

The Daily Star

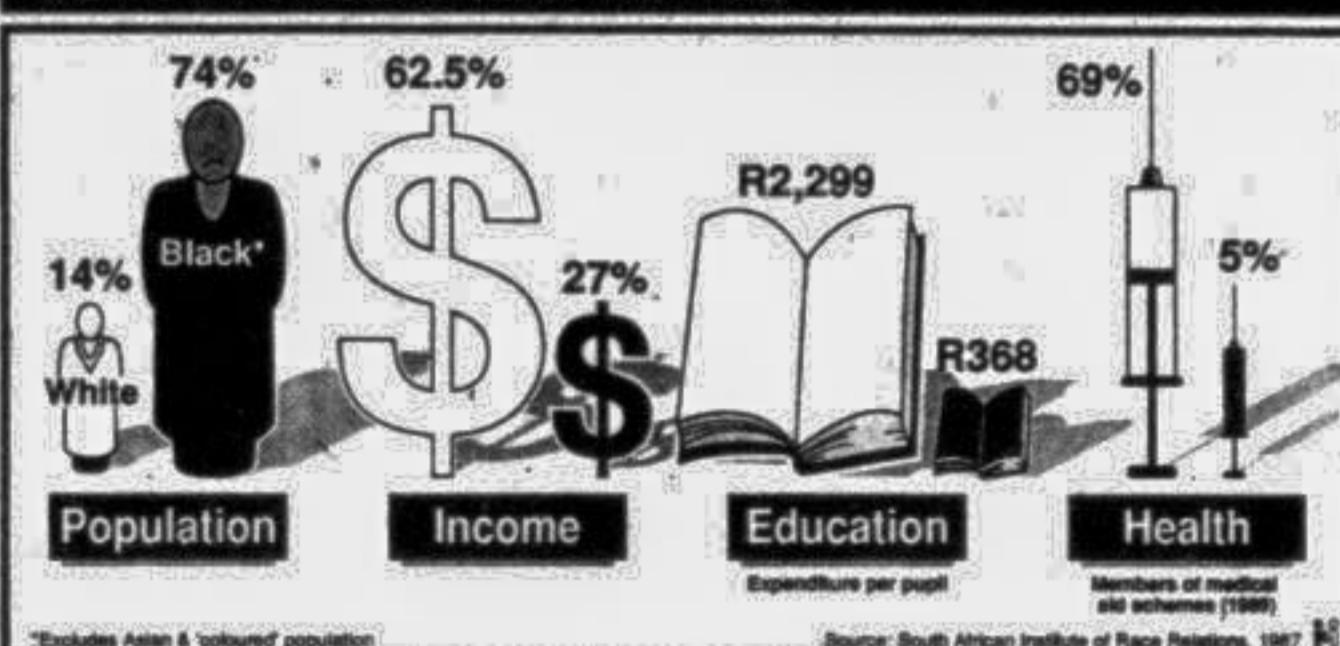
WEEKEND MAGAZINE

Should I Stay or should I Go?

Daniel Silke writes from Cape Town

Coming to terms with change in South Africa is inevitably creating huge uncertainty among the five million whites. Some are finding the stress too much to take. It is estimated that 200-250 families are moving abroad every month. But for those who can make the mental leap and set their minds on the opportunities ahead, reports Gemini News Service, there could be a bright future.

South Africa's two worlds



My girl friend looked concerned as we took our seats in one of Cape Town's fashionable Water-front restaurants. "Daniel," she said, "I'm worried. You know that I am not normally a pessimist but the political situation is now beginning to depress me. Maybe I should consider emigrating."

Lauren is a 25-year-old suburban high-school teacher who works in a predominantly white, upper-middle class area. She earns only around \$750 a month and works long hours and over weekends.

Her school is struggling to adapt its teaching methods to the growing black student body, who are themselves faced with the daunting prospect of studying the prescribed curriculum in English as if it were their first language.

This places an extra burden on educators to alleviate not only the deep educational divide created by years of institutionalised discrimination but also the inevitable language and cultural barriers. Lauren is sympathetic to thousands of young white South Africans faced with the dilemma of staying or leaving.

For much of this century, a white minority government dominated the political and social fabric of society. Today, the mainly Afrikaner regime has lost its legitimacy and is soon to be replaced with a black majority.

Continued on page 11

The whites after apartheid

Slowly but surely South Africa is moving towards real democracy. The country's first non-racial elections are scheduled for April. The mainly Afrikaner regime has lost much of its legitimacy and is likely to be replaced by a black majority government. What impact would this have on the country's five million whites?

