

Bankers nail down the apartheid coffin

POLITICS: a personal viewpoint by B.A. SANTAMARIA

HOWEVER unlikely the comparison may appear, what is happening to Afrikaner supremacy within South Africa contains pertinent lessons for Australia.

Although nobody can predict either the course or the speed of events, the exclusive domination of South African politics by the Afrikaner "clan" is on the way out.

Its problem is easier to diagnose from outside by those who do not have to live with the consequences of change, than it is to correct from inside by those who do.

By common consent, the problem is that since the Smuts era, for the greater part of the past 50 years, South Africa tied its future exclusively to the principle of apartheid. In terms of absolute morality, it is difficult, if not impossible, to defend apartheid. To defend the far more brutal repressions of subject tribes by many, if not most, black African governments is even more difficult, although it does not seem to occur to the masters of opinion that it is relevant to the South African tragedy.

In practical terms, however, apartheid was ultimately doomed because it was politically unsustainable: for the simple reason that no white European government in Africa was prepared to murder as many of its black political opponents as the leaders of the "liberated" African states have been prepared to.

Lenin allegedly said: "A government which is prepared to use limitless terror cannot be overthrown." Obviously the Afrikaners are not, which is to their credit if not to their profit.

That time has now caught up with the South African Government is evidenced by the fact that its Foreign Minister, Mr "Pik" Botha, has admitted in almost direct terms that apartheid was a mistake from the beginning. Once that conviction spreads among a ruling group, its cohesion is threatened. So is the constitutional structure which depends on that cohesion.

Presumably this new situation will be greeted with great satisfaction by the leaders of opinion in the Western world. The destructiveness of Left-liberalism has now found a new and powerful ally in the international bankers whose concern with human rights is not even minimal. It is the fact that the bankers have finally turned thumbs down on the South African Government which promises to be decisive.

What is to be noted is that nobody — repeat nobody — has yet proposed a constitutional framework which is likely to reconcile the divergent political interests of black and white, so that they can live in a harmonious society. Instead we have a simple act of faith that as long as they start to talk they will get somewhere. I have my doubts.

The Congo solution

A politically conscious black in South Africa must inevitably demand the abolition of discrimination, and almost certainly seek to express his views within the only available vehicle, either within the African National Congress or Buthelezi's Inkatha movement. How could a black come to any different conclusion?

On the other hand, the whites, faced with what they have seen in the rest of Africa once it was freed from the "shackles" of white rule — genocide, famine and corruption — are afraid of the possibility of an Idi Amin or an Obote, or any of the murderous tyrants whose deeds are consistently exposed by their equally corrupt and equally murderous successors.

The Western banking interests — whose leading figures have on other occasions proclaimed that they would rather deal with the Soviet Union or China than democratic states because the former can guarantee "labour discipline", ie not have strikes,

are obviously interested in one thing only. It isn't "human rights" for white or black.

If their economic interests were the only ones to be preserved, the problem would be far easier to "solve". It has been "solved" in the Congo. There, the admittedly oppressive Belgians were thrown out and Western mineral interests have been preserved — but at the cost of handing the hapless Congolese over to possibly the most corrupt dictator of them all — President Mobutu.

That would not turn out to be a good formula for South Africa, even if all that mattered was its gold, cobalt and other minerals. One does not exactly see Buthelezi and the Zulus (any more than the Afrikaners) agreeing to "one man one vote".

For Australia, the lesson lies in the fact that it was not President Reagan who made the political decision to turn thumbs down on South Africa. It was whatever anonymous persons run the Western banking system in the apparent interests of powerful mineral and other industrial combines.

These are the same people who continue to "re-schedule" billions in loans to the bankrupt economies of Latin America and of communist Poland.

For those Australians who think that it is just bad luck for the South Africans, there is a different, foreseeable scenario.

When Australia's external debts amount to, say, \$100 billion in approximately three years time — to choose a quite arbitrary time and figure — Australia too will have to face foreign bankers.

Whether or not they turn thumbs down on us will be determined not by the decisions of our present political leaders, but by whether Australia's interests and those of the Western banking houses are the same. This being so, it would be better to pay off our debts rather than insisting on consuming more than we produce, which is not merely a disease of the unions.