

Let Nobody Doubt Our Will to Resist

This interview was conducted in Washington by Benjamin Pogrund shortly before R.F. Botha, then ambassador to the United States, was appointed minister of foreign affairs. Mr. Pogrund is associated with the Rand Daily Mail and is currently based in Johannesburg.

Mr. Ambassador, let me begin by asking whether you think the entry of the United States into the Rhodesian situation has been a critical factor in furthering the prospects of settlement.

Yes, I think so. Of course one doesn't know how far the United States would go in this process. The United States is severely hampered by the traumatic atmosphere following Vietnam and Watergate. I believe it has been stated from the United States side as well that they will not become militarily involved in Southern Africa. But I also believe the United States sees it as in its interest to avoid, or try to avoid, a major conflict in Southern Africa, since they cannot win from such a conflict. That is quite clear. I think peace can still be achieved, especially if it is then accompanied by a major economic developmental program for the whole area. In any case, the United States undertaking in Southern Africa has produced a new potential.

The South African Government consistently says it is not interfering and will not interfere in the affairs of its neighbors, and thus it is not exerting and will not exert any kind of pressure on Rhodesia's Ian Smith and his colleagues. Isn't this somewhat of a fiction? Surely the whole point of the U.S. contact with Prime Minister Vorster, and with yourself, is that South Africa can bring pressure to bear on Rhodesia. Isn't it only a question of how far South Africa goes in getting Rhodesia's whites to change?

From the very beginning just about everybody has been urging South Africa to step in to exert pressure on Mr. Smith. I think the whole world has been directing advice at Mr. Vorster, telling him what to do and what not to do. But the bitter irony is that the whole world didn't want to do anything about it. And quite frankly, the country whose responsibility it remains is Britain. If Britain claims sovereignty over an area, then it is for Britain to decide how to work things out. South Africa

does not intervene in another man's country. How can we, a relatively small nation, intervene in the sovereign territory of a large nation like Britain? It's bad from the international point of view. Nonintervention is a cornerstone of our policies. Where do you draw the line?

I can tell you that in the time I've served abroad I've received a substantial number of requests for assistance from dissident African groups to overthrow their governments. We have declined throughout; that is the only sound policy. We've not even considered it.

But to return to Rhodesia, there is a difference between exerting pressure and pointing out realities. If you find yourself in the position where you might not have sufficient fuel in your car to travel a certain distance, and I merely point out to you that there's a great danger that you might not reach your destination with the amount of fuel that you've got, then you cannot really say that I've exerted pressure on you. What happens in Rhodesia must remain essentially a Rhodesian decision. But South Africa has a duty to point out to Rhodesia the realities of the whole problem, how the problem could develop, what the alternatives might be if various options are followed.

On another topic. Just a year ago South Africa was involved in military operations in Angola. In retrospect do you believe the involvement was a mistake?

Who can say? It is always easy after an event to be wise. Who can say what the alternatives then were?

The fact that South Africa's military forces retreated from the country is seen in parts of black Africa as having destroyed the idea that white South Africa's army was invincible. Whether the army retreated for military or diplomatic reasons is really irrelevant; the point is that it happened, and it seems to have had important psychological effects.

I do not agree with that at all. I was very much involved in the process that led to the withdrawal of our troops. At the United Nations there was a debate in March, 1976, and that debate was initiated with the purpose of getting a resolution adopted that would have demanded that we must withdraw from Angola

immediately. Why, I ask, would you have had a world action like that, to get us out of Angola, if it was so easy to run over us militarily? That is the answer. There is no question in my mind that we are as strong as we've always been because your strength militarily depends largely on your will to resist. I cannot think of a people in the world today that will have a stronger will to resist than our people. Any miscalculation on this score will be a severe one with very severe results for those who do the miscalculation.

Another question on Angola. Have you seen any serious consequences flowing from South Africa's military involvement in Angola? To South Africa, that is?

