

One Azania, One Nation
The national question
in South Africa



No Sizwe

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

A.B.	Afrikaner Bond
A.N.C.	African National Congress
A.P.O.	African People's Organisation
B.A.A.D.	Bantu Affairs Administration Department
B.B.	Afrikaner Broederbond
B.B.V.	Boeren Beskermings Verenigin
B.C.M.	Black Consciousness Movement
B.L.S.	Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland
C.A.D.	Coloured Affairs Department
C.P.C.	Coloured People's Congress
C.P.S.A.	Communist Part of South Africa (prior to 1950)
C.Y.L.	African National Congress Youth League
F.A.K.	Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurvereniginge
I.C.U.	Industrial and Commercial Workers Union
I.S.L.	International Socialist League
N.E.U.M.	Non-European Unity Movement
N.I.C.	Natal Indian Congress
N.P.	National Party
P.A.C.	Pan-Africanist Congress
P.R.P.	Progressive Reform Party
R.S.A.	Republic of South Africa
S.A.C.P.	South African Communist Party (post 1962)
S.A.I.C.	South African Indian Congress
S.A.I.R.R.	South African Institute of Race Relations
S.A.L.P.	South African Labour Party
S.A.R.	South African Republic (Transvaal)
S.A.S.O.	South African Students Organisation
U.M.S.A.	Unity Movement of South Africa
U.P.	United South African National Party

Man has never shown as much interest in knowing other men and other societies as during this century of imperialist domination. An unprecedented mass of information, of hypotheses and theories has been built up, notably in the fields of history, ethnology, ethnography, sociology and culture concerning people or groups brought under imperialist domination. The concepts of race, caste, ethnicity, tribe, nation, culture, identity, dignity, and many others, have become the objects of increasing attention from those who study men and the societies described as 'primitive' or 'evolving'.

More recently, with the rise of liberation movements, the need has arisen to analyse the character of these societies in the light of the struggle they are waging, and to decide the factors which launch or hold back this struggle.

Amilcar Cabral 'Identity and Dignity in the Context of the National Liberation Struggle'. Address on the occasion of receiving an honorary doctorate from Lincoln University, Pennsylvania, 15 October 1972. Reprinted in *Return to the Source: Selected Speeches of Amilcar Cabral*.

INSTEAD OF A PREFACE

THE PREFACE TO THIS WORK can only be written once South Africa is ruled by the revolutionary people. Until then, three things need to be said.

First, anyone acquainted with scholarship will realise that there are gaps in the material consulted. These gaps are themselves an important part of the story to be told in the preface. The work is nonetheless being published because, together with many who have read the manuscript or helped in its gestation, I consider the subject to be so urgently in need of a thorough airing that publication should not be delayed.

Second, even though almost every other contribution on the national question is considered critically by me, it should be stressed that my approach has been motivated throughout by the desire to facilitate the unification of the national liberation movement by fomenting a discussion on the *basis* of national unity and on the political-strategic implications of ideas about who constitutes the South African nation.

Third, many people have helped me to produce this book. All of them have perforce to remain anonymous for the present. Some of them do not share my views at all. They, more than my comrades even, have to be thanked for their broadminded loyalty to scholarship and ideas.

No Sizwe
January 1979

INTRODUCTION

Nationality and the relationship between theory and strategy

IN THIS STUDY I EXAMINE the theory of nationality which has been propagated by the ideologues and theoreticians of the National Party in South Africa since the mid Fifties. This theory, the official justification for Bantustans and for the policy of Separate Development, purports to be of general validity and in line with political thought and practice throughout the modern world. Theoretically, it involves the question of what the nation of South Africa is, i.e. who constitutes the nation? Since the answer to this apparently simple question is the stuff of political controversy in this country, it is necessary to investigate the historical evolution of the theory of the National Party, to reveal the reasons for its propagation, to show whose interests it serves, to consider alternative theories, and to examine all these in terms of their relation to the class struggle in South Africa.

The balkanisation of South Africa by means of the ruling party's Bantustan strategy has often been pilloried as fraudulent, monstrous, ludicrous and so forth. Yet the very term 'Balkanisation' bears within it a historic judgement. For the centrifugal rupture of the Russian, Turkish and Austro-Hungarian empires shortly before, during and after World War I resulted in state formations which have been accepted universally as constituting viable and legitimate nations. In a sense, therefore, the use of the term 'balkanisation' imparts to the Bantustans a quasi-legitimacy which is at variance with the critique it is meant to express. The national liberation movement in South Africa finds

itself today in a situation analogous to that which faced the precursors of the First International in the middle of the last century in Europe. There, the Pan-Slavonic policy of balkanisation pursued by the Tsarist regime was aimed at weakening the Austro-Hungarian Empire and especially its Turkish rival in the Balkan peninsula. The incipient nationalism of the East European nationalities, created under the impulsion of a politically aspirant bourgeoisie was the main tool of this imperialistic drive to expansion. Since Tsarist Russia was the symbol and bulwark of all that was reactionary and backward-looking in Europe, Marx and Engels and other socialists and liberals were implacably opposed to balkanisation, and many went so far as to deny outright the legitimacy of the nationalisms of Eastern Europe.¹ The encouragement of these reactionary nationalisms was seen by the representatives of both the liberal bourgeoisie (e.g. Mazzini) and the working classes to be in direct conflict with the real interests of these classes. But, as Lenin later realised, the emancipation of the serfs (1861) neutralised the historic reactionary character of Russia: the Tsarist empire became in all important respects a colony of Western Europe and was unable (after the crushing of the Polish Revolt of 1863) to play its previous counter-revolutionary role. This altered the character of these Eastern European nationalisms. Indeed, they came to be a vital dimension of the struggle against capitalism and feudalism in Russia itself.

South Africa is the Tsarist Russia of the Southern African sub-continent. Whether in Namibia, Zimbabwe, or South Africa itself, its apartheid policy of separate 'nationhood' for so-called 'Bantu' and other 'nations' serves an analogous purpose. Hence political strategy dictates that this nefarious policy be opposed by all possible means. The alleged success of the Turnhalle conference in Namibia in 1978, and the claims made for the 'independent' Transkei as representing a model of peaceful decolonisation, are

indications that, in certain quarters of the 'Free World', there are influential people waiting to latch on to anything that will lend respectability to a policy and theory that have called forth universal abhorrence. Already the liberation movement itself has had to witness the desolating spectacle of some of its supposedly staunchest members defecting to the Bantustans amid ablaze of publicity. Men such as Joe Matthews (formerly of the A.N.C.), T.T. Letlake (ex-P.A.C.), and Digby Koyana (ex-Unity Movement) have thrown in their miserable lot with the partitionists and supine followers of the National Party's formula for South Africa – the Matanzimas, Mangopes, etc. They, more than any others, have revealed the counter-revolutionary potential of the Bantustan strategy.

The national liberation movement, i.e. the various organisations of which it is composed, has presumably developed a counter-strategy. Illegality of operation has by and large prevented this strategy from being put forward explicitly. Very often that which is written does not reflect the real views of the leadership who have to protect their membership and supporters inside the country. However, strategies can also be inferred from political acts, be they of a literary, mobilising or military character. The success or failure of such strategies will not be discussed by this work; what this book *is* concerned with is the fact that there does not seem to exist any systematic refutation of the theory of nationality which the National Party has been propagating. Yet such a refutation has to be undertaken.

In general it is not sufficient to state what the objective effects and aims of the Bantustan strategy are or will be, and simply *for that reason* to reject it – i.e. because it happens to contradict one's own conception of the solution of the 'racial problem' in South Africa. For although the systematically expounded refutation of the *theory* by which the Bantustan strategy is interpreted to the world and to its victims is not a precondition for the formulation of possible

alternative liberation strategies, it remains the task of the theorist to undertake such a refutation, the obverse side of which is the theoretical elucidation of the correct strategy of the national liberation movement.

An example will clarify the matter. Every organisation in the national liberation movement has rejected the Bantustan strategy because, amongst other reasons, it will 'divide the people'. Of course, it is implied or explained that this divisive process has economic, cultural and political disadvantages for 'the people'. I know of no example, however, where the full ideological implications of such a statement have been worked out. I know of no document where the interconnections between the ideological dimension (implied by the words 'people', 'nation', etc.) and the politico-economic dimensions of our political practice have been explicated. Yet this has become a fundamental necessity. Practical decisions of far-reaching strategic and political importance depend upon the clarity of the leadership and membership of the liberation movement over this question – decisions such as whether 'Indians' are part of the 'nation', whether 'Coloureds' are a 'minority', whether only 'Africans' should belong to a given organisation. These have become questions of practical political importance, the answers to which require theoretical clarity and precision.

Strategy necessarily implies a theory. At a certain point, however, it becomes necessary for the very implementation of a strategy that the theory behind it be articulated explicitly. This book has tried to do this precisely because I felt that this point has been reached by the movement for national liberation in South Africa. It becomes daily more obvious that, unless this theoretical-historical task is initiated, the movement must continue to suffer one strategic defeat after another.

It is a conspicuous and ironical fact that neither the liberal nor the radical marxist opposition to the present

regime has formulated any reasonably systematic theoretical-historical analysis of the sociological assumptions and explicit propositions of the National Party's theory of nationality. There seem to be two reasons for this omission. In the first place, all liberal and surprisingly many marxist critics of the National Party's theories share the latter's mystified conception of 'race' (notwithstanding many excellent analyses of the objective socio-economic basis of racist ideology in South Africa). The inevitable result is that they are unable to produce at the theoretical level a decisive argument against the National Party's theory of nationality, which takes as one of its points of departure the myth of 'race'. In the second place, the subject of nationality (nationalism, the nation, etc.), viewed from a bourgeois sociological perspective, is one of the most controversial fields of scientific investigation. Even in the Soviet Union, where there has been a long tradition of theoretical debate on the subject and almost as long a period of implementation of strategies concerning nationality, there is no definitive view on the subject – in fact there is a constant revision of apparently well-founded principles.² Methodological problems, such as the problem of definition, make a mockery of most work on the subject³ to such an extent that – especially on the so-called extreme left – many people actually question the very reality of the category 'nation' and all that goes with it.⁴

But far from being 'nonsense', nationality is an historic force. This is the reason for the propagation and proliferation of bogus nationalisms, the main purpose of which is to dissipate the force of the class struggle by deflecting it into channels that will nurture the dominant classes. The Bantustan strategy is precisely such an attempt to harness the creative and revolutionary energies of the national liberation movement in order to use them against the emergent nation by dividing it into warring and antagonistic groupings graced with the tainted robes of

'independent nations'. These groups, be they language groups, religious sects, colour-castes, or administrative units, have, in the South African context, a reality at a certain level. To deny this is to behave like an ostrich. It is much more important to recognise them for what they actually are, to characterise them as such and to analyse the dynamic, embedded in the class structure of the South African social formation, by which they have been and are being brought into motion. Only in this way, and not by mere negative assertion or inane ridicule, can the bogus claims of the National Party's theory and practice be exposed. This theory which postulates the existence in South Africa of eight (sometimes nine) 'Bantu nations', one 'white nation', one 'Indian' and one 'Coloured nation-to-be', has thrown into sharp relief the need to characterise scientifically these groups of people. Anyone who realises that theory is a guide to action will not doubt that future policies and strategies will be influenced by the existence of an articulated theory concerning the nature and possible direction of development of the groups concerned. The practical proof of this in South Africa is the National Party's theory and the impact it has had on government policy.

In a country like South Africa, where social relations have for generations been treated as 'race relations', the need to arrive at a practically illuminating description of the character of these relations, i.e. the *real* (socio-economic) basis of social inequality and the *real* (ideological) forms in which it is expressed, cannot be evaded by those who take on themselves, or on to whom is thrust, the political responsibility for planning the post-apartheid, post-colour bar society now evolving there. It should be clearly understood, therefore, and I wish to state it as bluntly as possible, that this work is intended to meet both theoretical and practical political needs; it is not intended to be a mere juggling of words in the greyness of 'theory'. Only insofar as it is itself the result of, and capable of being a guide to,

the action of the oppressed people is the writing of it to be understood at all.⁵

The central concepts which will be discussed in relation to the way they apply in the South African context are 'race', nation, 'ethnic group', colour-caste and class. The basic thesis of this work is that the population groups (as they are officially called) which now inhabit South Africa are historically evolved colour-castes; that a complex combination of caste-consciousness, class consciousness and class interests under definite but constantly changing material conditions of production and reproduction of relations of production determines the specific forms which historical development in South Africa has taken. The historical product of this development will be a single, democratically constituted nation which, unless counter-revolutionary strategies prevail, will not come into being as long as capitalist relations of production are dominant. Whether or not this single nation does come into being will depend on the extent to which a working-class leadership of the national liberation movement succeeds in determining the political ideology of the revolutionary people. On the other hand, this book argues that the imposition of Bantustans as alleged nation-states can under specific circumstances (in particular a demoralising defeat of a revolutionary uprising) influence historical development so that the solution of the national question will be retarded and distorted, albeit temporarily, in important ways.⁶ I stop short of formulating a counter-strategy to that of the National Party, as this is more specifically the task of political practice. However I do believe that a strategy based on the theoretical position expounded here represents the only *viable* alternative for the national liberation movement.

A note on methodology

In all works concerned with the characterisation of groups of people who are politically mobilised there are certain inarticulate premises which invariably give rise to misunderstandings and polemics. It is, consequently, necessary to anticipate some of the problems that will inevitably be posed by critics of this study. These problems are related to the premises on which the work rests. The acceptability or otherwise of these premises depends on the class position adopted by the reader. It must be clear, therefore, that within the context of a shared class position, criticism will be expected and accepted. On the other hand, criticism from outside the framework of my class position, while also expected, will be of less importance to the life of this document and the ideas it contains.

Analysis of aspects of a social formation proceeds at various levels. In most cases and for most circumscribed purposes, concentration on any particular level is adequate, provided the purposes are clearly stated and the limitations of such analysis conceded. Thus, for instance, analysis which is confined predominantly to the ideological level (the level of consciousness) can give important empirical insights without, however, providing an analytical framework by means of which the historical movement of a society can be examined. To that extent such analyses are distorting and mystifying taken as a whole. This is precisely the swamp that liberal and most other ruling-class analyses of South Africa's 'plural society' fall into. On the other hand, analysis can be confined to the purely economic aspects of social relations. This is what often passes for class analysis. While such work can undoubtedly lay bare the direction and parameters of change, it remains essentially abstract. The formulation of effective counter-strategies to those of the ruling class requires an analysis which has integrated the political and ideological dimensions of the

social formation. The divorce of consciousness from being which is implied in the former procedure is the source of mechanistic tracts of doubtful value. This economistic error is precisely the mistake that much marxist analysis of the South African social formation has made. As a result, it not only did not consider the feasibility of a Bantustan strategy but, when it was obviously being implemented, refused to take it seriously. In contrast, in this book, it is assumed that an analysis which seeks to present the possible options for policy and strategy for the contending classes with a measure of accuracy has to proceed at the economic, political and ideological levels simultaneously and that it can do so without running into irreconcilable contradictions of a methodological nature, such as blatant eclecticism.⁷

Social solidarity is a manifestation of consciousness, of what is assumed to be common to the entity concerned under particular historical circumstances. That which is common is seldom some simple and clearly defined element, nor does it remain constant and unchanging. Thus, for instance, it is completely futile to attempt to explain the feelings of solidarity of the various classes composing a nation in terms of the fact that all the individuals speak the same language – to equate the nation with the language group. Language is equally a common factor in tribes, in clans, or in castes; yet the manifestation of solidarity in each of these cases is very different from what has come to be called nationalism. It is assumed here that social solidarity or, more generally, identity is an aspect of the ideological dimension of a totality which has historical, economic and political moments, and that unless the interconnections of all these are brought to bear on the particular manifestation of solidarity, analysis becomes emptied of all reality and the result is inevitably a verbal game.

As a corollary to this it is assumed that definitions of social solidarity groups are always formulated from the point of view of a definite political position. The theorist pursues

definite political aims – speaks for a given class or fraction of a class. In political and theoretical practice, therefore, any theory of nationality depends upon a particular conception of the correct political strategy for the class represented by the theorist concerned. This does not mean that all theories of nationality are mere opportunistic rationalisations by people of a perversely abstruse cast of mind. It means rather that the theory of nationality is itself a stake in the struggle between contending classes, that the hegemonic aspirations of these classes find expression in part in the contending solutions of the national question proposed by their articulate representatives, i.e. the competing theories of the nation. This, indeed, is the profound implication of the assertion by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in *The Communist Manifesto* that:

The working men have no country. We cannot take from them what they have not got. Since the proletariat must first of all acquire political supremacy, must rise to the leading class of the nation, must constitute itself *the* nation, it is so far, itself national, though not in the bourgeois sense of the word.⁸

Under given historical circumstances the articulate representatives of each class give expression to the conception of the nation that they sense (or, if they are scientific and deliberate, that they know) will serve the interests of their class best. Theories in the social sciences are never neutral despite claims to the contrary. Within a given historical epoch that theory of the nation is ‘correct’ which gives expression to and helps explain the processes by which the productive and creative forces of a society are freed from the beliefs, customs, prejudices and divisions that have become outmoded, retrogressive and obstructionist. This does not imply:

that that theory will necessarily be the one to be implemented and realised within the relevant time-

span, for this depends on factors other than the 'progressive' content of the theory concerned.⁹

From the point of view of the advocates of such a theory, the failure to realise it could lead to undreamt of historical detours (that) alter the whole course of the history of the country concerned, at least in its normal aspect.¹⁰

Although this work is conceived of as a contribution to the theoretical analysis of the South African social formation, it is necessary to stress that the approach is an *historical* one. The vacuity of bourgeois sociology, which approaches social phenomena with so-called operational definitions, is a mere obfuscation which itself serves the political purpose of confusing and debilitating the radical intelligentsia. I adopt, therefore, an historical materialist approach which explains social development by examining the interconnections between the determinative economic structure of the social formation and the ideological and political elements that co-determine, at the secondary level, the particular forms in which the class relationships become manifest under given historical circumstances. This approach understands that historical interpretation is related directly to the political position of the historian, i.e. to the class interests he or she represents. In this regard I share the attitude expressed by Trotsky who stated unequivocally that the author:

... stands as a historian upon the same viewpoint upon which he stood as a participant in the events. The reader, of course, is not obliged to share the political views of the author, which the latter on his side has no reason to conceal. But the reader does have the right to demand that an historical work should not be the defence of a political position, but an internally well-founded portrayal of the actual process of the revolution ...

The serious and critical reader will not want a treacherous impartiality, which offers him a cup of

conciliation with a well-settled poison of reactionary hate at the bottom, but a scientific conscientiousness, which for its sympathies and antipathies – open and undisguised – seeks support in an honest study of the facts, a determination of their real connections, an exposure of the causal laws of their movement. That is the only possible historic objectivism, and moreover it is amply sufficient, for it is verified and attested not by the good intentions of the historian, for which only he himself can vouch, but by the natural laws revealed by him of the historic process itself.¹¹

At the same time I must emphasize that this is not a history of South Africa. From an historiographical point of view this is a history of the idea of the nation in South Africa, traced not as a mere ideological phenomenon, but in its relation to the economic and political conjuncture which it expresses and helps to determine, in the context of constantly changing forces and relations of production.

The table of contents is self-explanatory so that no additional summary is required. However, it will perhaps assist the reader if I point out that Chapters One and Four are closely related to each other, as are Chapters Three and Five. In Chapter Six I deal with the central concepts – especially that of colour-caste – necessary for the understanding of my formulation of the national question, which is dealt with in the concluding chapter of the work.

Use of the concept 'bourgeoisie'

It is necessary to refer at the outset to the manner in which the term 'bourgeoisie' and its derivatives are used in this work. In particular, it should be stressed that qualifications of the term are in all cases intended to emphasize economic, political or ideological aspects of the bourgeoisie. Thus while 'capital', generally speaking, can be qualified according to a given phase in its circuit (finance, industrial,

commercial, landed capital), it ought not to be so qualified in terms of the branch of production in which it is invested (mining, manufacturing, agricultural capital) unless there are historical reasons for assuming a relative immobility of capital in a particular case. This latter restriction does not apply to the owners of capital, however. The bourgeoisie, as a class of people subject to concrete historically evolved political and ideological influences, is, unlike capital, in fact divided into (non-antagonistic) fractions, formally or informally, more fixed or less fixed depending on the total development of the productive forces and on attendant political and ideological changes.

In this work, therefore, the term 'bourgeoisie' is used to describe the totality of agrarian, finance, industrial and merchant capitalists in whose hands is concentrated the ownership of the means of production. This class uses these means of production in a capitalistic manner, i.e. for the direct purpose of producing surplus value. They produce use values for the market and not for their own consumption, so that, in the words of Marx, 'the dominant and determining characteristic of their products is their existence as *commodities*'.

Particular attention is drawn to three derivatives often used in the text to emphasize political and ideological aspects of elements within the bourgeoisie. The term 'liberal bourgeoisie' refers to the *political* aspect of the mainly industrial and merchant bourgeoisie that has historically tended to oppose all rigidly segregationist solutions to the problem of 'race relations'. The political representatives of this fraction of the capitalist class have, especially since the Rand Revolt of 1922, advocated the co-option of the leadership of the African nationalist movement. Because of the peculiar development of capitalism in South Africa most individuals who fell into this category were until recently English-speaking. The liberal bourgeoisie has traditionally and economically been closely tied to metropolitan (mainly

British, now also American) capitalist interests.

The term 'national bourgeoisie' refers to all fractions of the bourgeoisie whose capital was or is derived from, and predominantly retained in, South Africa. It consequently excludes the owners of shares or other legal forms of capital whose interests and allegiance are domiciled elsewhere. Politically, the term is more neutral than, for instance, 'liberal bourgeoisie' since the national bourgeoisie does not embrace any particular political strategy other than the mystified concept of 'what is best for South Africa', i.e. for the ruling class as a whole. It is clear, therefore, that it can encompass individuals and groups who would otherwise consider themselves to be political opponents.

Finally, the term 'Bantustan bourgeoisie' was coined to refer to the class of black entrepreneurs now being created by the National Party government, irrespective of whether their capital is invested in land, or in secondary or tertiary industry. Strictly, one should speak of an aspiring bourgeoisie. The original accumulation of this class derives from state-supplied credit, i.e. from the taxpayers of South Africa, black and white. It is clear that the term embraces both comprador and bureaucratic elements.

Lastly, it is perhaps also necessary to comment on the use of inverted commas around words denoting groups of people. In general, it will become clear to the reader that this work is concerned to create a new conceptual universe from which the dead rot of racism has been banished. Consequently, it has to create a different discourse from those now prevalent in the field of so-called race relations. In order to avoid clumsy and space-consuming circumlocutions, I have often resorted to the use of inverted commas (as in 'race', for instance) so as to underline my rejection of the concept denoted. For technical typographical reasons, however, I have in many cases omitted inverted commas. This comment is intended, therefore, to alert the reader to what may on occasion seem

to be a lack of consistency. An example will clarify the matter. Should one who rejects the racist connotations of the term, Indian, in the South African context, always write 'Indian' or 'people of Indian origin', if there is occasion to distinguish between this group of people and others for any reason? I have done both, but the reader will also come across the unadorned usage, Indian, especially where the reference is clearly to ruling-class usage or to quotation.

Notes

1. See, for instance, E.H. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution*, Vol. 1, pp. 415–22. Also B. Wolfe, *Three Who Made A Revolution*, pp. 637–8.
2. See Chapter 6 below.
3. See Chapter 6 below.
4. One is reminded of Marx's acid comments on his son-in-law, Lafargue's ridiculing of nationalities as 'nonsense'. See E.H. Carr, *op. cit.*, pp. 421–2.
5. 'Grey, dear friend, is all theory. And green the golden tree of life.' Mephistopheles in Goethe's *Faust*, Part 1.
6. See Chapter 6 below.
7. See further the section in Chapter Six on the relationship between caste and class.
8. K. Marx and F. Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, in Marx/ Engels, *Selected Works*, p. 51.
9. F. Molteno, 'The Historical Significance of the Bantustan Strategy', p. 33.
10. *Ibid.*
11. L. Trotsky, *The History of the Russian Revolution*, Vol. 1, pp. xx–xxi. Also see E.H. Carr, *What is History?*, *passim*.

1. THE NATIONAL PARTY'S THEORY OF NATIONALITY

Conventional ruling-class perspectives: The prism of 'race'

THE CONVENTIONAL RULING-CLASS WISDOM concerning South African politics can be summarised briefly as follows: After the defeat of the Boer Republics in 1902 and the establishment of the Union of South Africa in 1910 politics in South Africa referred essentially to the struggle for parliamentary hegemony between predominantly English-speaking and predominantly Afrikaans-speaking groups of whites, irrespective of the classes to which they belonged or aspired to belong. Only in times of economic crisis, such as the inter-war period of the Great Depression, did a truce between the two groups operate. In this struggle the position of the black people of the country was analogous to that of a factor of production (labour). The blacks were seen as the main source of unskilled and semi-skilled labour, the whites as the main source of skilled labour, enterprise and capital. Land was, until approximately 1948, the crucial factor around which a white-black conflict could arise. However the monopoly of power enjoyed by whites ruled out any possibility of the inarticulate, disorganised and disunited blacks constituting any serious threat to the *status quo*.

In general, the ideological explanation for the position described above was that the whites, because of their 'superior civilisation' and their European heritage, were entitled to rule. It was their duty to help blacks to attain a similar standard of sophistication, but until this had been

done (a goal which many deemed unattainable), blacks in general would have to rest content with their inferior status. On these basics all spokesmen of the ruling-class, both English- and Afrikaans-speaking, were united. Academics and scientists underpinned these gut-level convictions of whites with learned tomes on the inequality of the 'races'. (To some of these productions I shall return presently because of the bearing they have on the present subject.)

After the Sharpeville massacre (1960) and the creation of the white Republic of South Africa (1961), the main focus of politics in South Africa shifts, in the National Party's view, from a struggle between the two white language groups to one between the white 'nation' and various black 'nations'. In the more liberal view the shift is towards a struggle between whites and blacks *sans phrase*. The former view found its clearest expression in an address to the United Nations Security Council by Mr. R.F. Botha, then the South African ambassador to the U.N. In it, he said:

The problem in Southern Africa is basically not one of race, but of nationalism, which is a world-wide problem. There is a White nationalism, and there are several Black nationalisms ... My Government's principal aim is to make it possible for each nation, Black and White, to achieve its fullest potential, including sovereign independence, so that each individual can enjoy all the rights and privileges which his or her community is capable of securing for him or her.¹

This statement represents the culmination – on the theoretical level – of a process which had started in the early 1930s when Afrikaans-speaking white intellectuals began to formulate a theory of nationality in order to legitimise what is now called Afrikaner nationalism.² What has happened is that since the mid-1950s the essentials of that theory have been generalised and applied to blacks in order to legitimise the strategy of Bantustans.

