

Illustration by Stephen Osborn

by Adam Hochschild

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It is the parade I remember best from that summer. A snappy, sparkling, holiday military parade under a clear blue sky, with soldiers in fresh-starched khaki and the sun glistening brilliantly on trumpets and trombones. The kind of parade that, if you were a boy scout in a small American town, you would have run along behind, swinging your arms high in time with the music.

The troops were marching past the village square of Stellenbosch, a beautiful old town about 30 miles inland from Cape Town. Row on row of young white soldiers of the South African army led the parade. Bringing up the rear was an older and more ragged group of men—veterans of World War II, walking out of step with rows of medals flapping awkwardly on tweed suits. Rosy-cheeked girls with long blond hair from the big Afrikaans-language university in Stellenbosch skipped along on the sidewalks, waving at soldiers they knew, but most of the spectators were more somber.

It was a tense time then in South Africa. The entire continent seemed to be turning against the white man. A few months before, the battle for an independent Katanga had been lost, but white mercenary Katanga “freedom fighters” had been welcomed as heroes in the streets of Johannesburg. That summer, 1962, the newspapers were filled with accounts of white people fleeing Algeria. The South African government had just rushed its infamous “sabotage bill” through parliament, a measure which allows the death penalty for such vaguely defined offenses as “endangering law and order.” Soon after, house arrests and imprisonments began, designed to crush what little remained of the country’s open anti-apartheid movement.

The parade seemed almost like a ritualistic gesture of defiance, as if all the white people of Stellenbosch had dredged up their medals and poured into the streets to shout to a hostile continent, “We’ll fight to the death!” The quiet white crowds lining the streets knew their government’s military power was the only thing standing between them and black Africa—both the black Africa to the north and that within their own borders.

Dutch settlers and their descendants have farmed the fertile valley around Stellenbosch since the 1600’s. The

gabled farmhouses and hillside vineyards have a mellowed, aged look about them, for the town is in the heart of old white South Africa. When South Africa’s race struggle erupts into war, this region will be the last line of defense, for here the whites will have their backs to the sea and can retreat no farther. I felt a poignant sadness watching the parade, a sense of seeing a nation gird against itself, preparing for a massive and inevitable blood letting. It was the same feeling you might have had as a traveler in France during the 1780’s or that I had once had watching a faded film of Tsar Nicholas II reviewing his troops.

WHEN YOU ARE a white American visiting South Africa, as I was that summer, it is the flavor of permanence among the country’s whites which is most unexpected. They are not sun-helmeted colonialists who’ll withdraw gracefully when the revolution comes. They were born there and they’ll stay and fight.

The Afrikaans-speaking whites, descendants of the early Dutch settlers, predominate in country towns like Stellenbosch; the English-speaking whites control the big cities. Thus the sense of permanence you get in Johannesburg is not that of a Dutch country town, but of a large American city. Its bustling, skyscraper downtown could almost be New York or Chicago. Time and Newsweek are on the newsstands and Crest and Pepsodent in the drug-stores. The airport terminal is a huge modern mass of concrete, and the railroad station a majestic, vaulted masterpiece of modern architecture (though built, at great expense, so white and black passengers never meet). Mining king Harry Oppenheimer recently put up a huge new office of several dozen stories in the Johannesburg business district. It is built, to scale, in the exact shape as the Pan-Am Building in New York. You are almost tempted to view it as a monument to Oppenheimer’s hope that his financial empire will last as long as the one in Manhattan.

There’s a museum in Cape Town that displays original bushman paintings. Great rock slabs have been carried indoors, covered with the last mementos of that near vanished people. Pale reddish-brown cows and horses flit in one dimensional rows across the hard rock. They look like frightened little shadows, running in frantic and diminishing hordes to some obscure fate, just as one imagines their masters desperately fleeing from the strange new men with white faces.

Those men, the first European settlers, landed a few miles from where that museum is today, only 30 years after the Pilgrims sighted Plymouth Rock. The bushmen and Hottentots at the Cape of Good Hope either inter-married with the Dutch settlers or fled to the interior and virtual extinction.

The rest of South African history is symbolically summed up in that first encounter: the whites always came out on top. As they pushed inland, past the quiet valleys around Stellenbosch, they sometimes had to battle black Africans for the land, but their guns assured them of victory. The outcome—today's white supremacist state—was made inevitable by the fact that the whites had rifles and the Africans had only spears.