I'm not aware of any at this stage. But you can rest assured that the decision would not have been taken unless there were very strong indications at the time that that type of action would have been welcomed by other black African leaders as well. That much I've got to stress. Just take the OAU, the Organization of African Unity, conference at Addis Ababa around January 10 or 11, 1976. You will remember the OAU was still at that stage divided 22-22. Now it was always easy whenever something was aimed at South Africa to get unanimity or near unanimity in condemning South Africa. So that gives you an indication of the extent to which African leaders at that particular point in time were not prepared simply to condemn South Africa's involvement in Angola but wanted to insist on a general condemnation of all foreign intervention in Angola, including that of the Russians.

Ambassador, looking just to the south of Angola, to South West Africa, Namibia, one result of the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola, MPLA, coming to power in the north is that the border between Angola and South West Africa is effectively wide open to SWAPO [Southwest African People's Organization], guerrillas, and insurgents. That border is surely so long, around 1,200 kilometers, that it cannot be defended or sealed off. What special precautions is the South African Government taking to meet that situation?

I cannot give details on this. It involves security matters. But I can say that the border is long but isn't as open as you think. A very large part, almost from the Ruacana Falls toward the sea, is a part where the border runs through perhaps the most inhospitable terrain in the world. So that that part is not really open in the normal sense that you can cross it easily. For the rest, the Okavango River forms a rather formidable barrier, with the Okavango people living very closely on the southern bank of that river forming themselves a rather effective barrier. The Caprivi really doesn't lend itself to penetration to South West Africa but to Botswana, constituting there also a barrier. So that it is in effect the north central part of Ovambo where you have a border with roads—not many roads, but where pressure can increase. But I am sure that the government is very much aware of this, and the peoples of South West Africa are very much aware of this. Again, it depends very largely on the will to resist, and I believe the will to resist is there also on the part of

the peoples of South West Africa. After all, it is their security that is at stake. You can rest assured that they are not just going to lie down and let hostile forces run over them.

Ambassador, on South West Africa, Namibia, American officials and media have been saying in recent weeks that progress toward a settlement is being made. But the SWAPO leadership consistently denies this and says that no progress at all has been achieved. They say that what South Africa has been prepared to offer thus far is meaningless to them and that they are not prepared to talk to the Turnhalle representatives. Do you support the Americans' optimistic view, and if so, why?

Well, the statement that progress is being made is true. The representatives of the people of South West Africa are gathered around a conference table. Now whether the United Nations likes this or whether SWAPO likes this doesn't really constitute the main point. South Africa has made it clear that all options are open to the peoples of the territory. That is the only possible way to go about it if you want to be fair, if you want to seek a viable solution. Because if the sovereignty is with the people of the territory, then that sovereignty must be exercised by the people of South West Africa. They've got to live there, not us or the United Nations.

Except, of course, both the U.N. and SWAPO say that the Turnhalle representatives are not representative of...

Sure, but you must expect that. Of course they will say that. I don't expect them to say anything else. But that doesn't make one inch of a difference because, I repeat, if you say self-determination is to have any meaning, who must do the determining—the United Nations? a single political party? No, the people there must determine this.

The prime minister of South Africa has stated categorically that he will not interfere even if they come up with a constitutional program that is opposed to the one he follows in the Republic. He will not interfere even if they add to the conference or if the conference wishes to talk to other parties. In not one single instance has Mr. Vorster or the South African Government endeavored to interfere with this process.

Ambassador, SWAPO's accusation is that because of the existence of certain security laws it cannot operate normally as a political organization in South West Africa, and in fact that is why so many Ovambos and others are in exile.

Well, who put them in exile? They were invited to participate in the Ovambo election not so long ago. If they had the type of support they claim they have, that would have been an ideal test to go in there and to indicate what support they have. This election occurred in January, 1975. The election you had before that time had a very poor vote coming up. SWAPO was then very quick to jump on that and say, Look, that's a real indication, you see the people don't want to vote because they support us. Another test then came up and the trend

went against them. Then suddenly they said they were not prepared to participate in so-called Bantustan elections. But the fact remains that the Ovambos form almost half of the total population. If you have the opportunity to test your support there and refuse to do so, it indicates to me that you were sure that the result was going to prove that you had no support.