Nature and development of Afrikaner sectionalism

Before we can look more closely at the propositions constituting that theory it is essential to analyse briefly the nature and development of Afrikaner 'nationalism'. One of the astounding facts about South African historiography is that, until recently, with the exception of the work of F.A. van Jaarsveld, T. Dunbar Moodie, D. O'Meara and J. Cronin,³ there are no serious studies emanating from South Africans themselves of this important movement. There are numerous works on the origins of the Afrikaner people, but none of these deals theoretically with their 'nationalism'. In a later section I shall deal systematically with the claims of Afrikaner theorists concerning an Afrikaner 'nationality'. At this point I want to focus on the sources and development of the Afrikaner nationalist movement.

Those descendants of predominantly Dutch-speaking colonists who defected from the Cape Colony in approximately 1834–1840 (in the notorious Great Trek) were essentially subsistence farmers who had very tenuous links with the Cape, and thus with the world market. Very few were families of considerable means, judged by the prevailing standards of the colony (cattle and wagons). Only after the dispossession of most of the indigenous tribes (in collusion with Her Britannic Majesty's successive governments at the Cape and later in Natal and the Orange River Sovereignty), and in response to the increasing demand for Manchester goods in all parts of the world, did these farmers, like their counterparts in Australia and in New Zealand, become important suppliers of wool and hides.⁴ Afrikaans-speaking farmers in the Cape Colony were similarly occupied, but a significant group engaged in viticulture and wine-making in the Western Cape, an enterprise which had a tradition almost as old as the colony itself.

The conflict between the British administration and the farmers on the Eastern Frontier was in essence a conflict between mutually contradictory aims. Until the 1840s Britain was interested in the Cape Colony primarily because of its strategic significance on the route to India and only secondarily because it provided a market for its manufacturing industries. According to De Kiewiet, the Cape '... was listed in Treasury accounts not as a Settlement or Plantation, but as a Military and Maritime Station' as late as 1849.⁵ For this reason the overriding concern of every successive Colonial Secretary was to avoid the risk of war against the indigenous tribes and thus to prevent the expenditure of the British taxpayer's grudgingly contributed funds on senseless colonial adventures. The emigrant farmers, on the other hand, measured their status, wealth and comfort in terms of land, cattle and sheep. A longstanding tradition of extensive pastoral farming had become a self-perpetuating mechanism for the dispossession of the technologically inferior indigenous tribes. The Commando system, backed up by government troops, pushed the frontiers of the colony ever more precipitately eastwards and northwards. Land-hunger, therefore, was the fundamental cause of the defection from the Cape which was justified by the Trekkers on the grounds that Britain treated whites and blacks as equals, that the slaves had been emancipated without proper compensation and (a claim made much later) that there was official discrimination against the Dutch language.

For two brief decades the Boer Republics – with varying degrees of British intervention to prevent the total dispossession of the BaSotho and Zulu peoples so as not to have overwhelmingly powerful and hostile states in the rear of the Colony – continued in quasi-feudal anarchy and backwardness. However the mineral discoveries of the 1860s and 70s changed the entire course of their development. It is important to note that, despite historical

and language affinity, a clear distinction had emerged between the settled Afrikaans-speaking farmers of the Western Cape, engaged mainly in viticulture and sheep-farming, and the frontiersmen, who were semi-nomadic pastoralists. Even the most rabid Afrikaner chauvinists concede that before approximately 1881, there was no sense of unity among all the Afrikaans-speaking white inhabitants of South Africa. Not until the Boer Republics could demonstrate that it would be worthwhile to acknowledge one's *Afrikanerdom*, i.e. not until it made economic sense to assert nationality, did a sense of identity based in the main on language take root among large numbers of Afrikaans-speaking whites.

Afrikaners at the time of the mineral discoveries

It was British imperialist greed that immediately created the conditions that led to the rise of Afrikaner sectionalism. The annexation of the diamond fields around Kimberley, claimed by the Orange Free State, was the spark that lit the conflagration. The subsequent struggles in the South African Republic around the ownership and control of the gold fields of the Witwatersrand entrenched this anti-British, Afrikaans-based sectionalism for the return of the land, wealth and independence of the former republics. Against the background of the Great Trek and the suspicions fostered against 'perfidious Albion', it is not difficult to see why most of the Afrikaans-speaking white inhabitants of the Boer Republics would be drawn together in the common struggle against British imperialism as represented by Rhodes and Jameson. That their resistance was based on more than a mere feeling for independence is evident from the fact that they believed, especially after the late 1870s, that they could depend on other European powers, notably Germany, to intervene on their behalf. The naiveté of this belief is no more than a reflection of their

incomprehension of the imperialist system of spheres of influence. Of course, in reality, the struggles in the South African Republic around the gold fields were class struggles in which petty commodity producers and some large-scale producers (mainly white farmers) struggled to retain their hold on the land and its mineral wealth against the superior force of a fully-fledged, rapacious imperialism.

The situation of the Afrikaans-speaking white population of the Cape Colony was more complex. Ever since the last days of the Dutch East India Company there had been a pro-government and an anti-government faction in both the Western and the Eastern Provinces. After the final British occupation of the colony in 1806, these became pro-British ('Anglo-men') and anti-British ('nationals') factions. The revolt in the Eastern Cape eventually led to the Great Trek. It also led to the alienation of the Republicans from the Loyalists in the Cape Colony. Although the Afrikaans-speaking section comprised approximately three-quarters of the white population of the Cape Province, they did not assert themselves politically until after the granting of responsible government to the Colony in 1872.

At about this time three important events took place. First, the discovery and subsequent dispute over the Kimberley diamond fields suddenly changed the whole face of South Africa. The manner in which Britain browbeat and conned the Free Staters exposed the naked greed and imperialist nature of British government. At the same time it was inevitable that capital, whether concentrated in agriculture or in the hands of British financiers, would begin to seek means of controlling and exploiting the mineral riches of the country. The anti-British sentiments and propaganda emanating from the Republics found a ready ear among considerable numbers of Afrikaans-speaking whites in the Cape Colony.⁶

Second, and apparently unrelated to the above events,

the first Afrikaans language movement emerged full-grown in the Western Cape. For many decades a gap of virtual unintelligibility had been manifest between Afrikaans as spoken by the majority of 'Dutch-speaking' people in South Africa, and Dutch, which remained the written language and the language of the courts, the schools and the church. Since the direct connection between the Cape and Holland had been severed in 1806, there was by 1875 no reason to sustain the Latin-like remoteness of Dutch among the common people. Hence a dedicated group of Afrikaans-speaking intellectuals under the leadership of Rev. S.J. Du Toit began to advocate the substitution of Afrikaans for Dutch in all spheres of life. This movement led in 1876 to the establishment of the *Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners* (the Association of True Afrikaners) in Paarl, followed shortly by the establishment of its own newspaper *Di Patriot*, which was the first Afrikaans newspaper in South Africa. The *Genootskap* advocated Afrikaans as the written language and the creation of a feeling of national unity among Afrikaners.⁷ It wanted to plead for 'Our Language, Our Nation and Our Country'.⁸ The linguistic and historical researches and activities of the *Genootskap* had a direct impact on the cultural and sectional consciousness of the Afrikaner people, especially since it deliberately strove to unite all Afrikaans-speaking whites in Southern Africa. It was destined to become an instrument in the hands of the agrarian capitalists in the Western Cape by means of which they would gain the allegiance of the Afrikaners as a language group in order to bargain for a share of the power and wealth controlled by British imperialism.

This agrarian capital was represented in the Cape from 1878 onwards in an organised form by the *Boeren Beskermings Vereniging* (the Farmers' Protective Union) under the leadership of Jan Hendrik Hofmeyer. The B.B.V. was a union of farmers' associations and was established originally as a lobby to fight an excessive excise duty on

brandy. Branches were established throughout the Cape Colony and a few of its representatives were elected as members of the Legislative Assembly of the Colony. The organisation began to converge with one of the first political products of the language movement – the Afrikaner Bond (A.B.), established by Du Toit in 1882. Despite his initial rejection of the Bond, Hofmeyer soon accepted the fact that the activities of the Bond and the B.B.V. were overlapping, and he consequently agreed to fusion at a congress on 24 May 1883.

Agrarian capital and the Afrikaner Bond

Since the Afrikaner Bond is the political source of 'Afrikaner nationalism', it is of great importance to understand why and how it came into being. The A.B. was a political association of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois white (predominantly Afrikaans-speaking) farmers covering the whole of South Africa. Its founders and leaders, men such as S.J. Du Toit, D.F. Du Toit, J.H. Hofmeyer, were the intellectual elite of the Afrikaans-speaking whites at the Cape, sons of large-scale wine farmers who had begun to sense both the need and the possibility of capturing parliamentary power in order to control the economic levers.⁹ Their initial struggle for equal status for Dutch with English as an official language in the Cape Colony was, apart from genuine sentiment, their strategic opening gambit to challenge exclusive imperialist control of the Cape and later of the Boer Republics. The major factor on which both the Afrikaner Bond of S.J. Du Toit and Hofmeyer's B.B.V. were in agreement was the need to eliminate, or at least reduce, the stranglehold of British banks on the South African economy.¹⁰ Both advocated, with little success at this stage, the establishment of a 'national bank' to serve the interests of the farmers as against the merchant bias of the 'English' banks. They also

encouraged farmers co-operatives to eliminate merchant-class parasitism on direct producers.¹¹

The anti-British struggle of the Boer Republics, after the discovery of the rich mineral deposits, was the immediate reason for the overt politicisation of the B.B.V. and the language movement. The language and cultural aims and the religious orthodoxy had already created firm personal bonds between men such as Du Toit of the Cape and Paul Kruger and Piet Joubert of the South African Republic, as well as Chief Justice Reitz of the Orange Free State and other leaders of the Republics. After the first war by Afrikaners against Britain (1879–1881), the time was therefore ripe for all the anti-British streams to flow into a single political pool. The result was the Afrikaner Bond. By 1883 the original Bond, formed by Du Toit, and the B.B.V. had merged and accepted a single programme of principles. This programme is the source of the political theory and practice of Afrikaner sectionalism.

One important aspect of this sectionalist movement at this stage has to be stressed. Hofmeyer and men like him were too well aware of the dependence of the Afrikaner on the British connection ever to become anti-English chauvinists (ironically, even a Du Toit eventually became no more than a British stooge). Their major aim was, however, to link firmly a stratum of the white working population, which might otherwise have been completely alienated, to the British imperialist chariot by organising and regimenting their potential leaders. As men of property, with partial access to power in the Cape Legislative Assembly, they were interested essentially in a share of power at the expense of the black labouring classes and, like all patriotic bourgeoisies, were also incensed that the economic surplus should be allocated in the main to foreign shareholders and exporters. Through parliament, and on the model of British 19th century movements (Chartists and the Anti-Corn-Law League),¹² they were

determined to obtain a share of power and a seat at the table of plenty conjured up by the discovery of diamonds and gold. This is the reason for the noteworthy lack in official Afrikaner Bond documents of hurrah-patriotism and anti-English chauvinism, and also for the limitation of their political demands to a united South Africa under its own flag (but not necessarily a republic). At a time when most Afrikaners owned some land or had a profession, the Bond, which was their political voice, was concerned primarily to obtain for the elite a share of power, i.e. the possibility of being integrated into the ruling class. At this stage in the history of Afrikaner sectionalism, therefore, it is the agrarian bourgeoisie and their representatives who constitute the vanguard of the movement. This position was to change, as we shall see, as a result of economic development and the changing class relationships arising therefrom.

The solid bourgeois foundation of the Afrikaner Bond and the way it sought to use the potential language-group sectionalism of the Afrikaners emerge clearly from S.J. Du Toit's original proposal for the establishment of the organisation circulated on 20 June 1879. Point Three of this proposal reads as follows:

AN AFRIKANER BOND, which ... furthers the true interests of our land and of all parties, and *prevents the sacrifice of Africa's interests to England, or those of the Farmer to the Merchant.*¹³

And Point Six states:

AN AFRIKANER BOND, *which develops Trade and Industry, for the benefit of the land and not to fill the pockets of speculators; which above all does not permit our money market to be dominated by English banks; which will develop factories as soon as opportunity comes.*¹⁴

In this latter point, especially, the cry of national capital for

investment in secondary industry and liberation from the bondage of imports from 'home' is evident.

The Afrikaner Bond, and those organisations in the Boer Republics which were later modelled on it, was the political expression of agrarian capital's desire to gain political power and to eliminate the exclusive dependence of the colony on British imperialist finance and industry. However it is equally clear that deeply embedded in its structure and its goals was a contradiction which, broadly speaking, drew a line of demarcation between the attitudes and aspirations of the bourgeoisie and of the petty-bourgeoisie. Whereas the former was content to settle for a sharing of power with imperialism on the basis of the joint exploitation of the 'native masses' and would, therefore, accept equality of languages and opportunity on the existing foundations, the latter were concerned to gain exclusive power and to sever the British connection, thus making it possible for national capital to become dominant in the whole of South Africa. Since the Hofmeyer (bourgeois) interpretation was more in line with the realities of the situation towards the end of the 19th century, the Afrikaner Bond inevitably became no more than his electoral machine, an organisation of 'conciliation' and for the sharing of power.

The defeat of the Republics in the Anglo-Boer War (1899–1902) temporarily blocked any possibility that the petty-bourgeois interpretation of 'Afrikaner nationalism' could become the dominant one. The acceptance by the Afrikaners' new political parties, Het Volk and the Orangia-Unie, of the British Prime Minister Campbell-Bannerman's proposals of compromise and reconciliation in 1906, entrenched Hofmeyerism in the form of the South African Party (S.A.P.), led by Generals Botha and Smuts. This party expressed politically the fact that agrarian (largely Afrikaner) and finance (essentially English mining) capitalists had come to an agreement concerning the running of South Africa. The legislative programmes of the

first few administrations after the four colonies were joined together in the Union of South Africa in 1910 revealed all too clearly that this compromise was based on the assumption that the 'natives' were to be the helots for an all-white aristocracy. The episodic differences between General Smuts and General Hertzog (who almost immediately broke away from the S.A.P. to form the first National Party) should not obscure the fact that both accepted the premises of the compromise of 1910, a fact that was again proved in 1934 when their parties merged to form the United South African National Party.

The Broederbond: 'Class vanguard of Afrikaner nationalism'

But the fundamentalist petty-bourgeoisie did not give up their struggle. Their heroes were the men of the Rebellion of 1914, Generals De Wet, Kemp, Beyers, Jopie Fourie and many others. In 1918 there was formed the Afrikaner Broederbond (A.B.). Whereas the original Afrikaner Bond had been the class representative of the agrarian bourgeoisie, the role of which had been to tie Afrikaner sectionalism firmly to the imperialist master for the benefit of agrarian capital, the new Afrikaner Broederbond was the *petty-bourgeois* class vanguard of this sectionalism until approximately 1948.¹⁵

The real importance of the Anglo-Boer War lay in the economic depression that followed and the effect this had on the depopulation (affecting Afrikaners) of the rural areas. A complete class shift took place in the ranks of Afrikaans-speaking whites. The overwhelming majority had before the War been either land-owning peasants (exploiting black labour-tenants) or at least tenant-farmers. After the War, the process of dispossession, aggravated by an unprecedentedly severe and long drought, accelerated and eventually rendered the majority of them landless

proletarians congregated in cities, searching for work and unable to offer any special skills – thus subject to competition for jobs from hundreds of thousands of Africans from all over Southern Africa.¹⁶ Since these proletarians enjoyed the vote, their *class-based* antipathy to the imperialism which had dispossessed them, and their *caste-based* antipathy to black workers, whom they saw as directly threatening them, provided ideal soil for a sectionalist mass movement. Indeed it can be said that one of the two major strategic tasks of the Broederbond was to prevent this working class from responding in all matters *as a class*, i.e. to abort any class consciousness among them. This was no easy task for:

Despite sustained attempts at cultural mobilisation, Afrikaans-speaking workers displayed a dangerous tendency to act in terms of class rather than cultural interest. To respond as workers – admittedly protected from and therefore hostile to the aspirations of black workers, but as workers none the less – rather than as Afrikaners. The basis of this tendency was the trade union organisation, led by English-speaking artisans and dominated by the craft unions which clearly had no interest in cultural mobilisation. Afrikaans workers thus belonged to class organisations, had their interests articulated in these terms and voted for the Labour Party. They had thus to be weaned from both.¹⁷

The urgency with which this primary task was viewed by the petty bourgeoisie becomes evident from a hysterical speech delivered by Dr. Nico Diedrichs (later President of the Republic of South Africa) in 1937:

If the [Afrikaner] worker is drawn away from our nation, then we might as well write Ichabod on the door of our temple. The worker has always supplemented the higher classes – the working classes are the spring from which the nation draws. Today there is a determined struggle under way

which is aimed at the working classes, the foundation of our People. There are forces at work in the bosom of the People which seek to unite our workers with the proletariat of other lands ... The head-quarters of this movement is in Moscow ... In South Africa we believe that the Afrikaner worker is still the best and most reliable Afrikaner. He must be drawn into his nation in order to be a genuine man. There must be no division or schism between class and class. May the day break here as is the case in Italy and Germany, where the worker may comfort himself with the thought: 'What I do here I do as a worker, but I do it in the service of my nation.'¹⁸

The Broederbond's second major task was the concentration of capital derived from workers (and other classes, especially farmers) in the hands of a few Afrikaans entrepreneurs to create an economic power base which would benefit immediately from control of the state by the petty bourgeoisie voted into power by the white workers.

If infant Afrikaner capital was to grow in the face of tremendous hostility and competition from established capital, it was faced with a number of priorities. It had to organise the Afrikaans market by persuading Afrikaners to invest in infant and not very promising ventures when much more attractive avenues were available. But there were very few Afrikaners in the North with capital to invest, and they were largely associated with the United Party. Thus the only source of capital was the savings of Afrikaans farmers and workers. If these individually small sums were to provide the large amounts of capital needed, both groups had to be mobilised extensively. The only available mobilisational device which could unite their diverse interests was that of ethnicity, their common 'Afrikaans' culture. Political power too was essential to this aim, not only because government contracts

could be awarded to the 'right' people, but because of the role of government in determining economic policy and its power of appointment to the critically important advisory boards, planning councils and control boards.¹⁹

The Afrikaner Broederbond

... was always an urban, petty bourgeois, northern dominated grouping, reflecting in itself too the differential relationship with fractions of capital between the northern and southern petty bourgeoisie.²⁰

Whereas in the Cape there had existed since the days of the Afrikaner Bond, a firm alliance between Afrikaans-speaking agrarian capital and the petty bourgeoisie, the northern provinces had a totally different situation. For, after the Natives Land Act (1913) (which restricted African land holding to less than ten per cent of South Africa) most large-scale farmers made their peace with imperialism and supported Botha and Smuts' policy of conciliation. The urban petty bourgeoisie, faced with the problem of landless 'poor whites' and economic deprivation and discrimination, had no class other than the emerging white working class with which it could ally itself. It should be remembered that we are here speaking of the period shortly after the Anglo-Boer War when the Union of South Africa had yet to prove itself. The historical resentments of the Afrikaans-speaking petty bourgeoisie – their memory of the Great Trek and of all the 'perfidy' of England and the fact of economic and cultural oppression of Afrikaners by English-speaking 'sharks' – made it difficult for the petty-bourgeois elements among Afrikaners to conceive of a real alliance with the petty bourgeoisie among English-speakers. In any case, the only classes that could challenge the state in terms of actual or potential concentrations of power were the national bourgeoisie itself and the white workers, the majority of whom had rapidly become Afrikaans in the wake of the

Anglo-Boer War.

It is precisely this ideologically isolated position, reflecting the total economic dependence of the northern petty bourgeoisie, which gave the Broederbond its significance. From the outset it expressed its concern with urban issues. It saw the problems of poor whiteism and the position of Afrikaners generally as an urban rather than rural phenomenon. Its solutions were never to be sought simply at the level of politics, but in the ownership structure of the industrial economy, by challenging the nature of South African capitalism itself. This orientation gave it the vanguard role after 1927, and even in the days of the Hertzog Party, differentiated it from the broader concerns of the Nationalist establishment.²¹

Essentially, therefore, the Broederbond was the 'left' wing of Afrikaner sectionalism. It represented the interests of those petty-bourgeois and aspirant bourgeois strata which could not be satisfied with the Botha-Smuts (and later Smuts-Hertzog) compromise with imperialism whereby formal political independence was conceded without imperialism abandoning its economic hegemony. Mining capital, although its immediate representatives did not constitute the government, in fact dominated economic strategy and development. Agrarian capital, although it directly ruled the country, was no more than an adjunct of the former. This situation was unacceptable to the radical petty bourgeoisie and to the workers. The Broederbond, therefore, set out to use all the ideological and cultural weapons in the arsenal of South African history in order to get a greater share of economic power for national capital. But its anti-imperialism could not provide the base for a genuine revolutionary struggle since its petty-bourgeois and racist origins and strategies precluded this *ab initio*. This more than anything else shows that it was the objective role of Afrikaner 'nationalism' to broaden the base of the

ruling class, and even to raise that segment of the bourgeoisie espousing a nationalist (white chauvinist and anti-British) outlook to a position of hegemony within the ruling class. As such, it was bound to collide with the black wage-earners who were beginning to stake *their* claim to economic and political rights. Instead, therefore, of becoming the vanguard of a working class movement against imperialist exploitation and oppression, the petty-bourgeois Broederbond allied itself with a single fraction of that working class, in order to create a political base for the national bourgeoisie. With this leverage, it tried to bargain for a greater share of power and to restructure the economy in such a way that the national bourgeoisie would have more influence over economic strategy.

O'Meara is therefore perfectly justified in posing the following questions:

A critical question is what exactly constituted 'the Afrikaner nation' and its 'interests'? Who were the 'ons' (us) of Nationalist rhetoric? What was it about 'ons' which enabled the interests of farmers, workers, peasants, petty bourgeoisie and capitalists to be depicted as those of 'the Afrikaner nation' and how have these interests changed? After 1927 the Broederbond entrusted itself with the largely successful identification, interpretation, guardianship and promotion of these interests. Its analysis and solutions to the problems of 'Afrikanerdom' were those of an economically deprived and excluded petty bourgeoisie. The structure of South African capitalism was identified as the source of this discrimination and the Bond set out 'to capture the foreign (capitalist) system and transform and adapt it to our national character'. The Afrikaner nationalism it espoused was similarly a petty-bourgeois response which sought to coordinate the interests of various Afrikaans-speaking class forces against the 'imperialist' hegemonic and dominant classes.²²

The Afrikaner nationalist theory of the nation

It is to this question of the 'Afrikaner nation' that we have to address ourselves, for two important reasons. In the first place it is necessary to understand how the Afrikaans-speaking petty bourgeoisie and aspirant bourgeoisie attempted to structure and explain their nurturing of Afrikaner sectionalism. Political and organisational mobilisation of the Afrikaans-speaking workers required an ideological legitimation. This was provided in the late 1930s by Broederbond intellectuals (notably Dr. Nico Diedrichs) who had recently completed their academic training in Germany or Holland. In the second place, it is necessary to establish the continuity that exists between the theories of nationality espoused by these intellectuals and the subsequent theory of the nation inherent in the strategy of Bantustans, while at the same time showing how the development of capitalism made necessary and possible the application of this theory to the black wage-earners and other labouring people, but only after the 1951–1960 period. In other words, it must be shown that strategic discontinuity at the political level is not accompanied by ideological-theoretical discontinuity. Since this question of the development of the theory of the 'Afrikaner nation' has been treated in some detail by T. Dunbar Moodie,²³ even though from the point of view of a 'history of ideas', it is sufficient to summarise here his main findings and to indicate those aspects relevant to an understanding of the development of the Bantustan strategy.

Moodie distinguishes between what he calls 'liberal' and 'neo-Fichtean' nationalism.²⁴ The concept of the nation espoused by Diedrichs and his stablemates was of the latter neo-Fichtean variety. Diedrich's book *Nasionalisme as Lewensbeskouing en sy Verhouding tot Internasionalisme* ('Nationalism as a View of Life and Its Relation to Internationalism'), published in 1935, is the *locus classicus* of

this theory of the nation. In consonance with the German Romantics' idealist notions, Diedrichs asserts that man is a spiritual being and as such an instrument of the Divinity. The individual (an abstraction) does not exist outside of a human community, the highest form of which is the nation. But men have to conquer their natural dispositions in order to acquire, sustain and develop their spirituality:

For human nature is not a mere fact, but a task, a calling, an idea ... Mankind is never completely himself ... he must always conquer himself to remain himself, more and more overcome himself in order to become that which he is not yet, but which he ought to be.²⁵

The central propositions of this neo-Fichtean theory of nationality are summarised by Moodie as follows:

Corresponding to his idealist view of mankind, Diedrichs defined the nation in spiritual terms. Such factors as love for a common fatherland, common racial descent, or common political convictions might be present in any given nation, but are not necessarily present. The real unity of the nation rests upon a single, spiritual, defining characteristic, a common culture. Diedrichs defined 'culture' as the possession of certain values and principles ... In static terms or as defined subjectively, the nation is a community of feeling. But objectivity is dynamic and is attained only in the process of a coming into being, in a unity of commitment to a common calling. A nation thus involves a unique cultural principle and a community of commitment to the active realization of this principle in every sphere of life.²⁶

The idea that a nation both is, and at the same time is coming into being, does not imply that nations are historical entities. On the contrary '... nations are not historical entities in the sense that history created their unity. Their unity is supra-temporal and grounded in the common ideal world

of values.'²⁷

In fact, Diedrichs posited the nation as the essential and necessary unit of social analysis. Individuals have existence only insofar as they are taken up into the national whole ... The nation is thus the only true reality; true individuals and true humanity exist only in and through the nation.²⁸

People are, therefore, not equally endowed with 'humanity' since not every individual has attained the spiritual values inherent in nationhood. Diedrichs argues that 'The only equality which must be accepted is the equality of opportunity for each to bring that which is within him to full expression'.²⁹ This growth to full humanity 'is possible only when the individual perceives himself as a member of the nation'.³⁰

Nations, according to Diedrichs, are the products of a designing Divinity. They demonstrate both the wealth of his creation ('He ruled that there should exist a multiplicity and diversity of nations, languages and cultures'³¹) and the fact that each nation has a unique 'calling' in accordance with his cosmic plan.

