

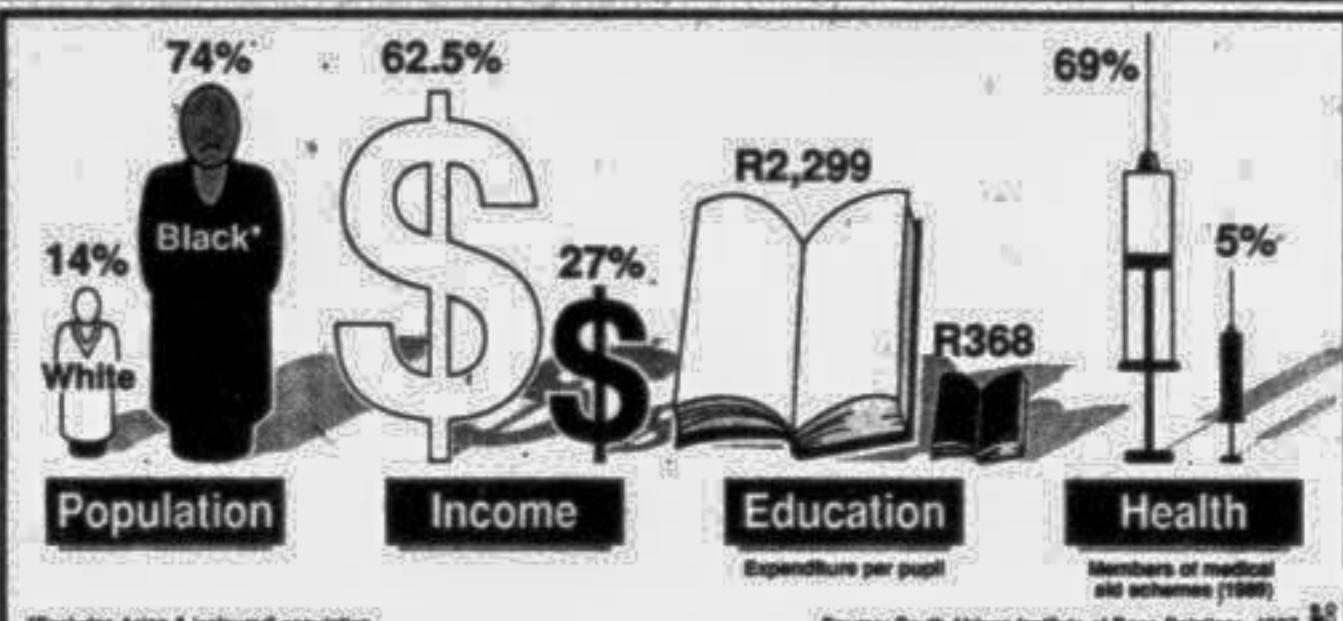
The Daily Star WEEKEND MAGAZINE

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 symptomatic of 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 major-

ity government following non-racial elections next year.

Whites, who have witnessed the social and economic malaise that has befallen much of Africa since the 1960s, fear a similar decline once a black majority gains power. This lack of confidence in the efficient running of the country may be a kickback to the apartheid years that portrayed blacks as inferior with little ability to run a modern industrialised state.

The African National Congress (ANC) have done little to allay white fears. Their continued alliance with the South African Communist Party leaves most whites anxious. They question the ANC commitment to democracy.

Senior ANC office-bearers like their outspoken youth leader, Peter Mokaba, have promoted anxiety by asking the radical and impatient township youth to "kill the farmer," "take the struggle to the white areas" and "save your bullets for De Klerk."

This message is well received in the shanty-towns outside Johannesburg but leaves a bad taste in white mouths. South Africa has been plagued by increasing violence and whites often view this as an indication of what is to come. Internecine strife between ANC and Inkatha has left thousands dead in the last year alone.

Television news nightly de-

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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.

To 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."

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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 there have distinctly un-Zulu names, but they are unequivocally scions of white Afrikanerdom. There's a Breitenbach, a Myburgh, a Van der Heever, a Bekker...

"I've lived among the Zulus all my life," white Afrikaner parliamentarian Jurie Mentz explained on defecting to Inkatha from the ruling National Party early this year. "They're my people. I like to be with them."

Mentz, unusual among whites in that he speaks fluent Zulu, said he decided to join the pro-capitalist Inkatha after visiting the ruins of communism in Russia and Eastern Europe. His defection was followed by two other white MPs: English speaker Mike Tarr, of the liberal Democratic Party and fellow Afrikaner Hennie Bekker, a National Party parliamentarian for the Johannesburg Constituency of Jeppe.

Less prominent political figures have followed, highlighting the fundamental changes in party profiles following President F W de Klerk's 1990 abolition of a law forbidding multiracial membership of political parties.

While blacks are joining De Klerk's National Party, despite its segregationist past, whites like Wilhelm Verwoerd, grandson of the former prime minister who devised apartheid, are slowly starting to support Nelson Mandela's African National Congress (ANC).

Inkatha, too, is benefiting from this phenomenon. Buthelezi's critics see him as an autocrat who runs KwaZulu like a private fiefdom. Significant numbers of whites now hail him as a moderate bulwark against an ANC demonised by the government during its 30 years in exile.

"It's quite simple really," explained Nicholas Myburgh, a former Inkatha chairman in the Western Cape. "More and more whites like myself have begun

to realise the days of white politics are over. If we want to exert some influence in the future we should throw our weight in behind one of the so-called black parties."

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 by 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 Breitenbach, 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 per cent 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 per cent 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-

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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 rul-

ing 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 led to 15 years of extensive study of 'Baishnab Shaitya' 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 Chaitanya' a sophisticated theological document. In addition, he has been dabbling into works as sophisticated as 'Mongol Kabay', '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 separatism was introduced by the British. In the first census of India, the primary question asked of an

Indian was, "What is your religion?" Many of the responses, says Stewart, was, "I don't know?" Stewart explains that religion or 'dharma' in traditional India meant the natural order of things or a way of life. Inevitably, the next question became 'Are you a Khan, Chatterjee etc?' In the 19th century although differences between Hindus and Muslims existed, it was after the census that the real splitting of the community began. There were Muslim laws for the Muslims,

libraries, 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



Dr. Tony Kevin Stewart delivering the keynote speech at a seminar on the theme 'The Legendary World of Satya Pir' jointly organized by the CDRB and the USIS Dhaka on 3rd December, 1992.

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 'shinni' and becomes rich.

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

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 Fulbright 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 the Kentucky born Bengali expert.

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The making of South Africa

First Europeans 1480-1600

The arrival of the Portuguese.



Cape Colony expands 1650-1844

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



Boer War 1899-1902

Boers (Dutch settlers) defeated by British.



South Africa today

Homelands created under 1959 Act.



1-Cape Colony 2-Orange Free State 3-Transvaal 4-Natal 5-Bethuanaland 6-Rhodessia 7-German South West Africa 8-Portuguese East Africa 9-Basutoland 10-Swaziland