If I can move on to Transkei. Transkei was the first Bantustan to become independent, on October 26. Not only has not a single country recognized it, but it was given, as you know, a thumping condemnation at the United Nations. It is obviously vital to your government's plans for separate development and for the creation of a further eight Bantustans that they be accepted by the world. Is the world's reaction toward Transkei therefore a crushing blow?

No, it was one that we expected. It would have been strange if they didn't do what they did. Our enemies do believe that our policy has a real possibility of succeeding. That is why they have planned this tremendous condemnation of the Transkei. You know and we know that in South Africa Mr. Matanzima, the leader of the Transkei, does not support many aspects of the South African Government's policies. Indeed, when it suited the United Nations, they quoted the criticisms of the homeland leaders against the South African Government to indicate that they do not accept the South African Government's policies. Again, when it suits them, they also condemn those they quote to support them in their criticism of the South African Government. This is such a cynical state of affairs that anyone familiar with the facts and the real motives cannot possibly pay much attention to the condemnation that has come from them.

Ambassador, you raise a question there because, apart from the world, most of the black Africans who lead the Bantustans—men working within the government's own framework—are vehemently opposed to the policy. They say black Africans, to use the phrase of one of them, are being robbed of their birthright and that they want a full share in South Africa as a whole. If the people who are part of the policy don't want it, then what's the point of the policy? Doesn't this lead to the conclusion that South Africa's accusers are correct when they say that it is a policy that is being forced on black Africans?

It depends on what you mean by policy. You must make a distinction between what I would call the grand design, namely, to create autonomous, independent, and constitutional units functioning politically independent of one another; completely independent to determine their own political, internal, cultural, educational, and what-have-you policies. You know that this is the ultimate aim. It has been the ultimate aim of the national party policy all along.

I think where the trouble started is that this ultimate aim, which in my opinion cannot be faulted, morally speaking, is being confused with application of the policy. I don't think anybody today would claim that, as far as the application is concerned, mistakes have not

been made. We are painfully aware of them. But you do not throw overboard the only viable solution because you are experiencing difficulties in its implementation.

This is my point of view, and I believe a lot of the antihomeland action derives from misunderstandings regarding the application. If you can remove, in my opinion, the points of friction between black and white affecting their earnings, their daily lives, etc., then I think you will be surprised at the willingness of the black African leaders inside South Africa to come to an agreement. If I may be very frank with you today, I can say to you that even if through some magic action—which will not happen, but for argument's sake—you could remove tomorrow every white man from South Africa, I say to you, you will still not have one integrated South Africa. I believe it absolutely and I know that Africans also know this. But they are not going to state it publicly because it doesn't suit them in their political claims.

Now this brings us to the crux of the whole matter. Either you admit—which is the truth, which is reality—that there exist various nationalisms in Southern Africa or you say there isn't such a thing as various nationalisms. It's either of the two. If you admit there are various nationalisms, then those nationalisms must come to an agreement with one another. And I believe they can. I believe it can still happen and I believe there is still enough good will for that to happen. I believe that, whatever happens in the future, there will come a time when this will be the basis of the solution. Either it's that or it's one great big conflict in which no one will be the winner. You will have a war such as you never had in Africa, because these are the facts of life. This is true of the whites, not because of the whiteness of their skin, but because they feel themselves to be a nation today—and I'm including here English-speaking and Afrikaans-speaking sections of our population. The vast majority of both sections would wish to retain the political power to govern themselves. When we come to the question of our relations with our black peoples, there might be divergence of views as to how it ought to be done. But on this basic issue, that we ought to retain the power to govern ourselves, I say to you that a vast majority of Afrikaans and English-speaking white voters will never, never, never agree to a system in which they will lose that right to govern themselves.

Ambassador, isn't that surely the point, that black Africans say they have not been consulted about this? That this is something that South African whites have decided upon and are carrying out, whatever black Africans feel about the matter?