God does not work only through men, but also through nations. To each nation to which He entrusted a special calling He laid up a special task which would have to be fulfilled as part of His providential plan with creation ... An effort to obliterate national differences thus means more than collision with God's natural law. It also means an effort to shirk a divinely established duty or task.

Hence: 'To work for the realization of the national calling is to work for the realization of God's plan. Service to the nation is thus service to God.'³² By making the link between nationalism and 'service to God' Diedrichs ensured that the religious bigotry of the Dutch Reformed Church-nurtured Afrikaners would make them listen to his *political* message. But the acceptance of this brand-new theory by the

traditional custodians of Afrikaner destiny was not without obstacles, as will become evident below.

The dynamic aspect of nationhood, that which brings about its culture creativity, is its divinely ordained calling. Indeed, one may say that the real task of the visionary intelligentsia is to recognise and characterise concretely on the basis of so-called historical patterns – through a reinterpretation of the past or, more bluntly, myth-making – the content of the particular nation's calling. This central importance of the calling is aptly put by P.J. Meyer (one-time head of the Broederbond) in his book, *Die Afrikaner*, published in 1941:

The People as a faith-unit fulfils its own calling on the one hand by realizing the value-whole and on the other the life-order ordained by its faith ... The People is at the same time a social and a cultural community. In the realization of its unique life-form the People creates its culture and in the creation of its culture it realizes its own life-form. These are the two sides of the fulfillment of its unique calling as given in its faith ... The ethnic calling which is contained in the ethnic faith is the most important and primary community-forming and culture-creating factor in the coming-into-being of the People. The realization of the sense and being of Peoplehood is the fulfillment of the ethnic calling which finds its most complete precipitation in the ethnic language. The fulfillment of a People's calling is a dual process, namely community-formation and cultural creation out of the constitution of the People over against its actuality.³³

As seen by Meyer, the normative factors in the vocation of the Afrikaner nation were 'The patriarchal family, the republican constitutional form, and a system of wardship over the South African natives'.³⁴ The cultural value-whole comprised 'a sense of subordination to an absolute and sovereign God as found in Calvinism, general economic

welfare, Christian national education, and uniquely ethnic arts and science'.³⁵ Hence the 'calling' involved the Afrikanerisation of South Africa in all spheres – economic, political and ideological. (This programme of action explains all that has happened subsequently, but it needs to be shown that the logic of the ideologues was not at variance with the real needs of capitalist development, despite the persistent, and often strident critique of their 'irrationality' by other ruling-class theorists and propagandists.)

The neo-Fichtean theory of Diedrichs, Meyer and others was perfectly acceptable to Kuyperian Calvinism as represented by D.R.C. theologians such as H.G. Stoker and L.J. Du Plessis.³⁶ But on two important questions they joined issue with Diedrichs's exposition of the theory of nationality. In the first case they refused to accept what they considered to be his apotheosis of the nation, his subjugation of the individual to the nation, on grounds of rigid Calvinist dogma according to which the nation *and the individual* are equal in status and value before God!³⁷ This position, although leaving the theory of the nation open in principle to liberal individualist interpretations, equally, and more immediately, could be and was used to obstruct any attempt to tie the nonconformist right wing (the Purified National Party led by Dr. Malan) to some 'general will' as represented at that time by General Hertzog's National Party. More important for the present argument is their second objection that Diedrichs's theory '... rejected race as in any way a defining characteristic of the nation, for race is feral and earthly for Diedrichs – definitely inferior to culture',³⁸ which has also a spiritual aspect. The Kuyperian Calvinists, on the other hand, held that '... the spiritual ... is also earthly, also of [creation] and definitely not "divine": God must be distinguished from the spiritual and valuable in [his creation]: this spiritual is just as ... "earthly" or bound to creation as dust and blood.'³⁹

The tendency represented by Stoker and others such as Du Plessis in the Broederbond, therefore, insisted that 'race' was 'a necessary aspect of the nation, although he insisted that he did not wish to exclude the possibility of intermarriage, and the incorporation of individuals from other groups.'⁴⁰ It is important to note that Diedrichs and other neo-Fichteans eventually succumbed to the pressures of their fellow Broederbonders and of the increasing influence of Blood-and-Soil Nazism in the Afrikaner opposition movements. By 1941 he accepted the validity of the criterion of 'race' and other Nazi paraphernalia as integral to his theory of the nation.⁴¹ As for the subsequent Bantustan theory of nationality, which allegedly 'moves away from race', it actually represents on the theoretical plane a kind of return to the original neo-Fichtean position of Diedrichs and others.

Both neo-Fichteans and Kuypersians insisted that Afrikaans-speaking whites were not a 'section' of the South African white population but a separate 'nation'. Both tendencies were forced by circumstances (principally the outbreak of the second World War) – and the neo-Fichteans like Diedrichs, on principle – to concentrate all efforts on transforming the Afrikaner into a 'nation', i.e. to wean away the white Afrikaans-speaking workers from class-orientated ideas and actions, and the farmers from their historic alliance with British mining and finance capital. In contrast to the neo-Fichteans, the Broederbond's Christian Nationalists à la Du Plessis believed firmly in the 'civilising mission' of the Afrikaner 'nation' – in that aspect of its 'calling' that stressed the need to 'Afrikanerise' South Africa and all its people.⁴² As we shall see later, this tendency gained ground almost immediately after the coming to power of the Purified National Party of Dr. D.F. Malan in 1948.

Despite the politely waged polemic between these two tendencies, for practical purposes they may be treated as

one, so that the Purified National Party's theory of nationality as a sociological-theoretical system of ideas may be summarised succinctly as follows: (1) nations are divinely ordained, predestined categories, ideal forms, the historical content of which is determined in concrete struggles of congeries of peoples; (2) nations are communities of culture, defined by a set of values acquired and maintained in historic struggles; (3) this culture finds its main deposit in specific languages, so that language becomes in the words of the English historian, Edward Freeman, the 'badge of nationality';⁴³ (4) community of 'race' is an inherent attribute of a nation so that people of divergent 'race' cannot belong to the same nation. (However, it is also clear that the concept of 'race', despite dogmatic views held by individuals, is handled very flexibly.⁴⁴)

There is no need to trace the actual history of the take-over and control by Afrikaans-speaking petty bourgeois, aspirant bourgeois and bourgeois elements of the Afrikaans-speaking white workers in the period between 1938–1948. This has been done, at least in outline by O'Meara and T. Dunbar Moodie.⁴⁵ Suffice it to say that the claim of some supra-historical *a priori* unity of Afrikaners is as hollow as all other claims of the same kind. History is replete with the corpses of such 'theories' but it is important to stress that as guides to action and as ideological instruments these 'theories' have to be taken seriously and rebutted for what they are, i.e. myths.

In this myth, class cleavages are irrelevant for social action, as the ideological vision common to all Afrikaners, derived from Calvinist theology, united them into a much broader social unity. It is obvious, but equally needs constant reiteration, that Afrikaner nationalist ideology developed historically as a response to social change, and is no immutable *weltanschauung*. Afrikaner nationalism has always been articulated by a shifting class

alliance, until very recently dominated by a relatively deprived petty bourgeoisie. Indeed, the emergence of a fully fledged Afrikaans-speaking bourgeoisie has discernably loosened the ideological hold of Afrikaner nationalism *per se*. It is the petty-bourgeois groups over whom the ideology still holds the strongest sway. Only after 1945 were Afrikaans-speaking workers incorporated into the Nationalist class alliance, and the petty-bourgeois nationalists of Die Nasionale Raad van Trustees had to work long and extremely hard to win these workers to their cause. It was class factors, sheer naked economic interest rather than the supposedly common cultural unity, which achieved this in the end ...⁴⁶

Afrikaner 'nationalism', in our exposition, went through three phases. In the first phase, which lasted until approximately 1914, the Afrikaans-speaking agrarian bourgeoisie of the Cape Province staked its claim to economic and political power by mobilising the Afrikaans-speaking farmers and petty bourgeoisie in order to form an alliance with mining and finance capital, the dominant and hegemonic fraction of the ruling class. This alliance was further strengthened after the Anglo-Boer War when it was broadened to include the agrarian bourgeoisie of the former South African Republic and the sugar plantation farmers of Natal. In the second phase, lasting approximately from 1914 to 1939, the Afrikaans-speaking petty bourgeoisie of the Transvaal, the Cape and the Orange Free State, with the backing of the farmers of the Orange Free State (as represented in the person of General Hertzog), spearheaded a movement for greater autonomy for indigenous South African capital from British imperialism. When, with the support of the white workers, this stratum came to power in 1924, it immediately began to nurture manufacturing industry and congruently to depress and, in a new way, to keep at a minimum level the value of (black) labour power

by means of the 'civilised (i.e. white) labour policy'. For it should be clear that segregation, the political aspect of the 'civilised labour policy' served a similar economic function for nascent secondary industry to that which the Reserves and the migrant labour system had served and continued to serve for primary industry (i.e. by effectively depressing black workers' wage levels). This is, like the reserve strategy, an aspect of the colour-caste system entrenched by the capitalist mode of production in South Africa, which is taken up in detail in Chapter Six. At the same time this alliance of classes pressed for Dominion status, i.e. relative political autonomy within the Empire. On this question the urban petty bourgeoisie and aspirant bourgeoisie broke with the Hertzog alliance and began to press for an independent republic in which the national bourgeoisie would become hegemonic. This break, in the mid-1920s, inaugurated the third phase under the aegis of the Broederbond. Formed in 1918, this became the 'class vanguard of Afrikaner nationalism' and succeeded in attaining its political objectives through the National Party in the period 1948 to 1961 (See Chapter Four for further analysis).

'Liberal' theories of the nation

Before the changes brought about by parliamentary power within the National Party can be discussed, it is necessary to summarise briefly what I shall call generically the 'Liberal' view of the nation. This view, as held by men like Srnuts, Hertzog, and the younger Hofmeyer, amongst others, has a consistent and enduring core which needs to be characterised so that the episodic variations and transmutations which it has undergone do not confuse the issue.

In the period before 1960 *all* representatives of the ruling class were united on the proposition that parliamentary

power was the preserve essentially of 'whites'. Since the Act of Union in 1910 clearly prohibited blacks from sitting in parliament, and since the electorate was composed overwhelmingly of white workers and farmers, no political party or person with parliamentary pretensions could publicly advocate the inclusion of black people in the government of the country (and even less so within the 'nation' in any sense of the term). What discussion did take place centred on the question of whether Afrikaans-speaking and English-speaking whites constituted a single nation as in classical European bourgeois nations. By and large the positions adopted depended on what degree of economic and political interlocking of local and imperialist capital was deemed necessary for the survival of the capitalist system in South Africa. In the political parlance of the day, the discussion was conducted around the question of 'the British connection'.

Generals Smuts and Botha, and the Hofmeyerist liberals who inherited their mantle, were firmly committed to the imperialist perspective. They were not at all concerned to foster the development of an independent urban (i.e. native) bourgeoisie. Instead they believed that the Empire was one and that within it the normal class struggles and class conciliations of European capitalist societies should be allowed to play themselves out. The peculiarity of South Africa in their view was the fact that this process would necessarily take place on the backs of a vast class of black helots. To quote Smuts:

The whole meaning of Union in South Africa is this: We are going to create a nation – a nation which will be of a composite character, including Dutch, German, English and Jew, and whatever white nationality seeks refuge in this land – all can combine. All will be welcome.⁴⁷

In this view, therefore, the defining characteristic of the nation was 'whiteness' of skin colour.

General Hertzog, in contrast, did not accept this close connection with metropolitan capital. More than Smuts and Botha, he was aware of the fact that the capitalist state would have to seek allies in the rapidly growing white working class if it was not to succumb to a challenge from the disenfranchised black workers and peasants. To meet the demands of the aspirant bourgeoisie and the white workers, it was necessary to define the nation less broadly. Hertzog consequently tried to exclude those individuals who 'regarded South Africa as a strange country'. These were persons who were not yet what the General called South Africans:

It was a class which was here with good intentions, but it had not made itself at home, and had not, as yet, joined the ranks of either the old Dutch or of the old English portions, and it felt that it was ready to shake the dust of the country off its feet whenever those things from which it drew benefits existed no longer.⁴⁸

Hertzog's concept of the nation, therefore, added to the dimension of pigmentation that of patriotism and bourgeois anti-imperialism.

In the end the fusion in 1934 of these two tendencies represented by Smuts and Hertzog bridged the narrow gap between them. Unlike the Purified Nationalists led by Malan, they foresaw the possibility of 'civilising' the non-white groups in the remote future and at that stage political-constitutional questions would obviously arise.

Smuts, Hertzog, the younger Hofmeyer, and their liberal successors all assumed that the population of South Africa was composed of four 'races', viz. a White, a Coloured, an Indian and an African race. Though there was a large measure of disagreement concerning the inherent potential of these 'races' to develop along the evolutionary path blazoned by 'Western European Civilisation', all agreed that hitherto and for the foreseeable future the 'white race'

would have to be at the helm of affairs. It will be shown presently that shifts in political strategy took place as the challenge from the movement for national liberation, which represented the underprivileged and oppressed blacks, gathered force. However, such shifts of strategy did not alter the basic belief in the existence of four 'races', even though certain terminological alterations were made from time to time to meet the tactical demands of a changing situation.

This conception of four 'racial' groups with its inherently capitalist and federalist implications and its concomitant science of 'race relations' has always remained at the core of the liberal theory of the South African nation. This can be shown by quotations selected at random from two of the best known modern representatives of the school. Leo Marquard ends off his Presidential Address to the South African Institute of Race Relations in 1957 as follows:

As a liberal South African, a republican burgher by birth, I can only plead that you throw everything into the task of bringing white and non-white together before it is too late. The task is great, it calls for its fulfilment to Africans, Asians, Coloured and European.

As a European, I do not pretend to speak for the other races. They have men and women who can speak, and who have spoken, in clear accents of which South Africa can be proud. Speaking as a member of one of the constituent races that make up our population, I know that men and women, nurtured in the aspiring civilisation of Europe, have never yet faltered before great tasks.⁴⁹

In a similar vein, Margaret Ballinger, for many years a 'Native Representative' in the all-white parliament, writes about what she calls the 'racial composition' of South Africa's population in her autobiography. After giving

statistics about the 'racial groups', she says:

These figures give a ratio of just over three Africans to one European, or if we include all Non-White groups in the calculation, four Non-Whites to one White. On the other hand, if the Asian and Coloured groups were combined with the Whites as belonging to more developed stocks than the Africans – as they were encouraged to think of themselves in the formative days of a segregation policy directed immediately at the Africans – the ratio would be in the region of two Africans to one of the other group.⁵⁰

Liberalism's gradualist 'solution' to South Africa's 'racial problem' is stated clearly in her introduction:

Its starting point is that of a liberal; its conclusions are still those of a liberal. In the course of the years, I found nothing to modify my belief that a broad-based democratic system progressively embracing politically all the elements in our complex society is not only the way to peace; it is the only way in which we can fulfil our essential destiny which is, at whatever price of pride or privilege, to help to carry the torch of Western Christian civilisation, with its emphasis on the value of the individual irrespective of race or colour, to the uttermost ends of the earth.⁵¹

In the meanwhile, by introducing more systematic segregationist policies and institutions, the liberals not only tackled the central question of the continued supply of 'cheap black labour' on which capital accumulation had hitherto been based in South Africa, but also steered the country towards the idea of a 'confederation' of 'racial groups' under the hegemony and domination of the 'white nation', i.e. the white capitalist ruling class backed by metropolitan capital and defended by white wage-earners of all varieties.⁵² It will be shown presently that these liberal policies developed, with the inevitable concomitant repression, into the present Bantustan strategy and that the

line between different fractions of the ruling class after 1960 was drawn by their view on whether or not blacks were to be admitted into the 'nation'. It will be shown that in essence the line of demarcation proceeds from differing assessments of the strength and limitations of the African nationalist movement.⁵³

None of the celebrated but in reality puny politicians, theorists and publicists of 'white South Africa' could transcend the grip of 'race' and class interest. The single and beautiful exception to this depressing statement is Olive Schreiner. She, and she almost completely alone, dismissed the relevance of 'race' and 'blood' in the heyday of vulgar social Darwinianism:

Wherever a Dutchman, an Englishman, a Jew, and a native are superimposed, there is that common South African condition through which no dividing line can be drawn ... South African unity is not the dream of a visionary; it is not even the forecast of genius, which makes clear and at hand that which only after ages can accomplish ... South African unity is a condition the practical necessity for which is daily and hourly forced upon us by the common needs of life: it is the one path open to us. For this unity all great men born in South Africa during the next century will be compelled directly or indirectly to labour; it is this unity which must precede the production of anything great and beautiful by our people as a whole; neither art, nor science, nor literature, nor statecraft will flourish among us as long as we remain in our unorganised form: it is the attainment of this unity which constitutes the problem of South Africa: *How from our political states and our discordant races, can a great, a healthy, a united, an organized nation be formed?*⁵⁴

This revolutionary, indeed visionary, perspective was rejected by the entire ruling class to whom she appealed in countless letters, petitions, publications and public

addresses. As it was in direct conflict with the short and longer-term interests of the ruling class, it could only be taken up by the oppressed and exploited classes, as indeed it was. Only what she called 'the labouring people' would one day have the total commitment, the real interest and the historic courage to bring this vision to realisation.

Notes

1. *The Star*, 2 July 1976.
2. It will become clear below that I view this 'nationalism' as being in reality a sectionalism.
3. F.A. van Jaarsveld, *The Awakening of Afrikaner Nationalism – The Afrikaner's Interpretation of South African History*; T. Dunbar Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom*; D. O'Meara, 'The Afrikaner Broederbond 1927–1948: Class Vanguard of Afrikaner Nationalism'; and J. Cronin, 'Psycho-analysis and Afrikaner Nationalist ideology'.
4. The quantity of wool exported through the Cape ports rose from 144,000 lbs. in 1834 to 491,000 lbs. in 1838, to 1,060,000 lbs. in 1841, to 5,447,000 lbs. in 1851, (see C.W. de Kiewiet, *A History of South Africa: Social and Economic*, p. 58), to 14,900,000 lbs. in 1856 (see M. De Kock, *The Economic Development of South Africa*), to 36,296,698 lbs. in 1865 (see H.B. Thom, *Geskiedenis van die Skaapboerdery in Suid-Afrika*, pp. 88–99), and to 40,896,000 lbs. in 1870 (see De Kock, *op. cit.*, p.42). The number of hides and skins exported rose from 864,000 in 1856 to 2,742,000 in 1870, while the value of ostrich feathers rose from £7,500 to £87,000 and that of mohair from nil to £26,000 in the same period. (See *ibid.*)
5. D.W. De Kiewiet, *op. cit.*, p. 38.
6. See Van Jaarsveld, *op. cit.*, p. 100ff.
7. See J.J. Oberholster, 'Die Oorsprong van die Afrikaner-Nasionalisme', in O. Geysers and A.H. Marais (eds.), *Die Nasionale Party*, vol. 1, p. 35.

8. Quoted, *ibid.*
9. See p. 13ff below.
10. See T.R.H. Davenport, *The Afrikaner Bond*, p. 50.
11. See *ibid.*
12. See *ibid.*
13. *Ibid.*, p.35 (my emphasis).
14. *Ibid.*, p.36 (my emphasis).
15. See D. O'Meara, 'The Afrikaner Broederbond 1927–1948: Class Vanguard of Afrikaner Nationalism', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 2, April 1977, to which this section is heavily indebted.
16. See, for instance, Oberholster, *op. cit.*, pp. 52–8. Also C. Marais, 'Die Politieke Magsverskuiwing (1921–1924)', in O. Geysers and A.H. Marais (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 509–10. Also W.M. McMillan, *The South African Agrarian Problem and Its Historical Development*.
17. D. O'Meara, 'White Trade Unionism, Political Power and Afrikaner Nationalism', *South African Labour Bulletin*, Vol. 1, No. 10, April 1975, p. 44.
18. *Die Oosterlig*, 8 November 1937, quoted in Moodie, *op. cit.*, pp. 168–9.
19. O'Meara, *loc. cit.*, pp. 43–4.
20. O'Meara, 'The Afrikaner Broederbond 1927–1948 ...', *op. cit.*, pp. 160.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 163.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 166.
23. See Moodie, *op. cit.*
24. *Ibid.*, p. 154, n. 9.
25. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 157.
26. *Ibid.*, pp.157–8.
27. Diedrichs, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 158.
28. *Ibid.*
29. Diedrichs, quoted in *ibid.*
30. *Ibid.*
31. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 159.
32. Quoted, *ibid.*

33. Quoted, *ibid.*, p. 163.
34. Moodie, *ibid.*
35. *ibid.*, pp. 163–4.
36. See *ibid.*, pp. 61–7.
37. See *ibid.*, p. 159ff.
38. Moodie, *ibid.*, p.160.
39. Stoker, quoted in *ibid.*
40. Moodie, p. 160.
41. See *ibid.*, p. 162.
42. See *ibid.*, pp. 161–2.
43. Quoted in Rupert Emerson, *From Empire to Nation – The Rise of Asian and African Peoples to Self-Assertion*, p. 132.
44. See, for instance, Moodie's exposition of anti-Semitism in the Afrikaner opposition before and during World War II, *op. cit.*, p. 162; pp. 165–8.
45. See notes 15 and 17 above; and Moodie, *op. cit.*, p. 170ff.
46. O'Meara, 'White Trade Unionism, Political Power and Afrikaner Nationalism', *South African Labour Bulletin*, Vol. 1, No. 10, April I 975, p. 48.
47. Quoted in K. Hancock, *Smuts, The Fields of Force*, p. 36.
48. Quoted in D.W. Kruger, *South African Parties and Policies*, pp. 61–2.
49. L. Marquard, *South Africa's Colonial Policy*, p. 26.
50. M. Ballinger, *From Union to Apartheid – A Trek to Isolation*, p. 15.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
52. Moodie, *op. cit.*, p. 81 quotes D.W. Kruger's assessment of Hertzog's 'two-stream' policy as follows: 'Hertzog's dual ethnicism (referring to Dutch-Afrikaans and English language groups) never aimed at Dutch Afrikaner dominance. Throughout his public career he emphasized complete ethnic equality between English-speaking and Afrikaans-speaking South Africans. His moderation did not, of course, extend to the indigenous African peoples. In respect of the native inhabitants, the National Party envisaged 'the supremacy of the European population in a

spirit of Christian trusteeship”, which meant “providing the Native with the opportunity to develop according to his natural talent and aptitude”.’ Moodie himself adds significantly that, ‘We thus find in nationalist policy at its inception a glimmering of respect for the black African’s own ethnic rights, firmly checked by the assertion of white supremacy.’

53. The unmistakable resemblance between ‘liberal’ views of the nation of South Africa and those of the early political leaders of black organisations will become evident when the latter are treated in Chapter Three.
54. O. Schreiner, ‘South Africa: Its Natural Features, Its Diverse Peoples,
55. Its Political Status: The Problem’, *Thoughts on South Africa*, pp. 61–2.

2. THE RESERVE STRATEGY AND THE GROWTH OF CAPITALISM

THE ELECTORAL VICTORY OF THE Purified National Party under Dr. Malan in 1948 represented the formal political assertion of the hegemony of indigenous capital in the South African social formation. Metropolitan imperial capital, mainly invested in the crucial extractive industries, had finally lost the battle against indigenous capital for political hegemony even though it retained co-dominance at the economic level. Malan's party represented an alliance of the urban petty bourgeoisie, the agrarian bourgeoisie and elements (predominantly Afrikaans-speaking) of the urban industrial bourgeoisie.¹

Native reserves and the accumulation of capital

Stated broadly, the main economic goals of this regime, which has maintained its hold on political power up to the present, were two-fold. On the one hand it had to push further the Hertzogist National Party and the United Party strategy of progressively emancipating indigenous capital from metropolitan capital. It had to ensure that as much as possible of the economic surplus generated in mining and other imperialist-dominated industries was reinvested in South African agriculture and secondary industry instead of being repatriated. This would be done, as in the past, mainly by fiscal and tariff policies heavily weighted in favour of agriculture and secondary industry. In addition, state-owned and parastatal corporations continued consciously to undertake and expand the programme of import-substitution industries with a view to strengthening

the industrial base of indigenous capital and ensuring high prices for agricultural products and certain base metals. On the other hand, the regime had to devise methods to maintain the unlimited supply of cheap black labour under circumstances where the basis of that supply – the Native Reserve system – had virtually been eliminated, insofar as its original economic function was concerned. As this latter problem is the real explanation for the implementation of apartheid and, therefore, of the Bantustan strategy, it is necessary to consider it in more detail.²

The era of African military resistance to conquest came to an end around 1880. Although there remained a number of scattered areas still under communal ownership, the colonising powers did not pursue a policy of total dispossession. This was not primarily because of military reasons, even though it was doubtful whether the conquerors were indeed ‘armed with military power sufficient to render all resistance to its authority hopeless’.³ Previous experience both in South Africa and in other parts of Africa had taught the colonial administrators the value of these ‘native reserves’. As early as the middle of the nineteenth century, Theophilus Shepstone in Natal and George Grey in the Cape Colony had realised, despite different strategies, that actual communal possession, provided access to land was limited, would make the reserves into labour reservoirs for adjoining white-owned farms and plantations. South African and East African experience was proving the value of indirect rule – the co-optation of indigenous chiefs into the colonial system as lower-level bureaucrats who administered the ‘native areas’ on behalf of the administration in return for an annual salary together with bonuses of all kinds, retaining those elements of ‘native law and custom’ that were not subversive of the capitalist system. In the South African context indirect rule directly served the imperial purpose of ‘divide and rule’ because of the manner in which

dispossession had spatially separated the indigenous tribes from one another, and the way in which the chiefs had been emasculated and local headmen slotted into the chain of command which ran through the district magistrate, the divisional chief magistrate to the colonial government. This aspect of the reserve strategy, like much else pertaining to it, was given its final form in the Glen Grey Act of 1894 piloted through the Cape Parliament by the arch-imperialist Cecil John Rhodes.