The basic structure of the country that grew out of those early struggles on the *veld* is familiar enough: 3 million whites govern a land that includes about 14 million black and brown men—mostly black Africans, plus some mulatto "coloreds" and Indians. Segregation is complete, in a ruthless, precise way even Alabama cannot match. This dawned on me forcefully one day in the city of Durban, where I was talking to a Zulu student. I suggested we continue our conversation over a cup of coffee somewhere. He looked blank, and I suddenly realized there was not a single public eating place in the entire country—a land as wide as from New York to the Mississippi—where we could go together.

But there are two things that are not so familiar. One is the rootedness of South Africa's whites who own the vast bulk of the natural and industrial wealth. They have no more intention of sharing their land and jobs (over 80 per cent of the farmland and most skilled jobs are reserved by law for whites) with the black Africans than New Yorkers would be willing to hand over the wealth of Wall Street to the Martians. The second point follows: white South Africans are not like the white Southerners who have allowed segregation to be slightly eroded by court orders and sit-ins. The resistance movement tried a general strike in South Africa a few years ago. Police went from house to house forcing people to work at gunpoint. African nationalist groups which believed in the non-violent policies of Ghandi and Martin Luther King have been crushed and their leaders jailed and tortured. The government means business. This is not Selma, but Budapest.

A SURPRISINGLY LARGE NUMBER of tourists visit South Africa each year to see wild game and the magnificent scenery. But it is hard to escape the preoccupation with race and violence. The talk of almost every South African turns to this subject eventually.

In Cape Town I interviewed a man from the government agency that tries (with considerable success) to bring European settlers to South Africa to bolster the country's white population. He compared South Africa to the other places a European could immigrate: "Well, I suppose if you want security in your immigration you can always go

to New Zealand. Yes sir, that's just about the most secure place you can go. Of course you can always go to Australia as well, but for adventure there's no place like South Africa. All those black chaps around, you know, and you never know what they're going to do next. Yes sir, that's where the excitement comes in."

In the same city, a British-born journalist took off on a long, Cockney-accented tirade, with an acid and jarring eloquence: "I was the leader of a Young Conservatives branch when I left home, but I feel so frustrated and bitter against the West now that I'd join anything. If your bloody fleet came sailing into Cape Town harbor today and said to the non-whites, 'Look, we're here to help you with your revolution,' they wouldn't want it. I was at a meeting and the Communists said, 'Shall we have another Sharpeville? Will it help the cause?' No, they decided, no. 'The West will do it for us. America will cut her own throat here. We'll just give her time.'

"So, you chaps just keep on having your garden parties with the cabinet ministers. And people will get more and more bitter. What a country you're supporting! I've seen them pouring the milk into the sea, when blacks are nearing starvation. I've seen those rotting dumps of oranges. [At the time, food surpluses were being destroyed to keep farm prices up.]

"I'll tell you something. When Kennedy came in we thought we had a hope. We all wondered, would he do anything about South Africa? When he sent Satterthwaite out here [Joseph Satterthwaite, a career diplomat appointed ambassador] we thought something might happen. I went down to the boat with the other reporters to meet him. I asked him, 'What do you think of apartheid, Mr. Satterthwaite?' And what do you think he said? 'I've been at sea three weeks and I'm out of touch.' Do you wonder that I'm bitter?"

A well-known novelist commented to me, "You ask what the rest of the world can do about South Africa? Three things: 1) the dockworkers of the world could refuse to unload South African goods, 2) the United States could stop buying South African gold and 3) an oil embargo could be organized against South Africa.

"Of course, a lot of us have mixed feelings about these things. We know that in case of any international pressure it would be the non-whites who'd suffer most. One of the most vicious things about apartheid is the job reservation system—in times of unemployment they can just 'reserve' more categories of jobs for whites so that it's the others who suffer. But still, these things should be tried.

"Your country has some great traditions. But you have not gone beyond mouthing them in dealing with South Africa. After all, 'sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.' "

THE JOURNEY EAST from Cape Town is one of the most beautiful train trips in the world. The rail line goes through small towns which gave their names to battles in the Boer War, and then winds along the top of a high cliff at the edge of the sea. When the train rounds a bend, you can look out the window and see the engine ahead, hundreds of feet above the foaming white surf.