This is overlooking some very important historical factors. You know the history of South Africa as well as I do. You know that the Transvaal and the Orange Free State were independent states more than a hundred years ago. You know that no one queried then the right of those two republics to govern them in the way they did govern themselves. You know what later happened with Union in 1910, making the Cape, Transvaal, Natal, and the Free State into one country. At no stage of our history was it envisaged that, politically speaking, there would

be a sharing of power. Indeed, the position of Lesotho, Swaziland, and Botswana makes it abundantly clear that even in that case, where it was envisaged in the British Act of 1909 that they might one day join the then Union of South Africa, it was made clear that those three territories would have an option to opt out, and they did opt out later. Up to a point in time we ourselves thought those three territories should have been added to the Union of South Africa, and Dr. Verwoerd relinquished that policy and said, Look, the pattern of Southern Africa is nation-statehood. Let us move in that direction. The main problem at present in South Africa is not with the theory of nation-states. They are already in existence. They are there. It's a question of whether it can be done in such a way that it becomes acceptable to a substantial number also of the black peoples. I believe it can be done.

Well, Ambassador, doesn't that raise the issue—without getting entangled in historical debate about who was where first, but simply taking the reality of the situation at the moment—surely one of the fundamental objections to the present separate development policy is the distribution of land. Twenty per cent of the people are keeping 86 per cent of the land. If it has to be a policy of different development for South Africa's different peoples, musn't a more equitable partition of the country be sought?

Before addressing myself directly to your question and giving you my personal view on that, I do wish to state one thing you already know. This type of accusation is appearing repeatedly in the media overseas. Surely you also know that it isn't as simple as they try to make it. I read every day that we have driven them into these horrible reservations. This is creating an emotional antagonism against us. Eighty per cent of the country? What part of that country is the Karoo, the semidesert, the western side with virtually no rainfall? Two hundred fifty thousand square miles, or roughly almost one-third of the country, is semidesert. Surely when you start talking about sizes and percentages, you must first look at the quality of the land and the area. Secondly, who drove the Zulus into what is Zululand? Not us, or the Xhosas, or the Vendas. Surely you know that Shaka's lieutenant was Mzilikazi, who killed, according to missionaries of the time (and not our calculations), up to two or three million black peoples. So that when we came to the Transvaal and the Free State there were virtually no black peoples living there. They came in when gold was discovered, diamonds were discovered. It's just a recent development. This talk of generations and respect for the peoples who have lived here...

Ambassador...

...it's just not true. You know it.

Ambassador, with respect, that view is contradicted by a host of books by contemporary travelers of the time.

Well, I'll give you my sources. They are the only ones available.

Well, I didn't want to get involved....

I'll give it to you. We have made the most thorough study of the history of South Africa for the World Court case, which I've got here, and I'm prepared to give you a copy of that. We haven't used one source; we've used the lot.

I have no doubt of the facts. We went to archives, to all kinds of documents that were never even published. But be that as it may. The point I make is that it is totally wrong to come along with that type of accusation, that we were the ones who did it.

Basically, until the industrial development of South Africa up to the Second World War, there was virtually nothing. I mean, what was the population of Johannesburg in 1940? Go look it up. It was minimal, the number of blacks who lived there at that stage. It was since the Second World War that the industrial development of South Africa really started, and you had this terrific inflow of black workers from the countryside, which is happening all over Africa. It's not just the South Africans. But of course in South Africa the glaring light of the whole world is constantly on us. We don't even know today, you and I, what happened yesterday in Uganda or in two-thirds of the countries of the world. There is not even press freedom there. Nobody reports on it. But all right, the double standard won't help us, I accept that.

To return to your point. You say it is the land issue. But how often has it been put to my government that there is agreement that should the land issue be solved to



(Credit: South African Consular General Information Service)

the satisfaction or relative satisfaction of black interests, that that would lead to a solution of the political trouble? It is a question I'm putting. Our adversaries are using it now to indicate why the policy cannot succeed. I use it in a reverse manner. Will there be agreement if the policy can succeed, if we are able to solve that?

Ambassador, what about the coloreds and the Asians? They are not to have any areas of their own—land areas as such in the sense of nation-states. And they will not be given the vote in Parliament. The most they can hope for are cabinets giving advice to the South African cabinets and such like. That is obviously a poor substitute for real representation and a place in the country.