Before wool and hides (and later sugar) became important export commodities, such labour as was required by the viticultural activities of Western Cape farmers and the largely subsistence sheep-farming of Trekboers and Voortrekkers in the rest of the colonised area of South Africa, had been supplied by slavery and various forms of servile labour, especially labour tenancy. With the abolition of slavery in the British Empire in 1834 and the emergence of capitalist farming in the interior (wool-growing was largely a function of the demand for raw materials by the now burgeoning British textile industry), new sources of labour had to be found and stabilised. One of the answers to the problem was precisely the reserve system. Initially commerce and barter (leading to a demand for new goods), together with restrictions on the acquisition of land for expansion (this acquisition being necessitated by the segmentation principle on which indigenous Nguni- and Sotho-speaking polities depended for survival and growth) sufficed to induce younger men to work on adjoining white farms.⁴ Gradually, however, as the demand for labour outstripped the supply thus created, poll taxes and hut taxes were levied on the still self-sufficient households in the reserves, thus forcing able-bodied men, and even women, to go out to work for money wages on an intermittent basis. This process was facilitated and supported by the ideological activities of missionaries. With the discovery and exploitation of diamonds and later of

gold, there was a giant leap in demand for labour which called for even more drastic measures. The 'native', in the notorious words of Rhodes, had to be taught 'the dignity of labour', and it is at this point that the system of native reserves becomes a crucial component of the capitalist system as it has developed in the peculiar conditions of South Africa.

The point is made succinctly by Molteno and justifies citation at length:

We have seen that the Reserves ... played a part in the process of proletarianisation. But, unlike the proletarianisation that is effected through direct and total dispossession, most of the communal producers, who were driven into wage labour as a result of the reduced productivity of the communal mode in the Reserves, were actually able to maintain links with the land and the communal mode. For while on the one hand the Reserves were serving to change, and to reduce, the productivity of communal production, on the other the Reserves were serving to keep in existence some form of communal production by protecting it from the encroachment of other pre-capitalist forms of production for the specific mode of expansion of capitalism in Southern Africa. Thus, the Reserves served to produce not proletarians according to the classical definition but rather workers who retained access to albeit limited means of production and who also had to sell their labour-power for at least part of the time in order to subsist. Workers who have access to no means of production are entirely dependent for the subsistence of themselves and their family on wages. Because the capitalist class is dependent on a class of workers, they have to pay wages which make it possible for the workers to live and support children who will take their place when they become unfit to work or eventually die. If, however, workers retain access to means of

subsistence that lie outside the immediate sphere of commodity production, they are not entirely dependent upon wages which, as a result, can be less than what it actually takes for the workers to survive and for a continuing flow of workers to be ensured. It was precisely such extra-low wages that the Reserves, in their conservationist functions, made possible and up until about the 1930s the mining industry, particularly, depended upon this possibility of which they took full advantage. The state was dominated by the interests of mining and agriculture, which in fact found its expression right up until the mid-60s in legislation concerning the Reserves/Bantustans, more particularly that concerning the acquisition of land by African people.⁵

That this is not just an *a priori* argument is borne out by the fact that in their more unguarded moments the representatives of the ruling class have made the same point about this function of the Reserves in unequivocal terms. Thus, for instance, the Lansdowne Commission on Mine Wages in 1943 heard the following evidence from the Chamber of Mines:

[The Reserves policy] aims at the preservation of the economic and social structure of the native people in the native areas where that structure can be sheltered and developed. The policy is a coherent whole and is the antithesis of a policy of assimilation and the encouragement of a black proletariat in the towns divorced from tribal heritage. *The ability of the mines to maintain their native labour force by means of tribal natives from the Reserves at rates of pay which are adequate for this migratory class of native but inadequate for the detribalised native is a fundamental factor in the economy of the gold mining industry.*⁶

By thus providing a 'wage subsidy' in the early days of industrial capitalism in South Africa, the reserves helped to

keep down the value of labour power. However there were other ways in which the reserves helped to reduce the wages bill of capital, in particular in the primary sectors of mining and agriculture. One of the results of partial dispossession and the retention of some land under communal ownership is the conservation of 'tribal' modes of life, including eating habits, ways of dress and methods of providing shelter. From the point of view of urban-industrial, especially 'white', standards of living, these reserve-based standards approach the physical minimum for human survival. By thus helping to freeze and entrench the historically determined and conventionally 'accepted' minimum for survival, the reserves, as an integral aspect of the colour-caste system (which is analysed in detail in Chapter Six), ensured that the wages bill of capital would remain relatively static and even a declining percentage of the Gross National Product. Of course, this historical and conventional component of wages must not give rise to the idea that it was accepted without a struggle by African and other black workers. Severe and intense class struggles were waged, and are still being waged, by the exploited labouring people to alter this 'minimum'.

In industrialised capitalist economies a certain percentage of the working people is normally kept unemployed (Marx's reserve army of labour). This reserve army, through competition for jobs (i.e. by raising the supply of labour above the level of normal demand), holds down the level of wages and at the same time helps to discipline the employed labour force which can, at least theoretically, in most cases be replaced by the unemployed. Since the unemployed must eat and live to be able to serve these functions, their existence involves the capitalist state in unproductive expenditure such as unemployment benefits, 'doles', etc.

In South Africa, however, the burden of supporting the bulk of the labour reserve army has fallen

predominantly on the Reserves. It is the Reserves that have made possible the maintenance of these workers-without-work at sub-subsistence levels and hence at minimal cost to the state and to capital but at the expense of the workers and peasants themselves.⁷

Similarly in regard to other 'surplus' elements of the population – the aged, the disabled and the sick, who have normally to be supported in part by the state using the economic surplus generated in the economy – the reserves in South Africa have served as a dumping ground:

From the earliest days of the Reserves' existence, they have played a part in carrying whatever portion of the labouring population have constituted a surplus from the point of view of the interests dominant at different times.⁸

The above exposition has shown how the system of native reserves and resultant migrant labour have ensured a continuing supply of 'cheap' black labour. It is necessary to stress this in view of the prevalence of liberal analyses which emphasise migrancy and its attendant evils, notably the destabilisation of family life, but seldom the fact that the system depresses the value of labour power and thus maximises surplus! It is, however, equally important to stress what did *not* happen as a result of the Reserve system. In the normal course of the penetration of pre-capitalist economies by capital, classes are produced such that eventually a replica of the system of capitalist class relations is reproduced in the area penetrated. Marx's holding up of industrialising England as a model, though generally valid, is historically only partly true of colonial and semi-colonial areas because the assumption that all other conditions are the same does not apply in these instances. South Africa is another such instance. The reserve system, instead of leading to class polarisation as known in Europe, produced a relative levelling of 'classes' within the

reserves, at least in the beginning. With the general exception of chiefs, *all* male tribesmen were potential migrant labourers. Since communal tenure was and has remained the dominant form of land tenure in the reserves, and since the principle of the right of each man to a plot of land was theoretically (and at first also in practice) adhered to, the possibility that a 'kulak' class of rich peasants could emerge on a large scale was cut off.⁹ In this way the development of an African bourgeoisie was effectively prevented.¹⁰

It is only on the basis of the above analysis that legislation such as the Natives Land Act (1913) and the Native Land and Trust Act (1936) makes sense, unless one is prepared to attribute complete irrationality and unbending racist obtuseness to the architects of this legislation. The former Act, introduced into the South African Parliament by the liberal, J.T. Sauer, demarcated those limited areas in which Africans could acquire land and, with a few exceptions, prohibited the ownership of land by Africans in areas other than those thus scheduled. As such, therefore, it formalised the reserve system and charted the course of 'Native Policy' for the next half-century. The 1936 Act, introduced by General Hertzog, entrenched the system and 'released' a bit more land for occupation by Africans. This augmentation of the area of the reserves was itself acknowledgement of the value of the system. But it was also a response to the pressure of population on the land, a question which will be referred to in more detail below, since the economic developments inside the reserves were as important in determining their changing role as those outside of them.

In addition, security considerations undoubtedly played a part in uniting the ruling class on their policy that only a very small settled urban African proletariat should be tolerated in South Africa. Thus, for instance, the Board of Trade and Industries warned in a report on the

manufacturing industry, in 1945:

Racial and class differences will make a homogenous Native proletariat which will eventually lose all contact with their former communal rural relations which had previously given their lives a content and meaning. The detribalisation of large numbers of Natives congregated in amorphous masses in large industrial centres is a matter which no government can view with equanimity. Unless handled with great foresight and skill these masses of detribalised Natives can very easily develop into a menace rather than a constructive factor in industry.¹¹

However, from the above exposition it remains clear that the basic reason for the attempted abortion of a settled urban African proletariat has a profound economic foundation, one on which the entire prosperity and continued development of the capitalist system in South Africa rests.

Capitalist development gives rise to new contradictions

The problem of ensuring that the reserves would continue to serve the economic functions outlined above was to become increasingly urgent. For purposes of illustration the 'push-pull' analogy may be used. On the one hand the migrant workers gravitate towards the point of production where they earn the means of subsistence and establish personal relations, unions and even families, so that their linkages to their reserve 'homelands' become weakened (if they do not snap altogether). Moreover, the growth of manufacturing industry in general tends to undermine the system of migrant labour and thus the reserves' original functions. For unlike mining and agriculture, where the bulk of the black labour force was engaged in unskilled or

at best semiskilled positions which did not require a lengthy training period, the nature of most manufacturing operations makes a high rate of labour turnover wasteful in the extreme, involving as it does costly periods of training and retraining of operatives. Pressure from secondary industry thus also favours the permanent settlement of men (and their families) in the cities. It is relevant to note here that even mining, as it has begun to employ progressively larger numbers of blacks in semi-skilled positions, has begun to pull in this direction. Mr. Tony Fleischer, labour adviser to the Chamber of Mines said in May 1977 that it was hoped to overcome the 'peak and valley' situation in labour supply by means of certain incentives (for black mineworkers of South African origin) by offering those who sign on for 45 weeks 'that they will be given back their same job at the same mine and the same rate of pay when they return'. An airbus system is also to be instituted '... whereby miners ending their contract can be flown home for six weeks to two months. Bonuses will be offered to those returning in the stipulated period. 'Moreover it is hoped to increase the number of workers housed in married quarters (as opposed to the 'bachelors' compounds) from the statutory 3 per cent of all black mineworkers to at least 10 per cent.¹²

In the reserves themselves, various forces were and are 'pushing' people to the cities and undermining the conservationist functions of the reserve. The general tendency of capital, despite inhibiting tendencies enshrined in law and custom, is to dissolve pre-capitalist forms of production by involving with its Midas touch all who come into contact with it in the processes of commodity production, exchange and distribution. Though subsistence farming remains the basis of most productive activity in the reserves, the majority of peasant families either already produce for exchange (albeit minimally) or want to do so. The ethos of communal autarchy, therefore, is no longer the

determining factor, having been replaced by a private property ethos. Counter-productively, the ruling-class strategy of maintaining the reserves in their underdeveloped state has led to the ecological devastation of these territories. For, clearly, the opposite strategy of heavy investment in the reserves would have been self-defeating from the point of view of capital. As Wolpe pointed out:

... the effect of large-scale investment in the Reserves would be to make cheap labour-power costly in the sense that the accumulation advantages to capitalism deriving from such labour-power would be lost or reduced if the surplus was utilized in the African rural areas. In fact ... the State's expenditure on agricultural development in the Reserves has always been extremely low, increasing only marginally as conditions of production worsened. The immediate consequence of all this was a rapid decline in the agricultural product in the Reserves.¹³

The consequence of these factors – relative overpopulation, overstocking, backward methods of production, and the absence of most of the economically active male population at any given time – has been the notorious poverty, malnutrition and mortality rates associated with the reserves. More importantly, this 'neglect' of the reserves has led to the situation where their 'wage subsidy' function has disappeared. The turning point probably came in the late 1930s or early 1940s, when the factors mentioned above resulted in a growing proportion of the inhabitants of the reserves belonging to the class of landless peasants, even where they owned some livestock.¹⁴ Hence,

... as more peasants were forced to become partial workers they were all less and less able to draw on the product of the dying communal forms of production in the Reserves because not only was

that product diminishing even in absolute terms but it was also becoming increasingly unequally distributed and therefore decreasingly available to wage labourers. Furthermore, effective links between those in the Reserves and the peasants having to work for even longer periods in the cities, began to break down. This meant a further limitation on the extent to which what pre-capitalist product there was from the Reserves could serve to supplement the wages paid out in the cities.¹⁵

In short, the rapid industrialisation of South Africa since the mid-1920s was beginning to erode the basis for the supply of cheap black labour. The reserve strategy, which had suited the early phases of development of the extractive industries, was threatening to become counter-productive. For the industrialisation and proletarianisation of the black people, together with the chafing limitations set on the development of the rural reserves, had to find expression in mass struggles of the oppressed classes against the system of oppression. Moreover this whole question should be seen in conjunction with the above analysis of the contradictions among the various fractions of the ruling class. Latterly the reserve and migrant labour systems, with their concomitant superstructure of an army of bureaucrats, pass laws, prisons and police, did not directly benefit the growing secondary and tertiary industries. Therefore these sectors of capital (together with the exploited classes themselves) were in fact defraying part of the costs of the reserve system for the benefit of mining and agriculture.¹⁶ Thus the political representatives of these sectors (the liberals) tended to call for the dismantling of the migrant labour system and for the development of the depressed Reserve areas. Their political strategy consisted of an attempt to harness the growing working class consciousness and African nationalist movement to the free enterprise system.

Notes

1. For an insightful analysis of the differentiation of and fractions within the South African ruling classes, see D. Kaplan, 'Capitalist Development in South Africa: Class conflict and the State'.
2. The following discussion relies mainly on a paper delivered at the Eighth Annual Congress of the Association for Sociology in Southern Africa, 30.6.77 . to 5.7.77 , by F. Molteno, entitled 'The Historical Significance of the Bantustan Strategy', (hereafter cited as 'The ... Bantustan Strategy').
3. Earl Grey, quoted in E.H. Brooks, *White Rule in South Africa 1830–1910*, pp. 43–4.
4. See M. Wilson, 'The Nguni People', in M. Wilson and L. Thompson (eds.), *The Oxford History of South Africa*, Vol. I, South Africa to 1870, p. 119. Also T. Hammond-Tooke, Command or Consensus, *The Development of Transkeian Local Government*.
5. F. Molteno, *op. cit.*, pp. 6–7.
6. Quoted in Oliver Walker, *Kaffirs are Lively*, p. 22. (my emphasis).
7. Molteno, *op. cit.*, p. 9.
8. *Ibid.* p. 10.
9. According to Bundy, such a class was already emerging outside the Reserves in the 'sixties of last century. See C. Bundy, 'The Emergence and Decline of a South African Peasantry'.
10. See Molteno, *op. cit.*, p. 5.
11. Quoted in A. Callinicos and J. Rogers, *Southern Africa after Soweto*, pp. 50–1.
12. See *The Star*, 7 May 1977.
13. H. Wolpe, 'Capitalism and Cheap Labour-Power in South Africa: from Segregation to Apartheid.'
14. See F. Molteno, *The South African Reserves*.
15. Molteno, 'The ... Bantustan Strategy', p. 8.
16. See Molteno, 'The ... Bantustan Strategy', p. 16.

3. RESPONSES OF THE OPPRESSED

The Nationalist Party's traditional electoral support came from the agricultural sector, which could not survive without subsidies, loans and cheap immobilized labour ... The combination of self-interest and ideological inclination made it impossible for the National Party ... to contemplate dismantling the labour-repressive economy and replacing it with a relatively free market. In addition, a labour-repressive economy was beneficial to the small group of entrepreneurs drawn from the Afrikaner nationalist elite which had its links with the more prosperous sectors of agriculture and had often begun its enterprises in a spirit of economic nationalism.¹

THE ANSWER TO THE CONTRADICTION between fractions of the ruling class outlined at the very end of the previous chapter – over the fate of the native reserves and the concomitant system of migrant labour – was the National Party's policy of apartheid (which became 'separate development'), of which the Bantustan strategy is an integral part. From a strategic economic point of view apartheid can be seen as the mode of reconciling the contradictory demands of secondary and tertiary industry on the one hand, and primary industry on the other hand. At the ideological level it presented itself both as the logical extension of segregation and as the implementation of the 'calling' of the Afrikaner 'nation'.²

Demystification of the theory of the nation inherent in the Bantustan strategy requires analysis at all levels – economic, political and ideological. It is not sufficient merely to indicate the economic practice or the political

aims of Bantustans: indeed these will be stated only briefly since they have been examined in numerous recent works.³ At this point, however, it is essential to stress the *political moment* inherent in all state economic strategy. Political economy, properly so called, is a single discipline and a single practice. Any attempt to divorce economics from politics either in theory or in practice is at best self-delusory, at worst catastrophic. The National Party's apartheid strategy was as much determined by the need to depress the value of labour power at as low a level as possible to the advantage of profits, as it was by the need to head off the surging growth of African nationalism in the 1940s and 1950s, and of the even more threatening working-class consciousness and unity that was developing in the country. In putting forward this thesis one may be suspected of unjustifiably imputing a measure of clairvoyancy and intentionality to ideologues who were perhaps simply acting in accordance with the dictates of a 'tragically' inhumane and mechanistic doctrine of 'race'. It is therefore appropriate to cite here a typical statement by one who was co-responsible for the formulation and implementation of apartheid/separate development. M.D.C. de Wet Nel, later to become Minister of Bantu Affairs, wrote in a well-considered article on 'Bantu Policy' in 1953:

Thus the policy of apartheid provides the only safety-valve for the growing Bantu nationalism, which no power on earth can halt. It will guide Bantu nationalism in such a manner that it will become a force for peace and salvation in Africa instead of a revolutionary force for plunder.⁴

Class structure of the oppressed

To understand why the National Party, as the representative, objectively, of the national bourgeoisie and of the overwhelming majority of the white wage-earners,

was feeling the urgent need to redirect the course of South African history (this is how they themselves perceived their mission) it is necessary to give an outline of the development of political thought and organisation among the oppressed people of the country.⁵

By the time the Union of South Africa was formed in 1910, a clearly defined class structure had emerged not only among the white inhabitants of the country but also among the blacks. The majority of the unenfranchised people were still communal producers living intermittently on the land, mainly in reserves. The one-man-one-lot principle precluded the possibility of a class of black agrarian capitalists coming into being, and commercial farming among Africans was virtually non-existent. An increasing proportion of the able-bodied men domiciled in the reserves was at any one time employed in the mines or on white farms as migrant labourers and this proportion was to increase rapidly after the First World War.⁶ In regard to these two categories of people it is necessary to say something about the perennial controversy over their class character. Were the communal producers 'peasants'? Are the migrant labourers 'peasants' or 'proletarians'? The importance of these questions stems from the fact that the political strategies of organisations are necessarily influenced by which characterisation is adopted. Using as a point of departure the categories of the rich, middle, and poor peasants, it is immediately obvious that with rare exceptions those people with actual land holding rights – whether under communal or individual tenure – can all be described as poor peasants, i.e. men who employ no labour other than that of their family. In polygamous households the family could consist of a relatively large number of adults so that in some cases the appellation 'middle peasant' would be justified. But since the concept 'peasant' implies either freehold or leasehold *ownership* of the land (i.e. the right to alienate the land), the question arises

whether in fact the vast majority of direct producers can properly be described as 'peasants'. If one accepts, however, that for practical purposes communal landholding as practised in South Africa amounts to something like leasehold in perpetuity, the question of whether or not to use the term peasant becomes a matter of semantics.

On the other hand, it is a fact that the majority of these peasants became migrant labourers in the cities and on the white farms. It is their wives, therefore, who are the practising peasants. Those who have advocated an immediate proletarian revolution in South Africa have necessarily stressed the proletarian character of these migrants. Those, on the other hand, who accept that, whether as a transitional phase or as a final goal, the present struggle is for the democratisation of South African society, have usually described this category of people as peasants. To resist the urge to categorise in this either-or manner itself indicates a political attitude. The fact, of course, is that migrant labourers are neither merely workers nor merely peasants (even in the above sense of the term). They constitute a historically transitional group whose *place* in the economic structure at present can only be described as that of worker-peasants.⁷ Their *class position*, however, is not something which is mechanistically determined by their place in the economy. Since class position also involves the level of consciousness, it will be determined by factors other than merely the 'abstract' economic ones.

Another important category of people on the land, living almost exclusively in the reserves, were the chiefs, sub-chiefs and headmen. After the back of the indigenous people's military resistance had been broken, this group was incorporated at the lowest levels of the state bureaucracy to perform local administrative functions. Their high status in the community remained because ostensibly they still controlled the allocation of land, on which function their status and authority had been based in

the pristine communal system. On the other hand they were powerless because they no longer performed these functions on behalf of the people, but were the underlings and hirelings of an oppressive and alien state. Though they enjoyed privileges in regard to the amount of land and cattle they held, they had no more chance of accumulating capital independently than any other communal producer.

Such opportunities for independent accumulation did, however, exist for rural squatters on white farms and some categories of peasants on mission stations. There were various categories of so-called squatters but the majority were either sharecroppers or rent-paying agricultural tenants. For decades white farmers ran a lucrative business of speculating in land on which blacks were given permission to 'squat' in return for a rental in cash or kind. As this was one of the few ways in which independent accumulation by African agriculturalists could take place, it became a sought after status for many, especially landless peasant families. Until approximately the mid-1920s, the class of 'squatters' included a percentage of Coloured farmers. And in Natal a relatively large number of former indentured labourers of Indian origin had chosen a plot of land instead of the alternative of being repatriated, and those who managed to sustain their agricultural activities tended to become petty capitalist market gardeners orientated to small-scale production for the urban market. Probably the most numerous class of people on land owned by whites were labour-tenants. These ranged from individuals who laboured most of the time for the farmer to those who laboured most of the time for themselves without actually being 'squatters' in the above-mentioned sense. With the development of large-scale commercial and company farming the tendency was for labour tenancy to be progressively transformed into wage-labour.

In the urban areas the class of wage-workers was increasing rapidly, a process which was to snowball after

the First World War until the Natives Urban Areas Act of 1923 placed obstacles in the path of the permanent urbanisation of African families. Ever since 1921 'Stallardism' has been the guiding star of ruling class policy concerning the African urbanisation. This policy, set out by the Transvaal Local Government Commission of 1921 chaired by one Col. Stallard, decreed that: 'the native should only be allowed to enter the urban areas, which are essentially the white man's creation, when he is wishing to enter and to minister to the needs of the white man and should depart therefrom when he ceases so to minister.'⁸ Only Coloured and Indian families were allowed to gravitate towards the urban areas with relative freedom and in due course the majority of them became permanently urbanised. Except in Natal where many Indian immigrants and former indentured labourers specialised in commerce, there never developed any substantial class of black traders, since this sector remained largely in the hands of white petty capitalists and later of large commercial houses. A small but articulate class of teachers, preachers, nurses, clerks and later doctors and lawyers were thrown up, some individuals having antecedents that reached right back to the earliest contact with European missionaries. Among Coloureds – and to a lesser extent among Indians – a numerically small but important artisan class existed, which traced its origins back to the first slave who had been brought to South Africa from the East Indies.

Early political strategies and ideological responses of the oppressed

For these classes of the oppressed people there were essentially three possibilities of response to their final dispossession and conquest. With the defeat of the Bambata Rebellion in 1906 the hope of reconquering the land by military means was for the foreseeable future extinguished,

especially since one of the basic principles of ruling class strategy was never to train blacks in the martial arts, except in dire necessity (and then only in strictly limited numbers and usually in non-combatant positions). Nonetheless, the question of access to the land remained the central question for all black political organisations.

The second possible response was a religious one. This was expressed mainly through the organisations of the Ethiopian movement.⁹ Ethiopianism represented the breakaway Africanist tendency in Christianity in South Africa. Although derived from the European denominations, it was greatly influenced by indigenous customs and beliefs. Apart from its normal religions and social preoccupations, it sometimes took a millennial turn, as in the case of the Israelites who were butchered in the notorious Bulhoek massacre, but it more commonly followed reformist, mutual aid pursuits. It kept alive the belief that Africa belongs to the Africans and that the land should be returned. But this was seldom given a directly political expression except by individuals in their capacity as members of political organisations of the oppressed. It was rather a general climate, a political memory that was sustained in these churches and their prayer meetings in the open veld or in the hovels inhabited by the majority of their members.

The third option was represented by those Christianised converts who had attached themselves to the British (and other, especially German) missionaries around the turn of the 18th century. A few families, such as the Sogas, Jabavus and Jordans, had produced well-educated and highly qualified individuals who aspired to total inclusion in European society. This intelligentsia, like the totally dispossessed descendants of the Khoi Khoi and what had come to be called the Coloured people, accepted that the land had been lost by conquest and that their destiny lay in making their way up the existing socio-political and

economic structure. Because of the frustration of their aspirations, they were aware of the systematic deprivation of rights to which people of their caste, irrespective of class or status, were subjected. They realised that the key to the betterment of their condition, if not access to power itself, was the acquisition of the franchise by the oppressed people. Consequently they began to demand democratisation of the colonial and post-Union society by organising cultural and quasi-political associations among blacks of the 'educated class'. The beginning of modern political propaganda specifically among blacks can be dated from 1884 when John Tengo Jabavu founded a newspaper called *Imvo Zabantsundu* (Black Opinion). Because of the manner in which they had accepted Christian teachings (non-violence, non-resistance to established authority, etc.), i.e. because of their essentially petty-bourgeois ethos, this class of people adopted the political methods of petition, deputation, and remonstrance and were steadfastly opposed to all talk of civil disobedience or violent resistance. None the less their political and ideological views represented the wave of the future and were to determine the organised political thought and action of the oppressed for the next few decades.

For reasons which are elaborated elsewhere in this study,¹⁰ the rulers treated what we may call for convenience the African, Coloured and Asiatic sectors of the oppressed people as separate socio-political entities. Differential privileges and access to opportunities for individual advancement were available to these groups (and to whites of course, but always within the framework of whites having a dominant position) on the alleged grounds of 'race', culture and language. This ideology was transmitted to all individuals in the different groups by the normal means of ideological mediation, in particular by means of schools, the churches and legislation. Hence the educated elite, which had absorbed the capitalist ethos, inevitably

formed organisations which catered for disabilities felt to be peculiar to the groups from which they themselves originated. Thus, without exception, all the political organisations of the oppressed which were formed up to approximately 1918 were essentially caste organisations concerned with the betterment of their own particular group and with gaining economic and political concessions for 'their' people. This was the case, to mention only the most important, with the South African Native National Congress (later renamed the African National Congress) which grew out of a combination of provincial native congresses established in the late 1890s; the African Political (later People's) Organisation (A.P.O.) established by and for Coloureds; and the Natal Indian Congress, established by Mahatma Gandhi. The one common plank which all these organisations shared was the demand for the extension of the franchise to the oppressed. Otherwise they concerned themselves exclusively with those issues that affected their particular groups, such as the pass laws and the squatting acts (affecting mainly Africans), business and educational opportunities and social discrimination (which Coloureds were particularly conscious of), and the problems of repatriation to India and inter-provincial travelling restrictions (of special concern to Indians). A good example of the limitations imposed on the vision of these organisations' leaders by caste-consciousness and prejudice may be seen in the views expressed by Dr. A.B. Xuma as late as 1930. This is particularly significant if one remembers that he was to become A.N.C. President in later years:

As we intend to build bridges between White and Black, we can dismiss the case of the Coloured man by stating that the missionaries fought and secured some of the rights for the Hottentots until the Coloured man of today is, in principle, accepted as a White man politically, industrially, economically

and educationally.