The second day my compartment filled up with white university students, on their way back to college after a vacation. As the miles clicked by, we talked about studies and girls and practical jokes and sports, and but for the blazers and accents, they might have been Americans hurrying back to school for the first football game of the fall. For hours no one had mentioned race, that ever-present concern in the back of every South African's mind. When I obliquely brought up the subject, one of the students, an intelligent engineering major, remarked somberly that he knew an African government would come to power in South Africa one day. That was probably as it should be, he said, but when it happened he would emigrate. He saw reality, but somehow he couldn't face it, and the thought of *le deluge* was a dark and persistent cloud over his future.

IN THE 1840's, when the most militant Boers tired of British rule at the Cape of Good Hope, several thousand of them put their belongings in covered wagons and set off for the interior. The "Great Trek" was one of the epic migrations of history. The group marched more than 1000 miles into the unexplored interior of Africa and founded two independent republics which today are the two inland provinces of South Africa. Along the way, the participants in the "Great Trek," or *Voertrekkers*, as they called themselves, used to fight off bands of African warriors by forming their wagons into *laagers*, fortified circles from which to fire their guns. It is a cliché in South Africa today that the whole country is turning into a vast *laager*. Only now the Boers' weapons are not covered wagons and rifles but jet planes and tanks, purchased mostly from our NATO allies and the young white soldiers like those who marched at Stellenbosch. The thing that will probably end apartheid for good will be an invasion by the black African states to the north, and this is what the *laager* is arming against.

But the worst thing of all about South Africa's coming race war is that the United States and its allies are likely to be on the wrong side, defending the heavy investments we have in that country and its position as the most solid anti-communist bastion on the continent of Africa. No South African government official takes seriously those anti-apartheid speeches the U.S. representative to the U.N.

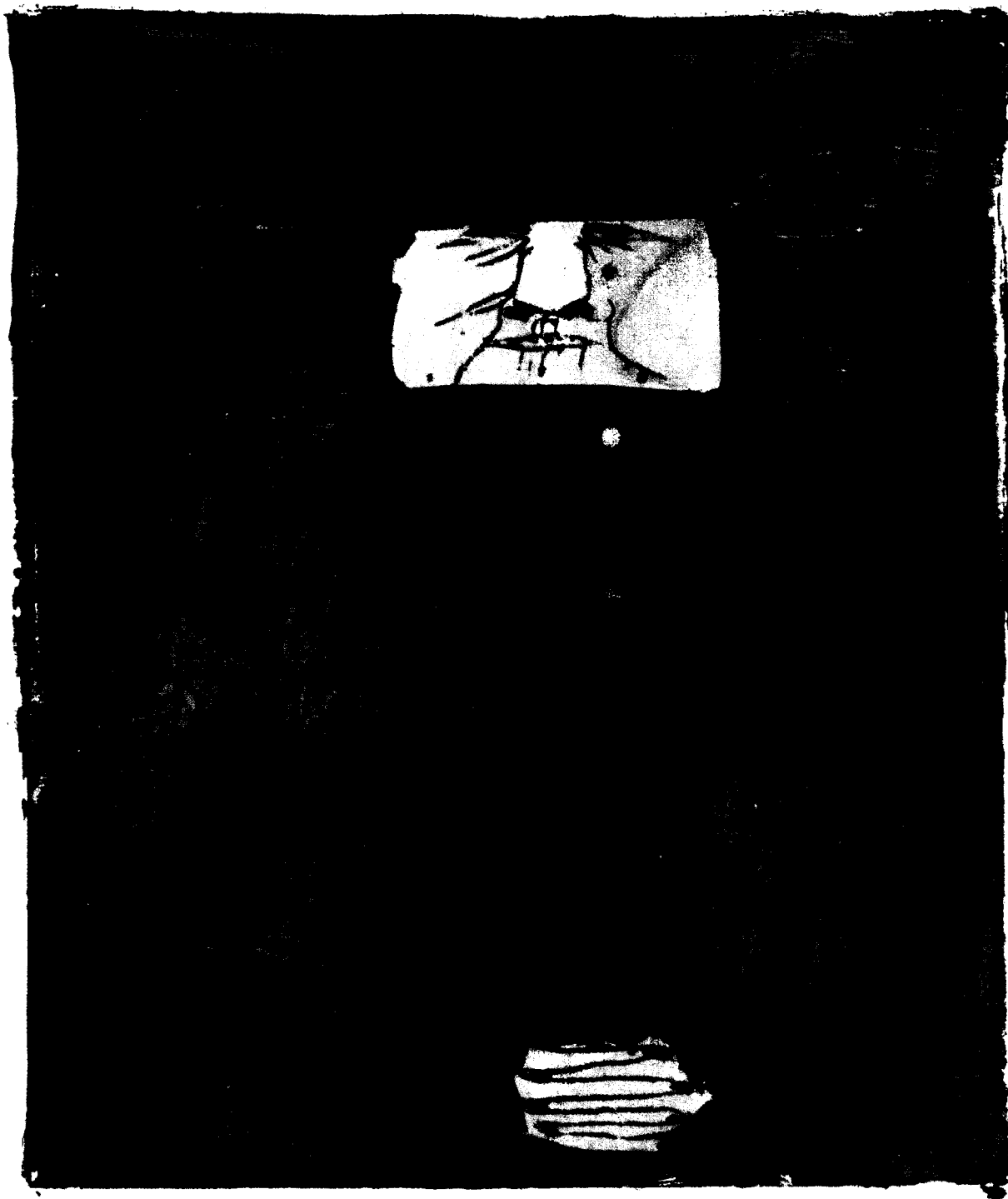
gives to the General Assembly every year. The time South Africa has been most threatened economically—when foreign capital started pulling out of the country after Sharpeville—America bailed her out, and all indications are that we'd do it again.