This is a very delicate matter. As I understand it, no final policy has been worked out as regards the political, let's call it, dispensation for the coloreds and the Indians-Asians in South Africa. I believe that with a little bit of mutual trust a process can be set in motion that will in time become acceptable to those two population groups. But if one starts this process in a manner that, again, arouses suspicions and fear on the side of the whites, then it is doomed to fail. It's a question of trusting one another, I believe, and starting with what has been offered; and what has been offered is substantial. Joint cabinet committees have been offered in which colored and Asian leaders would be able, together with white cabinet ministers, to express themselves on very important issues affecting the lives of all South Africans. Surely that is something—why not try it? Never has it been stated that a final solution has been achieved in this respect, but the road there is open.

Ambassador, it's just over two years since you gave your celebrated pledge to the United Nations that racial discrimination in South Africa would be done away with. Extremely little has been carried out to further that. Are you disappointed with the rate of progress in fulfilling your pledge?

No, I am not because I know as a National Party politician how delicate this whole issue is. Before practical changes can be made there must be changes in the hearts and minds of people. If you ride roughshod over the reservations, traditions, and ways of thinking people have built up over the centuries, you are going to lose. So I know this is a matter that must be approached with patience, with understanding, because you know and I know that what is at the basis of the divergence in South Africa, politically speaking, is a fear. It is a fear on the part of the white man that he will be overrun by sheer numbers and lose control over himself, his way of living, and his country. I suppose on the side of the blacks there is an insistence and an impatience that they cannot wait much longer for certain changes to be effected. But between these two phenomena I believe a road can be found, and I believe that the government has moved away from discrimination in many fields already. I know the pace is not to the liking of many people inside South Africa and, for that matter, abroad. But again we've got to see to it that there is order in South Africa. There is already severe criticism of the government. There is

always a danger of white voters turning against the government.

The prime minister is constantly making appeals to the whites in South Africa to respect the human dignity of all people, irrespective of race and color. He's leaning over backward to meet black leaders and listen to their complaints and their grievances. I know, for instance, that he asked them to submit proposals regarding the pass laws, regarding influx control. When he invited the black leaders, he said, Look, we all realize it is a problem, now will you submit proposals? Surely it's not a one-sided affair. Surely black leaders....

But black leaders simply say that the pass laws must be done away with.

It's not that easy. If you return to a situation of those absolutely bad shantytowns we had immediately after the Second World War, who's going to be assisted in that way? Irrespective of your views regarding the application of those laws, surely you cannot fault the basic concept that there must be some form of control. Not necessarily based on color at all. Otherwise, you are simply going to be overrun. It's a problem all over the world. All over Africa.

That is the point, Ambassador: that they refer only to black Africans; whites and others are not subject to them. That's what makes them discriminatory.

You know as well as I do that there is a demand for black labor, unskilled black labor. It so happened historically. It's not the whites' fault that they came to a country where the vast majority of peoples, living as they did a traditional type of life, were not skilled in so-called Western technology and industrial methods. Now surely there will be an oversupply of that type of labor. You can't just allow it in and allow those absolutely horrible inhuman conditions that existed before, certainly not if we are to maintain the level of wages that have been achieved. There's no question about it. It is the same all over the world. The concept of controlling labor requires any government, also a black government, to exercise some restraints. It is happening in the rest of Africa. They've got to control it. If they don't, then go and see how those cities look in Africa.

The black consciousness movement in South Africa has been blamed for its origins on the U.S. Black Power movement. But others say that it's a direct and natural result of the racial division enforced in South Africa with the official fostering of racial and tribal differences. In other words, with the black consciousness in South Africa at the moment, isn't an inevitable harvest being reaped?

I don't think so. I don't believe that. If that was the case, why didn't Lesotho, Botswana, and Swaziland join up earlier? They were once governed by the same colonial power. I believe there were grievances, yes. But if you have as your aim a certain political goal, then you will use grievances, blow them up out of all proportion, in order to create conditions that would make it possible for you to achieve your political goal. It boils down to one thing again, the crucial point. Either both black and

white come to an agreement with one another, talk it out over a conference table, or shoot it out on the battlefield.

The Christian Institute of South Africa published a detailed account describing the system of detention without trial, allegations of torture about those who have died while in security at police hands, and so forth. The report was banned by the government only a few days after it appeared in late September, 1976. Can you comment on the details of the report if they are known to you or else on why it was banned?

No. I do not have the details of this particular matter except to say that freedom of expression exists in South Africa to a very large extent, to a greater extent than in two-thirds of the nations of the world. There is no question about that, and I do know that complaints are investigated about maltreatment and ill-treatment. Otherwise, why would you have had the cases that we've had in the past? That's all I can say.

There is, as you know, rapidly increasing American interest in Africa, and of course there is, as you again know, great condemnation from the topmost levels of government down of South Africa's racial policies. How do you view the prospect of greater American attention to South Africa's affairs?

The attention has always been there. It has been rather negative because it's easy to condemn and criticize, but what is your alternative? What is your alternative? The Americans can play a useful and positive role if they would come forward with positive alternatives instead of condemning what we're trying to do. I repeat: We are aware of shortcomings and imperfections in the application of the policy, but if anybody thinks there is an alternative to the basic concept of granting freedom and independence to peoples who do see themselves as different nations, different peoples, then I would like to see that solution. Seldom do the American criticisms face up to the reality of the situation. Of course we all know that one man one vote will mean the total destruction of the white man. This is a fact. And I think you will find that what most whites in South Africa want—most I say, perhaps not all—is merely the right to govern themselves and live their lives according to their institutions, which are part of them. This is also a right that we should desire other nations of the world to have also. Now in our case the problem is severe because we have so many black peoples in our midst—demanding political rights and other rights. Retaining your identity is not a racialistic attitude as such, it is only portrayed as such because of the starkness of the difference between white skins and black skins. Look how long it took the English-speaking section of the population and the Afrikaans-speaking section to grow into the type of national selfhood that we are now achieving. It took a long time between white and white.

It boils down to one thing and only one thing: The desire to live as a people and as a nation. All other matters are negotiable. That's why I'm optimistic, because we can prove the sincerity of the majority of whites on this point, that it's not racialism in the sense of discriminating against a man because of the color of his

skin but a question of, a desire and a love for, that which belongs to you without hating somebody else. This is the way we've got to move forward. But I believe it can be done. If the Americans could see this clearly and could assist in that type of process, we would then be assisting not only the whites but we would be assisting the blacks and all the peoples of Southern Africa.

Ambassador, the South African Government, and that of Prime Minister Smith in Rhodesia, assert that it must be supported by the West because it is a bulwark against the spread of communism in Southern Africa. There are others, however, who believe that it is precisely the policies being followed by the government of South Africa today that are opening the way to communism by creating instability through black anger and by identifying communism with freedom in black minds.

Let me answer you with a very effective example. What has caused the Russian invasion of Angola? There was no apartheid there and the South African Government was not governing there. Who drew the Russians in there? Who induced them to supply arms and ammunition to one black faction against other black factions? Certainly not the South African Government.

The Russians of course had been supplying arms to the MPLA before.

Well, that might be so, but my point is just this. You are implying in your question that it is because of our policies that you have a spread of communism, that the Russians are attracted to the prospect of assisting blacks. I say it's not true. I say that the Russians have got their grand designs, there's no question about it, and their overall global strategy as to what they want to achieve. I can take you farther afield. I can take you to the Middle East. As far as I know there are no apartheid laws there. Why do they cause problems there? And so forth. The Russians would have done exactly what they are doing now even if there hadn't been a single white man in Southern Africa. They would still have aimed against the moderate black African leaders who didn't want to cooperate with them because there you're dealing with a different ball game, as the Americans say. That ball game is to oust America from Africa altogether, to get hold of Africa and to get hold of the sea route around the Cape. It doesn't matter who's in power, the Russians would still do it.

Sure, but the suggestion is that the government's policies are making it easier for them to come in. It's giving them a fertile field in which to operate. Just as in Angola....

It's making things difficult for us, yes, I readily admit that. But the alternative to that is that we should suddenly and completely recapitulate. That is out of the question. In my opinion we must move away from measures that tend to cause misunderstanding and friction and bad feelings between blacks and whites.

Ambassador, a movement shows signs of developing in America of seeking to get the South African

Government to change its policies, to get away from separate development, through applying economic pressures. How vulnerable is South Africa to this? Especially in view of the deteriorating economic situation there with the low gold price, inflation, and the enormous cost of the current troubles leading still more to a loss of investor confidence abroad.

We are going through a difficult economic time, but we're not the only ones. We have had an excellent economic growth rate during the past years. South Africans enjoy very high standards of living, and, as I said earlier, I believe South Africans will be prepared to accept a far lower standard of living if need be if it's a question of their survival.

White South Africans?

Yes, sure, because they will never capitulate. That is my answer. My answer to you is that the will to resist, the power that is inherent in a nation, cannot be measured even in terms of the economic welfare of that nation at a particular moment in history. What must be measured is that nation's will to survive, and that does not really depend on the world outside. That is dependent on us. And nothing can break that except ourselves.

Leading out of that, I've been told that the American investing market is becoming more conservative in the sense that those who control companies and pension fund monies are more careful about where their money is being placed. I'm also told that as a result of this there is an increasing reluctance to invest in South Africa because of the country's racial policies and practices. There seems to be, this is the way it has been put to me, a feeling of repugnance about being involved with South Africa. Have you seen any evidence of this while you've been ambassador?

Yes, I think that this has been going on for quite a while. There are church groups and others inside the U.S. who strongly urge the American Government and industries to become disengaged, as they put it. I do not think they have really given this proper consideration because those who will suffer most in terms of this type of approach would be the blacks, whose interest they profess the wish to advance. You're not going to achieve anything that way, in my opinion, because South Africans seem to be unanimous on this one point—black and white—namely, that that is not the solution.

There is a widespread view here, a view of the South African Government as an authoritarian and repressive government. Would you like to comment on that?

It's nonsense, when every day hundreds of reports emanate from South Africa, some of them rather

vitriolic. Really it's nonsense, really we need not even argue and discuss this. There is freedom of expression and criticism. I mean, look at the reports in the opposition papers in South Africa and from opposition members. Surely they attack the South African Government as vehemently as is the case in most other countries. Sometimes I think the criticism is even more harsh than you have in America. In our case the slightest little action is put under a magnifying glass. It receives terrific attention not only from the South African opposition parties but from the whole free world press.

There is of course a very wide range of security laws in South Africa that do restrict individual rights, and there are a considerable number of people in jail for their opposition to the government—people who have both been charged under the security laws and hundreds of others who, at the moment, are being held without trial.

I know of no one in South Africa who is in jail merely because he wished to bring about peaceful change or bring another government into power through the constitutional processes. Once you've got the wide margin of press freedom and the right to express yourself in a country, I do not see what your complaint is. I can go tomorrow to South Africa and start a political party to try and oust the present government.

But black Africans cannot organize a political party outside the Bantustans.

There are political groups that may operate within their own areas. They are not devoid of all rights, as is often portrayed abroad. Who has given black Africans their rights? It is this government. Would you consider many of the statements of Chief Gatsha Buthelezi as those of a man who is suppressed? In any event we are not a European country. We are an African country. Why do Americans always judge us as a European country? Where in Africa do black people enjoy the freedom they enjoy in South Africa, or the standards of living and the security of person and the access to independent courts? It will do us a lot of good if equal standards could be applied to Africa as a whole and if equal demands in the field of human rights could be made of all of us. The demands being made of South Africa amount to one thing only: that the whites should surrender and capitulate completely. Apart from the fact that I do not believe this will ever happen, it strikes one that not a single American who has made this demand has ever been prepared to guarantee that the whites would enjoy the same rights and privileges that minority groups enjoy in the United States. It's strange that I've heard of no American who is prepared to guarantee that. From a moral point of view, if you're not prepared to guarantee that, don't make the demand.