The Indian in South Africa does not fall within the purview of our discussion, because, according to the Rt. Hon S. Sastri, the Indian cannot make common cause with the African without alienating the right of intervention on their behalf on the part of the Government of India.¹¹

The petty-bourgeois and divisive nature of this ideology is manifest in almost every speech and article produced by the leaders of the time. In the same speech, Dr. Xuma also exemplified its elitist implications:

The educated African is our hope, our bridge. He is an asset that responsible and thinking White South Africa cannot afford either to ignore or to alienate without disastrous results in the long run. He should be brought into close contact and co-operation with the thinking Europeans. He must be consulted in all matters affecting the African community. It is he, and he alone, who can best interpret the European to the African, and the African to the European.¹²

Perhaps the most glaring example of the reformist character of these organisations is the A.P.O. After some years, it became no more than an electioneering machine manipulated by its leadership, selling the Coloured people to the highest bidder among the white political parties. (Because of the property qualifications required of a candidate for election to the legislative body in the Cape Province before Union, no black ever stood for parliament, and after 1910 this was in any case statutorily prohibited.) Between annual conferences it was kept going by the frequent production of a newsletter which did serve to bring political ideas to the attention of literate Coloured people. But its relationship with other blacks was ambivalent. There was genuine interest in and solidarity with their struggles (which were, however, perceived as

'different,)', but essentially the A.P.O. saw the threat of an alliance of the Native Races¹³ as its strongest bargaining counter with the whites. As with all other political organisations of blacks at this stage, the A.P.O. was a caste organisation under petty-bourgeois, 'aspirant-white' leadership. One of its major preoccupations was to prevent the white rulers from degrading Coloureds to the level of Africans!

The petty-bourgeois leadership of these organisations, consisting in the main of teachers, preachers, doctors, chiefs and small businessmen, articulated the demands of the oppressed people in a populist but caste-divided manner. As yet no distinct consciousness amongst the *labouring* people had emerged. The political axis on which these organisations revolved was a racist alliance between rural and urban petty bourgeoisie. There was no proper conception of a single nation and no proper understanding of the language question.

To exemplify this, let us quote one of the few explicit statements by a black political leader on the national question deriving from this period, that contained in Dr. Abdurahman's Presidential Address to the A.P.O. on 1 January 1912 in Pilkington Hall, Johannesburg.¹⁴ This speech is important also because it is the embodiment *par excellence* of an attitude to the question of the nation, which may be called 'Colouredism'. While correctly attacking the ruling classes for confining the discussion on the nation to those belonging to the white group, Abdurahman ranges himself (and the Coloured people) on the side of the English-speaking section with which he associated a more liberal attitude to the 'racial question'. Since his fundamental position is that 'these two questions of language and nationality are inextricably associated' and that 'no true nationalism can arise in a sparsely populated country inhabited by two or more races, speaking different languages and priding themselves on their exclusiveness',

he advocates the universal adoption of English and the soonest possible suppression of Afrikaans, which he sees as a degrading patois:

The question naturally arises which is to be the national language. Shall it be the degraded forms of a literary language, a vulgar patois; or shall it be that language which Macaulay says is 'In force, in richness, in aptitude for all the highest purposes of the poet, the philosopher, and the orator, inferior to the tongue of Greece alone?' Shall it be the language of the 'Kombuis' [kitchen] or the language of Tennyson? That is, shall it be the Taal or English?

The dilemma and the craven subservience to Anglo-Saxon culture and British imperialism politically are manifest in the climactic but pathetic words of this petty-bourgeois aspirant Englishman:

Now this problem of language concerns our people and I think it should be the aim of all our members to seek to cultivate the English tongue wherever and whenever practicable or possible. Why so large a proportion of our people, who, to my knowledge, have facility in English fall into the habit of talking to one another, in Cape Dutch, I cannot understand. Such a habit is not conducive to progressive thought and it should be discouraged. Remember that our South African nation must be composed of various races of different colours; and all the talk about racialism indulged in by the Europeans concerns only that spirit of deadly antagonism that exists between British and Dutch. Language is being used by one section as the means whereby that bitterness may be perpetuated, and yet I have no hesitation in saying that even the most violent enthusiast for the Taal would admit the superiority of the English language; but the Dutchman ... is urged ... to cling to his language, and the motive behind it all is to accentuate the narrowness and bitterness of a racial bias that moves the Boer so deeply.

This kind of statement shows these leaders projecting a caste ideology which assumed the existence of at least four different 'peoples' in South Africa. In this they were merely echoing the liberals' conceptions whose political position they shared. Indeed, the Jabavus and the Abdurahmans were the specific creations of the liberal ideologues of the ruling class, such as W. Schreiner and J.T. Sauer.

Class-oriented organisations

Between approximately 1918 and 1924 a new voice began to be heard also claiming to speak on behalf of the oppressed and the exploited. In 1918 the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (I.C.U.) was founded by Clements Kadalie, a clerk from what is now Malawi. This organisation, which consisted largely of African workers but with a large Coloured membership in the Western Cape was a cross between a trade union and a political organisation and was, indeed, eventually to founder on the lack of clarity in respect of its organisational goals.¹⁵ Its militant call for defiance of the pass laws, for a minimum wage, and for equality of opportunity, together with the dynamism of its leaders Kadalie and George Champion, soon made it the leading voice of the oppressed people. For more than a decade it eclipsed the A.N.C. whose prayers and deputations contrasted unfavourably with the militant direct action of the I.C.U. However corruption, anti-communism (inspired by tutors such as W.G. Ballinger who came from the British Labour Party) and petty-bourgeois, pseudo-syndicalist illusions about the power of the economic strike, as well as the lack of a programme of principles (enabling opportunists to run amok with the organisation) led to the crumbling of this first attempt at a black working-class organisation of a political character. By 1928 the I.C.U., which at one time had more than 100,000 members, was ready to be interred.

In the meanwhile there had come into existence in 1921 the Communist Party of South Africa (C.P.S.A.). It began as a break-away from the International Socialist League, itself a left-wing, anti-war splinter group from the (exclusively white) South African Labour Party. Like the S.A.L.P. and the I.S.L., it first concentrated its efforts on the organisation of white workers who, naturally, were the most organised fraction of the working class and whose conditions and ideology most closely resembled those of Europe (from which the majority of the leaders of these organisations hailed). Until the mid-1920s, the Communist Party was opposed to collaboration with the 'bourgeois' A.N.C. and similar organisations. After 1924, when it realised that the white workers had been co-opted as a class by the ruling classes, it gradually shifted its focus to the political education and organisation of black workers. It concentrated especially on the I.C.U. until that organisation expelled its communist members. But it also began to build a large number of predominantly African trade unions of its own, despite the fact that after 1924 such unions could not be registered legally.¹⁶ In later years it established night schools (which were informal adult education centres) in the major cities and these became important recruiting agencies for the Party and led to the rapid proliferation of its ideas among the intelligentsia and advanced workers.

The Party itself was periodically shaken by the dissensions and class struggles which at the time permeated all organisations of the Third International and which arose from the historic contest between Right and Left Oppositions and the Stalinist Centre in the U.S.S.R. It is important to note that initially the C.P.S.A. was prepared to work with the petty-bourgeois Afrikaner National Party led by Hertzog because of its overtly anti-imperialist stance. After 1924, however, the Party went over to a strategy of tacit and often open alliance with the liberal bourgeoisie. There was implicit (and often explicit) in its theory and

practice the conception of a two-stage revolution: first for bourgeois democratic rights and later for socialism.

From about 1926 the C.P.S.A. began to work inside caste-oriented organisations such as the A.N.C., especially after J. Gumede, a prominent member of the A.N.C. executive became a fellow-traveller after visits to an international congress in Brussels and to Moscow.¹⁷ Starting in 1928 the slogan of 'an independent native republic'¹⁸ was popularised by the Party (even though the majority of the executive strongly opposed it) because the disciplinary rules of the Third International (which had adopted the resolution from which the slogan was derived) bound the whole Party to this position. Although the slogan has recently been reinterpreted by party historians as implying black majority rule on a one man, one vote basis,¹⁹ it is clear that at the time it was understood to mean either a separate black state that would be carved out of South African Territory, or one in which (black) Africans were to be regarded as a majority 'nation' (or group of 'nations') as against white, Coloured and Indian 'national minorities'. Partly because it met with little positive response outside the Party and partly because it gave rise to vitriolic controversies and purges within, the idea was allowed to fizzle out. However it left a definite mark on the subsequent development of the liberation struggle in South Africa. For it made it possible for caste organisation, and for strategies based on the assumption of the permanency of caste, to find support among members of the Communist Party in subsequent years.

The fact of the matter is that there was abysmal confusion in the C.P.S.A. on the theory of the nation as it applied to South Africa. As will be shown later in this book, this confusion was caused by the failure to understand the articulation between class and colour-caste.. Or, to put it differently, the C.P.S.A. leadership was still trapped in the bourgeois liberal ideology of race relations: 'There was ...

confusion over the meaning of “independent native republic” and “national movement”.’ Recalling Stalin’s definition of a nation as ‘a historically evolved, stable community of language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a community of culture’, party members argued about its application in South Africa. Was there a single African nation, or were there a number of distinct nations (Xhosa, Zulu, Shangaan, etc.)? Was a national group, or a tribe, the same thing as a nation? The extent to which confusion existed in party circles may be gauged from the fact that as late as December 1931, at a meeting of the Central Committee of the C.P.S.A. in Johannesburg, Molly Wolton proposed ‘the substitution of our slogan Federation of Independent Native Republics for the previous slogan of a South African Independent Native Republic’.²⁰ Paradoxically, therefore, some of the most prominent members of the C.P.S.A., amongst others Lazar Bach,²¹ advocated something akin to the present Bantustan theory of multi-nationalism at a time when the Afrikaner sectionalists themselves were still trying to identify their particular brand of nationalism. Even Moses Kotane, until his recent death General Secretary of the South African Communist Party, wrote in 1931 about the ‘predominantly African areas where, with the addition of more land, African republics may be set up. Industries could be established in these areas; agriculture put on an economic footing; towns, schools and training institutions built’, and, referring to the question of whether there was one African nation or many, Kotane said:

The language question would form one of the main difficulties. There is no one language which is sufficiently known and spoken by a majority of the people in Africa. Zulu is spoken mainly in Natal; Xhosa in the Eastern Cape; Sutho in Basutoland and in some parts of the Free State, Tswana in Bechuanaland, western and north-western

Transvaal, in some parts of the Cape, and in some parts of the Free State. And then there are Sepedi, Tshivenda and Shangaan in the eastern and northern Transvaal. Neither English nor Afrikaans is widely spoken among Africans.

So, while in each republic or national area everything would be conducted in the language of its people, there still remains the problem of the official national language to be solved. Nevertheless, this could be settled by the common consent of all.²²

Clearly, there is an important connection between this early view and some of the subsequent responses of the national liberation movement to the Bantustan strategy. The matter will, therefore, be taken up again when analysing the present-day thought and practice of the liberation movement in Chapter Five.

In the early 1930s most communists who opposed the Stalinist orthodoxy in the C.P. were expelled and by 1934 a Lenin Club had come into existence.²³ This Club was the source of all Trotskyist tendencies and organisations in South Africa. It soon split into two major groupings, one which advocated an above ground workers party fighting for proletarian revolution, and another which advocated a national movement struggling for a bourgeois democratic system on the basis of a transitional programme. Both tendencies had a clearly enunciated class analysis and advocated a non-racial ideology. However even here, as in the C.P.S.A., petty-bourgeois tendencies in the leadership disfigured their organisations, and it is clear that few of them ever really understood the practical significance of the colour-caste analogy implicit in their analyses.

Trotsky's own views on this question are of great interest and were of lasting influence despite their Eurocentric character. In a letter entitled *Remarks on the Draft Thesis of the Workers' Party of South Africa* dated 20 April 1933, he replied to the theses on South Africa of the

majority faction in the Lenin Club. It should be remembered that the original theses were motivated by the polemic within the Communist Party concerning the slogan of 'an independent native republic' and its interpretation in the South African context. It is, therefore, interesting that Trotsky seemed to adopt a more flexible approach than his South African adherents. He wrote:

We must accept with all decisiveness and without any reservations the complete and unconditional right of the Blacks to independence. Only on the basis of a mutual struggle against the domination of the White exploiters can be cultivated and strengthened the solidarity of Black and White toilers. It is possible that the Blacks *after victory* will find it unnecessary to form a separate Black state in South Africa; certainly we will not *force them* to establish a separate State; but let them make this admission freely, on the basis of their own experience, and not forced by the sjambok of the White oppressors. The proletarian revolutionaries must never forget the right of the oppressed nationalities to self-determination, including a full separation ...²⁴

He stressed that:

A victorious revolution is unthinkable without the awakening of the Native masses, in its turn it will give them what they are so lacking today, confidence in their strength, a heightened personal consciousness, a cultural growth. Under these conditions the South African Republic will emerge first of all as a 'Black' Republic; this does not exclude, of course, either full equality for Whites or brotherly relations between the two races (which depends mainly on the conduct of the Whites). But it is entirely obvious that the predominant majority of the population, liberated from slavish dependence, will put a certain imprint on the State.²⁵

Trotsky stressed that he was 'too insufficiently acquainted with the conditions in South Africa to pretend to a full conclusive opinion in a series of practical questions', but it is clear that his view of the national question (ironically) comes close to that of the Comintern Executive discussed previously. The tendency on the part of marxists to view the various language groups and colour-castes as nationalities or national groups is, therefore, also manifest in writings by Trotskyists and members of the Fourth International in this period. Thus, for instance, in an editorial published in *Discussion*, the organ of the Cape Debating Society which was an offshoot of the Fourth International, the editors maintained that:

... the achievement of full democracy by the *national groups* means that they will for the first time have the right to determine their economic and social relations free from those coercive methods suppressing their national growth. They will be free to develop those characteristics in their national make-up which can flourish in a new modern industrial society. Culture and education are made accessible to them and it is on this basis of complete undeterred freedom, independence and real autonomy, that they will determine *whether to integrate themselves with the other liberated groups* to forge a real national unification of their country.²⁶

Although there are other passages which suggest a concept of colour-caste (the term itself is not used, although Trotsky uses the term caste elsewhere in the letter cited above), it is evident that on this basic question there was pitiable confusion among Trotskyists which, from the point of view of formulating a strategy for national liberation was disastrous. This confusion is epitomised in the same editorial's statement that 'The blacks are ... pariahs, voteless and rightless [implying a concept of colour-caste]. This is the unique position of the *nationally oppressed groups* in

South Africa.²⁷ Hence the use of the terminology of *national oppression* seduces the authors to identify the oppressed groups as national groups.

The pivotal period: 1935–1945

The period 1935–1945 may be called the pivotal period of contemporary South African history in so far as all those ideological forces, which have shaped the present, emerged and converged in this period. The Pact government (the alliance that began in 1924 between Hertzog's National Party and the White South African Labour Party) had stimulated manufacturing industry. A rapid urbanisation of both the black and white rural populations ensued.²⁸ The aftermath of the October Revolution in Russia, the world-wide depression of the 1930s, and the anti-fascist struggles in Europe, Asia and America all helped radicalise political thought and action in South Africa as they did in other parts of the world.

The All-African Convention (A.A.C.) formed in 1936 to fight Hertzog's Segregation (Native) Bills, brought together for the first time since 1912 representative organisations of the African people from every corner of the country.²⁹ This was a notable achievement for three reasons. The A.A.C. represented the first attempt by blacks to unite, under one umbrella, organisations drawn from all walks of life – political, as well as economic, social and cultural. The A.N.C. together with vestigial branches of the I.C.U., churches, voters' associations, student groups, trade unions and even sports clubs came together, and the founding conference decided that the A.A.C. was to become the voice of the African people. Significantly also, Coloureds and Indians were accepted as members of the Convention, a practice which had already come into existence in certain A.N.C. branches, especially in the Western Cape. Most important, however, was the fact that the Convention

adopted the policy of non-collaboration with the oppressor – in particular the boycott of the inferior political institutions specially created by the government for blacks to use as ‘toy telephones’. Although the A.N.C. later left the Convention and some of its leaders even agreed to work the dummy Natives Representative Council created in 1936, the All-African Convention of that year was an important herald of things to come and it represented a major ideological and strategic contribution.

Non-European unity

Two important organisations of this period – despite their brief span of life – were the National Liberation League (founded 1935) and the Non-European United Front (1938). They were the result of concerted efforts, inspired by both Stalinists and Trotskyists, to form united-front-type organisations which were intended to create unity in action of *all oppressed groups* on specific issues as well as on more long-term demands. A gradual shift was taking place from the previous position where caste-based organisations fought for concessions for the elite in their respective colour-castes to one where it was realised that only the united struggle of all the oppressed for common goals against a common oppression could actually pose a threat to the ruling classes. This development inevitably influenced thinking on the national question, and new ideas on this subject were indeed becoming manifest. Moreover the question of the class leadership of the struggle of the oppressed came sharply to the fore with the militant trade union activity of the 1930s and early 1940s.³⁰

An important step was taken in 1943 with the formation of the Anti-C.A.D. Movement. Following the Smuts government’s proposal in 1941 to create a separate Coloured Affairs Department (on the model of the Native Affairs Department), an unprecedented wave of protest,

inspired largely by young Trotskyist and ex-Trotskyist intellectuals, swept through the Coloured community. Under the impact of the Anti-C.A.D. movement the government's plan came to nought. A dummy Coloured Advisory Council functioned fitfully until it expired in 1948 but the Coloured Affairs Department could only be instituted after 1948 when the new National Party government imposed it in defiance of the protests of the people over whom it was created. The Anti-C.A.D. Movement was a federal organisation modelled on the A.A.C. It also expressly adopted the A.A.C. policy of non-collaboration and the weapon of the boycott. For the Coloured sector of the oppressed people it marked a watershed since it for the first time effectively challenged the aspirant-white, 'Colouredist' orientation which had been prevalent until then under the influence of leaders such as Dr. Abdurahman, Rev. Gow, and others.

In the period December 1943 to January 1944, the A.A.C., the Anti-C.A.D., and certain rebel branches of the Natal Indian Congress came together to form the Non-European Unity Movement (known as the Unity Movement). At the level of national organisations (as opposed to clearly defined working class organisations like the C.P.S.A.) this was the first step away from the previous caste-based framework. This movement, a federation of two federal bodies (A.A.C. and Anti-C.A.D.), adopted a ten-point programme of democratic rights which was to be attained by means of the policy of non-collaboration. It was a serious attempt to overcome the problems of caste prejudice and segregation among the oppressed communities. On the basis of this minimum programme and policy of non-collaboration it hoped to mobilise simultaneously the whole of the black working class, the peasantry, and the urban petty bourgeoisie, as well as the radical intelligentsia both black and white. In practice, the leadership and strategists of the Unity Movement assumed that the white labour

aristocracy would not play any revolutionary role as long as the immediate (but only transitional) phase of the struggle for the democratisation of the country was the order of the day. Non-collaboration, objectively, was the method by which the black workers and peasants were to be taught the lessons of class independence – they were thereby to be separated politically from any temptation to create an alliance with the liberal bourgeoisie. In the South African context, this was a revolutionary step forward since all organisations of the oppressed people had hitherto been created and sustained with a liberal-reformist perspective, if not literally under liberal bourgeois tutelage.

In respect of the concept of the nation, also, the theory and practice of the Unity Movement represented an incomparable advance on all previous and prevalent views on the subject. A succinct treatment of the subject by it is contained in the document *A Declaration to the People of South Africa from the Non-European Unity Movement* published in April 1951:

Who constitutes the South African nation? The answer to this question is as simple as it would be in any other country. The nation consists of the people who were born in South Africa and who have no other country but South Africa as their mother-land. They may have been born with a black skin or with a brown one, a yellow one or a white one; they may be male or female; they may be young, middle-aged or of an advanced age; they may be short or tall, fat or lean; they may be long-headed or round-headed, straight-haired or curly-haired; they may have long noses or broad noses; they may speak Xhosa, Zulu, Sotho, English or Afrikaans, Hindi, Urdu or Swahili, Arabic or Jewish, they may be Christians, Mohammedans, Buddhists, or of any other faith. So long as they are born of a mother and belong to the human species, so long as they are not lunatics or incurable criminals, they all have an equal title to be citizens

of South Africa, members of the nation, with the same rights, privileges and duties. In a nation it is not necessary that the people forming it should have a common language or a common culture, common customs and traditions. There are many nations where the people speak different languages, consist of different nationalities with different cultures. The United States of America, Switzerland and the Soviet Union may be taken as examples. All that is required for a people to be a nation is community of interests, love of their country, pride in being citizens of their country.³¹

The Unity Movement saw their task as '... the building of a nation consisting of many nationalities'.³² It is at once clear that unlike all previous theories of nationality in South Africa (including that of the Communist Party) the Unity Movement did not hesitate to declare that there is one nation and not many. There is a specific denial of the correctness of Stalin's definition of the nation in the rejection of community of language and community of culture as necessary attributes to a nation. However, it is also clear that there is still in this Unity Movement document a confusion of the concepts of state and nation which will need to be referred to again presently. There is also the same tendency as with the earlier Fourth International in the 1930s to describe the colour-castes and language groups of South Africa as nationalities (a concept equivalent to that of national groups, later used in the literature of the Congress Movement) even though the concept of colour-caste is implicit throughout the analysis. But it is fundamental to the approach of the Unity Movement that it does not concede the possibility of any of these 'nationalities' exercising their right to self-determination in the direction of secession from the existing South African State. Separatism of any kind is, therefore, anathema to their 'universal concept of the nation'.³³ At this stage (the early 1950s), however, the question of the class

leadership of the nation and therefore of the national movement is not posed.

The Unity Movement's contribution to what we may now call the continuing discussion on the national question is patently of the greatest importance. It clearly and unambiguously called into question the whole of the previous era of caste-based organisation and political action. It insisted that the ideological lag (relative to the objective economic factors which were drawing the caste and language groups together) had to be bridged by means of a genuine national unity movement:

[The People] behave as groups, think as groups, act as groups, but not as a nation. All sections of the Non-Europeans are afflicted with this segregation-germ. It puts back the clock when the leadership of the Indians can see nothing but the Group Areas Act and direct all their energy towards bringing about a Round Table Conference with India and Pakistan; or when, as one hears repeatedly at meetings in defence of the Coloured vote, it is argued that 'we shall not allow ourselves to be reduced to the level of the Natives', or when, to the delight of the Herrenvolk and the enemies of Unity, the Africans in Natal still harbour Indophobia and have actually been guilty of an anti-Indian pogrom. Admittedly, the agents and lackeys of the Herrenvolk have a great deal to do with all this, but a part of the blame must be placed on the shoulders of the Non-Europeans themselves.³⁴

Africanism

The theory of the nation is clearly a stake in the class struggle. Just how important a catalytic role the Unity Movement contribution played can be gauged from the emergence of the Congress Alliance and the theory of the nation with which they came forward at that time. Under

the influence of the Unity Movement and of the general anti-imperialist upsurge in the colonial world during the Second World War, and because of the revival of the Pan-Africanist movement in the U.S.A., Europe and Africa, the younger people in the A.N.C. became disillusioned with the manner in which the conservative leadership had up to that time used the organisation for bargaining with and seeking concessions from the rulers. Their agitation led to the creation of the A.N.C. Youth League in 1944 – the year in which the Unity Movement also founded. Here, again, was a fundamental development that was to have consequences reaching right up to the present phase of the struggle. The A.N.C. Youth League was avowedly Africanist and saw no role for whites in the struggle. It stood for boycotts of the dummy ‘race’-based institutions created by government for blacks. It also espoused a form of mixed economy which was similar in conception to certain versions of what is now African Socialism. Its most important contribution proved to be a tactical one: it insisted – as against the previous stress on negotiations between leaders and administrators of government policies – on a programme of action and on the adoption of direct action by the people as a regular feature of political education and agitation.

But in its concept of the nation, the Congress Youth League (C.Y.L.) had not moved much beyond the position of the Semes and Xumas. It insisted stridently that the African (i.e. the Bantu-speaking) people were a nation who had to determine their own destiny, and that no other ‘national group’ (or ‘racial group’) should co-determine their policies. It was, of course, prepared to consider periodic alliances between caste-based political organisations. These views are expressed clearly in an article written in May 1946 by A.M. Lembede, the philosophical father of the Youth League whose premature death raised him to the status of a martyr soon thereafter. According to him, one of the ‘cardinal principles’ on which

African nationalism is based is the following:

Africans are one. Out of the heterogeneous tribes, there must emerge a homogeneous nation. The basis of national unity is the nationalistic feeling of the Africans, the feeling of being Africans irrespective of tribal connections, social status, educational attainment or economic class. This nationalistic feeling can only be realised in and interpreted by [a] national movement of which all Africans must be members.

Another such 'cardinal principle' was:

Co-operation between Africans and other Non-Europeans on common problems and issues may be highly desirable. But this occasional cooperation can only take place between Africans as a single unit and other Non-European groups as separate units. Non-European unity is a fantastic dream which has no foundation in reality.³⁵

In their formal manifesto issued in 1948, the C.Y.L. declared South Africa to be '*A Country of Nationalities*':

... South Africa is a country of four chief nationalities, three of which (the Europeans, Indians and Coloureds) are minorities, and three of which (the Africans, Coloureds and Indians) suffer national oppression ... At all events, it is to be clearly understood that we are not against the Europeans as such – we are not against the European as a human being – but we are totally and irrevocably opposed to white domination and to oppression.³⁶

It will become evident later that in this conception of the nation there was a point of intersection with the prevailing views in the Communist Party; this became manifest later on in the second point of the much publicised Freedom Charter adopted by the Congress Alliance in 1955. However, the seminal ideas of the C.Y.L. when questions of organisation and strategy arose gave rise to a split which

ended eventually in the breakaway of the Pan-Africanist Congress (P.A.C.) from the A.N.C. in 1958–59.