In three special articles GEMINI NEWS SERVICE reports on the fears and hopes of white South Africans

PAUL KRUGER (1825-1904)
The Father of Boer nation



How a Verwoerd Shook His Whole Family

Arlene Getz writes from Stellenbosch, South Africa

Apartheid's death throes have caused some astonishing realignments in South African politics. Blacks are edging toward the once whites-only National Party. Whites are trickling towards traditionally black parties. Yet few converts are more unlikely than Wilhelm Verwoerd, grandson of the Afrikaner leader responsible for the segregationist policies. Gemini News Service talked to him about the way he shocked his family.

Of many Afrikaners, the Verwoerd family is akin to royalty. Every South African city has a street, hospital, airport or suburb named after Hendrik Verwoerd, the prime minister assassinated by a deranged parliamentary messenger in 1966.

All are likely to be renamed when a black-led government takes power, but until then they remain as ubiquitous symbols of the ideology whose policies fuelled the racial hatred and political instability still crippling the country.

It was Verwoerd who devised the Grand Apartheid plan to strip the black majority of their citizenship and who downgraded black education to ensure they could perform only menial jobs. It was Verwoerd who tried to exile blacks to barren homelands scattered over a

mere 13 per cent of the country; and it was he who remarked that it was better to be poor and

white than rich and multiracial.

Most of his family still honour his discredited legacies. His



Wilhelm and his wife Melanie share a joke with a friend. 'Apartheid and separate development were failures in morality.'

elderly widow has moved to a desolate whites-only town to start an Afrikaner homeland. A son is founder and tireless worker for the Society of Orange Workers, promoting such a homeland, and a daughter is a driving force in a far-right Afrikaner cultural organisation.

One descendant, however, has broken ranks. To the horror of his relatives, Wilhelm Verwoerd, grandson of Hendrik, has become a paid-up member of Nelson Mandela's African National Congress.

In a rare public appearance the young Verwoerd said: "Apartheid was not just a policy failure. Separate development was not just a well-meaning experiment that unfortunately did not work. Ultimately apartheid and separate development were failures in morality."

Continued on page 11

A Love Affair with Bengali Culture

by Aasha Mehreen Amin

It was an almost forgotten legend that brought Tony Stewart, an American Professor of North Carolina State University, to this country. This was the legend of Satya Pir a mythical Muslim sage who was also worshipped by Hindus and one who was said to have the most extraordinary powers. At a time like the present, when religious strife is at its peak Stewart finds a reconciliation of two religious groups — Hindus and Muslims, hidden deep within the tales of this legendary holy man. In an exclusive interview with The Daily Star, Stewart spoke of his own interpretations of Satya Pir and explained his long time love-affair with Bengali culture.

Stewart, now a professor of philosophy and religion has been doing research on Bengali culture since 1974. Studying Sanskrit and teaching himself Bengali, he has delved deep into the realm of a culture whose glorious past has almost been forgotten. Why Bengali culture and not something else? Stewart says that Bengali culture was one of the richest in the world.

During his intense study, Stewart probed into the history and literature of Bengal in the 18th, 19th and 20th century. He discovered that Bengalis had made immense contributions in the way in which British India was formed and regulated by its conquerors. "Time and again," says Stewart, "famous people would refer to Bengal and names like Dhaka, Calcutta were always mentioned." Bengalis, Stewart explains, became a model for emulation. They offered a contrary model to that: 'Bengalis do it differently' was a common refrain among politicians and historians.

What is intrinsically interesting about Bengal, says Stewart, being a flat delta region extremely rich and fertile, is its remarkable ability to sustain a large population. Culture flourishes where people are close to each other, he adds.

Stewart also talks of the region's 'slipperiness' from a cul-

ting standpoint. Physically, Bengal has always been difficult to control because of so many rivers and so has maintained an environment for people to thrive creating one of the richest literatures of all time. "From what I can tell," says Stewart, "it goes back as far as one thousand years producing an amazing literary output."

But what really distinguishes Bengal, Stewart points out, is its cosmopolitan mix that one does not find in the rest of South Asia. Bengali literature, Stewart claims, has "as many pirs as baishnabs". In this context Stewart's main quest has been to find out 'how do Bengalis perceive the world?'

Trying to answer this question has lead to 15 years of extensive study of 'Baishnab Shahitya' reading hundreds of Baishnab texts with the help of Ed C. Dimock, Stewart's mentor and the main figure responsible for Bengali studies in the US.

