

Tales of

Two

Kennedys

QUOTE

As one black person said to me when I commented that Azapo's enmity toward whites was a form of racism in reverse: 'But you have to understand, Senator, when it comes to racism, we've had the best teachers in the world — the whites of South Africa.'



TUTU — absurd assaults



NICKEL — reassurances



REAGAN — complicity



NAUDE — opponent



BOTHA — retaliation



BOESAK — smear

COMMENT

Changes are only of style

OVER a period of some 18 years one would suppose major changes to have taken place in any reasonably developed Western country. And many South Africans console themselves — and seek to ameliorate international criticism — with the proposition that politically, this country has changed substantially since the mid-Sixties.

Elsewhere on these pages two men, Robert and Edward Kennedy, look at our strange society from perspectives almost two decades apart. Their writings reflect some of the changes that have taken place, changes of style rather than substance. The most depressing thing is not the problems faced by a country which — as Government apologists never tire telling us — is faced with unique circumstances, but the insubstantiality of the progress made toward reform.

The Sixties were the granite years of apartheid. Those years are decidedly over, for no longer does the Government hold with righteous fervour the belief that an equitable solution to race differences is the policy of separation.

The apartheid creed, however, has merely been eroded, not replaced. The talk of reform is all flim-flam: it is the grudging make-do solution of the sorely pressed, rather than a clear vision based on the philosophical rejection of racial domination. Because it is based on the exigencies of the hour, it is always too little, too late.

Robert Kennedy identified seven broad areas where blacks were discriminated against. It is true to this day, that if your skin is black you still:

- Cannot participate in the political process or exercise a meaningful vote.

- Are restricted to jobs for which no whites are available.
- Earn wages lower than those of the white, for the same work.
- May live only where the Government decrees.
- May live with your family only if the Government approves.
- Are by law and practice, an inferior from birth to death.

It is salutary to note that only in the area of total physical segregation has the situation eased since Robert Kennedy's visit.

Only lightly camouflaged by the ethereal clouds of reform, we remain a society riven with uncertainties, filled with alienation and mistrust.

When Senator Robert Kennedy visited South Africa just over 18 years ago, he wrote an article for the Sunday Tribune on his impressions of this country and its strange politics. We reprint an edited version of that article today along with the story of his brother, Senator Edward Kennedy, who visited the country this month.

EXCLUSIVE

By **ROBERT KENNEDY**
(who visited South Africa in 1966)



AT THE southern tip of Africa, the mountains rise up and then fall sharply to the sea. The beaches are washed in turn by the harsh Atlantic and the warm, slow waters of the Indian Ocean. There, perched on the rocky slopes of the Cape of Good Hope, stands the proud city of Cape Town, a monument to the remarkable fortitude and vigour of the Dutch, British, French, Africans and others who have built one of the richest and most energetic societies in the world.

As our plane banked over the city, strikingly beautiful in the bright sunlight, all of us smiled and talked, warmed by the shared pleasure of beauty and of pride in human accomplishment.

Then a voice said: "There is Robben Island," and the plane went silent and cold. For Robben Island is home to more than 2 000 political prisoners in South Africa — black and white, professors and simple farmers, advocates of non-violence and organisers of revolution, all now bound in the same bleak brotherhood because of one thing: because they believe in freedom, they dared to lead the struggle against the Government's official policy of apartheid.

Apartheid, the Afrikaans word for "apartness", rigidly separates the races of South Africa — three million whites, 12 million blacks, and two million Indian and "coloured" people. It permits the white minority to dominate and exploit the non-white majority completely. If your skin is black in South Africa:

- You cannot participate in the political process, and you cannot vote.
- You are restricted to jobs for which no whites are available.
- Your wages are from 10 to 40 percent of those paid a white man for equivalent work.
- You are forbidden to own land except in one small area.
- You live with your family only if the Government approves.
- The Government will spend one-tenth as much to educate your child as it spends to educate a white child.
- You are, by law, an inferior from birth to death.
- You are totally segregated, even at most church services.

During five days this summer, my wife Ethel and I visited South Africa, talking to all kinds of people representing all viewpoints. Wherever we went — Pretoria, Cape Town, Durban, Stellenbosch, Johannesburg — apartheid was at the heart of the discussion and debate.

Our aim was not simply to criticise but to engage in a dialogue to see if, together, we could elevate reason above prejudice and myth.

At the University of Natal in Durban I was told the church to which most of the white population belongs teaches apartheid as a moral necessity. A questioner declared that few churches allow black Africans to pray with whites because the Bible says that is the way it should be, because God created Negroes to serve.