Four views of the nation in South Africa

As this pivotal period (1935–1945) comes to an end, therefore, we enter the contemporary period with at least four more or less clearly delineated approaches to the national question. The first was that of the (Purified) National Party, representing the class interests of the urban and rural national bourgeoisie, the Afrikaans-speaking aspirant bourgeoisie, the urban petty bourgeoisie and the majority section of the white wage-earners. The second was that of the liberal bourgeoisie, representing essentially the interests of metropolitan (especially mining) capital and a large section of the (mainly English-speaking) urban industrial bourgeoisie, and concentrated politically in the United Party. This conception coincided in all but details with that of the A.N.C., even as put forward by its Youth League, and was not inconsistent with the views prevalent in the Communist Party (especially as – with the exception of the Youth League itself – none of these tendencies was bound by any dogma concerning the concept of the ‘nation’ except that implicit in the idea of race relations, later to be propagated in terms of the concept, ‘plural society’). The third view of the nation was the Africanist view of the Youth League militants which, in essence, held that ‘Africans’ formed the nation. It is evident that this was the authentic voice of the black petty bourgeoisie which wanted to use black chauvinism in a manner similar to that in which the Broederbond had used Afrikaner nationalism. In this conception the definition of ‘African’ would prove to be crucial, the point at which dogma could be shaken into a potentially revolutionary theory. For, only if the category ‘African’ was held to include *all* South Africans who opposed the system of domination, would the use of the

term represent a decisive break with the petty-bourgeois limitations which it shared with Afrikaner nationalism. The fourth view was that held by the Unity Movement which alone disregarded the question of 'race' as a defining characteristic of the nation.

Among the oppressed the battle would be fought out among all these tendencies. And each position would tend to become tied to the related question of which class should lead the national liberation movement.

Just as Afrikaner sectionalism was asserting itself on all fronts in the late 1940s, so too a massive upheaval was taking shape among the oppressed and disenfranchised people in response to exactly the same pressures which were impelling Afrikaner nationalists in a diametrically opposite direction. The liberal solution for the threat to the capitalist state was to co-opt the right wing of African nationalism and thus confine the challenge to the parameters set by private enterprise, but on the basis of new class alliances. This meant ditching the white working class as a privileged caste, in favour of collaboration with the aspiring black bourgeoisie whose nationalism promised a greater chance for the long-term survival of capitalism in South Africa than that of the Afrikaner bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie. The Afrikaner nationalists, from their ultra-right wing perspective, had understood that African nationalism if brought under working-class leadership could not be confined to the struggle for democratic rights and incorporation into the existing system. They sensed that the struggle would grow over into a challenge to the capitalist system itself. South Africa's ruling-class strategies of the past were thus exacting their vengeance. The absence of a viable and prestigious black bourgeoisie meant that the national liberation movement would inevitably tend to come under radical proletarian leadership. Hence the only way out was to smash this movement, decapitate it, redirect it into sectionalist channels, and create the bourgeois class

that could in theory lead it into the sand. The force of African nationalism itself would thus be harnessed in such a way that it dissipated itself. This goal necessitated a new strategy, one which has come to be known as the Bantustan strategy.

Notes

1. S. Trapido, 'South Africa in a Comparative Study of Industrialisation', p. 50.
2. See, for instance, Dr. D.F. Malan's election speech delivered on 5 March 1953 at Stellenbosch. Reprinted in D.P. Goosen (ed.), *Die Triomf van Nasionalisme in Suid-Afrika (1910-1953)*, pp. 92-3.
3. There is a growing number of works on the theory and practice of apartheid. A useful bibliography is provided in Davenport, *South Africa. A Modern History*, pp. 395-401.
4. Speech reprinted in D.P. Goosen (ed.) *op. cit.*, p. 105. See also my discussion in Chapter 4.
5. For factual but inevitably controversial presentations of the struggles of the oppressed people since the late nineteenth century, see especially E. Roux, *Time Longer Than Rope*; I.B. Tabata, *The Awakening of a People*; H.J. Simons and R. Simons, *Class and Colour in South Africa*; and Mnguni, *300 Years, A History of South Africa*.
6. For a competent analysis of the numbers of people and the processes involved, see F. Wilson, *Migrant Labour in South Africa*, especially pp. 152-8.
7. O'Meara and Innes, *op. cit.*, have suggested the term 'intermittent workers'.
8. Report of the Transvaal Local Government Commission of 1921, paragraph 267.
9. A good introduction to Ethiopianism in South Africa is B.M. Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets in South Africa*. Also see E. Roux, *op. cit.*.

10. See Chapter Six.
11. 'Bridging the Gap between White and Black in South Africa' (Address by Dr. A.B. Xuma at the Conference of European and Bantu Christian Student Associations at Fort Hare, June 27–July 3, 1930. Printed in T. Karis and G. Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, Vol. 1, p. 219).
12. *Ibid.*, p. 227 .
13. See, for instance, A.P.O., 5 June 1909, p. 11 and A.P.O., 12 March 1910, p. 8.
14. See A.P.O., 13 January 1912, pp. 5–7 .
15. See I.B. Tabata, *The Awakening of a People*, pp. 12–23.
16. S.T. van der Horst, 'The Effects of Industrialisation on Race Relations in Africa', in Guy Hunter (ed.), *Industrialisation and Race Relations, A Symposium*, p. 119.
17. See Roux, *op.cit.*, p. 211. For the Communist Party's attitude to Hertzog's National Party, see G. Carter, *The Politics of Inequality*, p. 61 ; Simons and Simons, *Class and Colour in South Africa*, p. 302ff.; A. Lerumo, *Fifty Fighting Years –The Communist Party of South Africa 1921–1971*, Chapter 3.
18. See especially Roux, *op.cit.*, p. 255ff. and B. Bunting, *Moses Kotane*.
19. Simons and Simons, *op.cit.*, pp. 390–1. Also see note 64 to Chapter Four.
20. Bunting, *op.cit.*, pp. 40–1.
21. See M. Legassick, 'Class and Nationalism in South Africa', p. 52.
22. Bunting, *op.cit.*, pp. 41–2.
23. See Roux, *op.cit.*, p. 312.
24. 'Trotsky's Letter on the National and Agrarian Struggles in South Africa', p. 19.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 18.
26. 'Editorial: The National Question and Its Relation to South Africa', in *Discussion* (my emphasis).
27. *Ibid.*
28. The scope and significance of this migration is well

treated by D. O'Meara in 'The 1946 African Mine Workers' Strike and the Political Economy of South Africa', *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, Vol. XIII, No. 2, July 1975.

29. See I.B. Tabata, *The Awakening of a People*.
30. See O'Meara, *loc.cit.*
31. *Op.cit.*, p. 3.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
33. *Op.cit.*, p. 3.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
35. 'Policy of the Congress Youth League', (Article by A.M. Lembede in *Inkundla ya Bantu*, May 1946. Printed in Karis and Carter, *op.cit.*, vol. 2) pp. 317-8.
36. 'Basic Policy of the Congress Youth League', *ibid.*, p. 329.

4. THE BANTUSTAN STRATEGY

Vision, realpolitik and dialectics

IT IS NECESSARY at the outset to anticipate the objection that by speaking of a Bantustan *strategy*, thus implying that its authors possessed considerable clarity about their real goals and were not confined to the horizons visible to them through the ideological prism of 'race', one is attributing to them a clairvoyance and intentionality which would not merely be unprecedented, but frankly impossible. This objection would seem all the more reasonable since it is a demonstrable fact – acknowledged even by its architects – that the Bantustan strategy did not come forth fully developed from the brain of its political father, Dr. Verwoerd. On the contrary, it is clear from the evidence that the strategy evolved through a series of twists and turns, and even some breathtaking somersaults. For example, we have an initial denial by Dr. Verwoerd that one of his goals was the creation of independent black states, followed by his admission some six years later that this was *necessarily* the goal.¹

The obvious pragmatism of this position should not obscure the relationship between ideologically motivated goals and the multiplicity of other factors of an economic, political and ideological nature. Only a simplistic propagandist or an economic determinist would argue that the particular economic effects associated with apartheid and Bantustans are the actual causes-in-intention of the ideology. Ideology does have a relative autonomy. But autonomy does not mean insular separation. It always involves an interrelationship with the other determining spheres – the economic and the political. Though the racist

utopias of Afrikaner intellectuals and publicists are undoubtedly the intellectual source of the vision of a fragmented South Africa, they were themselves produced by a preceding historical totality by the economic, political and ideological history of the whole country. As such, they were obviously related to the existing configuration of these spheres in the social formation. However one must accept that the ruling class as a whole in a social formation will tolerate, and even actively promote, any ideology that does not subvert the existing set of class relationships. If one did not accept this, one would have to conclude that ideological, economic and political spheres exist in hermetic isolation from one another without any possibility of influencing or determining developments in the other spheres. To state this is to refute it.

But the objection of imputed clairvoyance can be judged spurious on even less remote grounds. The fact is that apartheid (and, therefore, Bantustans) is not an ideology. It is a political strategy derived from the primary mode of expression of the dominant ideology of the South African ruling classes, racism. It is a variant of and a development beyond previous political strategies; in certain respects it represented a departure from these strategies, all of which had themselves found expression through the prism of 'race'. Only if one understands this cardinal theoretical demarcation between ideology and strategy, can one understand how the original strategic intentions of the authors of Bantustans, though apparently in contradiction with the eventual political practice, have in fact been consistently implemented (albeit in forms different in detail from those originally envisaged). On the theoretical level what has happened is that the Afrikaner Nationalists have succeeded in accustoming the ruling classes to a discourse based upon the concept of 'race'. The original political strategy has not changed fundamentally. Verwoerd and Vorster, his successor, were prepared to grant

‘independence in the dictionary meaning of the word’ (Vorster’s words) only after they had come to realise (in the 1970s), from the pilot schemes of the former High Commission Territories (Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland), that there was no economic or political danger in doing so. They were then confident that the original purposes of the apartheid Bantu Authorities programme of 1951 could and would be served just as well, if not better, by ‘independent Bantu states’.

Once this realisation had taken root, a new theoretical justification based on the same racist ideology was needed. The result was the theory of South Africa as a multi-national state. The dialectical relationship between economic, political and ideological moments in the social formation could not be demonstrated better than by a detailed study of the National Party’s policies and practice between 1948 and 1963, i.e. between the first implementation of apartheid and the first implementation of multi-nationalism (with the granting of self-government to the Transkei). One does not, therefore, have to impute any Cassandra-like wisdom or foresight to the authors of the Bantustan strategy. Within the parameters of their original purposes – basically, the smashing of African nationalism and black working-class consciousness, and the maintenance of the value of labour power at as low a level as possible (even though these were not the terms in which they conceived this latter purpose) – they were compelled to manoeuvre amongst a variety of pressures: the need to retain the support of their electorate, the maintenance of ideological consistency, the maintenance for their hand-picked collaborators of a reasonable degree of credibility amongst black people, economic pressures (especially those emanating from the burgeoning secondary industry), and finally the need to cushion the assaults from a world hostile to overt racist ideology after the holocaust of fascism and the political emancipation of the colonial world.

In this way the National Party also hoped to assuage an international liberation that could never acknowledge that racism had become a necessity, without which the capitalist system cannot survive in South Africa. All these contradictions had to be reconciled ideologically by means of a theory which appeared to jettison racism while actually building on its solid foundations. Racism has been to the development of capitalism in South Africa what the doctrine of individual rights was to the development of capitalism in England and France. The conventional bourgeois critique of racism, and many marxist variants thereof that are still current in the literature of the liberation movement, is based on a myth. This myth, which is often reinforced 'scientifically' by a false reading of the first volume of *Das Kapital* where Marx used a highly abstract model of British capitalism as it then existed, assumes that there is some optimum set of conditions under which capitalism – with a minimum of blood and tears – can flourish to infinity. One of these conditions is assumed to be equality of rights for individuals. Yet, historically, capital has been combined with all forms of labour, from slave labour to 'free' wage labour, in order to make possible the process of accumulation. In South Africa, racism with its concomitant forms of forced labour (i.e. labour recruited with the coercive assistance of state organs rather than on the basis of some illusory contract between 'equal' buyer and seller of labour power meeting each other in the so-called free market as alleged in the textbooks on 'perfect competition') legitimated the accumulation of capital by a small class of local and foreign white capitalists.

The fact that the development of the productive forces necessitates altered ideological mechanisms for the continuation of the capitalist system is universally attested. However, this does not mean that the dominant ideology is thereby wiped out. It is an illusion, fabricated in the interest of those who would confine the development of the African

nationalist movement in South Africa within a persisting capitalist framework, to believe that capitalism can continue to exist on South African soil without the shadow of racism. As long as groups of some kind or other are perpetuated as political entities – and capitalism *must* do this in order to disorganise the proletariat – for just so long racism cannot be eradicated in South Africa.

Repression and retribalisation

Between 1948 when it came to power, and 1964–65 the National Party government set about smashing the organised extra-parliamentary opposition, specifically the African nationalist and the black working-class organisations. This, together with the introduction of rigid social separation of the ‘racial’ groups, has on occasion been called the negative phase of its programme.² With every increase in its parliamentary majority, it took harsher measures against the people’s political organisations and against the trade union movement. This history is so well documented that there is no need to recount it here.³ It suffices to draw attention to the strategic aspects of this programme of repression. After half-hearted and tentative overtures to the Africanists in the A.N.C., obviously made to probe the stability of the links between African nationalism and communism,⁴ the National Party never again in this period seriously considered the possibility of buying off and co-opting the petty-bourgeois leadership of the national movement. With ruthless consistency it equated any attempt to alter the economic, social and political system with communism. Through bannings of leaders, meetings and organisations, through banishments and deportations of individuals belonging to all the organisations of the oppressed people, it inexorably narrowed the circle of legal political protest and activity, thus driving the whole movement for national liberation

underground into illegality and armed struggle. Because this movement was by inclination and circumstance completely unprepared for such a situation, the regime gave itself an advantage of two decades during which it could streamline its policies and implement them without fear of any immediate threat to the capitalist system. One consequence of this strategic decision was the need to nurture an alternative leadership to that which it was persecuting and driving into exile. Such a leadership was ready to hand in the chieftaincy especially, which the government's plans had from the start considered essential for its overall scheme of retribalisation.

At the same time as the National Party government was eradicating the people's organisations, it had to ward off the challenge from the liberals who saw the salvation of the country in the co-option of the right-wing and moderate leadership of African nationalism. Apart from the horse-play of parliament itself, the ways in which the regime dealt with the challenge mounted by the Liberal Party were formally identical with those it used against the liberation movement (bannings, imprisonment, censorship, etc.). Its war on two fronts thus created the impression that those attacked by the same enemy were allies. It therefore became extremely fashionable in the 1950s for liberals to be seen and to consider themselves as part of the liberation movement. This illusion was only shattered in the 1960s once recourse to arms became the order of the day and the lines of struggle thereby redrawn.

Behind the battle lines the regime was single-mindedly implementing its strategy of retribalisation of the whole of South Africa. Its economic motivation has already been analysed.⁵ The strategy involved halting any further permanent urbanisation of African people. Secondly, it involved the resettlement of African people in the reserves in such a way that 'surplus' or 'non-permanent' people in the cities would be domiciled in the reserves whether or not

they had links with those areas; it also eliminated 'black spots' (isolated African peasant communities settled in the midst of white-owned agricultural land) through their resettlement in the existing reserves, or on land adjoining them bought from private owners for this purpose by the state. This reversal of the tide was expected to be completed by 1978. At the same time the position of those African people who by virtue of having lived for generations in the urban areas could not be denied the status of permanency was rendered insecure. The sword of Damocles – the constant threat of resettlement in the reserves – was to discipline and cow them into submission.

Thirdly, the retribalisation scheme also involved a vast reorganisation and regimentation of unskilled and semi-skilled labour. Both ordinary state bureaucrats of the labour recruitment bureaux and the tribal authorities (chiefs, sub-chiefs, and headmen) were to be used for this purpose. The proletariat was to be disorganised into mutually antagonistic ethnic or tribal groups under the ideological and political guidance of these traditionalistic *gauleiters*. Migrant labour, one of the pillars of capitalism in South Africa, was to become the *modus vivendi* of all but a vanishing minority of the African people. All these measures required for their administration a tightening up, and extension to all Africans (including women), of the hated pass laws.

Fourthly, because of its pivotal role in the reproduction of the relations of production, 'native education' was to be reconceived and restructured from the bottom up. It was to serve the purpose of perpetuating the capitalist system as it had developed in South Africa and not creating the illusion that black people would be permitted to graze in the green pastures of 'white civilisation'. In the notorious words of Dr. Verwoerd, 'the Native' was to be taught that 'there was no place for him in "European Society" above the level of certain forms of labour.'⁶ White collar ideals were to be

stamped out in the classrooms, which henceforth were to become no more than adjuncts to the labour bureaux and other labour recruitment agencies.⁷

Finally, the necessary adjustments were also to be made in the organisation of the lives of the Coloured and Indian population registration groups to fit them into the traditional pattern of the colour-caste hierarchy and to drive them away politically from the African people. The growing practice and theory of Non-European unity were to be nipped in the bud.

The legislative centre pieces of the apartheid programme of retribalisation were the Bantu Authorities Act (1953), Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act (1951), Native Building Workers Act (1951), Native Services Levy Act (1952), Native Laws Amendment Act (1952), Natives (Abolition of Passes and Co-ordination of Documents) Act (1952), Bantu Education Act (1953) as well as the Group Areas Act and various amendments to the Industrial Conciliation Act, consolidated in 1956. In these acts and in almost annual amendments to them, the goals set out above were statutorily enshrined and pursued. Verwoerd, at that time Minister of Native Affairs and therefore main spokesman of the government concerned with the 'constructive' aspects of apartheid (i.e. retribalisation) made it clear that he was acting according to a plan.⁸ On him devolved the task of socio-economic engineering whereby the reserves were to continue to buttress capital accumulation in primary (and also in secondary) industry. Hence he stressed the impoverished condition of the reserves and advocated their 'rehabilitation' and 'betterment':

He wanted to establish economic farming units in the Reserves, cultivated by 'full-time stockfarmers or agriculturalists' producing for the market and resale to 'large non-farming native communities in the native areas' engaged in 'the rural type of urban development'. He had appointed a socio-economic

commission under F.R. Tomlinson to look into this, as well as an Inter-Departmental Committee to investigate the location of industry near the Reserves so as to cut down the black invasion of white urban areas. Two other Departmental Committees were investigating ways of reducing livestock and exploiting mineral deposits in native areas. Verwoerd also said he was 'training the Bantu for possible forms of self-government, based on their own traditions', and on the principle that 'sound evolution depends on starting with small responsibilities within a limited sphere'.⁹

There is no word here of Bantustans as independent states, or even as self-governing areas within the unitary South African state. While, therefore, the socio-economic and political purpose is the same as it is in the later Bantustan concept, the justification at the ideological level is different; it is still the principle of Christian trusteeship inherited from the party created by General Hertzog in 1914, and restated in the National Party's 1952 Programme of Principles, as follows:

As a basic principle of its attitude towards Natives and Coloureds the party recognises that both are permanent parts of the country's population, under the Christian Trusteeship of the European races ... In accordance with this principle it desires to give the non-European races the opportunity to develop themselves, each race in its own fields, in both the material and spiritual spheres, in keeping with their natural gifts and abilities ... It also declares itself in favour of the territorial and political segregation of the Native, and of separation between Europeans and non-Europeans in general and in the residential and – as far as is practicable – in the industrial spheres ...¹⁰

Continuities and discontinuities in ruling class strategy

It is clear that, though the reserves had by round about 1940 lost their original function of providing a wage subsidy for primary industry, they could none the less continue to serve the other functions outlined above, all of which tended to depress or at least keep static the value of labour power. In the period 1948 to 1957 the National Party government was merely continuing the traditional policies of the ruling classes vis-à-vis the reserves. By refusing to adopt the recommendation of its own Tomlinson Commission in 1955 (and previously made by the Smuts government's Fagan Commission in 1948) to invest capital on a large scale in the reserves in order rapidly to restore its agricultural potential and create the infrastructure for secondary and tertiary industry there, the Party was remaining true to its basic strategy. For it had to maintain the alliance with the white workers if it was to remain in power. Since the Fagan-Tomlinson strategy spelled the end of cheap black labour in the long term, it would inevitably lead to a reshuffle of class alliances and a breakdown of the colour-caste system on which capital accumulation had hitherto depended.

Far from representing a major rupture in ruling-class policy, the regime's choice of extending the reserve strategy into the apartheid system, under the new circumstances in which the reserves no longer provided a wage subsidy and where a growing, articulate and increasingly militant mass movement was challenging the *status quo*, constituted a rational decision from the point of view of all fractions of the ruling class (except perhaps the industrial bourgeoisie interested in economies of scale and thus in an expanding domestic market).

But ... the Bantustans carried on where the Reserves had left off in terms of depressing the level of people's needs and minimising the cost of satisfying

those needs which they cannot but have, thus contributing to the reproduction of a fraction of the working class and of the reserve army of labour along with the semi-maintenance of a significant portion of the rest of the surplus population. The Bantustans also continued in the Reserves' role of contributing to the disorganisation of the proletariat, although in a manner that was in part changing ...¹¹

It is clear that as soon as *any* oppressed, underprivileged or exploited class of people in South Africa developed their resistance to the point where they either constituted a direct threat to the state or could tumble the country into a prolonged period of instability and economic dislocation, attempts were made to co-opt the leadership of that class, as long as the basis of capital accumulation – the super-exploitation of the labouring people – could be maintained intact. Such challenges were always the result of previous structural economic changes in production even though there was not a mechanical causative link between economic and subsequent political developments. Let us recall some major instances. The growth of capitalist agriculture and the agricultural export industry produced pressures and contradictions that led to the formation of the Afrikaner Bond and the early Afrikaner sectionalist movement. Mining created a privileged white working class which challenged the ruling classes by combining together in order to retain privileges and rights for skilled (white) workers as opposed to unskilled or semi-skilled (black) workers. Early secondary industry gave birth to a black working class and militant African nationalism as well as working-class organisation. Post-Second World War developments heralded the possibility, even if remote at that stage, of this class coming to power and undermining the basis of accumulation. So once again co-option of the leadership of this new class threat became necessary. But the petty-bourgeois leadership of the African nationalist

movement was historically tied to an alliance with the liberal bourgeoisie. So the National Party government was compelled to seek a more traditional base for creating an alternative leadership which it could use to dissipate the force of black nationalism as well as that of the working-class movement, which was also gaining ground. It is from this premise that the discontinuities between the pre-war reserves, immediate post-war retribalisation, and post-1960 Bantustan strategies are to be explained.

It is important to stress once more that, although it is necessary for purposes of exposition to present the strategy as though it had a finished conception from the beginning, it was and has remained an evolving course of action influencing, and influenced by, political-ideological theories and by economic and social developments both inside and outside South Africa. The category of government-appointed chiefs and headmen was the foundation of the early Bantustan strategy. This group of people was drawn into the lower levels of the bureaucracy in a new form of indirect rule. The chieftaincy which, because of its traditional association with the military resistance of the people to conquest, had originally been degraded by the ruling class and transformed into no more than ceremonial status, was revived and extended. In the process it was emptied of its original content and significance. Chiefs were appointed where possible in accordance with customary genealogies; but in many cases in flagrant contravention of these because the appointees suited the political purposes of the government better. In this way the base of the South African state was broadened. A new group of black people was brought into existence, one which had been given a vested interest (even if still negligible in material terms) in the perpetuation of a slightly modified *status quo*. To this class were added the numerous petty-bourgeois elements that were now drawn into the administrative apparatus of the Department of Bantu Affairs. Apart from the govern-

ment wanting these elements to take the place of both the modern nationalist and the modern socialist leaderships which had been thrown up by the struggle in the previous decades, the main task of these men and women was to operate efficiently and with as little friction as possible the new streamlined system whereby the labour of the millions of black peasant-workers was to be regimented. 'They became the camp commandants of the Bantustan labour camps.'¹² All this was passed off ideologically as the granting of 'limited self-government' to the country's black people.

It becomes obvious from this exposition and from the words of Verwoerd, the architect of the strategy, that the major difference between the reserve strategy before 1948 and the Bantustan strategy thereafter was the acknowledgement by the ruling class of the class stratification which had been inexorably developing before 1948, despite the strategic barriers set to such development among black people in general and those in the reserves in particular. The National Party set out to stimulate, but at the same time to control and confine, this process in such a way that it did not threaten to alter fundamentally the existing class relations in the social formation. That any executive of the ruling class would have had to attend to this historic phenomenon is amply demonstrated by the fact that the 1948 Fagan Commission, appointed by Smuts' United Party government, had also recommended action in this sphere:

We suggest that an attempt be made to collect landless families in villages inside the Reserves. If possible, they could there be given a little plot of ground just big enough to keep the women and children occupied, but not one that is supposed to provide for their full support. The hypothesis must be that their income is derived wholly or mainly from the wages earned by their absent menfolk. An attempt should further be

made to persuade the chiefs and the tribes to exclude men whose plots are neglected owing to their absence from sharing in the allotment of communal land. Such families will then also be landless and will similarly have to be accommodated in the villages. If after the men give up migrant labour and once more become full-time residents in the Reserves, they could again come into consideration for the allotment of land.

The Fagan Commission added a rider which for the National Party strategists only became relevant in the late 1970s, that:

... If the villages are a success, they may in many cases prove to be merely a half-way house for families of men who start as migrant labourers but in the course of time become urbanised and will then desire to take their families out of the Reserves. Insofar as the villages may fulfil this function they will also be serving a useful purpose.¹³

From the experience of their own sectionalist movement, the Afrikaner strategists and ideologues appreciated the importance of a bourgeois class for the stimulation and sustenance of a nationalist movement within a capitalist framework. While, therefore, the chieftaincy and petty bureaucracy were considered to be administratively pivotal in the period of retribalisation and repression, it was understood that, unless classes of people with an *economic* stake in the perpetuation of Bantustans permanently dependent on South Africa were also created, the fascist face of repression would be all that the strategy would have to show. This was the case in the Pondoland Revolt of 1960 where:

The focus of the discontent was the Bantu Authorities system and action was directed against the functionary chiefs and headmen. The notorious Proclamation 400 ... was enacted by the South African Government to deal with the grave situation

... A consideration of some of the provisions of this proclamation is revealing for they illustrate the extent to which the traditional legitimization of the authority of the tribal leaders had broken down and had to be supplanted by coercive state power.¹⁴

After the Report of the Tomlinson Commission in 1955, the government set about systematically creating an economic elite or aspirant-bourgeoisie with a stake in what it now began to refer to as the Bantu Homelands. This cardinal aim of the Bantustan strategy was recently stressed again by Dr. F. Hartzenberg, the Deputy Minister of Bantu Development. In an article in *The Argus* of 27 July 1977, he is reported to have said that:

... the Government did not begrudge [white] investors reasonable profits from homeland schemes, but [he] warned that no one should expect to enrich himself in the homelands in a short period of time.