During this time Stewart has also translated Krishnadas Kaviraj's 'Chaitanya Charitamrita' a sophisticated theological document. In addition, he has been dapping into works as sophisticated as 'Mongol Kabya', 'Chandi Mongol' and 'Broto'.

What really intrigues Stewart, is that there are so many Hindus and Muslims, all so much a part of the culture of Bengal. There were as many Hindus writing about Muslims as there were Muslims writing about Hindu figures.

Most of the different versions of Satya Pir were written by Hindu authors; and during the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries, many serious pieces on Radha and Krishna were written by Muslims.

They were writing about each other and living together in villages. There are many instances in literature of the period" says Stewart, "where a Muslim Kazi and a Hindu Brahmin call each other brother, 'chacha' or 'kaka'."

According to Stewart, this modern image of separateness was introduced by the British. In the first census of India, the primary question asked of an

and Hindu laws for the Hindus. As they had to operate under different sets of laws, therefore, being a Hindu or a Muslim became politically very important.

Stewart's intensive study of Satya Pir literature which includes about 1,000 books, has led him to theorize that these tales have been written to understand a particular problem — the 'problem of reality'.

After searching through the libraries of Dhaka University, Bangla Academy, Calcutta University and a few Calcutta li-

braries, Stewart discovered about 750 handwritten and 250 printed texts all devoted to Satya Pir. This voluminous collection written by about 300 authors, consisted of many different versions of the Satya Pir legend. Stewart noticed, however, that three stories kept repeating over and over again. These were Satya Pir and the poor Brahmin, Satya Pir and the woodcutters and Satya Pir and the King.

In the first story, Satya Pir, in the garb of a Fakir, comes

down from Mecca and visits a poor Brahmin and asks for alms. He tells the Brahmin 'if you worship me, you will be rich'. The Brahmin starts to point out the difference between them when Satya Pir transforms himself into Narayan — 4 arms, club and all. Completely convinced of Satya Pir's powers, the Brahmin worships the Pir by offering 'shinn' and becomes rich.

In the second story a group of woodcutters ask the Brahmin the secret to his wealth. The

Brahmin tells them to worship Satya Pir, which they do with ardor by making an offering of 'shinn' and so become very rich. Here wealth includes not just money but general well-being, health, sons etc.

The third story is about a king who sees the woodcutters' big mansion and learns of the magic of Satya Pir. He sends his best trader to the south to make a gold 'astana' to worship Satya Pir. The merchant promises to do the same, leaves Bengal and arrives in Lanka where he profitably forgets his promise.

Predictably, all sorts of awful things happen to him — he is accused of stealing and sent to prison. Stewart, here, adds that the further south one goes, in these stories, the more evil the people are, Lanka being an island of demons.

After 12 years the merchant's wife and daughter who also worship Satya Pir ask for the trader's release.

Satya Pir appears in the Lankan king's dream where he rides a tiger that salutes on the king's neck.

Of course everything becomes alright, the merchant is released, enriched and sent home. Again the merchant loses everything when he and his sailors refuse to give alms to a Fakir (Satya Pir in disguise).

They realize their mistake, offer 'shinn' and everything is restored. In this way wrongs were righted by worshiping Satya Pir.

These three recurring stories, Stewart discovered, consisted 90 percent of the literature on Satya Pir, the rest of it includes fantastical tales: men turning into women, women turning into men, birds into animals; women wearing armour and slaying demon rhinos or turning men into rams for perverted pleasure.

Stewart claims that all this suggests that the literature is actually more serious than it appears to be and there are subtle messages that hint at an attempt to try and solve a particular problem.

"The real issue of Satya Pir," says Stewart, "is not trying to get Hindus and Muslims to join and worship a common god. I think it shows people who

are trying to understand how they can live with each other in a world that is very different than what it is supposed to be."

A Hindu, for example, says Stewart, who has been told that a king can only be from the Ksatriya class finds that he is ruled by a Muslim king in the 18th century. In this way people's idea of the world does not somehow fit with reality, creating confusion and distortion.

In this disturbing state, the only refuge can be found in holy men — men who know what is wrong and tell people how to fix it.

The fact that the character Satya Pir takes on different forms — he sometimes dresses as a Brahmin, sometimes as a Fakir — reflects that the functions of a holy man remains unchanged whether he is a Brahmin or a Fakir.

