

**8<sup>th</sup> Alfred and Winifred Hoernlé Memorial Lecture**

# **Some reflections on civilization in Africa**

**Herbert Frankel**

SOME REFLECTIONS ON CIVILISATION  
IN AFRICA

FRANKEL.

**HOERNLÉ MEMORIAL LECTURE**

1952

**SOME REFLECTIONS**  
*on*  
**CIVILIZATION IN AFRICA**

*by*

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## **HOERNLÉ MEMORIAL LECTURE.**

A lecture, entitled the Hoernlé Memorial Lecture (in memory of the late Professor R. F. Alfred Hoernlé, President of the Institute from 1934 to 1943), will be delivered once a year under the auspices of the South African Institute of Race Relations. An invitation to deliver the lecture will be extended each year to some person having special knowledge and experience of racial problems in Africa or elsewhere.

It is hoped that the Hoernlé Memorial Lecture will provide a platform for constructive and helpful contributions to thought and action. While the lecturers will be entirely free to express their own views, which may not be those of the Institute as expressed in its formal decisions, it is hoped that lecturers will be guided by the Institute's declaration of policy that "scientific study and research must be allied with the fullest recognition of the human reactions to changing racial situations; that respectful regard must be paid to the traditions and usages of various national, racial and tribal groups which comprise the population; and that due account must be taken of opposing views earnestly held."

Previous Lecturers have been The Rt. Hon. J. H. Hofmeyr (Christian Principles and Race Problems), Dr. E. G. Malherbe (Race Attitudes and Education), Prof. W. M. Macmillan (Africa Beyond the Union), Sen. Dr. the Hon. E. H. Brookes (We Come of Age), Prof. I. D. MacCrone (Group Conflicts and Race Prejudices), Mrs. A. W. Hoernlé (Penal Reform and Race Relations), Dr. H. J. van Eck (Some Aspects of the South African Industrial Revolution).

The lecture "Some Reflections on Civilization in Africa" was delivered in the Great Hall of the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, on October 7th, 1952.

## Some Reflections on Civilization in Africa.

WHEN I was invited to deliver this Hoernlé Memorial Lecture, I regarded the invitation not only as a great privilege but as a duty. Like my friend, the late Jan H. Hofmeyr, who gave the first of these lectures, I felt under the constraint of *pietas* to accept the invitation. Hoernlé's work, friendship and personality greatly influenced me — although, I regret, I was not formally a pupil of his — from my earliest student days at this University, as well as later when I was privileged to be his colleague. Unfortunately, my visit to my *Alma Mater* is on this occasion all too brief, and I have had little time in which to attempt to do justice — even if I could do so adequately — to the memory of one of the greatest pioneers of racial understanding that South Africa has had the privilege of attracting to her shores.

It is only a few years ago that Jan. H. Hofmeyr said in this hall that middle-age had crept suddenly upon him. Little did I realise that it would not be long before I would stand here to pay tribute to the memory of our mutual guide whose life inspired and continues to inspire all of us. For Hoernlé was not just "in" South Africa; he was part of all of it. Yet his world stretched far across all mundane boundaries, whether of race, religion, politics or nationality. He dedicated his philosophical thinking to the world, and his practical work to Africa — to Africa as a whole: Africa as part of the modern world. He was an idealist and always remained one. I remember another idealist: Sidney Webb, then Lord Passfield, giving an address at a re-union dinner at the London School of Economics and Political Science. The chairman in introducing him expressed the hope that Lord Passfield was still the same idealist as Sidney Webb the student. To this Lord Passfield replied that life had taught him that to be half as idealistic at fifty is equivalent to being twice as idealistic as one had been at twenty-five. Hoernlé

might well have said the same about himself. His faith in the power of human reason and co-operation was never dimmed, notwithstanding the disappointments that much of his non-academic work inevitably involved.

### THE FALLACY OF "FINAL" SOLUTIONS

True to the spirit of the thinker in whose memory this lecture is being given, I propose this evening to address my remarks not to those in search of ready-made solutions to social problems, but to those who, as students, seek for understanding and are prepared to devote time to contemplation in a spirit of calm and humble detachment. Only if that spirit is kept alive can any society hope to survive the dangers which threaten it from without, and the even greater dangers which so easily disrupt the very foundations of its being from within.

I have referred to ready-made solutions. Perhaps it will be as well for me to say that in so doing I was not thinking merely of the slogans which so easily take the place of political wisdom in the hectic modern world. What I had in mind was something more fundamental. The very idea of finding final "solutions" to social problems is the peculiar result of applying to the life of societies and individuals a category of thought which does not fit. We cannot speak of individuals or societies finally "solving" the problems which constitute the very essence of their being. Such "solutions" would pre-suppose an omniscience with which only gods, and not men, are endowed; it would be necessary to assume that the problems involved were, like mathematical equations or logical constructs, capable of final solution: that solutions to social problems are inherent in a given set of premises. But in the problems of life and of living societies there are no given or clear-cut premises—other than the wide limits set by heredity and environment—and these are themselves subject to the influence of change.

It is this false analogy with mechanics and mathematics that accounts for the facile belief that the problem involved in living and working together in a community is similar to the problem of finding, by abstract thought or logical deduction, the "unknown" factor in an equation. In the realm of organic life there is, and

can be, no final solution—other than death itself. What appears to be a “solution” at one moment of time is but the stage-setting for the problems of the next succeeding instant or, if you prefer, of the next turn of the cycle in the life process itself. Those who arrogantly write solutions upon their political banners, like the tyrants who promise to solve the problems of society for a thousands years to come, offend not only the gods, who in anger soon take vengeance upon them with thunderbolts of fire— they offend the very nature of all social evolution which rests on the slow unfolding of institutions, laws, and habit-patterns of thought and action.

### THE “CATASTROPHIC” VIEW OF HISTORY

Closely related to the mechanistic concepts which are inapplicable to the life of societies is that “catastrophic” or deterministic view of social processes which regards all history as a straight line: Whether rising or falling, it is held in the vice-like grip of the unvarying determinants in accordance with which it is plotted by destiny itself—only a catastrophe can alter its direction. To minds benumbed by such symbolism history is a series of sudden eruptions which wipe the slate clean so that society can begin again with a different formula.

