



LOOK NORTH 'GROUP OF TEN', AND THANK YOUR LUCKY STARS!

The apartheid debate continues to rage. A “Group of Ten” has coalesced within some affluent Afrikaans communities around the principle of a publicly-pronounced condemnation of apartheid. This group has now attracted another 240 apologists who define themselves as citizens who were guilty of being “advantaged” by apartheid. We are informed that they are people who occupy positions “of influence” within the Afrikaans community. The groups emphasise they are sorry for the “pain of the past” purportedly meted out to black South Africans. In light of this public confession, it is not unreasonable to suggest that among the first actions the Group should take to assuage their guilt would be to kick-start a fund to compensate for their past attitudes and deeds.

It can also be suggested that prominent farmers who feel the same way should donate or “give back” the farms they acquired for redistribution to the disadvantaged, as compensation for their past actions and being participants in the so-called apartheid era. Claims for recompense may shortly surface from many who feel they were disadvantaged by apartheid and who now see a compensation gap opened up by the Group’s public mea culpa’s.

Precedents of this type of claim have been set by the Nama’s in Namibia against Germany, the Aborigines in Australia, the Eskimos and Indians in Canada and the Kenyans against the British government. Although the Group of Ten does not officially represent white South Africa, it is not beyond the realm of possibility that claims could be made against this Group, given that guilt has already been admitted! How the Group of Ten reacts to these possible claims will gauge the depth of their sorrow and remorse, in practical terms. Talk has always been cheap.

What is needed is a sense of perspective here. Firstly no one has publicly come up with a working alternative to apartheid which may have been placed before the white electorate in 1948. It was either apartheid or majority rule. As has been stated before, South Africa would have been faced with a one man one vote majority black government forty six years before the ascent to power

of the African National Congress in 1994. Given the empirical track record of this type of rule throughout Africa, there is nothing to show that South Africa would have ended up today any different from the regimes to the north of us.

Had this happened, the Group of Ten would not have had the chance to feel guilty about anything. The irony is that apartheid has allowed them to speak their minds from the comfort of their homes, in a functioning country that was built up during the apartheid years. Maybe apartheid was not perfect, far from it, but the alternative would have been an African shambles. The Group of Ten should take cognisance of what has happened on the north side of the Limpopo River. It is worse, much much worse than apartheid.

ZIMBABWE

In her latest letter from Zimbabwe dated 29 February 2020, blogger and Zimbabwean citizen Cathy Buckle highlights what is indeed an African shambles. And it is just over our northern border. Says Cathy: "This letter is for Lydia, in her 70's, sleeping on the floor and without enough to eat, and for Zimbabwean women who have endured such suffering and pain for so long, and yet somehow manage to hold their heads up high. I have had many requests to write about women for the International Day of Prayer for Zimbabwe (6 March 2020).

My story began in 2000 when a mob of men arrived at my farm gate throwing bricks and shouting, saying this was now their property, their farm, their home. More and more invaders came, claiming field after field, pushing us to bankruptcy and our livestock to starvation. The invaders cut down trees, erected shacks, taunted and intimidated the farm employees, tortured the shop keeper, threatened to shoot me and harassed and terrified me and my seven year old son.

After seven months when every field was burnt, every fence gone and every employee deeply traumatized, I gave in and walked away from my home, my life, my income and my future. Every man, woman and child living and working on the farm were also evicted by the mob and they also lost everything. We were one in our anguish.

OPPRESSION AND VIOLENCE

In the two decades that have followed, Zimbabwe has gone through periods of intense oppression and horrific political violence. People daring to demonstrate against human rights abuses have been subjected to extreme brutality at the hands of the police and security forces. Twice in the last eighteen months the army have taken to our streets, unarmed civilians have

been shot in cold blood and women raped and abused. We will never forget the horrific picture of 52 year old Sylvia Maphosa shot in the back by soldiers as she ran across the road, or of the young woman in white, arms extended seconds before being beaten to the ground by police, or the old woman in the red skirt kneeling on the road appealing to police to stop, while one policeman kicked her and others watched.

Zimbabwe has gone from being the "Breadbasket of Africa" to a net importer of food and needs international food aid to survive. Twice in the last decade we have gone into periods of hyper inflation and are in one such period now. When this happens, none are more in the front line of the desperate struggle to survive than us – the women, mums and gogo's (grandmothers).

In February 2019 the government of Zimbabwe announced that all of our salaries, savings, pensions and investments, which were in US dollars, had been converted to Zimbabwean dollars at a rate of 2.5 to 1. On that day we all lost 60% of our money, pensions and savings. In the year that has followed the Zimbabwe dollar has continued to collapse and you now need at least 20 Zimbabwe dollars for US\$1. In the last year inflation has gone from 4% to over 600%.

All of our salaries, pensions and savings are now worthless. Every US\$100 we used to earn or put aside for our pension is now only worth US\$5. Wages and pensions have lost 90% of their value in the last year, leaving us unable to feed our families, pay school and university fees for our children, or even afford our own medication.

For the past six months we have been crippled by 18 hours a day power cuts, only getting electricity in the middle of the night between 10 pm and 4 am. In the middle of the night we get up to do washing, ironing and cooking. Water only comes from our taps twice a week for a few hours, if we are lucky. Every morning women everywhere walk to the nearest well to get water which they carry home in buckets and plastic containers. Every day women and girls go into the bush to collect firewood which they carry home in enormous bundles on their heads, firewood to cook food for their children and hot water to wash with.

NO SANDWICHES FOR LUNCH

A loaf of bread which was ninety cents a year ago is now over twenty dollars and has become a luxury item in our shopping baskets, as has cheese, fruit, milk, meat, soap, tooth paste, washing powder and all the things we need to keep our families fed, healthy and safe. Women can no longer send their

children to school with sandwiches in their lunch boxes. Women who find work in domestic service and spend their days cooking, cleaning and looking after children, now earn the equivalent of just six US dollars a month, according to newly stipulated government wage levels.

Unemployment is over 90% leaving families splitting up in order to survive. A quarter of our population is estimated to be living and working in the Diaspora, sending money home for their families to survive. Women are left behind looking after children and grandchildren, selling fruit and vegetables in shacks and stalls on roadsides and pavements. More than eight million people in Zimbabwe are dependent on international food aid in 2020 in order to survive: this is over half our population holding out the begging bowl as a result of cruel and punitive economic policies, massive government corruption and drought." (See <http://cathybuckle.co.zw>)

FRAME OF REFERENCE

Virtually everything in life is within a frame of reference. South African whites who feel guilty about apartheid – they have yet to proffer a viable 1948 alternative - must realise they may have a tiger by the tail if they publicly acknowledge their guilt. Apart from claims that may be forthcoming, their perceived weakness will in all probability convince the ANC government that the whites are so supine with guilt that they will accept anything the regime throws at them. Already certain Afrikaans media is endeavouring to convince their readers that the ANC's mooted purloining of personal pensions will be acceptable, given certain investment "guarantees" by the government! Taking land without paying for it is also acceptable, because the president has said it will be done without endangering food security!! People who believe this nonsense are a danger to South Africa.

If the Group of Ten's focus swivel s to the possible arbitrary theft of their own personal pensions, or the expropriation of their private farms and property without payment by the "previously disadvantaged", they may reconsider their guilt in today's real politik frame of reference. They would be well served by using their energy to save what is left of South Africa for all of its people, black and white, instead of harking back to apartheid. It's all a matter of context.