But meanwhile, white South Africans know they have ten, maybe more, years before the African states will pose a serious military threat, and they're making the most of that time. They think of themselves as a fun-loving, hard-drinking, athletic race, and they are. They have an almost fanatical devotion to rugby which outmatches even Americans' spectatorly enthusiasm for baseball. The beaches are sunny, the sea warm, and the pace of horseracing, waterskiing, and rugby has the mood of a year-round Cape Cod summer.

One day while I was there the government announced the first names in a long list of resistance leaders who were to be "banned"—an ominous process by which you are forbidden to attend public meetings, have your words quoted in newspapers, or belong to any political organization. The principal Cape Town newspaper had this story on page 1 as one of its three most prominent of the day. In adjoining columns were Yves St. Laurent's latest fashions and a feature story about the national rugby team.

There is something bizarrely fascinating in all this. You cannot help but feel slightly dazed as you see the sullen faces of black men in the streets and then read the banner headline stories about Miss (white, of course) South Africa's reaction to the Miss Universe contest ("I got two proposals and a lot of shady suggestions"), or pass by the elegant Cape Town church that is the headquarters of the South African Society for the Propagation of Christianity to the Jews.

Of course the Louis XIV quality of this white civilization that lives so well is ultimately made possible only by the exploitation of cheap African labor, and apartheid fully deserves the violent end it will get. But still, the specter of violence ahead seems particularly sad. Perhaps because of the intense beauty of the country, and perhaps too, because their Versailles is our civilization—a culture of freeways and rock and roll, and people who speak English and watch American movies. It thus seems dangerously close to home. When I think of South Africa, it is often of a beautiful wooded hill above Cape Town, from which you can look down on the ships in the city's harbor and the thin blanket of fog rolling off Table Mountain. You can see people moving quickly about the city's streets and waterfront. In another country they might seem cheerful and animated from the distance, but here they seem like pathetic little shadow puppets, desperately dancing to the light of a candle about to flicker out.



Charles Engelhard: Our Man in Africa

OUTSIDE THE HOTEL ROBERT TREAT in Newark, New Jersey, hundreds of angry Negro and white pickets circled determinedly, calling out to the elite liberals on their way in to the annual dinner, or rhythmically chanting, "Hey, hey, whadaya say? Take his banks and mines away!" When the target of the picketing arrived at the hotel and was es-

corted through the line by a dozen policemen, one of the pickets shouted, "Brotherhood can't be bought!"

Later, while the pickets continued to chant outside, burly 49-year-old Charles Engelhard accepted the Brotherhood Award of the New Jersey region of the National Conference of Christians and Jews. "As a businessman," he extemporized, "you have certain obligations as a guest in

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