I was reminded recently of an example of this type of thinking when I had the good fortune to listen to a reading from Charles Dickens by that masterful actor Emlyn Williams. He read a passage from *A Tale of Two Cities*. I hope no one will think that, in reading a summary of it here, I am trying to emulate that great actor.

“Monseigneur, one of the great lords in power at the court held his fortnightly reception in his grand hotel in Paris. Monseigneur was in his inner room, his sanctuary of sanctuaries, the Holiest of Holiest to the crowd of worshippers in the suite of rooms without. Monseigneur was about to take his chocolate. Monseigneur could swallow a great many things with ease, and was by some few sullen minds supposed to be rather rapidly swallowing France; but his morning’s chocolate could not so much as get into the throat of Monseigneur without the aid of four strong men besides





. . . , (Monseigneur's) carriage dashed through streets . . . with women screaming before it, and men clutching each other and . . . children out of its way. At last, swooping at a street corner by a fountain, one of its wheels came to a sickening little jolt, . . . and the horses reared and plunged.

But for the latter inconvenience, the carriage probably would not have stopped;

A tall man in a nightcap had caught up a bundle from among the feet of the horses, and had laid it on the basement of the fountain, and was down in the mud and wet, howling over it like a wild animal.

"Pardon, Monsieur the Marquis!" said a ragged and submissive man, "it is a child."

"Why does he make that abominable noise? Is it his child?"

"Excuse me, Monsieur the Marquis—it is a pity—yes."

. . . the tall man suddenly got up from the ground, and came running at the carriage . . .

"Killed!" shrieked the man, in wild desperation, . . . "Dead!"

The people closed around . . . There was nothing revealed by the many eyes . . . but watchfulness . . . there was no visible menacing or anger . . . Monsieur the Marquis ran his eyes over them all, as if they had been mere rats come out of their holes. He took out his purse . . . "See! Give him that." He threw out a gold coin for the valet to pick up, and all the heads craned forward . . . as it fell. The tall man called out again with a most unearthly cry, "Dead!"

Monsieur the Marquis . . . was just being driven away with the air of a gentleman who had accidentally broken some common thing, and had paid for it, and could afford to pay for it, when his ease was suddenly disturbed by a coin flying into his carriage, and ringing on the floor.

"Hold!" said Monsieur the Marquis. "Hold the horses! Who threw that?"

He looked to the spot . . . the wretched father was grovelling on his face on the pavement . . . and the figure

that stood beside him was the figure of a dark stout woman, knitting.

"You dogs," said the Marquis, . . . "I would ride over any of you very willingly, and exterminate you from the earth . . ."

So cowed was their condition, and so long and hard their experience of what such a man could do to them, within the law and beyond it, that not a voice, or a hand, or even an eye was raised. Among the men, not one. But the woman who stood knitting looked up steadily, and looked the Marquis in the face.

He was driven on, and other carriages came whirling by in quick succession; the Minister, the State-Projector, the Farmer-General, the Doctor, the Lawyer, the Ecclesiastic, the Grand Opera, the Comedy, the whole Fancy Ball in a bright continuous flow, came whirling by. The rats . . . remained looking on for hours; soldiers and police often passing between them and the spectacle . . . The father had long ago taken up his bundle and hidden himself away with it . . . the one woman who had stood conspicuous, knitting, still knitted with the steadfastness of Fate. The water of the fountain ran, the swift river ran, the day ran into evening, so much life in the city ran into death according to rule, time and tide waited for no man, the rats were sleeping close together in their dark holes again, the Fancy Ball was lighted up at supper, all things ran their course."

What is it that grips us in this masterful drawing? It is the sense of doom, the picture of the inevitable catastrophe, to which this Fancy Ball of make-believe was leading, and, as it were, was bound to lead—until the knitting woman would sit with her sisters knitting immovably, patiently, while the heads rolled in the sand and the guillotine continued day after day to do the work which history had ordained.

Our, and our parent's generation, have had experience enough of such recurring catastrophes, revolts, and tyrannies; each to have been the last to complete the very work of history itself—only once again to be confronted with yet another and greater tyranny stretching over half the world: based on the communist

dialectic of inevitable revolution and war. No wonder that we are moved by the passage I have just read. Yet, however it grips us, it presents but a half-truth; and a dangerous half-truth.

It is false precisely where it gives the intended impression that it is describing the inevitable flow of history; but it is not a study of historical process at all. It does not tell us how the Fancy Ball of make-believe arose. It is a snapshot of a moment in history. It can be likened to a scene from a film; but it does not analyse why the film had such a scene at all, how the story began, and what the social forces were that caused the actors to play their parts.

History is not the record of external fate or providence condemning man along an inevitable road of destiny. It is, on the contrary, the record of man's infinitely variable choices, and of his experiences on the long unforeseeable path which he must forever climb with his fellow men in society. As Bergson put it long ago, it is only when we momentarily reach a halting place, and look back, that the path we made appears clear and pre-determined. But it is we who hewed it through forest and over rock; at each step there were other paths which we might have taken and which would have led to other resting places. Nor is it true that the climber can at any stage obliterate the marks which his exertions and sufferings have left upon his soul; anymore than the gnarled oak, with the marks of many twists and turnings upon its bark, can re-capture the pristine straightness of its youthful greenery. For man in society, as for man the individual, there is no way of beginning again from the beginning; the slate cannot be wiped clean. However much he may wish it to be otherwise, the problems and burdens of civilization will be the same to-morrow as they were yesterday and are to-day: The uncertain path will have to be hewn out afresh.

No abstractions, no mere generalization, no Acts of Parliament, no mere slogans—democracy, liberty, fraternity, the class war, or other fancy dress of speech, can remove the constant burden of human choice. Neither obstinate pride in the power of abstract reason, or of science, nor blind sacrifice to his chosen idols will suffice as beacons on man's way. For man is moved at least as much by habit and emotion as by reason: the deeds to which he

is accustomed may influence him more in what he believes he can, and should do, than all the philosophies.

But man's choices are never merely individual: he does not and cannot stand alone; he is both in and outside of society. Indeed, he would not know how to choose at all were he to be completely isolated: the burden of fear, which choice would then involve, would crush his spirit ere he tried to exercise it unfettered, unguided, and unsupported by his fellow-men.

#### CIVILIZATION AS SOCIAL CO-OPERATION.

It is not my intention to-night to attempt to give you a precise, coherent, or original definition of civilization; for that task I am supremely unqualified. My aim is only to start a discussion and to deal with some very limited aspects of my subject. And, perhaps, the most characteristic and, certainly, the most troublesome aspect of what we are discussing, arises when we consider this working together of man with his fellow man in society.

Civilization, in its simplest aspect may, as Professor J. R. Strayer has suggested, be thought of as the ability of people in society to work together effectively. When civilisations are in decay or decline, something which previously made that co-operation effective has been, or is being, lost or cast away. Men have ceased to believe in effective co-operant social action: they are held in a vice of fear. They believe themselves powerless to arrest the cynical disillusionment which grips them. In desperation they seek shelter in the worship of strange gods and beliefs. They are moved to catastrophic actions—even to attempts to annihilate those whom previously they thought their helpers. What but yesterday would have seemed to them impossible now appears as a necessary though headlong jump into the dark abyss of fate itself.

One of the marks of civilization is the ability of people in society to work together effectively. You will note the relative character of these words. They imply that civilization is not indicated merely by the possession of something absolute or material: it does not consist in the possession of tools or mechanical aids, of aeroplanes, motor-cars, plumbing, or of technical

know-how. It is not something which exists in *vacuo* — irrespective of time and place or of man's external environment. It cannot be discerned from the colour of a man's skin or deduced from the exploits of his ancestors: to have been civilized yesterday does not imply that one is civilized to-day. The conditions necessary for effectively working together in society change constantly. The field of social co-operation widens and narrows; but men may not be able to recognise such changes; or they may lack the aptitude or will to accommodate themselves to them. For example, in times when men were organised for the most part in nomadic tribes the effective area of co-operation was very limited. One's own tribe was not dependent on the way of life of other tribes; one could be relatively highly civilized within the bosom of one's tribal beliefs and gods, and yet one could destroy a neighbouring people without undermining the minimum conditions of effective co-operation in one's own. Given, however, an increase of population throughout the field in which such separate societies operated—given the need for a settled agrarian and trading economy with the concomitant growth of cities, then the minimum conditions of civilization take on a different aspect. The mores and the way of life of such societies, with their desert raids, and roaming existence, are no longer adequate. New standards of civilization have to be evolved. The tribal gods themselves must give way to more universal deities; their work is done: to continue to worship them is now a sign of barbarism not of civilization — an obstacle to the prerequisites of civilized life itself. Civilization is never an absolute state of being; it is a process — a becoming — a changing inheritance of aptitudes, habits, beliefs, and continuing social action without clear-cut beginnings and without certain ends. A civilization which is not in process of change, which can be grasped, defined, cut off and circumscribed, is a civilization which is not living but has been, or is being, frozen into death.

#### THE "FROZEN" SOCIETY.

The harrowing aspect of the passage from Dickens which I have read lies precisely in that it describes with deep psychological truth and insight a society which is so frozen. What we hear is

not the throb of life but the rattle of death. We are made to feel that nothing the actors can now do—no knowledge of wrong turnings in the past, no strivings in the future, can save them or their successors from the impending tragedy. Indeed, we are made to feel that the tragedy is not only inevitable but deserved: as retribution and punishment for the hapless and helpless actors on the stage.

This feeling results from that a-historical and a-sociological outlook to which I have already drawn attention. Notwithstanding his deep humanitarian feelings and sympathies, Dickens, in the last resort, like so many of his contemporaries, was thinking not in political or sociological, but in abstract, moralistic terms. (1) Such a view tends to regard civilization as something given: as wholly "good" or wholly "bad"—"superior" or "inferior", as the triumph of good over evil, not of man in society forming new relationships, and ever adapting himself anew to his environment and his fellow-men.

Western Civilization has paid dearly with the blood and tears of millions because of the facile belief that civilization is not a process of trial and error, of continuous adaptation, of sympathy, and of slowly evolving mutual understanding, but merely a question of abstractions: of liquidating those who being bad, or rich, or different, must be swept away to make "civilization" possible. Time and again those who thought themselves the "good", the "chosen", the "elite", or, as divinely appointed emperors or tyrants, made the same but obverse mistake of regarding civilization as dependent only on them, or on their abstract concepts of perfection: oblivious to the changing exigencies of time and circumstance, regarding their estate and function as unalterable as the laws of the Medes and Persians; despising both the opportunities for wider co-operation which the time enjoined, and the peoples whose power of co-operation it was necessary to seek, to cherish and to develop.

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(1) cf. Eric Auerbach's valuable analysis of literature as a mirror of concepts of reality in his *Mimesis: Dargestellte Wirklichkeit in der Abendländischen Literatur. Eine Geschichte Des Abendländischen Realismus als Ausdruck der Wandlungen in der Selbstanschauung des Menschen.* A. Francke AG Verlag, Bern.

The frightening truth of Dickens's sketch lies, I have suggested, on the psychological plain. Here we see a society which has ceased to function because those in it have ceased to be aware of the minimum conditions for effective social action. The eyes, alike of Monseigneur, of the knitting woman, and of the miserable rats who line the road, only stare: nothing focuses them on a single common element of experience.

