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THIRTY-FOURTH ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING

P O W E R _ _ S T R U C T U R E S _ _ I N _ _ S O U T H _ _ A F R I C A

by

PROFESSOR M.F. PRESTWICH

POWER STRUCTURES IN SOUTH AFRICA.

by

M. F. Prestwich.

The title of my paper today is, I am afraid, not altogether a satisfactory one. I hope very much, therefore, that none of you is present here today because of any special attraction which the title has for you.

It is not, of course, my own. It was given to me by your Director, and when I received it from him my immediate reaction was to say, first, that I did not feel at all competent to deal with the subject proposed, and secondly, that I doubted very seriously whether anyone had available the knowledge to deal with the subject as I, from my professional point of view, interpreted it. For to me, I must admit, the immediate suggestion as to the meaning of the title was that it asked for a detailed and factual -- almost statistical -- study of the various ways in which all sorts of pressure groups and particular interests affect legislation in South Africa, and also the way in which legislation is applied. It was as clear to me from the start as it will this morning become to you that I am not competent to produce anything of this kind. And, as I have already suggested, I doubt whether the materials are available for any approach in detail to this interpretation of the subject.

To the shrill cry of anguish and bewilderment which I emitted when I received your Director's kind and flattering invitation, I received a kind and soothing reply. He suggested various topics which would fall under this title as he understood it. He suggested far more topics, I am bound to say, than anyone could hope to deal with in the time assigned, and many more than I have the knowledge, to deal with. But I can say that all the topics that I shall discuss are among those which he suggested as relevant; though I must hasten to add that the way in which I propose to treat them is mine alone, and that he has no responsibility whatever for that. I think that by the time that

I have finished, he and you alike may well be grateful for this assumption of purely personal responsibility on my part as to what I shall actually say.

I still feel that the title is not entirely suited to the subject matter of my discourse. But I may plead some precedents in my defence. The academic department over which I have the honour to preside at the University of Natal is not simply the Department of History; it is the Department of History and Political Studies, and I personally teach a good deal of the Political Theory section of the latter. It will be known to many of you that one of the great classics of Political Theory - Rousseau's "Contrat social" - has a title which bears hardly any relation to the essential subject matter of the book itself. But I need not defend myself only by appealing to this august but (being eighteenth century) somewhat remote precedent. Assiduous students of the contemporary South African Press have no doubt become aware - as I have done over the last two or three years - of an increasing gulf in many papers between the apparent meaning of the headlines and the content of the news itself or commentaries beneath them. I may thus shelter beneath not only the authority of a major political theorist but under the authority of much contemporary journalism, if you should feel disposed to say, when you have heard me to the end - if any of you do hear me to the end - that the substance of my discourse has not lived up to the promise of my title.

Those of you who have been in touch with the academic study of politics over any part of the past twenty or thirty years will be well aware of the importance which the concept of Power has come to play in that study. And I think that perhaps the best starting point for my paper may be found in a brief passage in a work by Lord Russell, called "Power: A new Social Analysis", which appeared in 1938. "In the course of this book I shall be concerned to prove to prove", Lord Russell writes,

"that the fundamental concept in social science is Power, in the same sense in which Energy is the fundamental concept in physics". In saying that this is a convenient starting point, I don't mean to imply that I unreservedly accept the views expressed in Lord Russell's book. On the contrary, I agree whole heartedly with what Mr Bernard Crick, of the London School of Economics, has said in a thought-provoking book called "The American Science of Politics". Commenting there on some American writers on political studies whose point of view is basically much the same as that expressed in my quotation from Lord Russell he says - rightly, to my mind - "The weakness of their position is that they do not draw any distinction between power and authority. They use the two terms synonymously, whereas the tradition of their use enshrines a real distinction. Power is an instrument of coercion authority is a condition of either justice or consent"

(I have taken the liberty of slightly altering Crick's ipsissima verba. He is speaking specifically of Merriam, a particular representative of the school on which he is commenting. I have ventured to translate his singular into the plural.)

The distinction made here seems to me an exceedingly important one, and perhaps its relevance to my theme may become apparent from time to time if what I have subsequently to say. Meanwhile, for a somewhat closer approach to the significance of this distinction, I fall back upon another authority, that of Bertrand de Jouvenel, whom I regard as one of the very few really creative thinkers of our generation in the field of political studies. From his work on "Sovereignty" (written in 1956) I quote the distinction he draws. Power, he observes there, is nothing more than the capacity of some particular man or group of men to extract obedience. The distinguishing mark of authority is that it is exercised only over those who voluntarily accept it.