"But suppose God is black," I replied. "What if we go to Heaven and we, all our lives, have treated the Negro as an inferior, and God is there, and we look up and he is not white? What then is our response?"

There was no answer. Only silence.

In Rome, a week later, when Ethel and I met Pope Paul VI, we discussed South Africa — the loss of individual rights, the supremacy of the State, the growing rejection of Christianity by black Africans because, as one of them said, "The Christian God hates the Negroes." Distress and anguish showed in the Pope's face, the tone of his voice, the gestures of his hands.

I told the Pope about our visit to the Roman Catholic church he had dedicated a few years ago in Soweto, the section of Johannesburg set aside for black Africans. He remembered it well. The church is not permitted to own the property on which it is built, and the priests there are under constant government pressure.

As with all black Africans, the lives of the people of Soweto depend upon the symbols written in their individual passbooks. These must be carried at all times, like an automobile registration — but for human beings. To be caught without one, or with one lacking the proper endorsement by an employer, could mean six months in prison or exile to arid, forbidding places designated "Native homelands".

Except in one small area, a black African's wife must have a special pass to live with him — unless both happen to find work in the same town. She can visit him for up to 72 hours, but for a stated written purpose, and then she must stand in line to request her pass.

Arrests abound under the passbook law — more than 1 000 every day. To date, there have been five million convictions among the non-white population of 14 million.

Occasionally, the tortured cry out eloquently, as one did when convicted of inciting a strike (illegal for blacks).

That man was now below, on Robben Island, sentenced to life imprisonment. And as we turned back to the bright bustle of Cape Town, I pondered the dilemma of South Africa, a land of enormous promise and potential, aspiration and achievement — yet a land also of repression and sadness, darkness and cruelty.

It had produced great writers, but the greatest, Alan Paton, who wrote *Too Late the Phalarope* and *Cry, the Beloved Country*, can travel abroad only if he is prepared never to return. It has a Nobel Peace Prize winner, Chief Albert Lutuli of the Zulus, but he is restricted to a small, remote farm, his countrymen forbidden under pain of prison to quote his words.

It has some of the finest students I have seen anywhere in the world — intelligent, aware, committed to democracy and human dignity — but many are constantly harassed and persecuted by the Government.

Some of these young people, members of the 20 000-strong National Union of South African Students, crowded Cape Town's DF Malan Airport as we landed. The Nusas — through its president, a courageous senior at the University of Cape Town named Ian Robertson — had invited me to make the 1966 Day of Affirmation address.

The annual day, June 6 this year, formally affirms the 42-year-old organisation's commitment to democracy and freedom, regardless of language, race or religion.

Robertson was not at the airport. Nor would he be at the university that night. At the moment of our arrival, he sat in his apartment in Cape Town, forbidden to be in a room with more than one person at a time, to be quoted in the Press in any way, to take part in political or social life — prohibited, although he is studying to be a lawyer, to enter any court except as a witness under subpoena.

He was thus "banned" for five years by the Minister of Justice, who alleged that, in some unspecified way, he was furthering the aims of communism. But it was generally accepted that young Robertson's only offence was to invite me to speak.

That afternoon, I visited my host at his apartment. I presented him with a copy of President Kennedy's book, *Profiles in Courage*, inscribed to him "with admiration" by Mrs Jacqueline Kennedy.

I recalled my dinner, shortly after arrival the day before, in Pretoria with politicians, editors and businessmen, all genuinely puzzled that the Western world found fault with South Africa when South Africa was so staunchly anti-communist.

"But what does it mean to be against communism, I asked, "if one's own system denies the value of the individual and gives all power to the government — just as the communists do?"

They said South Africa's "unique problems" were internal.

"Cruelty and hatred anywhere can affect men everywhere," I said. "And South Africa could too easily throw a continent, even the world, into turmoil."

"But you don't understand," they said. "We are beleaguered."

I could understand that feeling. The Afrikaners — people of Dutch stock who make up 60 percent of the white population, struggled against foreign rule from 1806 until 1961. The Voortrekkers (literally, fore-pullers) opened up vast new areas in ox-drawn caravans during the last century, and their descendants fought the Boer War.

Yet, who was actually beleaguered? My dinner companions, talking easily over cigars and brandy and baked Alaska? Or Robertson and Paton and Lutuli? And the coloured population being evicted from District 6, an area of Cape Town, after living there for decades — its leadership "banned" for five years for protesting?

For the Minister of Justice can deprive a person of his job, his income, his freedom and — if he is black — his family.