#### THE NEED FOR AWARENESS.

One of the fundamental prerequisites of the process of civilization, I submit, is a certain state of awareness suited to the environment and passing circumstances in which men in society find themselves. It is an aptitude and not only a matter of social will: it rests on habit patterns of thought, perception, and action; it involves the ability to take account of an ever-widening circle of needs; of feeling and experiencing the relations and interdependence of the needs of the self and the needs of others. It is a form of loyalty — of loyalty, as J. H. Hofmeyr was ever at pains to emphasize, to an ever-widening circle of persons and institutions: to one's school, one's university, one's profession, one's village, one's city, one's province, one's state, and to the Commonwealth of States. It is the perception of reality as an expanding horizon of relations. It is this awareness of the nature of the human and natural surround, in which he has his being, that distinguishes the more from the less civilized man. As Professor Josef Pieper has recently written:—<sup>(2)</sup>

“Every living thing lives in a world, in ‘its’ world, and ‘has’ a world in which it lives. To live means to be ‘in’ the world . . . A stone . . . is not really related to the world ‘in’ which it is, nor to the things ‘next to’ which it lies, nor to those ‘with’ which it is in the world. A relationship in the proper sense of the word, is a link established from inside to something external; relations can only exist where there is an ‘inside’, where there is a dynamic centre from which all activity proceeds . . . inwardness is the capacity to establish

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(2) I am grateful to the publishers, Messrs. Faber and Faber Ltd., for permission to quote this passage from Professor Josef Pieper's book: “Leisure the Basis of Culture” (London, 1952) p. 109 ff.

relations and to communicate . . . Only a being capable of having relations . . . has a world. Only a living being exists within a range of relationships. The world is a field of relations . . . the higher the *order* of a being, the more embracing and wider its power of establishing relations . . . the higher a being stands in the order of reality, . . . the wider and deeper its world.

“The lowest world, the first step in the hierarchy, is that of a plant which does not extend its spatial world beyond the sphere of touch . . . The animal’s capacity to establish relations is greater in so far as it is capable of being sensibly and sensually aware; ‘to be aware’ of a thing is an entirely new mode of relating itself to a thing, unknown in the plant world . . .”

But, and here we come to the analogy to which I am particularly anxious to draw your attention,

“It is by no means true . . . that everything an animal is able, abstractly speaking, to see or to hear, belongs to its “world”; animals possessed of eyes do not actually see, nor could they see, everything that is visible in their ‘surroundings.’ And surroundings . . . do not constitute a ‘world’.”

Contrary to the view that all animals with eyes saw the same object, Jacob von Uexkull, the biologist, whom Professor Pieper quotes, (p. 111) wrote:

“The animal’s ‘environment’ is something altogether different from the natural scene; it more nearly resembles a small, poorly furnished room . . . A jackdaw is utterly unable to see a grasshopper that is not moving . . . We are perhaps inclined to suppose that although the shape of a grasshopper is familiar to the jackdaw, it is unable to recognize a grasshopper if a blade of grass cuts across it, it cannot recognize it as the ‘unity’ grasshopper—just as we find it quite difficult to recognize a familiar object in a picture-puzzle. On this assumption it is only when the grasshopper jumps that its shape becomes recognizable and dissociates itself from the surrounding images. But further experiments lead one to suppose that a jackdaw simply does not know the



shape of a motionless grasshopper and is so constituted that it can only apprehend the moving form. That would explain why so many insects feign death. If their motionless form simply does not exist in the field of vision of their enemies, then by shamming death they drop out of that world with absolute certainty and cannot be found even though searched for."

"Animals are perfectly adapted," concludes Professor Pieper, "to their sharply defined and delimited environment — perfectly adapted to it, but equally, imprisoned within it, so that they cannot overstep the frontier in any way whatsoever: they cannot even find an object though armed with senses that are apparently well adapted to the purpose, unless, that is, the object fits completely into their selected, partial world."

The analogy which I wish to press home is that, like animals, human beings may have eyes but see not, and ears but hear not. They may be imprisoned in a partial world: a world of illusion, penned in by myths and beliefs of the past, unable to scale the walls and look fearlessly upon the world — the larger world — of reality; incapable of forming new relations with it, and their fellow-beings within it. But the establishment of such relations is, as I have said, not only a question of will. The sensitivity of awareness is formed only by practice. Civilization in process is this necessarily slow evolution through social action itself; to bar such evolution is to court its final break-down.

#### AFRICA: ILLUSION AND REALITY.

Against this background I propose now to attempt to indicate some few of the vast changes in the human and non-human surround which have taken place in Africa in little more than half a century — even in little more than the lifetime of many in this hall to-night. They may serve to show — even if inadequately — the tasks which confront all the inhabitants of Africa in the problem of building a viable system of co-operation in the changing and dangerous times in which we live. In doing so I am conscious not only of the complexity of the issues involved but of my own shortcomings in attempting even to raise them.

I raise them not because I am able to give ready answers to them, but because I feel it important that we should direct our minds to the deeper issues which are obscured by current slogans and ideologies.

The exploration of most of Africa south of the Sahara; its partitioning among the Great Powers; its linking to the modern world economy; its gradual opening up by a network of communications—still inadequate to its needs—had its greatest momentum during that unique period in history, which has been described as “the noon of a halcyon day of Victorian England which was fatuously expected to endure to eternity.”<sup>(3)</sup> The long diplomatic and military struggles of the great European Powers, which led finally to the establishment of their hegemony in Africa, are at an end; so is the nearly three century long thrust of Europe into large parts of Asia. The optimism of nineteenth century Europe as the carrier of a finally perfected civilization available for export to all climes and continents has evaporated; so too has the belief in nationalism as the necessary and sole vehicle of liberty; the self-determination of nations has been found—like patriotism—to be not enough. From the ruins of two generations of war there has arisen a striving for a new approach to the problems of Western civilization in an age where to stand alone—economically, politically, technically or culturally—is to court disaster. The easy generalisations of the nineteenth and early twentieth century have been tested and have been found wanting. To-day there is a searching, a questioning, a criticizing of concepts: nationality, sovereignty, imperialism, security, and the like, unparalleled in modern times. These questionings will bear fruit: in new alignments, institutions and new creative endeavour. The free world is painfully, but with vigour, forging new bonds of security and patterns of co-operative endeavour across national frontiers. Whatever its travail may produce, it will not produce a society dominated by a merely European outlook but a community increasingly conscious of the needs and aspirations of other peoples.

