

# Look at this woman...

and understand  
my nightmare

IN the aftermath of Bishop Tutu's Nobel Peace Prize, ALAN PATON, in an article in the Sunday Times, questioned the black leader's political morality for supporting disinvestment. His piece has opened a debate on the issue. Here he replies to one of his critics.

By **ALAN PATON**







I READ that Dr Villavencio, who has in the past often thought I was right, thinks now that I am wrong in passing moral judgment on those who advocate disinvestment.

He thinks I take a simplistic view of the whole issue.

It seems that I have also misunderstood the parable of the sheep and the goats. I understood Jesus to mean that if you denied a hungry man food and thirsty man drink you were doing something very wrong.

I deduced from that parable, which I take very seriously, that it would be wrong to advocate any course that would put a man out of a job.

To be simplistic is bad enough, but to fall off one's pedestal makes it worse. One is hurt, not only in one's body, but also in one's pride. There is only one sensible thing to do

in these circumstances, and that is to go to bed. So I went to bed, to sleep, perchance to dream ...

## I DREAM

They came to see me, these Americans, full of righteousness. They flattered me too.

They told me my name was well known in America, almost as well known as Gary Player and Chris Barnard, and now of course Zola Budd and Bishop Tutu.

They told me the Americans had great respect for my moral judgments, and that if I came out for disinvestment, it would be a certain winner.

They asked me to become the president of the World Disinvestment Campaign. They also told me that if anyone was put out of a job, it wouldn't be me. I told them I had certain moral doubts, but they ex-

plained that I was being simplistic.

One should bear in mind that Jesus was talking about meat and drink, not about jobs. After much moral wrestling I accepted the argument. No-one can be more convincing than an American.

Also I must admit that I have some moral weaknesses — one is vanity and the other is money.

When it was announced, with a great blowing of trumpets, that I had become president of the World Disinvestment Campaign, my life changed overnight.

Mr Archimedes, who hadn't spoken to me for years, came up to Botha's Hill to tell me that I was now the hero of Africa. Professor F sent me a telegram saying that I had at last atoned for praising the Israelis for rescuing their hostages from the clutches of Idi Amin.

Mr R who had venerated me when he was young and had ceased to venerate me when I said that P W was astute, telephoned to say that he now venerated me again.

Chief B rang up in a fury and said that I had destroyed a friendship of nearly 40 years and that he would never speak to me again.

Cables of congratulations poured in from America, Canada, Britain, Sweden and other countries. Alas, I lost most of my capitalist friends, but one must pay a price for taking a stand.

I travelled all over the world. I was welcomed on campuses which would have shouted me down a year before. It was nice to come in out of the cold.

Then came the great day. Representatives of America, Canada, Britain, France, West Germany, Holland and Scandinavian countries met in London and declared for total disinvestment (except perhaps for a strategic mineral or two). Mrs Archimedes came up to tell me I was the hero of the whole black world.

Disinvestment began to bite. Port Elizabeth and East London became dead cities. Even in a quiet place like Botha's Hill there were daily black queues for food and jobs.

I must confess I didn't like passing them. Many of the people of the Valley of a Thousand Hills were my friends, but some grew very cold to me.

It was a great shock to me to hear over the radio that a mob had burned the buildings of the Valley Foundation and the Church of the Paraclete to the ground.

I telephoned the Rev John Ndlovu, and told him that he had my prayers. He said to me, we don't want your prayers, we want jobs.

Mr Archimedes, who knows I often go to the Church of the Paraclete, came up to condole with

me. He told me one must pay a price for making a stand.

There is unrest in the Valley, in Botha's Hill and Hillcrest and Kloof and Westville. I find that I spend more and more time in my study. I pull down the blinds. I find that I feel better when the blinds are down.

But Julia comes to tell me that there are black women wanting to see me. She brings their leader into my study, a tall woman for these parts, a tall woman carrying a child and dressed in black.

She looks like a sculpture of the Sorrow of the World. She gives me the child and I see that it is dead.

— Why do you give this to me?

— Because it is yours.

— How can it be mine? I have never seen you before.

— You took its life, therefore it is yours.

She goes out of the study and calls to me. She points to the waiting women.

— They will bring you their children too.

When the police have

taken away the body of the child I come to a decision. I get into my car, my new bullet-proof car, and I drive to Pinetown and I buy something I have never bought before. It is a gun.

I go home and go into my study with the drawn blinds. There, surrounded by all the hundreds of books and papers that I wrote for the World Disinvestment Campaign, I shoot myself to death.

How could I do such a thing? How could I bring such a noble life to such an ignoble end? How could I commit such a deadly sin? I

am filled with an agony of remorse. The burden of it is intolerable. I wish only to die.

## I WAKE

But ... what am I talking about? Am I not dead already? No I am not! The whole thing is an unspeakable dream. I am full of joy to realise that I never had anything to do with any campaign for disinvestment.

I ring up the Rev John Ndlovu of the Church of

the Paraclete. Why did you not ring before, he asks, I began to fear that you were dead.

I hereby solemnly declare that I will never, by any word or act of mine, give any support to any campaign that will put men out of jobs — not even if they promised me that it would bring Chernenko down. Or Reagan. Or P W Botha.

I rush to the post office and send a telegram to Dr Villavencio: three cheers for simplicity.