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THE POLICIES OF APARTHEID OF THE GOVERNMENT OF  
THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Letter dated 9 April 1968 from the Permanent Representative of South Africa  
to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to refer to the booklet "The United Nations and Human Rights" (Sales No.: E.67.I.29), which was published by the Office of Public Information in February of this year, in connexion with the International Year for Human Rights.

As stated in its foreword, the purpose of this booklet is to tell "the story of the concern of the United Nations with the concept and the reality of human rights over the last twenty years". However, instead of confining itself to this laudable objective, the booklet ventures into the field of political controversy by presenting, in a section entitled "Apartheid and racial discrimination in South Africa", a completely one-sided review of United Nations consideration of South Africa's domestic policies since the Organization's inception.

In so far as the section concerned deals with the merits of South Africa's domestic policies at all, it suggests that the latter consist of the "perpetuation of racial discrimination" by means of the "ruthless persecution and repression of opponents" and the "build-up of military and police forces in South Africa", and that they result in "race conflict". Aside from the fact that such comment is out of place and uncalled for in a Secretariat publication, it is not a truthful representation of the situation in South Africa. In order to correct the record, therefore, the basic elements of the South African Government's policy of separate development are set out below.

South Africa is a multinational country, made up of a nation of European descent which has been part of Africa for more than three centuries, and a number

of Bantu nations differing from one another in language, culture, traditions and everything else that determines national identities, each with its own undeniable right to separate nationhood in its own territory.

Taking into account the history, culture and circumstances of each of the nations in South Africa, it is the objective of the South African Government to provide every individual with a chance of unlimited development within his own nation and, wherever possible, in his own national homeland. It is also the objective to enable all the national groups to come together to consult on problems of mutual interest and concern on the basis of equality and mutual respect for human dignity through the establishment of a high level consultative machinery.

In this way the South African Government is endeavouring to eliminate political inequities among the various national groups and to attain the goal of sovereign equality for all the nations living within the boundaries of South Africa. The South African Government, therefore, subscribes to the ideal of eradicating the domination of one group by another. The problem arises, however, not from the ideal, but from the search for practical means of achieving it. The method followed by South Africa is to build up each people into self-governing entities capable of co-operating with one another in the political and economic spheres in such manner as may be voluntarily agreed between them.

South Africa's policy is therefore the reverse of domination and repression. It is rather one which makes it impossible for any single group to thwart the aspirations of other groups. By following an evolutionary process which enables each population group or nation to achieve self-realization within its own sphere, South Africa seeks to avoid a potential source of friction.

Furthermore, the South African Government subscribes fully to the human rights provisions of the United Nations Charter, and strives to promote and encourage respect for such rights, taking into account the particular circumstances existing within South Africa. These circumstances necessitate a reconciliation of the rights of individuals with the rights of nations and groups in order to ensure peaceful development and prosperity for all.

In this regard, the South African Government is convinced that the policy of separate development is the best means of bringing the ideals enshrined in the

Charter to fruition. Separate development, therefore, is not a policy of racial discrimination or racial superiority but is an entirely pragmatic approach to an exceedingly complicated set of human relationships. The objectives pursued by South Africa are the same as those set out in the Charter of the United Nations and are in accordance with modern concepts of human rights and dignities. The aim of the policy is justice for all on the basis of equal concern for each population group. This aim acknowledges the just claims and moral rights of each group to advance towards self-determination.

The prosperity and orderly development of South Africa which the world is witnessing today constitutes irrefutable proof of the success of this policy. It is generally accepted that the standards of living of all the peoples of South Africa are the highest in the whole of Africa. Are these achievements considered a violation of human rights? In educating its population groups, in providing them with health facilities, in affording them political rights in their own traditional areas, is South Africa acting in breach of human rights? Can it be maintained that the self-evident achievements which have already materialized in South Africa were the result of a destructive, oppressive and negative policy? Surely no objective observer could subscribe to such a view.

As regards the consideration by the United Nations of South Africa's domestic affairs, I must reiterate that this violates a fundamental principle contained in the Charter of the Organization. Despite this, however, the history of South Africa's relations with the United Nations reveals unparalleled efforts on the part of a founder Member State to reach an accommodation with the Organization. That South Africa's attempts in this direction have not borne fruit must be attributed exclusively to the machinations of certain States in the Organization.

It will be recalled that I recently apprised you of my Government's views regarding the OPI pamphlet entitled "The United Nations and the Human Person: Questions and Answers on Human Rights". These views were circulated in document A/6688/Add.2. On that occasion, attention was drawn to the fundamental contradiction between the OPI's basic mandate, as set out in General Assembly resolution 13 (I) of 1946, and certain resolutions of the General Assembly which are cited by the Secretariat as authorization for the circulation of anti-South African propaganda.

In the light of this background, my Government is, to say the least, disappointed that its warning in regard to the use of OPI facilities to publicize the anti-South African campaign in the United Nations, and more especially in publications purportedly devoted to human rights questions, has gone unheeded. I wish to reiterate that the inclusion of references to controversial political issues in a publication concerned with human rights cannot possibly serve the cause of human rights. Indeed, such references can only distract attention from the crucial problems in the human rights field and lead to confusion in the public mind as to the value of United Nations efforts.

This is not, in the view of my Government, a situation which can be allowed to endure unless the OPI is to be completely discredited as being nothing but an instrument for the dissemination of malicious, politically inspired propaganda.

I have the honour to request that this letter be circulated as a document of the General Assembly.

(Signed) M.I. BOTHA  
Ambassador  
Permanent Representative

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