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(3) L. B. Namier: “Avenues of History.” loc. cit.

Never before in history has there been such international concern and organised endeavour to discover new ways of international co-operation, on the basis of technical, economic, and sociological study, to combat want and political immaturity. The great advances and bold experimentation in British Colonial policies in Africa in recent years provide a striking illustration of this trend. The reasons for this revolution in Western thinking are many; I cannot attempt to deal with them now. Apart, however, from the humanitarian drive behind them there is one which particularly concerns us here. It is the realisation that in the jet and atomic age the free world is so closely interdependent for its security that the development of its resources on a trans-national scale has become a first priority for survival of the basic institutions on which its freedom rests.

It is against this common need that African policies will, I believe, come increasingly to be judged by those who will make the crucial decisions in the newly emerging power-constellations of the free world. In so far as pressure will be exerted on Africa it is not likely to arise, as in the past, from the power-politics of Europe. The dangers which threaten civilization in Africa come, in the first instance, not from without but from within; from possible internal stresses and weaknesses. It is these which could once again throw Africa — that half-way house between East and West — into the maelstrom of extra-African political struggles: a half-way house can only too easily become a battlefield.

It is well to remember that the continental peace from Cape to Cairo, which is so readily taken for granted, is a very recent, and, as yet, a very fragile thing. Before the early years of this century Africa was a continent of continuous, bloody, tribal conflict, of slave raids, of frontier and colonial wars, and of the first large-scale war by Europeans in Africa against a European world power. The modern internal history of Africa is not the history of a peaceful continent but of a continent that, except for a very brief space of time, has known neither peace nor good government. Africa is not a politically mature but a politically immature continent: by far the greater part of its indigenous population has so far had little opportunity of gaining experience

and developing the aptitudes and institutions for handling unaided many of the internal, and most of the inter-continental and foreign issues of government. The capacity for government, however, is not something that can be either merely taught, merely learned, or merely formulated and bestowed: it can only grow, and slowly evolve through the hard experience of social action and increasing responsibility; and for its evolution peace and order are the primary requisites.

I suggest, therefore, that the most vital task, at the present time, for all the inhabitants of Africa, is to guard the peace of Africa, and, in particular, to eschew policies and dissensions which might have the consequences of again making this continent the cockpit of international rivalries. It would be calamitous for all the inhabitants of Africa if the unique period of inter-continental peace, which has so accidentally come about, should prove to have been but an Indian Summer. Perhaps at no previous time in modern history has the urgency been greater in Africa for calm deliberation and leadership designed to evolve continental co-operant political and economic institutions suited to the human and ecological environment of Africa itself.

In order that all the inhabitants of Africa should be able to take full measure of these heavy responsibilities, it is necessary that they should see this continent in terms of reality and not of illusion. It is equally necessary for those outside Africa, but with interests in it, to do so. Fifty years ago the spanning of Africa from Cape to Cairo and from East to West by a network of communications, and a system of modern law and order, was little more than a dream — an aspiration. To-day, notwithstanding the fact that, as Alan Paton has so picturesquely phrased it: "if one were to journey over the Continent of Africa by plane, one would rarely by day see a moving vehicle on the ground. By night one would rarely see a light," there are very few regions in Africa which have not already been in some way, directly or indirectly, linked to the outside world. There is no longer a single economic, political or cultural development anywhere in Africa, the far-flung ripples of whose effects, like the beats of the African drum, do not spread across the length and breadth of this continent: characterised as it is now by no natural

barriers of any consequence from the Kalahari to the Sahara. Everything is in process of transition from the social and economic structures of pre-history through all stages of complexity up to the very heights of de-personalised, functionally organised, abstract metropolitan life in a city like Johannesburg — comparable as it is to that in any of the great financial and commercial centres of the world. Men and women from hundreds of tribes; from a score of nations; from many races and religions traverse the continent from North to South; from East to West; on foot, on horseback, on bicycles, in motor-cars, by air and by sea around its coasts. Everywhere the pattern of life is multi-racial, multi-tribal and multi-national. The pattern of life in Africa is not standardised or streamlined: it is not that of either Europe or Asia. Many races have sojourned in it, influenced it, or been absorbed by it; but none have yet left an indelible mark upon it. It is this continent, of many hues and colours, of all stages of civilization — a continent so old and yet so young — which *is* Africa: the Africa which throws its fascinating spell over all those whose awareness to reality has not been dulled; the Africa which stimulated the explorers, the missionaries, the scientists, the great British, French, Belgian and Dutch colonial administrators, the traders, the prospectors, miners, engineers, the pioneers, the voortrekkers, the settlers and the money-makers to unravel the secrets it so long held locked in a somnabulant past — when life for most of its peoples, beset with the dangers of a cruel environment, was generally “nasty, brutish, and short.” This Africa is indeed a continent with a life, a reality, and a spirit of its own — if we would but pause to catch its rhythm — drowned as it all too often is, by the tumult of the modern world; by the lack of patience of those greedy for immediate gain, and by ignorance of those unaware of the pace of Africa. For Africa has also a tempo of its own; those who would build a supple, living, all-embracing civilization in this continent must hasten slowly and realise that the way is long, through parched land and thick scrub; and that guidance from the past is hard to come by, and cannot be read by those who run, but must be unearthed patiently: not only with the aid of the physical but also of the human sciences.

I have another purpose in painting these aspects of African realities. It is to draw your attention to the fact that the very enthusiasm and rapidity with which the present super-structure of mechanical civilization has been erected in Africa has left us little time for awareness of the changing human foundations on which it rests. It is usual for the inhabitants of Africa to regard these problems as unique; but the problems of human relations are nowhere unique in relation to the passions and emotions, the hopes, the fears and the rationalizations which men invent to hide them from themselves. If it were otherwise history would be a meaningless tale told by an idiot.

#### AFRICA: THE BASIS OF HUMAN RELATIONS.

It is, I know, rash to endeavour to characterise great historical movements in general terms or phrases. Yet, reluctantly, I must, owing to the brief time available to me, make use of this device. If I were asked what have been the two poles about which the human forces in Africa have played with the greatest tension, I would say land and status; both for African and Non-Africans these and little else, have in the past spelled the security which they have sought and still seek. Security for the indigenous inhabitants of the continent has meant, and over vast areas still means, possession of land and the desire to live within the security of the particularistic, custom-bound, status-regulated bosom of tribal life and institutions. To the white pioneers in South Africa land and certainty of status with the freedom and security they gave, was what they sought. But, be it noted, they fought for a particular kind of freedom—a freedom *from* what they wished to escape: freedom to live their own lives on far-flung lands, with their own servants and their own herds, in almost patriarchal simplicity; freedom to live a life mainly regulated, not by the universalistic rules of the market, nor by the money-mechanism, but founded on hierarchial relationships and on *pietas*—to which my friend and teacher, Professor Haarhoff, has so often drawn attention.

All social relationships postulate a basis on which membership in the relationship shall be built. Thus the basis of relations between a doctor and patient, a tribal chief and his people, a

bywoner and the relative who has given him land to utilize in exchange for part-time service on his master's farm, all differ from the criteria of relationship which, for example, govern a wage contract in a modern factory, or the relationship of a bank. But, the common factor was, that all the company at the grand hotel of Monseigneur were perfectly dressed. If the Day of Judgement had only been ascertained to be a dress day, everybody there would have been eternally correct. Such frizzling — and powdering and sticking up of hair, such delicate complexions artificially preserved and mended; such gallant swords to look at, and such delicate honour to the sense of smell, would surely keep anything going, for ever and ever . . .

Everybody was dressed for a Fancy Ball that was never to leave off. From the Palace of the Tuileries, through Monseigneur and the whole Court, through the Chambers, the Tribunals of Justice, and all society (except the scarecrows), the Fancy Ball descended to the Common Executioner: who, in pursuance of the charm, was required to officiate "frizzled, powdered, in a gold-laced coat, pumps, and white silk stockings." . . . And who among the company at Monseigneur's reception in that seventeen hundred and eightieth year of our Lord, could possibly doubt, that a system rooted in a frizzled hangman, powdered, gold-laced, pumped, and white-silk stockinged, would see the very stars out! . . . The show being over, . . . With a wild rattle and clatter,

work which the employee is required to do, and which the efficient conduct of the business or industry postulates. Similarly, if one class, or race of persons is not given access to land or property, and is prohibited from exercising its aptitudes or potential aptitudes in putting such resources to use, then a particularistic element is interfering with the economic, or potential economic efficiency of the society.

In different societies the basis of social relationships is subject to very wide variations and a society resting on purely universalistic relations would suffer intolerable stresses. The real point of importance, however, is that in order to survive every society must be aware of the extent to which it can, under altered circumstances, permit itself the luxury of retaining criteria for social relations which run counter to the reality of its changing needs, and to the exigencies of the wider world of which it is a part. If a society were to continue to insist on outmoded criteria then in altered circumstances it could not long survive. For example, in a society where there are rules permitting only women to work in the fields, while the men are enjoined to hunt, continued insistence on such criteria in the face of new kinds of work necessitated by the growth of population, the need for modern agriculture, and, of course, by the disappearance of the wild game would completely undermine the existence of the community.

The social and economic history of large parts of Africa — particularly of the Union — in the last fifty years can be summed up by the rate at which the predominantly particularistic societies — both European and Non-European — have been destroyed, or are, as in the rest of Africa, in process of disintegration. Of course, all the well-known economic indices illustrate this thesis: to see is, however, not necessarily to recognize. Like individuals, societies often retain a mental picture of what they think they look like (usually a flatteringly younger picture) even when they daily look at their changed reflection in the mirror. Indeed, psychologists have reported a pathetic case in which an elderly woman obstinately maintained that the person she saw when looking into the mirror was her younger sister and not herself.

I can think of no better way of bringing home the difference



between the younger sister — now long-deceased — who was South Africa, and whose image still so frequently be-devils the thinking of the older, living sister — than by examining some statistics of population. These indicate, perhaps most unambiguously, how tremendous have been the changes which separate Africa to-day from that Africa of the past in which Europeans could go on living side by side with the indigenous peoples without the conscious emergence of any common world of relations between them.

#### POPULATION CHANGES. (6)

Let me first draw your attention to the significant fact that at the time when, roughly speaking, the modern economy of South Africa had begun to be developed in earnest — say about 1891 — there was a total population of all races of about 4.1 million (7) in the whole of South Africa. Yet to-day it is probable that a number very nearly equal to that whole population of 60 years ago is living in towns in the Union of more than two thousand European inhabitants. (8) According to the 1946 census the number at that date was 3.6 million.

Incidentally, it is worth remarking that in 1865 — the hey-day of the youth of the deceased younger sister of present-day South Africa — the total European population of the then most populous province, the Cape Colony, was only 180,000 — about four-fifths of the European population of Cape Town to-day; and even the total

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(6) In selecting the figures given in this section I have done so with the purpose only of making very broad contrasts. The figures of urbanization are subject to very great qualifications as they have unavoidably been amended from time to time according to different definitions of what communities are covered by the term "urban." For the statistics of "urbanization" for years prior to 1946 I have relied on Dr. Shannon's article. It must also be borne in mind that figures for population in territories other than the Union, even for recent years, leave very much to be desired. I should particularly like to stress that anybody making use of the figures should first consult the valuable article by Dr. H. A. Shannon on Urbanization 1934-1936 in the South African Journal of Economics for 1937 Vol. 5, page 164. The article, to which I am greatly indebted, discusses fully the different definitions of urbanization and analyses the statistical methods adopted by the different Censuses in the Union and its constituent Provinces.

(7) The number of 4.1 million probably overstates the position, as I have had to use the figures for 1904 for Natal and the Transvaal. In any case the figures for earlier dates for Natal do not include Zululand — which was included for the first time in the census of 1904.

European population of the Orange Free State and the Transvaal together in 1891 was only 196,000—less than the number of Europeans (about 220,000) in Cape Town in 1946.