Stewart's latest project is a three-year Institute for the Study of South Asian Islam.

Formed by five other American scholars, of Islam, the institute's main objective is to make the west understand Islam better.

Stewart points out that in the US an overwhelming majority of Muslims are from South Asia where as most Americans think that all Muslims are from the Middle East.

"We want to know why they are not more visible and see how South Asian Muslims have scattered in the world carrying with them their South Asian Muslim culture", says Stewart.

As a Fullbright scholar and trustee and treasurer of the American Institute of Bangladesh Studies, Stewart's visit to Dhaka is one of many between 1976 and 1993. Stewart has spent a little over five years in Calcutta and Dhaka. His passion for Bengali literature started by chance when as an undergraduate he took an Asian Religion class because it fits his schedule.

It was while taking one class after the other all on India, that Stewart met his mentor Ed Dimock who convinced him to study Bengali.

"And it has been the greatest thrill of my life," says Stewart, a Kentucky born Bengal expert.

Afrikaner Voices among the Zulus

Arlene Getz writes from Cape Town

In South Africa Chief Buthelezi, leader of the Inkatha Movement, is the biggest headache facing president De Klerk and Nelson Mandela. He still refuses to take part in the talks paving the way to an election scheduled for April 27. A boycott could be disastrous for the democratic process. Meantime, Afrikaners are joining the Movement and taking support from the ruling National party. Gemini News Service talked to some of them.

In South Africa's political lexicon, Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi's Inkatha

invariably is seen as a Zulu movement. Zulu warriors brandishing spears and sticks; a sophisticated leader shedding western lounge suits for animal skins to inspire supporters; an ethnic force fighting black township battles — these are the images of a party named after a symbol of the Zulu guardian spirit.

Down at the local Inkatha offices, though, the stereotype blurs. Not only do the officials have distinctly un-Zulu names, but they are unequivocally actions of white Afrikanerdom. There's a Breytenbach, a Myburgh, a Van der Heever, a Bekker...

"I feel very at home in Inkatha," he said. "It espouses western democratic values, free enterprise, all the sorts of things people want in the party. It's far more acceptable than the alliance between the ANC, the South African Communist Party and Cosatu (the Congress of South African Trade Unions), which has a socialist position and a deep-seated Stalinist approach to doing political business."

Myburgh, 30, is an Afrikaner farmer and one-time member of the National Party who joined Inkatha soon after its 1990 opening to all races.

"I feel very at home in Inkatha," he said. "It espouses western democratic values, free enterprise, all the sorts of things people want in the party. It's far more acceptable than the alliance between the ANC, the South African Communist Party and Cosatu (the Congress of South African Trade Unions), which has a socialist position and a deep-seated Stalinist approach to doing political business."

Myburgh says there are enough pro-Inkatha farmers in his Swellendam district to warrant setting up one of the 50 Western Cape branches opened by the party this year. Most new members, said local party media officer Cloete Breytenbach, were white or 'coloured' (mixed-race).

He added: "What we are experiencing all over the Western Cape is that the days of labelling the IFP as ethnic or Natal-based is just out of touch with reality."

Similar views were expressed by Bekker, who spent 12 years as a provincial councillor and MP for the National Party. He said: "Inkatha appealed to me because it has firm westernised economic policies and is committed to federalism."

Now Inkatha's chief coordinator in Transvaal province, the non-Zulu-speaking MP, described it as the fastest growing party in the country. According to Bekker, Inkatha's 2.6 million members were increasing at a rate of 25,000 to 35,000 a month. A significant proportion of these were white, he said, with one survey suggesting Buthelezi would receive 23 percent of the white vote in country's first democratic poll next year.

Inkatha's membership claims contradict survey findings that the party will win less than ten percent of next April's vote. They are difficult to verify. A spokesman for the ANC, which is widely expected to lead the country's first post-apartheid government, laughed incredulously at Inkatha's 2.6 million membership claim. The ANC says Inkatha has a con-

Continued on page 11

The making of South Africa

First Europeans 1480-1600

The arrival of the Portuguese.

SAN: Ethnic groups.

VENDA

NAMA

KHOI-SAN

SOTHO-TSWANA

SAN

NGUNI

KHOI-SAN

Bartholomew Diaz 1488

Vasco da Gama 1497

Cape Colony expands 1650-1844

A refreshment stop for ships to Indonesia. It grew with Dutch and British settlers.

1. The trek north 1836-1844

2. 1-1700

3-1750

3-1798

Limits of the Cape Colony: