

Apartheid the lesser of African evils

Hysterical criticism of South Africa has reached pandemic proportions. For our media it's a juicy story; for politicians a safe vote-grabber; and for our liberal-left a rapture of moral indignation. Apartheid and white rule, goes the hue and cry, must be swept away and replaced by that all-purpose panacea, majority rule.

To Joe Clark and other liberals, majority rule makes a pretty slogan and seems to preclude the need for any further thought. Try explaining to them that a good part of the terribly complex problem in South Africa has nothing to do with skin color and they will react with befuddlement. They see no irony or reverse racism in demanding "black" rule rather than "white" rule.

A few observations are in order. First, what exactly is South Africa's black majority, a nebulous group our liberals are set to place in power? That nation's black, dark-brown and yellow-skinned peoples amount to 17 million. The largest group is 5.6 million Zulus, themselves subdivided into various groupings. Then come the traditional foes of the Zulus, the three million Xhosa; their sometime enemies, four million Sothos, plus Tswana, Swazi, Ndebele, Shanga-Tsonga and many more tribes.

Inter-tribal enmity and violence scourges the majority of African nations. Look, for example, at "black majority" rule in Uganda, where tribal slaughter has killed 200,000 and led to Idi Amin being regarded as a savior by many of that land's wretched people. Or take the horrifying case of Rwanda where 400,000 Tutsis were massacred by their tribal enemies, many of whom cut off the legs of the taller Tutsis. We are still waiting for Joe Clark's comments on this event.



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It is easy to imagine similar tribal violence, but on an even grander scale, erupting in South Africa. And what about its other minorities? There are 900,000 Hindu and Muslim Asians in South Africa. Often called the "Jews of Africa," these small shopkeepers have become the first victims of black rule and black hatred in Africa. In Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda, Asians were robbed of their property, their women raped, and then they were expelled as penniless refugees. Asians, not whites, would be the first casualties of black rule — and Canada had better be ready to take in all 900,000 of them.

There are 2.6 million coloreds, people of mixed blood. Experiences in Africa and the West Indies has shown that this group, traditionally higher on the social and economic scale than blacks, becomes the next to be persecuted after Asians. Where will these people, of indeterminate race and wanted by no one, seek refuge. Perhaps Canada.

And what about that other minority, the 4.2 million whites, some of whose forefathers settled in South Africa 400 years ago — before the Zulu and Xhosa peoples arrived from West Africa? Our liberals don't care. A fig about them — they are all racists.

Somehow, though, it hardly seems right that we should tell white and many non-white South Africans to hand over their nation to black tribal rule, no more right, in fact, than if the South Africans ordered us to hand back Canada to the Indians — who, let us observe in passing, also seem to live under a sort of apartheid, though we call it "native people's development."

Apartheid is morally wrong and we should be slowly, surely and discreetly pressing South Africa to find some workable method of enlarging the political rights of its various component peoples. By braying loud and demanding immediate action under threat of all sorts of sanctions, we are encouraging violence in South Africa and making any solution unlikely in the near term.

Recall, as well, that what keeps South Africa's tribes away from each other's throats is the white minority government, with its police (50% black), soldiers and courts. Without this balancing force tribal warfare, as we see in the rest of Africa, will be more than likely. Just across the border in Zimbabwe, which was to be a model of moderate "black majority rule," the majority Shonas are slaughtering the minority Ndebele — white whites flee for their lives.

Bad as apartheid is, there are worse things — as Ugandans will tell you. Before trying to alter by radical surgery a nation about which we know very little, we should remember that many of the people who want to dismantle white South Africa also called, not long ago, for the "unification and liberation" by Ho Chi Minh and Pol Pot of Vietnam and Cambodia. The blood of three million murdered Cambodians and tens of thousands of Boat People is on their hands.

Are South Africans to be next?