It is also worth noting that the European population of the whole of Natal in 1891 was only about 47,000—considerably less than that of Germiston in 1946. Indeed, in 1946, the fifteen largest towns in the Union, with a population exceeding 20,000 Europeans each, had a total European population which exceeded the number of Europeans in the whole of South Africa in 1904. (The figures were 1,182,000 as compared with 1,117,000.) Actually, the number of Africans in the city and suburbs of Johannesburg alone in 1946 (387,175) greatly exceeded all the Africans in urban centres in the whole of the Union in 1904, when the total urbanised African population was about 243,000, and formed roughly 7% of the total African population of the Union (3.5 million). By 1921 the corresponding percentage was 9; by 1936 it was 14, and in 1946 it was 20 (the figures for 1946 were: African urbanised 1.5 million; total African population 7.8 million). The number of Europeans in urban centres, as defined above, in 1904 was roughly 40% of the total European population of South Africa; by 1946 it had risen to just over 60%; for all races the corresponding percentage had risen from 17 to roughly 32 and the total population of the country had more than *doubled* from 5.1 to 11.4 million. Finally, in regard to the Union, it is worth noting that the total population in 1951 at about 12.6 million has increased more than threefold since 1891.

The population trends to which I have drawn attention in

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(8) It can, of course, be argued that towns containing two thousand Europeans are hardly a good index of urbanization in a country with such vast distances as the Union. Dr. Shannon has, I think, rightly, drawn attention to this. I wish, however, to make it clear that I am not concerned with this point here—for my purposes these figures are quite adequate, as I am intending to show the destruction of a predominantly particularistic society. I should also like to draw attention to the important point that the Union censuses register persons according to the place where the census is held. In fact, however, in the Union the impact of "urbanization" is not fully indicated in this manner. A large number of Non-Europeans, particularly Africans, are continually moving from their "rural" or "tribal" surroundings into towns for short periods so that many more persons are affected by the more universalistic economy into which they are endeavouring to fit than are indicated by the census figures at any one moment of time.

the Union are indicative of what is happening in the rest of Africa at a slower rate. In 1900 the population of Accra in the Gold Coast was only about 16,000. It is now well over 130,000. Lagos Township had a population of about 41,000 in 1901. It now has a population of about 230,000, which, on the basis of the 1946 census, would have made it the third largest town in the Union. Incidentally, Ibadan now has a population of about 335,000; this is greater than the total European population of Johannesburg. In 1906 there were 559 Europeans in Nairobi, and the whole population was 11,612. In 1948 there were over 10,000 Europeans, over 43,000 Asiatics and over 75,000 Africans, a total of 129,000 in the city; this would have made it the seventh largest town in the Union on the basis of the 1946 census. In 1951 the total European population of Southern Rhodesia was 136,000, of which over 72,000 lived in Salisbury, and Bulawayo and their suburbs; these two towns, with their districts, accounted for a labour force of nearly 180,000 Africans.

The figures for the Union, I suggest, provide a striking delineation of some of the features which distinguish the real South Africa from that illusory sister-image to which I have referred. For what these figures mean is that if, by a wave of a wand, it were possible for the inhabitants of South Africa to be moved back in time to the separate feudal and tribal "worlds" of the "golden" past most of the present population of South Africa would starve at once. It is only because by far the largest part of the population now works and lives, either in whole or in part, within a modern economy closely linked to, and very greatly dependent upon, world markets that the existing population of South Africa can maintain even its present average low standards of living. But, as everyone knows, the largest part of the work by which the Union's population manages to attain even these low standards is conducted on the basis of criteria which are not at all relevant to the effectiveness of its work, but are based on laws and customs which contribute nothing to that effectiveness, but, on the contrary, greatly undermine it. It is to this fact, and mainly to this fact, that South Africa must ascribe its relative poverty and the obvious stresses and strains in the body-politic which arise therefrom.

This is a very common phenomenon. Over large parts of the world the so-called pressure of population on food supplies does not result merely from the scarcity of "natural" resources but rather from ignorance, and from habits, customs, laws and institutions which for one reason or another prevent available resources from being utilized or further developed.

There is urgent need for a continent-wide study of these questions in Africa. Contrary to expectations, the development of agricultural resources does not appear to be keeping pace with the growth of population. Even the output of many of the raw materials, which form the basis of Africa's agricultural exports, appears to show a disappointing rate of growth in comparison with the other raw-material producing regions of the world. Unless the work of the inhabitants of Africa as a whole in relation to the difficult environment of the continent, can be made more effective by the necessary changes in existing habit patterns of social action, the outlook for the future is disturbing. All over Africa the increasing numbers can no longer be adequately provided for on the basis of the methods, the institutions or the particularistic, functionally diffuse and hierarchical relationships of the past; yet, on the basis of the changes in these which the times demand there is no foreseeable limit to the expansion of population and productivity in this, as yet, so undeveloped continent.

#### THE DANGERS OF UPROOTEDNESS.

The great industrial and mining developments in Africa have drained, and continue to drain, the countryside of its able-bodied population; but they have not provided, and continue to do little to provide an economically meaningful and socially stable way of life. A population can adopt criteria of relationships suited to either an "urban-industrial" or "rural-agricultural" way of life just as, to use a different analogy, it can adapt itself to predominantly universalistic or predominantly particularistic criteria—although the latter are not suited to a modern industrial economy; but it is not possible to ensure any stability in a society which hovers in a twilight of social existence: which cannot find a basis for any permanent relationship at all. It is quite possible to

achieve an increase in all the usual economic indices of productivity, and yet fail to safeguard the very foundations of a stable society.

Thus urbanization in South Africa, and a similar trend in other parts of the continent, carries with it great dangers. The whole question demands the most painstaking impartial investigation by social scientists. For the present rate of urbanization indicates the presence of what is, perhaps, the most baffling of modern social diseases—mass uprootedness: men and women torn, too rapidly, from the soil, the mores, the loyalties, the obediences, and the sanctions to which they were accustomed; and which they could understand.