The Minister's word alone can jail any person for up to six months as a "material witness", unspecified as to what. The prisoner has no right to consult a lawyer or his family. Without government permission, it is a criminal offence even to tell anyone he is being detained.

He simply disappears, and he may be in solitary confinement for the entire six months. No court can hear his case or order his release. And — a final touch — he may be taken into custody again immediately after release. Many people held under this law and its predecessor committed suicide.

The capstone to this structure of repressive power is the "ban". On his own authority, the Minister of Justice can ban people from public life, from leaving their villages or even their homes. His victims are prohibited from contesting the order in court. Once a person is banned, it is illegal to publish anything he says.

A factory worker may be prohibited from entering any factory, or a union official from entering any building where there is a union office. A political party can be destroyed by banning its leaders — which is exactly what happened to Alan Paton's Liberal Party. They cannot legally communicate with each other, and the police watch them constantly.

And all this power is in the hands of Balthazar J Voster, the Minister of Justice, who, incidentally, was interned in South Africa during World War 2 because of his activities in a force that harassed the British allies.

These things were on my mind as I walked through 18 000 students at the University of Cape Town that evening. In the speech, I acknowledged the United States, like other countries, still had far to go to keep the promises of our Constitution. What was important, I said, was that we were trying. And I asked if South Africa, especially its young people, would join in the struggle:

"There is discrimination in New York, the racial inequality of apartheid in South Africa and serfdom in the mountains of Peru. People starve in the streets of India, a former Prime Minister is summarily executed in the Congo, intellectuals go to jail in Russia, thousands are slaughtered in Indonesia, wealth is lavished on armaments everywhere."

"These are differing evils — but they are the common works of man. They reflect the imperfections of human justice, the inadequacy of human compassion, the defectiveness of our sensibility toward the sufferings of our fellows ... And therefore they call upon common qualities of conscience and of indignation, a shared determination to wipe away the unnecessary sufferings of our fellow beings ..."

In a response afterwards, John Daniel, vice-president of Nusas, was eloquent and courageous: "You have given us a hope for the future. You have renewed our determination not to relax until liberty is restored, not only to our universities but to our land."

The next day I spoke at the University of Stellenbosch, which has produced all but one of South Africa's Prime Ministers. Nestled in a green and pleasant valley, the first centre of Afrikaner independence, it is the fountainhead of Afrikaner intellectualism today.

Everyone expected a cool, if not hostile, reception. But we were greeted in the dining hall by the rolling sound of thunder — the pounding of soup spoons on tables, the students' customary applause. It was clear that, although many differed with me, they were ready to exchange views.

At the question session, they defended apartheid, saying it eventually would produce two nations, one black and one white. Had not India been divided into Hindus and Moslems?

But, I asked, did the black people have a choice? Why weren't they or the "coloured" people consulted? The black Africans are 70 percent of the population, but they would receive only 12 percent of the land, with no seaport or major city. How would they live in areas whose soil was already exhausted and which had no industry?

And they are not being prepared educationally. Black children are not taught in English or Afrikaans, but in tribal tongues, thus cutting them off from modern knowledge. Education is compulsory for whites but not for non-whites; thus, one of every 14 white students reaches the university, while only one in every 762 blacks makes it. Indeed, one in three gets no schooling at all, and of those who do, only one in 26 enter secondary school.

The following day we spent three hours in the black ghetto of Soweto. We walked through great masses of people and I found myself making speeches from the steps of a church, from the roof of a car and standing on a chair in the middle of a school playground.

For five years, until our visit, the half-million people of Soweto had had no direct word from their leader, the banned Albert Luthuli. My wife and I had flown by helicopter down the Valley of a Thousand Hills at dawn to see him at Groutville, about 44 miles inland from Durban.

He is a most impressive man, with a marvelously lined face, strong yet kind. My eyes first went to the white goatee, so familiar in his pictures, but then, quickly, the smile took over illuminating his whole presence, eyes dancing and sparkling. At mention of apartheid, however, his eyes went hurt and hard. To talk privately, we walked out under the trees and through the fields.

I gave him a portable record player and some records of excerpts of President Kennedy's speeches. He played President Kennedy's civil-rights speech of June 11, 1963, and we all listened in silence — Chief Luthuli, his daughter, two government agents accompanying us, my wife and I. At the end, Chief Luthuli, deeply moved, shook his head. The government men stared fixedly at the floor.

In my judgment, the spirit of decency and courage in South Africa will not surrender. With all of the difficulties and the suffering I had seen, still I felt tremendously moved by the intelligence, the determination, the cool courage of the young people and their allies scattered through the land.

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Luthuli — restricted



Paton — restricted