Even this, however, does not seem to me to put the matter in the clearest possible light. The definition of authority I accept with a slight modification (or perhaps I should call it explanation, for from the general tone of his works as a whole I think that M. de Jouvenel would agree with me). It is this : that the voluntary acceptance of which he speaks does not necessarily mean an explicit consent, formally recorded in some way, as, for example, by vote. It may be something much vaguer than that. Indeed, I am not sure whether the very best statement on the nature of authority (it is not quite a formal definition) is not one that is rather more than two hundred years old. It is to be found, expressed with that classic eighteenth century accuracy, simplicity and clarity which almost invariably characterises his style, in a letter of Lord Chesterfield to his godson. "Power," he wrote, "may fall to the share of a Nero or a Caligula, but authority can only be the attendant of the confidence that mankind have in your sense and virtue."

I must modify a little more extensively M. de Jouvenel's definition of power for my purposes. If power is defined only in terms of ability to exact obedience, then I have no subject to discuss with you today. For it is clear that in these terms only the Government and its agencies possess power. So I would prefer, for the purposes of this discussion, to think of power in terms of degrees. In its fullest and purest form, it is, precisely, the capacity to exact obedience. But in a lower degree, I suggest that it may properly be used to include the capacity to bring about a desired state of affairs by pressure, influence or similar means. And I think, that for our purposes we must add a third, yet lower degree of power, which I may call merely negative power - sometimes simply vis inertiae, sometimes rather to be described as conscious though covert resistance - a phenomenon known to all who exercise power or authority, whether in a family or household, a school or university or any other group up to and including the state itself.

I must make two more points, illustrated by quotations from two of the authors whom I have already quoted, and then I shall have done with these preliminaries. The first is that, as Lord Russell points out in the book which I have already cited, there are many forms of Power. "Like Energy," he writes, "Power has many forms, such as wealth, armaments, civil authority, influence on opinion", and some of his chapters bear headings such as Priestly Power, Kingly Power, Naked Power, Revolutionary Power, Economic Power and Power over Opinion. Very often, as he points out, it is impossible to treat any of these forms in isolation, just as in physics "the study of one form of energy will be defective at certain points, unless other forms are taken into account."

The second of my two remaining points, and quotations, in these preliminaries deals with one of the relations between Power and Authority. In any given society, those who possess Authority over an important part of that society may thereby exercise Power over the rest. "If the rulers have authority over only a part of their subjects," says de Jouvenel, "they may receive from that part a strength sufficient to subject the others to their power". Long ago, the eighteenth century Scottish philosopher David Hume put what is substantially the same point in a more picturesque and telling form. Arguing that in the last resort all governments, even the most despotic, depend upon the support of the opinion of at least a strong body of their subjects, Hume says "The Sultan of Egypt or the Emperor of Rome might drive his harmless subjects like brute beasts against their sentiments and inclination. But he must at least have led his Mamelukes or Praetorian bands, like men, by their opinion." (Essay entitled Of the First Principles of Government). I cannot forbear to continue the passage I quoted a moment ago from the Baron de Jouvenel - "Of all states that is the worst whose rulers no longer enjoy an authority sufficiently extensive for everyone to obey them with good grace, but

in which their authority over a part of their subjects is sufficiently large to enable them to constrain others. This state of things - power over all by means of authority over a part - is the mark of the authoritarian state." M. de Jouvenel is writing without any particular state in mind, but I imagine that many of you will agree that in this last passage we have come very near to home.

It is obvious enough that the outstanding fact in the present situation in South Africa is the immense and to all appearance almost unshakeable power of the present Government and of the party which sustains it. It is unnecessary, I think, for me to offer any detailed analysis of the more obvious constituents of that power: many of you will know much more about them than I do. The Afrikaans-speaking people are as we all know, the large majority of the White electorate, and the system of delimiting constituencies increases the political effect of that numerical superiority. (I understand, incidentally - I think it is Professor Gwendolen Carter who makes the point in her valuable book "The Politics of Inequality" - that the loading in favour of rural constituencies is not in itself much greater than that which occurs in many other countries. The important fact, of course, is that we have here two fairly clearly marked racial groups so distributed geographically that the system works in practice consistently in favour of one of them.) It is to be expected that in a country which is not racially or linguistically homogeneous one group will be in the majority. What is, of course, a special feature of our situation is that of the larger racial group in the electorate, the majority is to all appearance unshakeably attached to one party and forms a group of remarkable cohesiveness and durability. Many circumstances have brought this about, which will be as familiar to you as to me - the strong sense of a distinctive Afrikaner nationality, with its language, its special ethos, and (still to a very great extent, despite some recent trends here and there in the Dutch Reformed

Churches) its distinctive religious outlook; the still vivid memories of the long struggle for Afrikaner ascendancy; and the ever present fear, perennial but probably increased by recent developments in the outer world, of a Black dominating majority.

The ascendancy of the governing party is firmly buttressed by other supports, about which it may be worth saying a little more. Take, for example, its special relation to some of the most important elements in the functioning of any developed modern state - the Army, the Police, and the Civil Service. With regard to the first two, of course, we all know that it is one of the distinctive marks of the modern state (it was not always true in the past) that it has a monopoly of the recognised use of force, and likewise that in every stable state the government of the day can normally rely on the loyalty and obedience of the Armed Forces and the Police, whatever the political views of individuals in those forces may be. But it would appear that the close sympathy here between the greater part of the Armed Forces and the Police on the one hand and the governing party on the other transcends this generally prevalent state of affairs. There is no precise parallel to it in the fact that most officers by profession in Britain still tend to be Conservatives. Nor is it paralleled by the markedly political character of the upper levels of the French Army under the Third Republic until nearly the eve of the First World War. For in that instance, the upper cadres of the Army tended to be either Royalist by family tradition or Bonapartist, and decidedly not sympathetic to the régime. And in any case, of course, this was true of the officer class rather than the rank and file. Nor does the German Army under the Weimar Republic offer any precise parallel, for that appears to have been rather an imperium in imperio than a body in close sympathy with any ruling party in the state.

In the piping days before the First World War, the late Mr Hilaire Belloc wrote a tart little comment on the attitude of imperialist Whites to the coloured races -

"Whatever happens, we have got
The Maxim gun, and they have not."

Our present masters are still in a position to say that with the sublimest assurance.

Not dissimilar is their relation with the Public Service. We cannot know precisely the political sympathies of individual public servants, and it is obvious, I think, that our Public Service is still by and large not overtly political. But I see no reason to doubt, and some reason to accept, the general view that the Public Service is predominantly staffed by people who are at least not unsympathetically disposed to the convictions and policies of the ruling party. Of course, it is true that in all stable states, the government in power can rely on the public service to carry out its legitimate orders loyally. But this is not quite the whole of the matter. It makes some difference whether a policy is applied by a Public Service inspired by a spirit of simple dutifulness, or whether it is applied by civil servants who regard themselves as zealous upholders of the policies of a particular party in power. But the principal importance of the attitude of a Public Service lies rather in the fact that the principal members of a public service in any modern state, as is well-known, play an increasingly important part in the actual formulation of policy.

I am not sure whether I should add to this list the judicial branch of the state. Here I must tread warily. I do not know whether for anything that might be regarded as an aspersion the judges, arising in awful collective wrath, can assemble together and commit the unwary scholar for contempt of court. I do not know whether the whole body acting individually might not one after the other commit the hapless critic until his contempt is purged only with the extinction of his life. Nor do I know how your esteemed President will take my comments. But greatly daring, yet walking delicately as Agag, I will venture on a few observations. I think I have noted lately, in some judicial pronouncements, and in

some statements by former members of the Judiciary, a tendency to accept almost automatically that in some particular case in which (say) the Minister for Justice is not willing to disclose his reasons for acting, it must be assumed that he has no doubt good reasons for doing so, and a tendency to interpret the Rule of Law in a minimal and technical sense. There is also a striking absence of criticism of legislation from the Bench, which British judges have in the past not infrequently uttered even when they were dutifully enforcing the law of which they disapproved, and which in some instances led to its amendment. Now it has been frequently pointed out (the great American judge Mr Justice Holmes was one of the first to do so, I think) that judges in their interpretation of the law are inevitably influenced by their convictions on society and government. Thus, for example, English judges in the nineteenth century interpreted the law in certain ways because they shared the almost universal orthodox views on laissez faire and freedom of contract in the economic sphere, and Mr Justice Holmes once felt it necessary to remind his colleagues in the Federal Supreme Court that the American constitution had not enacted Mr Herbert Spencer's "Social Statics". There is no thought here of yielding to Executive pressure; no thought of deliberate political partisanship, least of all in any party sense. What does seem to me to be happening here and now is something like this. The intellectual convictions and presuppositions on the nature of the social good which no judge can escape, and which must to some extent colour his interpretation of the law, seem to me to be steering a shift from a predominantly individualist and (in the British sense) liberal character to one in which reason of state - almost in an early Stuart sense - carries greater weight. If my diagnosis is at all correct, this is a source of strength to the government.

I need not dwell upon the numerous agencies and allies by means of which the leaders of the dominant party are able to assure the cohesiveness, the continuity and in some measure the imperviousness to "alien" ideas of the mass of their supporters. There are the schools and methods of education in vogue in certain parts of the country, and educational policy, it is possible, may come to be a means through which other sections of the White community are increasingly drawn at any rate into outer courts of the temple of Nationalist ideas. I am not quite sure whether the intensified military training of young men isn't already becoming another means to this end. It certainly could be. Then there is broadcasting a daily stream of news and commentary which is pretty consistently coloured by Nationalist beliefs and interpretations. The effect is, I think, already pretty discernible among many who would certainly not call themselves Nationalists but who have no very firmly grounded contrary convictions of their own. There is, of course, the Broederbond - obviously dedicated and obviously an organisation of great power and influence, even though the outsider like myself would not venture to say precisely how great that power and influence are. At the very least it has been a potent force in creating agencies which have directed and coordinated the activities of national-minded Afrikaners (I borrow some words from Professor Gwendolen Carter) and in placing nationalist-minded Afrikaners in key positions. I am very ready to accept that it has been very much more, but I am unable from my own knowledge to gauge how much.

And of course there are the Dutch Reformed Churches. It was a saying in England last century and early in this that the Anglican Church was the Conservative Party at prayer. The Dutch Reformed Churches obviously cannot be defined quite as the Nationalist Party at prayer, first because a great majority of non-Nationalist Afrikaners appear to be included (of course as a minority) in their membership, and secondly because among their clergy a small but intelligent and courageous minority which is

highly critical of Nationalist ideas. Nevertheless, the alliance between the Nationalist Party and the greater part of the Dutch Reformed Churches is obviously exceedingly close, and certainly a greater source of strength and inspiration to Nationalism than the traditional alliance in England between Toryism and Anglicanism has been to the former. Indeed, the rôle of the Dutch Reformed Churches here may be mostly closely likened, I think, to the rôle of the Creek Orthodox Church among the Greek-speaking peoples formerly subject to Turkey.

I am afraid all this will be little better than a twice-told tale for you, and I bring these matters in only for the sake of completeness. But there is one factor in the strength of Afrikaner Nationalism in the field of ideas which I have never myself seen mentioned, though doubtless it has been described somewhere. It is this: that in the doctrine of apartheid Afrikaner Nationalism has a myth which has proved itself to be of great practical potency. Some of you may be puzzled and taken aback by my use of that word "myth"; others of you will know exactly what I mean. I use the term, of course, in the sense originally employed, I believe, by the early twentieth century French Syndicalist, Georges Sorel. A myth in this sense does not mean a picturesque tale like the story of the Judgment of Paris; nor does it necessarily mean something untrue, as when we say that the Aryan race is a myth. What is essential is that, whether objectively true or not, it should be firmly and ardently believed; that it should have strong and deep roots in the emotions; that it should inspire positive action, here and now. As one commentator on Sorel has put it, "in a myth, a group dramatises all its strongest inclinations, and its dreams acquire reality and its acts sanctions." Or as Laidler puts it, in his "History of Socialist Thought": "Myths are indispensable to every revolutionary movement. They make it possible for those believing in the day of deliverance to keep up their courage and enthusiasm. They concentrate the forces of a rising class and

intensify it to the point of action. Social myths generally have Utopian features connected with them. But these features are not essential. The essentials are the hope which the acceptance of the myth brings and the ideals strengthened by the myth."

Sorel himself considered that the belief of the first generation of Christians in the literal imminence of Christ's Second Coming in majesty to Earth was a good example of the social myth in a religious form. A good modern secular example, I would say, is the Marxist conviction of the economic determination of history, or of the inevitability of the ultimate supersession of capitalist society by the triumph of the proletariat. And it seems to me that the doctrine of apartheid falls into exactly the same category. This fact, if I am right in regarding it as such, is of much more than merely academic interest. For the possession of such a social myth (though it may sometimes ultimately prove disastrous, if it is too violently in conflict with objective reality) is often a great source of strength to the group, giving it a powerful sense of cohesion; imbuing it with the confidence that the stars in their courses are fighting for it; inspiring it to energetic, consistent and purposeful action. Sometimes, looking at Afrikaner Nationalism and its opponents, I am moved to recall Yeats' familiar lines -

"The good lack all conviction, while the worst
Are filled with passionate intensity."