The whole idea of homeland development was the training and establishment of a middle class of economically independent entrepreneurs, industrialists, businessmen or farmers. 'We wish to transplant and perpetuate the capitalistic free enterprise system in the homelands because we are convinced it is the only system by which development can be achieved rapidly', Dr. Hartzenberg said.

The turn by the National Party government to the concepts and discourse of nationality was inextricably connected with its decision to bring about class polarisation within the African (and other black) communities. From Dr. Verwoerd's early speeches about the need to create such an entrepreneurial elite in the reserves right up to the time of writing, the economic-political importance of this class for the success of the strategy of multi-national development has been emphasised by government spokesmen. Thus on 25 April 1977 the Deputy Minister of Bantu Development

stated in the House of Assembly:

Management is the most important factor. For a nation to develop requires all its people and particularly those who have managerial skills and talents. We are making an appeal to the White employers in the White areas of South Africa to release the Black entrepreneurs and potential Black entrepreneurs, as well as people from the homelands whom they have in their employ, so that they can return to the homelands. These people are the lifeblood of the homelands. They are the most important asset of the homelands ... However, we are going one step further and we are asking the industrialist, the professional man, the dealer and everyone for that matter, not only to release such a person, but also to assist him, on the basis of the position of trust which has developed, in starting his own undertaking in the homelands ...¹⁵

By means of the Bantu Investment Corporation (established in 1959 and now called the Economic Development Corporation), the Xhosa Development Corporation (started in 1965) and later the Bantu Mining Corporation, some state capital (albeit a negligible quantity relatively) was diverted to the homelands for infrastructural investment, and tertiary undertakings were bought by the state from their white owners and placed under B.I.C. management. These undertakings were nominally run by black entrepreneurs under B.I.C. supervision, with the stipulation that they would eventually pass into the ownership of these management-trainees.

The Corporation [the Xhosa Development Corporation] has created a commercial elite within the Transkei, an elite which is dependent upon, and which will thus not oppose, the South African economy and hence, polity. This group assists South African industrial capital and will never compete effectively with South African commercial capital.

This elite is fostered in a variety of ways. Those to be given X.D.C. loans are carefully chosen. In a sampling taken by Hart in 1973 ...79.4 per cent of trading store managers (X.D.C. and other) had more than eight years of education, forming a well educated group within an underdeveloped territory ... Only those applicants with at least a Junior Certificate are considered for management loans and those must also have clean police records. Within the political environment of the Transkei this latter proviso eliminates many opponents of the ruling party.¹⁶

A significant aspect of this process of bourgeois class creation is the fact that chiefs and headmen are among the main beneficiaries of the largesse of the South African government and of Afrikaans-owned capital. In a (then) sensational article in the Johannesburg *Sunday Times* of 17 October 1976, Nic van Oudtshoorn exposed the fact that Chiefs Kaiser and George Matanzima (Prime Minister and Minister of Justice of the Transkei respectively) had not only invested massively in land purchases obtained at ridiculously low rates from the South African government-controlled Bantu Trust, but also in numerous hotels 'all of which have lucrative liquor trades'.¹⁷

Why did the National Party abandon one of the main commandments of the Decalogue of South African capital – the prevention of the emergence of an African bourgeoisie? This question is all the more poignant in view of the fact that previously this government had systematically stunted the economic development of the African petty bourgeoisie in the towns, as well as having suppressed the political organisations this class used to dominate. It is clear from what has been said above that this Bantustan bourgeoisie could never really become big or independent. Its very conception rendered it umbilically satellite and subservient to South African, in particular Afrikaans, capital. Given the historical development of capitalism in South Africa and the

white capitalists' almost complete monopoly of access to capital, there does not exist any mechanism whereby blacks could *independently* accumulate capital on any but a miniscule scale. As satellite capitalists operating essentially in the tertiary sphere, this new Bantustan bourgeois class could of course be slotted into the processes of distribution of commodities and help to realise surplus value for South African capital. This, indeed, is the sole economic function of the Bantustan bourgeoisie.

Real participation by black entrepreneurs in secondary industry is precluded on both economic and cultural grounds and is certainly not intended. The major aim in this respect of the Investment and Development Corporations, according to the Managing Director of the X.D.C., is the protection of *white* industrialists investing in the homeland.¹⁸ Both the B.I.C. and X.D.C. are increasingly linked to Afrikaans-controlled financial institutions such as Sanlam and Volkskas. According to Venter:

At the moment there are very few Transkeians who can successfully manage and finance medium and long-scale [sic] industrial undertakings. These industrial undertakings are necessary for the development of the Transkei and in this respect the corporation provides indirect financial and capital assistance to the private sector in the Transkei. We do this by creating new industries and by employing Transkeians to work in these industries ... These industries are temporarily managed by the corporation until such time as they can be handed over to individuals, partnerships or companies. What is important at this stage is that the Transkeians must have patience and the will to work harder in order to be equipped to run these industrial establishments.¹⁹

Clearly what is being created is not a bourgeois class which can compete with South African capital but rather one that complements it and will ensure that the

homelands' productive forces remain subordinate to capital in the metropolitan South African region. It is, therefore, not the economic role of this class that is important for South African capital:

From the point of view of development theory ... the state investment corporations are the mechanism whereby the state diverts 'public money' in order to create or buttress the weak bourgeois class needed by metropolitan capital to gain the political allegiance of the working class and the peasants via a 'nationalist' ethos.²⁰

Through the 'ruling' Transkeian National Independence Party and the 'opposition' New Democratic Party attempts have been made to mobilise the people in support of an 'independent' Transkei. In other Bantustans similar parties are in existence and they serve roughly the same functions. The leaders and spokespeople of these parties raise real demands and problems of the people but such demands are emasculated by being raised within the context of an acceptance of the Bantustan strategy. They demand, for instance, more land, but only in order to 'consolidate' their homeland territories, not to solve the land question which remains insoluble within the framework of *status quo* South Africa. However by raising a demand like this which can bring them into antagonistic contradiction with the ruling classes (since such a demand expresses the real needs and aspirations of the exploited and oppressed in the reserves), these Bantustan politicians court the favour and to some extent, albeit temporarily, gain the support of some of the people. Their stance of 'national' liberation, though still rejected by the overwhelming majority for the pose that it is, none the less constitutes an alternative to the certainty of all-out civil war represented by the present policies of the national liberation movement. It is unnecessary to belabour the point at this stage, although we could point to many other ways in which the Bantustan bourgeoisie and their

political spokespeople try to attach the labouring people to them. It also needs to be stressed that the important question for the ruling class is not whether this Bantustan bourgeoisie can be (or is) independent or collaborationist, national or comprador. It is adequate for ruling class purposes that this aspirant bourgeoisie should be able and willing to attempt to mobilise the masses around a sectionalist, separatist, politically debilitating and divisive ethos of 'homeland independence' based on private property.

Thus, while the 'purely economic' function of this class may be negligible in terms of the quantitative importance of their capitals, their socio-political function has become the pivot of the whole Bantustan strategy.²¹

In short, it appears on the surface of things that a species of neo-colonial solution to the contradictions of capitalism in South Africa is being planned and attempted.²²

What of the labouring people? The general strategy towards them was adumbrated by Dr. Verwoerd as early as 1956 in his discussion of the Report of the Tomlinson Commission. Better use of the land by increasingly freehold owners of farms in the reserves would render the vast majority of the people there landless. Employment for these displaced peasants would have to be found in nascent tertiary and secondary industries in the reserves themselves but more especially in the so-called Border Industries established by 'white', i.e. South African and foreign, capital on the borders of the reserves. In these border areas the Wages Act and the Industrial Conciliation Act would not be operative – industry would be enticed to re-locate and decentralise by means of the most attractive incentive of all, the lowest possible level of wages consistent with the reproduction of labour power. Border Areas employees would as far as possible commute on a daily or weekly basis from and to their 'homelands' a few kilometres'

distance from their place of employment. Hence the reserves would continue in their retribalised condition to act as a depressant on the level of wages and thus enhance rapid capital accumulation.

In adopting this policy the National Party strategists were doing no more than extrapolating both from the real position of increasing landlessness amongst so-called migratory workers (who in theory must have access to means of production, i.e. land, in the reserves) and from the increasing inequality of distribution of the agricultural product of the reserves, (i.e. increasing class differentiation). Already in 1948 the Native Laws Commission described as typical for most of the reserves the conditions recorded by a survey of the Keiskamma Hoek region of the Ciskei:

- (a) That nearly 30 per cent of families are landless in spite of the fact that the average unit of arable land is sub-economic and that at least 20 per cent of all arable land is not suitable for cultivation, and (b) that over 60 per cent of families own 5 or less cattle, including 29 per cent who own none, in spite of the fact that the Reserves are carrying double the number of stock that should be run if deterioration is not to take place.²³

This process of increasing landlessness has continued apace in the wake of so-called betterment, rehabilitation, and resettlement schemes.²⁴ On the other hand, because of continuing backward agricultural technology, this has not led to the creation of a class of wealthy peasants except in rare cases. Though the number of individuals who can be classed as peasants has decreased, those remaining have not accumulated much more capital than they had before. Moreover, political and cultural opposition to government agronomic changes has effectively put a brake on the intended shift from communal to individual tenure, especially private *ownership* of the land. The 'one-man, one-plot' system has effectively been retained because there are

simply not enough employment opportunities for the dispossessed population and for those individuals who would be dispossessed if the curb on private ownership should be removed suddenly. Moreover, the social security aspect of land holdings for the peasant-workers is of such importance that injudicious tampering with the existing system of land tenure would lead to recurrent *jacqueries*. Short of actually starving the 'uneconomic' peasants off the land – which process is far advanced – the government's reactionary schemes cannot be implemented without actually making more land available to the people. This, however, is politically impossible for a 'white' government to do and would in any case compound the problem since it would in all probability merely multiply the number of uneconomic units. A bourgeois solution to the land question i.e. one sought within the framework of the capitalist system, does not exist in South Africa.

In sum, therefore, the Bantustan strategy foresaw (and has largely created) a situation in which the vast majority of African people in the reserves would be increasingly super-exploitable wage labourers. Although the intention of 'reversing the tide' by transforming the urban drift of population normally associated with industrialisation into a rural drift has in practice been given up, hundreds of thousands of people have in fact been re-settled. Between 1948 and 1973 some 200,000 people were 'repatriated' to 'their homelands'.²⁵ The general effect of this policy was forecast by Dr. Verwoerd in 1959:

Natives who then enter White South Africa to come and work here, if their labour is still needed, particularly in the cities, will be migrant labour generally speaking, *although not migrant labour in the ordinary sense of the term*, that is to say, labourers who come for periods of six months, a year or eighteen months at a time. Large numbers of them will come and work and live here for a number of

years as family units but will then be interchangeable. They will remain anchored in the Homelands ...²⁶

In other words, more and more workers will become contract labourers as opposed to migrant labourers. They are supposed never to imbibe the habits of thought and action of a permanently settled urban proletariat, while at the same time they can objectively never become peasants. They are supposed to continue suspended between two worlds, marginal people who will never be able to organise themselves or threaten the system. Since the reserves will always remain depressed or semi-depressed areas, they will generally tend to pull down the wage level. In its initial conception, the government had firmly rejected the idea of allowing 'white' capital to be invested in the reserves on the grounds that this would be unjust to the 'Bantu'.²⁷ Once it became obvious, however, that this concession would not appreciably affect the supply and cost of labour, the government did not hesitate to implement what is now called investment on the agency system. Once again the actual experience of developments in the former High Commission territories was to serve as the green light for the strategists of the regime.²⁸ For in those territories the new possibilities for foreign investment after political independence did not in fact affect either wage levels or the number of B.L.S. workers having to seek employment in South Africa.

From this point of view it is clear why the government could seriously consider the eventual granting of 'independence' to the 'homelands'. Once the neo-colonial possibilities of the strategy had become self-evident, there was no need to shy away from the logical implications of its own original Commonwealth analogy for south Africa.²⁹ By the time this idea was mooted, a theory of nationality was ready to hand to be propagated as the legitimisation, and even the moral/political *motivation*, for 'decolonisation'.

Bantustan strategy as fulcrum of the larger separate development strategy

Before discussing this theory of nationality, it is necessary to put what has been said above about the Bantustan strategy into the broader perspective of separate development/apartheid. For it must be realised that, although the Bantustan strategy is pivotal in the hoped-for resolution of the contradictions of capitalist development in South Africa from the point of view of the classes represented by the National Party, it is only an aspect of a larger strategy. This grand strategy grew out of the historically evolved colour-caste pattern, according to which the oppressed groups are treated differently on the basis of so-called colour/culture attributes.³⁰ There is no need here to attempt to enter into a detailed examination of this question. It is an area where political, economic and ideological moments are so densely interconnected that it would take this exposition beyond its intended bounds to try to do so. Factual material on the history and implementation of apartheid as a whole is in over-abundant supply.³¹ It is sufficient for present purposes to fix our attention on certain fundamental aspects of the policy with a view to illuminating the later discussion on the theory of the nation.

In the first place it should be remembered that the real economic-strategic purposes of Reserves/Bantustans are all connected with the central issue of depressing the value of labour power. Through their conservationist functions,³² and latterly through forcible methods of retribalisation, the conventional and historical minimum requirements for the reproduction of ('black') labour power are, as it were, frozen. The justification for this is contained in the dominant racist ideology propagated and kept alive by the ruling classes since the advent of capitalism in South Africa. Ideologically apartheid', or separate development, like

segregation previously, performs the same function. By enforcing residential segregation of the various 'population groups' (justified on the basis of the undesirability, even immorality, of 'integration' because of potential 'racial friction'), ghettos are created in the major urban areas. Thus one of the major components of the wages bill, expenditure on housing for the working class, is kept at an absolute minimum. It is a fact, often still unknown in the outside world, that many of the largest urban ghettos reserved for blacks do not even have a rudimentary modern amenity such as electricity. The astounding fact that in an industrial area such as the Western Cape more than 10 per cent of the black labour force are domiciled in so-called squatter camps (the direct result in part of mass removals under the Group Areas Act) demonstrates the same point. Lower wages for blacks are thus justified on the basis that their cost of living (i.e. their cost of reproduction), is traditionally and in actual fact lower than that of the 'white' community. The only 'traditional' aspect in this rationalisation is the ruling-class policies that have produced these discrepant conditions.

One of the most telling examples of this purpose of apartheid/segregation can be found in Dr. Verwoerd's rationalisation for the refusal to equalise the salaries of black and white teachers, despite the fact that they have equal qualifications and that black teachers in general have to work under the most depressing and adverse conditions imaginable. In a statement on Bantu Education policy made in the Senate on 7 June 1954, he maintained that the call for equal pay for equal work was based on totally incorrect assumptions. The salaries of white teachers, he said, were not the proper criterion for determining those of black teachers. The former were set on the basis of a comparison with the income of the average parent of the (white) community in which the teachers taught and were generally considered to be unattractive. The salaries of black teachers were similarly determined by the income levels of 'their'

(black) community. Since teachers formed a privileged group in the black community, and since there was no lack of teachers, it would be unrealistic to increase their salaries.

Measured by this standard, and I have no doubt that it is the correct standard, it appears to me that the present salary scales are quite adequate and that there can be no talk of salary increases, since teachers would in that case be at an even greater advantage vis-à-vis the parents of the children in their care and since it would place them at an advantage against those people who have to help to bear the costs of education.³³

Far from expecting an increase or a closing of the salary gap, African teachers would have to be prepared for new salary scales 'which may even be less generous than the present scales'.³⁴ This example makes clear that, although a few individuals from all the oppressed groups – despite racial segregation and curtailment of rights and privileges – are permitted, as one of the strategic requirements of the system, to enter the petty-bourgeois class of traders, shopkeepers, professionals and artisans, the vast majority are relegated to a condition of permanent helotry.

Racist ideology, of which apartheid is one of the most malignant forms, serves also the fundamental political-strategic purpose of dividing the proletariat. By sealing off the producers from one another residentially, socially, culturally, and even as far as possible at work, either vertically or horizontally, apartheid systematically obstructs the growth of a unified working-class consciousness. Differences of colour, language, culture and history between one group and another are emphasised at every conceivable point, most especially in the tribalised school curricula. The Canute-like policy of ethnic housing in large ghettos such as Soweto, which was persevered in relentlessly, shows the extent of cynical social engineering involved in the apartheid system. 'Ethnic' groups were

invented to split up the African people mainly into language groups, the Coloureds into religious and colour groups, and the Indians into religious groups. The tendency to bring all whites, even the most recent immigrants from Europe, together into one 'nation' under apartheid found its polar opposite in the strategy of dividing blacks along 'ethnic' lines. Apartheid, in short, is at the sociological level the 'final solution', the ultimate attempt to entrench the historically evolved colour-caste system of oppression and differential privileges and rights on the basis of membership of alleged 'races'.

At the political level, apartheid, after smashing (in the short run) both the national organisations of the people and their militant working-class organisations, threw up a handpicked clique of sectionalist leaders, quisling collaborators whose positions, even if not their authority and influence, were finally guaranteed by the enactment of the Prohibition of Improper Interference Act of 1968. This Act effectively put an end to the legal existence of any non-racial political party or organisation. Though it does not prevent people from discussing politics or lecturing to one another, it does prevent them from joining political organisations composed of people belonging to another 'racial' group. The only platforms from which political education of the people can proceed legally are the various tribal assemblies, and the dummy institutions for each 'ethnic' group, such as the Coloured Persons' Representative Council and the South African Indian Council.

Pressures on and flexibility of the National Party strategists

There can be no doubt that the apartheid strategists hoped at all times that they could stamp out the unified, or at least co-ordinated, resistance of the oppressed by these means.

At the very least they realised they were obstructing and diverting the growth of that resistance. They hoped that they would thereby gain time to restructure economic and political life in such a way that the foundations of such unified resistance would be shattered. As they grew more confident and as pressures both inside and outside the country mounted against the crude racism inherent in the doctrine of apartheid, they began to put forward the more sophisticated theory of multi-nationalism, which has as its premise not mere *segregation* within a single state but actual *separation* of territories and sovereignties within one interdependent economic whole.

The basic contradiction in apartheid derives from its greatest advantage as a ruling-class policy. The reason for keeping the wage level below the minimum normal for a sub-metropolitan capitalist country such as South Africa is to accelerate capital accumulation. This is, of course, one reason why trade union organisations of Africans are not recognised and strikes are illegal. On the other hand, the white population and the few thousand blacks who make it into the ranks of the petty bourgeoisie constitute too narrow a base for the realisation of surplus value in the context of a rapid increase in the rate of capital accumulation. Since tariff policies protect domestic industries thereby making it possible to produce on a large scale, other (i.e. foreign) markets have to be found for South African manufactures, more especially for non-food products. The undeveloped African hinterland (especially countries such as Zimbabwe, Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, Namibia, Zambia, Mozambique, Angola and Zaire) is the obvious ready-to-hand market for this purpose. But the racist crudities of apartheid, apart from international competition, have been the greatest drawback to the unfettered expansion of South Africa's trade with the rest of Africa. This has particularly been the case since the countries concerned gained political independence. Though it is true that South Africa has

considerable trade with these countries, most of which have no option but to take the cheaper products of South African primary and secondary industry, all of them have repeatedly indicated that as long as apartheid prevails they are intent on finding alternative sources of supply. Because of the international working-class campaign against racism, and against apartheid in particular, the leaders of these countries (apart from their own convictions) have constantly to consider the reactions of their own citizens should they be seen to be acting in collusion with the racist regime. As Zambian President Kaunda said in one interview:

I would not be party to anything that is Bantustan – the degrading of mankind as a whole ... As long as the South African whites are not prepared to do unto the black man as they would have the black man do unto them they are asking, actually inviting, trouble of unimaginable proportions ... If tomorrow you people ceased to be racists, you do not know how much co-operation there would be between South Africa and us. The only barrier between us is apartheid. The moment you remove apartheid as a philosophy, as a way of life, all the gates in Zambia will be open and co-operation will be meaningful.³⁵

As long as the international campaign against racism, which has developed as the logical continuation of the anti-imperialist struggles of formerly oppressed peoples, did not have any direct economic, diplomatic and cultural effects of a negative character on South Africa, the government could treat it with contempt and ridicule. However once events such as the massacre of Sharpeville plunged the country into financial crisis because of the flight of capital, it became necessary to try to meet these pressures without giving up the economic and political substance of apartheid. The policy had to be dressed up in the glittering splendour of the Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations

(which South Africa has, of course, never signed). Apartheid, the philosophy of *baasskap* and blatant white supremacy, had to be presented as a strategy for national liberation and human dignity for all the peoples of South Africa.

Pressure from the government's own creations inside the country had the same effect. As long as the Bantu authorities and other collaborationist 'leaders' were unambiguously seen to be mere stooges of a cynical government, there was no hope of them ever gaining the allegiance of the working people among the oppressed. The traditions, the actual presence, and the increasingly sophisticated propaganda, especially in exile, of the liberation movement ensured that the names of men such as Matanzima, Mangope, Tom Swartz, and even Buthelezi, were anathema in almost every hovel in the country. It has been an abiding theme in the public speeches of these people that they are not stooges, but in fact 'political realists' and 'pragmatists' who see politics as 'the art of the possible' and who are, therefore, using the available legal platforms to guide 'their' people to freedom and dignity. The urgent need to provide them with more respectability was another factor which explains the shift in the ideological projection of the National Party from 'race' to 'nation'.

However, it would be grossly wrong to present a picture merely of calculation on the part of political manipulators, a breed of 'hidden persuaders' pursuing clear-cut economic and political goals. The assertion that the ruling-class strategists were in part reacting to various pressures from inside and outside South Africa is fully consistent with the proposition that autonomous ideological pressures from within the think-tanks of the National Party were also asserting themselves.

Verwoerd's policy of granting political control to black South Africans in their own areas was not

simply a pragmatic response to outside pressure, however. The prime minister was an extremely prominent member of the Broederbond ... There is a drive towards logical and moral consistency in Verwoerd's race policy which stems from the deliberations of intellectuals in the Broederbond.³⁶

From what has been said previously concerning the Afrikaner petty bourgeoisie's theory of nationality, it is clear that this theory had an inherent tendency, at the very least, to see language groups and so-called cultural groups in national terms. The dialectical interaction between economic-political events and ideological disputation would, therefore, inevitably produce pressure to apply this theory to the other 'peoples' of South Africa. Once the situation had been reached in the early 1960s, where this could be done, indeed had to be done, it would be done. It remains, therefore, to reconsider the theory systematically against this background.

The Bantustan theory of nationality

The main thesis of this study is that the theory on which the practice of the Bantustans is now based is an adapted version of that neo-Fichtean and Kuyperian theory of the nation which the Afrikaner intellectuals of the Broederbond formulated in the 1930s in order to legitimise the Afrikaner sectionalist movement. That the theory came to be applied to the different language groups and colour-castes among the oppressed only at such a late stage must be explained on the one hand in terms of the narrow chauvinist horizons of these intellectuals before the National Party's attainment of power, and on the other hand in terms of the initial phase of liberation-movement-bashing indulged in by the apartheid party once in power. However the theoretical basis for the application of the theory to other 'population groups' was laid as early as 1944 at the Volkskongres of the

Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurvereniginge (F.A.K.), a Broederbond cultural front. One of the key resolutions of *this* 'Congress of the People' stated that:

In order to give the natives sufficient opportunities freely to realise their national aspirations, they must be provided with separate areas which will be administered and developed initially for them and eventually by them as self-ruling native areas in which the whites may have no rights of citizenship.³⁷

Verwoerd, Eiselen, De Wet Nel, and those ministers and other ideologues who have succeeded them have subsequently been spelling out and acting out the implications of the theory, restricted only by pragmatic political and economic considerations. The National Party ideologues like to present this aspect of apartheid as 'positive' apartheid (as opposed to the negative apartheid of the early period of repression and retribalisation).³⁸ But it is evident from what has been said above that it is no more than the logical and politically expedient development of the original theory of the neo-Fichteans and the Kuyperians.

In 1958, as Prime Minister, Verwoerd stressed that the government had set its foot on the path of 'giving the Bantu as our wards every opportunity in their areas to move along a road of development by which they can progress in accordance with their ability'.³⁹ Already the ideological-theoretical justification for the Bantustan strategy was shifting from the idea of limited self-government based on tribal 'cultural' distinctions to one based on the right to self-determination of nations. Thus De Wet Nel, when he introduced the Promotion of Bantu Self-government Bill in the House of Assembly in 1959, in a pioneering speech, reiterated the neo-Fichtean credo of the nation:

The philosophy of life of the settled white population in South Africa, both English-speaking and Afrikaans-speaking in regard to the colour or

racial problem ... rests on three main basic principles ... The first is that God has given a divine task and calling to every People in the world, which dare not be destroyed or denied by anyone. The second is that every People in the world, of whatever race or colour, just like every individual, has an inherent right to live and to develop. Every People is entitled to the right of self-preservation. In the third place, it is our deep conviction that the personal and national ideals of every individual and every ethnic group can best be developed within its own national community. Only then will the other groups feel that they are not being endangered ... This is the philosophic basis of the policy of apartheid ... To our People this is not a mere abstraction which hangs in the air. It is a divine task which has to be implemented and fulfilled systematically.⁴⁰

De Wet Nel was also clear about the fact that the encouragement of separatist 'Bantu Nationalisms' was – apart from its philosophic basis – dictated by *real political* necessities. For he considered, as he said, that the global African nationalism then rampant in the country was based on a racist anti-whiteism and was 'the monster which may still perhaps destroy all the best things in Africa'⁴¹ (i.e. the capitalist state and its concomitant white supremacy).

