

COMMENTARY

EVENTFUL TRIP TO SOUTH AFRICA

by Stanley R. Rader

The author accompanies Plain Truth Editor-in-Chief Herbert W. Armstrong on his frequent visits with heads of state and other leading international dignitaries.

PARIS, July 1, 1976: I arrived here in the French capital only a few days ago, after five eventful weeks in the Republic of South Africa, where Mr. Herbert Armstrong spoke some 30 times before large and intimate audiences in Johannesburg, Capetown, Durban, Port Elizabeth, and South-West Africa. Mr. Armstrong was bringing to South Africa personally, for the first time, his message about the world in crisis, man's incredible human potential, and man's heritage.

While we were in South Africa, it became the center of world attention — giant, first-page headlines in every paper around the world — because racial violence literally exploded during the fourth week of our visit. This violence came only a few days after our very meaningful meeting with Prime Minister John Vorster and only a few days before his departure for Europe and his talks in West Germany with U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger.

By the time the violence had subsided, there were some 180 dead, some 1,200 injured, and property damage calculated to be in excess of \$40 million. Clearly, Mr. Vorster's well-earned reputation throughout the world had been damaged, as well as his carefully laid plans for détente and dialogue with the nations of Black Africa.

Mr. Vorster's meeting with Secretary of State Kissinger was af-

fectured by what many people in South Africa feel is only the beginning of more and more racial violence in the nation, unless concessions are made by the South African government to ease the tension that lurks just below the surface in the large black-inhabited townships located outside the major South African cities. This tension, they believe, is produced in no small measure by the government's policy of apartheid.

Mr. Vorster, embarrassed as he might have been on the eve of his talks with Secretary of State Kissinger, remained as firm in his convictions about the cause of the riots as he was about the fundamental reasons behind the worldwide attitudes toward the Republic of South Africa. Mr. Vorster stated in West Germany that there was no doubt that the violence was planned to disturb and disrupt his meeting with the secretary of state and that the disorders were fomented by communist-inspired agitators.

One of the very first questions that Mr. Armstrong asked the prime minister was why there seemed to be such a lack of understanding and knowledge about South Africa in other parts of the world. The prime minister interjected, "It's not a lack of understanding or knowledge! It's bias — bias of 30 years!"

The prime minister proceeded to explain that the Soviet Union, for example, has never forgotten that the Republic of South Africa was the first nation to break off diplomatic relations with the U.S.S.R. (in 1950) and that Pretoria had subsequently barred communists from belonging to any trade unions and had outlawed the Communist Party in

1953. The prime minister also stressed that his nation had successfully withstood a communist conspiracy to overthrow the government in 1953.

When asked about the lessons of Angola, the prime minister stressed that the whole world learned a lesson: that the Russians wanted to find out how far they could penetrate into southern Africa. What they discovered was that they could go about as far as they wanted to.

To counter any direct threat to South Africa itself, Mr. Vorster explained, his government would welcome help from any outside source but that he had learned that it perhaps would have to go it alone.

When asked about his predictions for the future, the prime minister stated that he felt that people would be able to visit South Africa in years to come, not only to enjoy its amenities, but to learn first-hand how people of different races could live together in peace. We are all hopeful that the prime minister's predictions will soon become a reality.

We are aware that no society is perfect, and we are also aware that a visit of even five weeks could not prepare us to understand fully all of the problems of such a complex society.

As we Americans prepare to celebrate our 200th birthday at home, we are only too well aware of the imperfections in our own society and our own historical development — a history checkered with many of the same issues that have confronted South Africa since the days of its very early settlement in the 17th century. We should therefore not be too quick to judge nor to otherwise condemn before all the facts have been made clear.

We are so concerned about the entire future of South Africa that we are planning a second visit in November of this year, and I am sure that what we find and report will be of great interest to our millions of readers throughout the world.