Of course, these lines are not quite applicable to our present subject, either in respect of their division into the two categories of good and bad, nor in respect of the attribution of conviction exclusively to one of them. But they may serve to sharpen my point. No one can doubt, I think, that the Nationalists have an intensity of conviction which too many of their opponents lack, nor that in any conflict of principle

ensuing in practice intensity of conviction is usually a source of great strength to those who have it.

I may briefly mention certain other elements of strength in the position of Afrikaner Nationalism, at any rate at the present time. One is the element of luck. Developments elsewhere in Africa and indeed generally in the world have played into its hands. In this respect its leaders have certainly been greatly favoured by fortune, but they have probably also shown prescience and skill in timing their actions to suit the tides of fortune.

Another aspect of their good luck is the flourishing state of the economy, at least for the more fortunate. I doubt whether this has much to do with Nationalist policy; though I am no economist, I fancy that it is the local manifestation of a very widespread condition of affairs. But to the man in the street, who does not read "The Economist", this is chalked up to the credit of the Government. And this in its turn brings further accretion of power. Nothing succeeds like success, and the former cautious trickle of far-sighted climbers on to the Nationalist bandwagon seems to me now to have become something more like a stampede - though with no danger of overturning the bandwagon.

To sum up, then, in terms of my earlier distinctions. The dominant party with its agencies has an immense authority with what is probably now the actual majority of the electorate. That authority enables it to exercise great power over the rest of the community. The factors which strengthen its power are numerous and potent and it is, I think, beginning to acquire authority, as distinct from mere power, with a large part of the non-Nationalist White electorate. I can discern no present signs of internal division or weakness, though of course one never knows what the future may bring. But so far as can be judged, the ascendant party constitutes a really solid and formidable power structure, and I think that properly it is the only one in South Africa.

I pass to some consideration of another of the topics which your Director indicated to me that he would regard as falling under the general heading of my paper: namely, how can the docility and the acquiescence of the English-speaking part of the European population be accounted for, when one considers the very considerable resources of at least potential power which it has at its disposal?

Before I attempt to answer, let me interpolate a brief parenthesis. It is, I know, inevitably a bit superficial to talk in general and comprehensive terms, as if each term stood for a solid block of people, with homogeneous outlook and aims; to speak simply of English-speaking South Africans as a whole, of Africans as a whole, even of Afrikaner Nationalists as a whole. I suppose that for any thorough analysis we should have to break down any such phrase as "the English-speaking element or factor in South Africa" into a number of categories, such as English-speaking South Africans of British descent who are very conscious of their specifically British traditions, English-speaking South Africans of British descent who are not so conscious; English-speaking South Africans who are not of British extraction, but who also (perhaps surprisingly) can be divided into these two categories (I may remark that some of the strongest and most perceptive upholders of British political traditions that I have come across in South Africa have been among English-speaking South Africans who have no hereditary connection whatsoever with Britain); and lastly, those who simply represent British and American capital, of whom it may be said, in the words of the classical proverb, ubi bene, ibi patria ; or in Biblical phrase, "Where your treasure is, there will your hearts be also"; provided of course that the treasure is safe and yielding as an investment a good interest. For an accurate analysis, such distinctions must be drawn, so far as they can be, in differing degrees for different groups. But it is obvious that if I were to draw in all that I have to say this paper would become impossibly complex. I mention them here only for two reasons: the first, that I wish to safeguard myself against the charge of indulging in excessive generalisation through

simple ignorance; the second, that I believe that these distinctions are probably most numerous among English-speaking South Africans, and least numerous among Afrikaner Nationalists, and that that is one important element in the power of the latter and the relative impotence of the former.

Leaving these subtleties aside, there is of course a short and easy superficial answer to the question of why the English-speaking element is so docile and acquiescent, and you will be as familiar with it as I am. It consists simply in the facts of numbers and distribution. The English-speaking element is numerically a minority. It is also highly concentrated in a comparatively few areas. Its vote-possessing members cannot, therefore, hope to return a majority of M.Ps., and could not hope to do so even if there were no loading of the franchise; and a great deal of such numerical strength as it has is expressed in vast, and in a sense wasteful, majorities in a few constituencies.

But this is not the whole of the story. After all, we are all accustomed to the idea that well-organised, assertive, socially and economically powerful minorities can and commonly do play a dominant rôle in politics, and most people seem to accept uncritically the idea that groups of this kind pull the strings behind the political scenes. And after all, it is the English-speaking element that is still overwhelmingly predominant in the control of economic power and even still in the most widely circulating Press. Why, with these assets, is it so acquiescent and docile?

An important - perhaps the important - part of the answer is that the principal business of the English-speaking element is business, to adapt a familiar American saying. And in any situation in which business is flourishing, business interests will normally be extremely reluctant to countenance, much less to undertake, any action which may introduce new, unpredictable and possibly uncontrollable factors into the situation. Business men have made revolutions; in fact, prior to the

Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, they made most revolutions; but usually, I think, because they believed that the existing order was bad for business and a new order would be better. But business, on the whole, may well be not unpleased with the existing situation, which permits it to make good profits, guarantees it a cheap and docile, if not very efficient, labour force, and maintains order in the simplest and most obvious sense of the term.

This fact has, I think, been emphasised by the development of giant economic organisations. The old individualist merchant or entrepreneur could often take a vigorously individualistic line in matters of public interest which might have nothing to do with his business affairs. The vast and complex economic corporations of modern times cannot afford - or feel that they cannot afford - the luxury of promoting particular political principles too wholeheartedly, unless it is necessary for them to do so in defence of their economic interests. "Did you ever expect a corporation to have a conscience," asked the first Lord Thurlow, that crusty High Tory Lord Chancellor in eighteenth century England, "when it has no soul to be damned, and no body to be kicked?"

Such giant organisations often make me think of the huge monsters of prehistoric times, who became vulnerable in the end through their sheer size, or of certain kinds of twentieth century battleship, which are so elaborate and so colossally expensive that it is almost impossible to risk using them in a naval engagement. Great corporations have, of course, enormous power in the economic field which is their particular concern. But they enjoy that power largely on the condition that they do not expose themselves to risk, without the most pressing economic reasons, in wider spheres of public controversy.

It is necessary also to bear in mind, of course, that in all modern countries those engaged in business must look to the state for favours and concessions and permits to an extent

unparalleled prior to our generation.

What I have said so far should make it apparent that in my view there is a curious division in South Africa between the preponderance of political power and preponderance of economic power. And this, it seems to me, has an important implication for our topic. Those who possess the latter may, as I have suggested, be in a weak position in some respects. But none the less the power which they possess is potentially very great. The possessors of political ascendancy must therefore, it seems to me, either capture economic power for themselves or else make as sure as it is humanly possible for them to do that their continued possession of political power is assured. On the whole, it is my impression that any attempt to transfer economic power from the English-speaking element to Afrikaner Nationalism would be less advantageous to the latter than the alternative course. It might have many unfortunate repercussions internally, and it would certainly have a bad effect on that inflow of foreign capital which is still important to South Africa. A continued, and doubtless accelerated, drive to secure a larger share for Afrikaner (and more specifically governmental) control in the South African economy will doubtless be made, but I personally doubt whether more than that will be attempted (though I am aware that I am here dissenting from Advocate Lewin's view that in the 1960's the English will fail to maintain their dominant position in the economic sphere). But that very fact will make it more imperative for the forces of Afrikaner Nationalism to ensure their continued political dominance, in order to make certain that all that they have striven for and all that they aim at shall be attained.

By and large, it seems to me, the economic rôle of the English-speaking is not an element of political strength, at any rate outside the purely economic sphere. It is almost an element of weakness - certainly of vulnerability. It means rather (at least in the existing situation) that the English-

speaking have given so many precious hostages to fortune.

Of the other great apparent element of strength in the position of the English-speaking element in South Africa - the control of the Press which has by far the larger circulation even among Afrikaans readers - it seems to me that it may also be said that this source of power is more apparent than real. The power of the Press - any Press - is, of course, very great in many fields, but English experience suggests that it is limited when it comes to influencing the public in matters of internal politics on which they feel strongly.

At present also the English-speaking Press does not seem to be entirely wholehearted. There are some honourable exceptions, but on the whole there seems to me to have been a marked change of tone since the establishment of the Republic and the departure from the Commonwealth. There have been some striking modifications of principle, and it seems to me that there is a good deal of caution and "self-censorship". And since most newspapers are primarily businesses, and much concerned with circulation, some seem to have a tendency to be all things to all men. One or two, I am almost inclined to say, appear to write at least one leader an issue for each school of thought among their large and varied leadership. Such ambidexterity (or should I say multi- or omni-dexterity ?) may show a praiseworthy capacity for adaptation to the modern world, but it is not the way to power or authority.

Hence, neither of what appear at first to be great potential sources of power to the English-speaking are, in the last analysis, really so. Indeed, I am tempted to apply some words used by Dr. Dönges about 20 years ago, in relation to the Afrikaners. They seem to me much more applicable to the English-speaking today than they were to Afrikaners then. "We have the purchasing power. We have the capital power. We have the money power. The question is: have we the will power and the power to act?" The answer, in my view, must be No.

Indeed, when I reflect on the conduct of the English-speaking element in South Africa since 1960, I am tempted to find the most exact illustration of the position in an apologue or fable by Oscar Wilde.

"Once upon a time there was a magnet, and in its close neighbourhood lived some steel filings. One day two or three little filings felt a sudden desire to go and visit the magnet, and they began to talk of what a pleasant thing it would be to do. Other filings nearby overheard their conversation, and they, too, became infected by the same desire. Still others joined them, till at last all the filings began to discuss the matter, and more and more their vague desire grew into an impulse. 'Why not go today?' said some of them; but others were of opinion that it would be better to wait till tomorrow. Meanwhile, without their having noticed it, they had been involuntarily moving nearer to the magnet, which lay there quite still, apparently taking no heed of them. And so they went on discussing, all the time insensibly drawing nearer to their neighbour; and the more they talked, the more they felt the impulse growing stronger, till the more impatient ones declared that they would go that day, whatever the rest did. Some were heard to say that it was their duty to go and visit the magnet, and that they ought to have gone long ago. And while they talked, they moved always nearer and nearer, without realising that they had moved. Then, at last, the impatient ones prevailed, and with one irresistible impulse, the whole body cried out 'There is no use waiting - we will go today. We will go now. We will go at once!'. And then in one unanimous mass they swept along, and in another moment were clinging fast to the magnet on every side. Then the magnet smiled - for the steel filings had no doubt at all but that they were paying that visit of their own free will."

Steel filings are, of course, all very well in their way. But when they behave in this fashion they are hardly the material from which a power structure can be made.

There are, of course, many further reasons why the English-element is "docile and acquiescent". One has a very special weight in my mind. It may not have the same in yours. I speak merely as a visitor from Natal to the Republic; I speak also as one who continues to be personally an uncompromising Queen and Commonwealth man, and who is allergic to republics. It is very likely, therefore, that many of you will find the point that I am about to make incomprehensible or even offensive. But for better or worse, here it is. I believe that when the English-speaking acquiesced as tamely as they did in the decision to establish the republic and to abandon the Commonwealth, they were in effect - bearing in mind that the British constitutional and political tradition is, with English literature as its

only equal in this respect, the great achievement of the British peoples - they were, I repeat, in effect, ^{saying} that tradition has no longer any relevance to the way of ^{life in} South Africa. They ^{thereby} showed themselves unwilling to protect anything but their private way of life and their economic interests. And I believe that like the giant Anteaous in the Greek fable, the virtue (at any rate for political power and authority) went out of them when their feet were lifted from them - Mother Earth - which for my purposes does not mean the literal soil of Britain, but does mean the British political tradition which they have casually abandoned.

There are many excuses for their attitude. One is that the mid-twentieth century has been a bad time for people of British stock everywhere, making them doubtful and bewildered about their inherited political values and principles and practices. Another is that in South Africa itself, almost from the time of Union, they have been discouraged from regarding themselves as a coherent group with specific political values by leaders whose principal interest was to make sure of the adherence of as large as possible a section of the Afrikaner electorate.

I have heard that butchers who slaughter sheep themselves usually have a goat who is specially trained to lead the sheep into the slaughter pen, and the sheep blindly and unprotestingly follow it. Such a goat is worth its weight in gold to its possessor. I can think of many possible candidates for this rôle of goat in relation to the English-speaking sheep over the past half century or so. When I mentioned this to my friend and colleague Professor Edgar Brookes, he remarked that I might call this "kidding them along".

To sum up this last section. The English-speaking are manifestly in no position to form a power structure in my first sense of the word "power" - that is, capacity to exact obedience. Largely because of their own willingness to compromise and to concentrate on their very great economic interests, they are in a very poor position to exercise power outside the purely economic sphere in my second sense of the word "power", the capacity to exercise a far-reaching influence in political affairs. I must, however, add that they can do more in my third sense of the word "power" - which I earlier described, you may remember, as negative power. I think that Mr. John Mander was right when he said in an interesting article in the October 1963 issue of "Encounter" that English-speaking South Africa still strikes the visitor as a remarkably "open" society in some respects, and that it is the pressure of the English-speaking element that has kept the situation as relatively fluid as it is. It has acted, not perhaps altogether consciously, as an obstacle to the realisation of the extremer Afrikaner Nationalist design for Utopia.

