

ARTICLE FOR ANDRE BRINK

1 December 1987**Dr F van Zyl Slabbert**

The standard Afrikaner is a caricature – but an authentic one, otherwise Eugene Terre'blanche would not be in business. He has a preoccupation with his collective identity which reflects a latent sense of inferiority and lack of self-confidence. And there is fear too, about his continued life here and the manner in which he would like to live it. He knows it is not possible – because “the world” is against him – but he is going to try and get away with it for as long as he can. And so he tends to be socially uncomfortable, often appearing crude and insensitive. This disguises a natural warmth and simple generosity. Those who wander into his midden usually experience an awesome and debilitating hospitality. There is no doubt about it, as a white, he is uniquely and specially African. He has missed most of what Europe has gone through culturally, philosophically and economically over the last century – and it shows.

The stereotyping curse: “You are a Jew because I look at you” determines the fate of the deviant Afrikaner. “Real” Afrikaners never tire from trying to excommunicate him, which guarantees his continued notoriety. The words, liberal, communist, atheist, humanist, even homosexual, preceded by “Afrikaner” conjures up an instinctive sense of paradox and reinforces the norm. And yet in literature, religion, politics, he has shown profundity and merit and courage.

His enduring tragedy is that he is a white African who refuses to come to terms with his own continent and its people. Most of them still wish to be here but apart, and after more than three centuries the sadness of “the Afrikaner” is that he still has not come home.