This is how one of the most eminent of modern historians pictures the disease with which European civilization has been infected by the growth of amorphous collectivities. "For men rooted in the soil there is, as a rule," writes Professor Sir Lewis Namier,<sup>(9)</sup> "a hierarchy of allegiances: to their village community or estate, to their district, to their 'country'—for them the nation is of a naturally federal structure. Traditional beliefs and hereditary ties persist; class and the way of living determine alignments; things are individual and concrete in the village or the small, old-fashioned town. But in the great modern cities men grow anonymous, become ciphers, and regimented; thinking becomes more abstract and is forced into generalisations; inherited beliefs are shaken and old ties are broken; there is a void, uncertainty, and hidden fear which man tries to master by rational thought. He starts by proudly asserting the rights of the abstract average individual freed from the bondage of tradition, and then integrates him into the crowd, a collective personality, which unloads itself in mass movements. The mass is the refuge of the uprooted individual; and disintegration of spiritual values is as potent a process as the splitting of the atom; it releases the demonic forces which burst all dams. The program may be social revolution, or national revolution, or both; the aim may be to right wrongs or to sweep away

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(9) cf. *Avenues of History*, Hamish Hamilton, London, 1952. 6. 26-27. I wish to thank the publishers and author for permission to quote the above passage.

stultifying incumbrances; the result can be liberation, but it can hardly be liberty which is founded on restraint and not on force, even if genuine idealism guides it. 'Whenever a single definite object is made the supreme end of the State,' wrote Lord Acton, 'be it the advantage of a class, the safety or the power of the country, or the support of any speculative idea, the State becomes for the time absolute. Liberty alone demands for its realization the limitation of the public authority . . .' Liberty is the fruit of slow growth in a stable society; is based on respect for the rights of the individual, deeply embedded in the life and habits of the community; is in its origin an aristocratic idea; of the selfconscious individual, certain of himself and his position, and therefore perfectly at ease. It spreads when every man's house becomes 'his castle'; yet he must have a house and be safely rooted."

The disease of uprootedness strikes everywhere in Africa without distinction of colour, race, or creed. Like cancer it is a silent disease: it kills when it is recognised too late. In Africa the fierce forces of Western industrialism are erecting a superstructure which is as dazzling as it is blind to the silent diseases which it carries with it. The basic problems of uprootedness in Africa are not unique, but the resistance of its peoples to its onward march is weaker than elsewhere—Africa lacks the defences provided in Europe by the gradual evolution from earlier associations, loyalties and social relationships: the sturdy peasant, the artisan disciplined by the craft-guild, the justice of the peace, the squire, and the long growth of local government and democratic institutions. The social soil of Africa is shallow: the roots of modern civilization cannot penetrate deep to resist the storms of circumstance; the least disturbances, like the rain and the wind, create a dust-bowl and a desert.

As yet neither the indigenous nor the immigrant peoples of the continent are sufficiently aware that civilization in process involves not only disintegration but conservation. In a larger sense that is also the basic problem of our time: to find a compromise between our aspirations on the one hand, and on the other hand our aptitudes—particularly our aptitudes to stand the stress of social change. In Africa there has as yet been

insufficient realisation and awareness of this crucial problem. Indeed, the problems involved in creating a civilization which can endure in Africa have so far been given little conscious attention. The modern history of Africa too often exhibits merely the desire of its various peoples to attain freedom only in that limited sense in which it denotes freedom from something: freedom from some aspect of reality, from the exigencies of the world outside Africa, and from the inconvenience of realities in Africa. But real freedom is not thus negative. It cannot rest on the desire to escape from reality, from moral obligations, or from oneself; the final expression of such degraded freedom is,

as Bordinof has written, "Is an urban factory, or the relationship of a bank to its customers. The individual definition from an anthropological contemporary study sums up the individualities here involved—

"The membership criteria of a selectivity will be called universalistic if persons are selected, etc. if not admitted"

etc. or the basis of criteria that satisfy the conditions; (1)

that they be criteria such that no individual is rejected by social structures from possession of a particular thing; and (2)

that they be criteria such that they are germane to the purpose of the individual selection as made. The membership criteria of a selectivity will be called universalistic if persons are selected, etc. if not admitted"

etc. or the basis of criteria that satisfy the conditions; set for

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(4) or Martin's theory; (5) The structure of society; "to  
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modern Chinese Business Class. (The Institute of Pacific Relations  
1949) I am also indebted to the work of Professor (David)  
McClary on his "Theory of Social Action." In the introduction, be-  
cause and particularistic criteria. Levy quotes the following  
passage from Parsons: "The all such analytical distinctions of de-  
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But, nevertheless, their relative predominance is a matter of the great  
importance." Selection criteria that are to minimize the role of social  
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These, that tend to minimize, but do not, entirely, eliminate, universalistic

# The Hoernlé Memorial Lectures

The IRR is republishing the text of the Hoernlé Memorial Lectures, a series of talks which started in 1945. The original introductory note to the lecture series reads as follows:

*A lecture, entitled the Hoernlé Memorial Lecture (in memory of the late Professor R. F. Alfred Hoernle), President of the Institute from 1934—1943), will be delivered once a year under the auspices of the South African Institute of Race Relations. An invitation to deliver the lecture will be extended each year to some person having special knowledge and experience of racial problems in Africa or elsewhere.*

*It is hoped that the Hoernlé Memorial Lecture will provide a platform for constructive and helpful contributions to thought and action. While the lecturers will be entirely free to express their own views, which may not be those of the Institute as expressed in its formal decisions, it is hoped that lecturers will be guided by the Institute's declaration of policy that "scientific study and research must be allied with the fullest recognition of the human reactions to changing racial situations; that respectful regard must be paid to the traditions and usages of the various national, racial and tribal groups which comprise the population; and that due account must be taken of opposing views earnestly held."*

## About the IRR

Since 1929, the Institute of Race Relations has advocated for a free, fair, and prospering South Africa. At the heart of this vision lie the fundamental principles of liberty of the individual and equality before the law guaranteeing the freedom of all citizens. The IRR stands for the right of all people to make decisions about their lives without undue political or bureaucratic interference.