The Africans have, of course, certain obvious assets. They have a vast preponderance in numbers (with every prospect that in the near future

that preponderance will increase); they are indispensable to the economic life of the country; and finally (though this is not entirely to my subject, which is concerned with internal matters) they have the moral support which comes from wellnigh universal conviction, outside South Africa and some scattered groups elsewhere, that discrimination based purely on race and colour is morally wrong. Yet these assets are potential rather than active, and if we look purely at the power-situation inside South Africa, the obstacles to their activation are grave; almost, if not quite, insuperable.

It seems impossible, in existing circumstances, that they could hope to acquire power, or a share in power, by revolution: unless, indeed, it were most powerfully aided, and perhaps guided, from outside. But looking merely to the internal situation, it must be remarked that few of the conditions which appear to have existed in all successful revolutions exist in South Africa today. It is quite wrong to believe all that is necessary for a successful revolution is a large, aggrieved or oppressed majority, conscious of its grievances and oppression. One of the necessary conditions appears to be weakness (manifesting itself in serious inefficiency and internal divisions) and loss of self-confidence in the Government. Those factors are not present today in South Africa. And I believe that it is generally agreed by the experts that under contemporary conditions South Africa is not a good country for guerilla war. Nor is the prospect much better for direct action which falls short of actual revolution. A general strike or strikes in key industries might theoretically be possible, even though they are illegal. But these, if they are to be successfully directed towards the attainment of specific ends, require immense organisation by known and trusted leaders, even if these work largely underground. And the existing machinery of what I must call at least the semi-police-state seems to be entirely adequate to isolate and silence and paralyse anyone who has become or shows signs of being able to become such a leader.

Moreover, I believe that it will be found to be true that wherever a measure of success has been achieved by a large popular movement, falling short of actual revolution, by people who felt themselves unduly excluded from any participation in power, it has been because they have been able to appeal to principles acknowledged by their rulers. But that is not the case in South Africa today. Indeed, from this point of view Bantustans - whatever other purposes in addition they may be designed to serve - seem to me to serve as a sort of moral bolthole. They enable the Nationalists to say, in effect: "Of course we acknowledge the right of every ethnic group to a place in the sun, and our Bantustan policy is designed to give just that".

As to what the actual effect on the general position of the Africans the establishment of Bantustans, and more especially the grant of very limited powers of self-government in the Transkei, may be, I must confess that I am at least as much in the dark as (say) Mr. de Wet Nel or Dr. Verwoerd. (If they were given to quoting so rank an Imperialist as Disraeli, I am sure that they would by now have borrowed his description of the Reform Act of 1867, and described Bantustans as "a leap in the dark"). Two things only I think may be said with some assurance, and perhaps we may welcome both. One is that the quasi-self-government conferred on the Transkei seems likely to enable some Africans to attain a status recognised even by Nationalists which may insensibly affect their attitude to Africans as such. The other is that at least it gives to some Africans a platform for expressing their views with a weight that they have not had hitherto. But beyond these points of reasonable assurance I myself feel quite unable to go.

Looking back over my theme as a whole, I can perhaps best crystallise my conclusions in a single image. Afrikaner Nationalism seems to me to be in the position of a powerful, militant country, armed at nearly every point, with its morale at high pitch, with its power highly integrated. Around it lie other countries, some with very little power, others half-hearted in the use of such power as they have, and all reluctant to make common cause with each other. And to complete the picture, it is the powerful and militant nation which has the further advantage of the initiative and of operating strategically on interior lines.

I am conscious that to many of you what I have been saying must seem discouraging, perhaps even defeatist. I do not intend it to be so, To my mind, the opposite of the defeatist - whatever the word for that may be - is not the man who weighs all the chances and only decides to fight if he is pretty sure that the tide of circumstances is running in his favour. Nor is he a defeatist who sees how scanty are the grounds for hope but goes on fighting. My mind goes back to Chesterton's lines:

I tell you naught for your comfort,
Yea, nought for your desire
Save that the sky grows darker yet
And the sea rises higher.

out

But of course the whole point was that Alfred, with/any rational or empirical hope, went on fighting - and won.

To the religious man, at any rate, no human assessment can ever be the final word on any situation. And the historian, from a merely secular point of view, can bring much the same message. The more I study history, the more I am impressed by the obvious and simple, but rarely recognised,

fact that people did not know what was coming next. There are here, surely, if not grounds for hope, at any rate grounds for not giving up.

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