In line with Diedrichs' *magnum opus* De Wet Nel declared that it was 'the spiritual treasures, the cultural treasures of a People' that unite peoples: 'Thus we say that our basis of approach is that the Bantu too will be linked together by traditional and emotional bonds, by their own language, their own culture, their ethnic particularities ...'⁴² Moodie has accurately summed up the process which was taking place here, although his own conclusions concerning the non-racial motivation of the strategy must obviously be rejected in the light of this study. Commenting on De Wet Nel's parliamentary *tour de force* he writes that:

The major premises of positive apartheid are thus

Christian National. The principle of physical separation is conceived not simply as enforced white domination by means of racial segregation, but rather as insurance that the black 'nations' in South Africa develop along their own ethnic lines to enable them to become 'Peoples' in the sense in which Afrikanerdom became a 'People' during the 1930s and 1940s. De Wet Nel was thus promising the black South Africans what Afrikaner-Nationalist intellectuals had fought so hard for after Union – cultural, economic and even some political independence. He believed that his policy created 'for the Bantu the possibility of bringing to fullest fruition his personal and national ideals within his own ethnic spheres ...'; for such was the experience of the Afrikaner People, based upon its sacred history and the Kuyperian and neo-Fichtean principles of Christian Nationalism. 'We grant to the Bantu', he said, 'what we demand for ourselves'.⁴³

In all the statements cited thus far it is clear that the concept of 'community of culture' is central once again in this implementation of the theory with regard to the black people of South Africa.⁴⁴ The controversy about whether culture alone, or 'race' as well, necessitated separate development, i.e. whether alleged biological inheritance or 'community of descent' is a necessary attribute of nationality, has never been resolved in the National Party's theory. Moodie asserts that '... major public proponents of apartheid tended to shift their ground depending on the argument, thereby creating an ideological system which is riddled with inconsistencies',⁴⁵ and concludes that '... cultural pluralism is a morally acceptable reality, whereas racism is not; and protagonists of apartheid tend to justify racism on the grounds of cultural pluralism'.⁴⁶

In order to appreciate just how adroit some exponents of apartheid have become at denying the racist assumptions and practice underlying the Bantustan theory of nationality,

one need only read again the rhetorical formulation of Foreign Minister R.F. Botha at the United Nations cited at the beginning of this work.⁴⁷ By 1966, when M.C. Botha had become Minister of Bantu Administration and Development, he could say that he saw it as his specific task:

... to differentiate the separate nations here in South Africa properly and to distinguish them properly from one another. As regards the Bantu nations ... I consider it my specific duty and task to do everything possible to help to establish the various separate Bantu nations, to help to settle them, to help to mould them and to help to develop them as separate nations in order that they may form a spiritual and national haven to every member of those various Bantu nations in South Africa.⁴⁸

Ten years later he was still saying the same thing but explicitly justifying the position of whites on the basis of their '*national*' identity rather than a '*racial*' one.

Separate development is the universal mode of living of nations. It is also the mode of living of our White people ... It is a universal mode of living in the sense that every nation or national unit has the desire to develop *sui generis* according to his own requirements and basic needs.

Where we have a variety of such nations here in South Africa, we have by law regulated the processes of development and the ways in which they live. We are still proceeding to do so since the development of a nation continues forever. The hon. member should know that the development of a nation is dynamic and not static. Separate development ... is a natural system of development for all the members of all the national groups in South Africa and therefore the Whites are also involved in separate development. We also enjoy the privileges and the opportunities which separate development gives us in our separate part

of South Africa.⁴⁹

Despite some of the more shallow aspects of this statement (e.g. that development can conceivably be 'static'), it is based on typical neo-Fichtean assumptions about nationality. The crowning irony, the veritable *reductio ad absurdum*, of the theory was reached in an earlier address by M.C. Botha in which he climactically maintained that:

As regards all the various nations we have here, the *White Nation*, the *Coloured Nation*, the *Indian Nation*, the various *Bantu Nations*, something to which we have given too little regard is the fact that *numerically the White Nation is superior* to all other nations in South Africa ... This has a very wide implication for us all ... Firstly, it demonstrates the utter folly of saying that a minority government is ruling others in South Africa. ... It demonstrates our duty as guardians ... our policy is based on facts ... of separateness and diversity of the various *Bantu Nations* and other nations in South Africa as separate national groups set on separate courses to separate destinies.⁵⁰

Men such as Drs. Eiselen (one of the original Bantustan ideologues) and P. Meyer (former head of the Broederbond) have continued to stress the other aspects of nationality that are important in this conception. On the question of Bantu languages, Eiselen wrote right back in 1934, when others had hardly glanced at the problem of nationality in relation to black people, that as long as there exists in a People the will to remain immortal as a People, nothing can destroy its language:

If such a will exists, then it can operate only through the medium of a unique ethnic language. From the history of the Boer people we learn how a People can retain its identity despite insuperable difficulties and enormous economic disadvantages.

The future will teach us whether the Bantu have a sufficient ethnically conscious stratum to persist and

win for their languages a firm and abiding place in South Africa. From our side we can do much to encourage these Peoples in their struggle for cultural existence if we try to understand and respect their language and culture.⁵¹

Eiselen, as is well known, was the father of the Bantu Education system in which – as previously in the privately run Christian National Schools established by Afrikaner sectionalists in the Transvaal after it became a British colony – mother-tongue instruction is the major pillar and is carried to lengths that have to be rejected on pedagogical (and of course political) grounds in the South African context.⁵²

Though not as important as the language question, community of territory is a necessary part of the Afrikaner Nationalist theory of the nation. In relation to the whites themselves, it was already impossible in the 1930s to assert that community of territory was an imperative attribute of the *Afrikaner* 'nation' without thereby implying some catastrophic war such as that which was unleashed by the Balfour Declaration's promise of a national home for the Jewish People in Palestine. English-speaking and Afrikaans-speaking whites lived so closely interlocked in South Africa that the postulation of a community of territory would have led to an intolerable tension within the state. Of course, the very same thing applies to the rest of the population of South Africa, except for those areas set aside for exclusive occupation by African people since 1913. Even here, however, whites and other groups had established themselves in such territories and in some instances were major landowners. Territorial consolidation of the 'homelands', therefore, has meant no more than buying out such whites or other 'non-Africans' and making the land available for occupation by Africans, strictly within the limits of Hertzog's Natives' Land and Trust Act of 1936. Even after this programme of 'consolidation' is completed,

all the 'homelands' will remain patchworks of territory, Bantustan islands interrupted by large stretches of alien land. For government administrators and theorists soon realised that they were confronted with a major problem in the form of vested (especially agricultural) interests. Dr. Eiselen, for instance, complained :

The farmers lose sight of our aim, they do not think ahead. When the state purchases land for the Bantu they say: Perhaps it is my farm they are going to buy up tomorrow. Our people ... only think of their daily comfort. They accept the theory. But at the same time they want comfort. Obviously a generous theory and unchallenged comfort are incompatible.⁵³

In consequence of the reality of this *political* situation, there is no other dimension in which the rationalisations inherent in the Bantustan theory of nationality are more clearly evident. The greatest difficulty has been experienced in regard to those people classified 'Coloured' and 'Indian'. For whereas the ideologues are able on their own premises (and without appearing to be too cynical to the outside world) to maintain that every 'Bantu' belongs to some 'Bantu nation' in some 'Bantu homeland', this cannot be said of these other two groups without flying in the face of historical and economic facts acknowledged even by ruling-class historiography. Until the mid-1960s, in fact, the ideologues refused to recognise 'Indians' as a permanent component of the South African population, and insisted that the ultimate goal was their total repatriation to the 'Indian homeland', i.e. India. Theoretical acrobatics of the most deceptive kind have had to be employed in order to explain why these groups now constitute nations, or at least potential nations, despite the fact that they have no discernible 'homeland'. The Western Cape, i.e. the Coloured group areas in the region, and the Indian group areas of Natal have, for instance, been called the 'natural home' or

even the 'heartlands' of these two groups because of their numerical concentration in the regions concerned. More abstractly, the attempt has been made to distinguish between what are called 'geographically demarcated territorial states' (presumably relevant only to whites and some Africans) and 'biologically demarcated tribal states'.⁵⁴ Hence it is argued that Coloureds, for instance, can exercise 'national sovereignty' in a state within the state on the grounds that:

It seems to be possible, however, to have a 'state within a state' when the one is a territorial state and the other a tribal state, for then it is possible for a group of people whose state functions are not demarcated geographically to possess sovereignty on the territory of the territorial state, such sovereignty being determined biologically, as happened in the ancient patriarchal community. Thus the biological tribal state need not conflict with the geographical territorial state as long as the co-ordination between the two is efficiently organised.⁵⁵

The importance of this question relates obviously to the universally accepted right of nations to self-determination, which includes in the final analysis the right to secede from the multi-national state. By 1959 the National Party theoreticians, basing themselves in the first instance on the republican, anti-British imperialist struggles of the Afrikaner bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie, had come to accept and were openly propagating independent Bantu states on the analogy of the British policy of decolonisation. Dr. Verwoerd postulated an eventual Commonwealth of equal South African states as opposed to the idea of a multi-racial government in a unitary state and this has remained the vision of the Party.⁵⁶

The latest concise statement of this principle is to be found in a letter written by Mr. Louis Nel, National Party

M.P. for Pretoria Central to the *Sunday Times*, published on 10 July 1977. The letter is interesting also because it restates briefly all the themes of the theory expounded above and proves that the neo-Fichtean theory of the nation has become the ideological prism through which Afrikaner sectionalists of all kinds perceive the South African reality.

It sounds so fair, so beautiful. One man, one vote in the united or a unitary South Africa. It sounds the morally justified thing to do. But I say NO. Let me make it perfectly clear. As a nationalist I naturally favour democracy and majority governments for every nation. But the circumstances in South Africa make it impossible to achieve these ideals by the system of 'one man, one vote' in a unitary South Africa, or for that matter with any variation of power-sharing policies. As a nationalist I fully subscribe to the ideals of our Government which are not only to maintain peace and security and to improve the quality of life of all our peoples, but also firmly to establish fundamental human and political rights for all men and women irrespective of race, colour or creed. We are a heterogeneous society. We have blacks, whites, coloureds and Asians living in this country. The black people comprise no fewer than eight (excluding Transkei) major, distinctive peoples, each with its own language, culture, life style, values and traditions – in short all that goes to make a distinctive nation. The whites, coloureds and Asians in themselves are also not homogeneous. Indeed, the population of the Republic is a microcosm of the entire globe. No umbrella nationalism exists among the black people, but there are strongly rooted ethnic nationalisms. Like many of the people, I believe that unity between these different black nations is unlikely – except on the possible basis of a racialistic polarisation motivated by hatred and jealousy of the white man. And then the unity would be temporary and fragile. The policy of 'one man, one vote' for all

our peoples *in a unitary South Africa* will never solve the potential power struggle danger between these divergent groups and carries therefore in itself the seed of the destruction of freedom and human rights ... The more heterogeneous a society the greater the potential for conflict and even bloodshed. But the reverse of this argument is also true, namely that the more homogeneous a society the less the potential for conflict. Botswana, ethnically one of the most homogeneous societies in Africa, is regarded internationally as the most democratic state on the continent. The South African Government has a strategy for achieving democracy and human rights for all. In its purest form the Government's policy is to remove the basis for power struggles by the creation of various politically homogeneous units – independent states – out of this big heterogeneous whole.

The liberals' pluralist thesis of the South African nation

Ever since Bantustans became a reality in approximately 1959–60, the liberals' view of the nation has undergone certain terminological changes stemming from the developing study of 'plural societies'. Their general approach to the question of the nation has been and is determined by two major considerations: whether a violent conflict of the variously defined pluralities can be avoided; and, relatedly, whether the conflict can be resolved within the free enterprise capitalist framework. Depending on how the various representatives and theorists of the liberal school assess the strength of African nationalism in South Africa they are either more plural or less plural. Those who believe that the African nationalist movement must be victorious have generally adopted a 'non-racial' approach calling for 'one man, one vote' on the reasoning that if you

can't beat them, join them. This has been the position of the now defunct Liberal Party which has consistently endeavoured to gain a hold over the leadership of the African nationalist movement and to wean it away from flirtation with left-wing socialist solutions: 'The party will employ only democratic and constitutional means to achieve the foregoing objects, and is opposed to all forms of totalitarianism such as communism and fascism.'⁵⁷

Other shades of liberal opinion, of which the Progressive Reform Party (later restyled Progressive Federal Party) is the most clearly defined, have adopted a straightforward pluralist characterisation of the social groups in South Africa. Their major concern has been to show that the Bantustan strategy, far from safeguarding capitalism, is in fact its gravedigger: that it nourishes the soil in which communism is bred and that it creates Trojan horses on the periphery of the Southern African sub-metropolitan complex. A recent exposition of this view is represented at its eloquent best in a speech delivered in the House of Assembly by Mr. J. Basson, at that time a member of the Progref-Verligte Alliance. On 25 April 1977 he said:

Hon. members will concede that there is a very close link between South Africa's future security and the attitude of its neighbouring states. We have seen how South Africa's security has been jeopardised due to the changes that have taken place in Mozambique, for example. The same applies to South West Africa and Rhodesia. If a country wants to continue to exist in peace –this applies to the Republic of South Africa – it must ensure that its neighbouring states live in peace with it and do not become sources of hostility towards it and perhaps even, at a later stage, springboards for action against it. I am sure hon. members opposite will concede this. We ourselves have never adopted the standpoint ... that because a territory is black or governed by Black people, it necessarily, for that

reason, poses a danger to South Africa ... However, when we create new neighbouring states, it is essential that we ought to see to it that they are not so full of grievances against us that they could in fact develop into a potential source of danger to us. In this regard I believe the government is making a very serious mistake.⁵⁸

Those of the liberal school who have least contact with and confidence in African Nationalism accept the existence of Bantustans as developed within the government framework but oppose the granting of political independence to these 'unviable' entities. In justification they again quote the Trojan Horse argument. For instance, Sir De Villiers Graaf, the then leader of the United Party, said in 1963:

If the ... Prime Minister really thinks that he can keep the entire mass of the Bantu population living permanently in the Republic without any representation at all in the Parliament which controls our destinies, how can he deny that we can do something much smaller ... and restrict the representation that we intend to give them in Parliament? *Our policy at least has a safety valve. It gives a degree of representation ... eight representatives of the Bantu people in Parliament will be far less dangerous than eight sovereign Black states.*⁵⁹

The former United Party (now the New Republican Party), therefore, proposed a federation of 'racially' based autonomous regions without the sacrifice of (white) parliamentary sovereignty.

Those liberals, on the other hand, who have more contact with African nationalism (essentially the former Progressive Party), advocate a federation based on 'non-racial' territorial units which would themselves be microcosms of the larger 'plural society'. In their Programme adopted on 13–14 November 1959, the Progressive Party stated that they recognised '... that in the

Union of South Africa there is one nation which embraces various groups differing in race, religion, language and traditions ...' and that:

The party regards our present flexible, highly centralised Constitution as entirely unsuited to South Africa, *whose inhabitants comprise a plural society consisting of several racial communities*. A constitution of this kind may work well enough in a homogeneous society ... but in a plural society such as ours it enables any group which happens, for the time being, to command a parliamentary majority to dominate and to exercise unchecked power over others. This inevitably causes, among the subject communities, growing frustration and hostility which threaten the very existence of civilised society in South Africa. The party is therefore, profoundly convinced of *the need for a reformed Constitution, which will contain adequate safeguards for each of our racial communities against domination by any other*, will accord to each a share in government, will guarantee the fundamental human rights and liberties of the individual, irrespective of race or colour, and will decentralise legislative and executive power in the interests of a reasonable degree of provincial and local self-government.⁶⁰

The correct form for such a plural nation (*sic*) is a federation. Hence Leo Marquard, one of the leading exponents of liberal theory in South Africa, advocates *A Federation of Southern Africa* and makes a plea for apartheid without its crude racist ideology. The attempt to pluralise South Africa by finding as many pluralities (usually called 'ethnic groups') as possible is no more than balkanisation without the ideological hazard of secession or partition: 'These ethnic groups are distinct in language and culture, and to think of them simply as 'Africans' or 'Bantu-speaking people' would be unreal. There are a number of sub-groups that also have distinct languages and traditions ...'.⁶¹

This idea has found an echo among quite a number of Bantustan leaders and is especially advocated by Chief Gatsha Buthelezi who believes that change should not be predicated upon '... the breaking up of the integrated economy which is the life blood of all the peoples of South Africa. The change should revolve on allowing each and every group to maintain its identity through new constitutional and political arrangements' and further believes '... together with ... Paramount Chief K.D. Matanzima, that this can be reduced to concrete constitutional terms through the federal formula or a federal commonwealth.'⁶²

It is unnecessary to string together more examples of such views. What is evident is that there is a very clear link between the concepts 'plural society', 'ethnic groups', and 'federation'. It is also unnecessary to examine in detail the scientific validity of the concepts attaching to 'the plural society'. Simon Bekker has, from a sympathetic point of view, examined the question in a number of studies⁶³ and concludes that 'South Africa fits the conflict pluralist mould, being a society in which ethnic, racial, economic and political lines of cleavage coincide with one another, and form a particularly deep racial line of cleavage between the white centre and the non-white periphery.'⁶⁴ Wolpe (a radical marxist), on the other hand, rejects the pluralist thesis as an inadequate and mystifying model generally, and for South Africa in particular, on the grounds that:

... to base an analysis on the criteria (race, religion, etc.) by which groups define themselves and the conflict between them is to take as given precisely what requires explanation. For what needs to be accounted for is why these particular groups come into existence and into conflict with one another.⁶⁵

Methodologically, therefore,

... what is needed is, on the one hand, a description of the groups and their conflicts in their own terms

and, on the other hand, an analysis of the structures and processes in which these groups are located. It is thus insufficient to stop at the first stage because this is to abstract from the social totality in which the groups are embedded and which explains them.⁶⁶

Such diametrically opposed assessments are clearly related to the respective class positions from which the authors are writing. It is, therefore, germane to repeat my assertion that the theory of the nation is itself a stake in the class struggle for national liberation. The 'nation' of the pluralists, which consists of any number of 'ethnic groups', does have one important advantage from the point of view of the present ruling classes in that it affords ample opportunity for divide-and-rule tactics. All the theorists of the more sophisticated pluralist thesis are agreed on this one point, that there is a need to allow black elite groups to 'resolve conflict' (i.e. prevent revolution) by some form of 'sharing of power', lest there be a 'seizing of power'. The gradual co-option and concrescence of elites by means of a federation of 'ethnic' entities is the way to avoid the restructuring of the existing property relations in any significant way.

In South Africa, where political interests are commonly perceived in racial terms and where material inequality has hugely reinforced the popular notion of the incompatibility of different so-called 'cultures', a pluralistic devolution of power is the course likely to evoke least resistance.⁶⁷

In a more indirect and sophisticated argument, Bekker states that:

The white governing elite must devolve real power to the tiered institutions so as to enable non-white elites within those institutions to develop conflict regulating motives from positions of institutional protection. To do this, the white governing elite

themselves must develop conciliatory attitudes towards non-white elites. Subsystem autonomy and elite motivation for conflict regulation are interdependent.⁶⁸

For the practical demonstration of what is being advocated here we have to turn to Chief Buthelezi once more. In his Hoernle Memorial Lecture, delivered in 1974, he stated that:

If the authorities took advantage of the remoteness of a revolution from below at present, to make certain concessions and to move more quickly, the homelands would have greater potential as a basis of a future South Africa ... Even if the idea and the system are imposed, the fact that we are prepared to make serious suggestions should be good enough to warrant our being drawn into full participation in decision-making on this policy.⁶⁹

Numerous complaints are reported periodically in the press from other black political opportunists who are playing the system, i.e. co-operating with the government by working its 'tiered institutions' (the dummy councils such as the Coloured Persons Representative Council, the various Bantustan Assemblies, Urban Bantu Councils, Management Committees, etc.), about their lack of real power and about the merely consultative or advisory status of these institutions. These opportunists' complaints are all directed at the same goal – to get the National Party to accept the liberal solution of elite-level co-operation within the capitalist framework. The clear implication of all this is that there must be a revision of class alliances: the white wage-earners should be jettisoned in favour of the black bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie as a more solid and secure foundation for the South African capitalist state. The rest of the implications follow from this major premise of the liberal solution of 'plural democracy'.

Some of the National Party ideologues have begun to

think along these lines themselves. There is a very clear strand of pluralist thought among so-called *verligte* Nationalists and it is clear that they owe as much to indigenous liberal influences as they do to their Kuyperian heritage. This is the significance of speeches made in the period 1974–1977 by government ministers such as P.W. Botha (now Prime Minister) and Dr. Koornhof on the need to consider some kind of Swiss Cantonal solution for South Africa (usually excluding ‘Africans’, whose aspirations are for the foreseeable future to be accommodated in their own ‘independent homelands’). The climax of the verbal agility of the ideologues has been reached in the official adoption of the term ‘plural democracy’ to describe the South African socio-political system. Thus apartheid has been turned into the pluralist’s ultimate utopia, plural democracy! The right wing and the left wing of the ruling classes meet at the point which is crucial for their continued domination, viz. on the question of the disorganisation of the dominated and exploited classes!

However, the problem of what we can call the ‘permanent revolution’ remains. For it should be remembered that one of the main strategic reasons for the National Party’s solution of formally independent states under client bourgeoisies is the consideration that concessions to African nationalism, properly so-called, cannot halt the growing over of the revolution into a socialist revolution. This is, in fact, the meaning of their reckless and seemingly irrational equation of African nationalism and communism. In the final analysis, therefore, the only difference between the National Party and the liberals lies in their assessment of the nature and potential of the African nationalist movement. Though the two elements express the interests of different fractions of the capitalist class, their strategic goal remains the same – how to secure the ‘free enterprise system’ and how best to disorganise the proletariat.

Aspects of the pluralist thesis will have to be considered again when the colour-caste system is examined. At this point it is necessary only to stress that the 'ethnic group' is the basis of all pluralist thinking in the South African context and that the basic purpose of such a conceptualisation is to bring about disunity among the oppressed people. The 'nation' of the pluralists is essentially a class-stratified, disorganised entity which however is held together by a maximum unity of purpose among the elites of the 'ethnic group' on the basis of a mutually profitable collaboration, while the exploited classes are trapped in a debilitating and disorganising 'ethnic' consciousness.

Notes

1. 'As Minister of Native Affairs, Verwoerd had never committed himself to independence for the Reserves, always limiting his promises to self-government under Pretoria at the level of the Territorial Authority. Dr. Eiselen, the Secretary for Native Affairs, stated very explicitly in *Optima* as late as March 1959 that the grant of independence was never intended ... As late as January 1959, Verwoerd hedged over the political future of these areas, referring to their ultimate independence only as a remote, unforeseeable possibility ... But during the 1959 session the Government introduced a Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Bill ... and Verwoerd allowed the suggestion of eventual independence for these Territorial Authorities to creep into his introductory and second reading speeches. He repudiated Eiselen's *Optima* article, saying it had been written long before the latest official Government statement was made. In reply to a question by the Leader of the Opposition ... Verwoerd explicitly referred to the possible development of these areas to full independence. He

saw analogies between the direction South Africa could take and that being taken by Europe – a combination of national sovereignties with economic interdependence ...' (T.R.H. Davenport, *South Africa – A Modern History*, pp. 281–2).

2. See, for instance, N.J. Rhoodie, *South African Dialogue – Contrasts in South African Thinking on Basic Race Issues*.
3. For some of the more important works on apartheid, see the useful bibliography in Davenport, *South Africa – A Modern History*, pp. 395–401.
4. G. Carter, *The Politics of Inequality*, pp. 37 1–2.
5. See Chapter 2 above.
6. A.N. Pelzer (ed.), *Verwoerd aan die Woord –Toesprake 1948–1962*, pp. 77–8.
7. See I.B. Tabata, *Education for Barbarism*. Statistical data on 'Bantu' and 'Coloured' education have been published periodically by the South African Institute of Race Relations.
8. See Davenport, *South Africa – A Modern History*, p. 267.
9. *Ibid.*
10. Point No. 16 of the Programme of Principles of the National Party of South Africa, Revised Programme 1952 Constitution, printed in D.W. Kruger, *South African Parties and Policies 1910–1960*, p. 97.
11. Molteno, 'The ... Bantustan Strategy', p. 19.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
13. *Report of the Native Laws Commission 1946–1948*, p. 47.
14. 'Why Independence?' *Transkei Independence: Report of the Transkei Study Project*, pp. 13–4.
15. *Hansard*, 25–29 April 1977, column 6066.
16. 'The Xhosa Development Corporation and the Creation of an Elite', *Transkei Independence*, p. 45.
17. *Sunday Times*, 17 October 1975.
18. See *Financial Mail*, 16 May 1975.
19. See W. Backer (ed.), *The Economic Development of the Transkei*, p. 89.

20. Molteno, 'The ... Bantustan Strategy', pp. 24–5.
21. *Ibid.*, p.26.
22. This question is referred to again in Chapter 5. See section on 'The Internal Colonialism Thesis'.
23. *Report of the Native Laws Commission 1946–1948*, p. 15.
24. On the exact connotations of these agronomic measures, see I.B. Tabata, *The Rehabilitation Scheme*, and C. Desmond, *The Discarded People*.
25. See Institute of Race Relations, *Survey 1974*, p. 183.
26. *Hansard* 1959, col.6218, quoted in Molteno, 'The ... Bantustan Strategy', p. 27.
27. See Verwoerd's speech on the Tomlinson Report, printed in Pelzer (ed.), *op.cit.*, p. 108.
28. On this pilot-scheme value of the B.L.S. countries see, for instance, W.W.M. Eiselen, 'Harmonious Multi-Community Development', *Optima*, March 1959, p. 8.
29. See *ibid.*, and Verwoerd's speech in the House of Assembly, 14 May 1956, in Pelzer (ed.), *op.cit.*, p. 111–2.
30. The theoretical implications and problems associated with the concepts and terminology of colour-caste are discussed in detail in Chapter 6.
31. See note 3 to Chapter 3 above.
32. See Chapter 2 above.
33. Pelzer (ed.), *op.cit.*, pp. 73–4.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 74
35. J.H.P. Serfontein, 'Kaunda: The only barrier ... is apartheid', *Cape Times*, 26 April 1977 .
36. Moodie, *op.cit.*, p. 264.
37. *Inspan*, 1944, quoted *ibid.*, p. 273.
38. See, for instance, N.J. Rhodie, *Apartheid and Racial Partnership in South Africa*, p. 63; and J.A. Coetzee, *Nasieskap en Politieke Groepering in Suid-Afrika (1652–1968)*, pp. 318–9.
39. Quoted in Moodie, *op.cit.*, p. 264.
40. *Hansard*, 1959, cols. 6001–2, quoted *ibid.*, p. 265.
41. *Ibid.*

42. *Ibid.*
43. Moodie, *op.cit.*, p. 256. See also G.M. Carter, *Separate Development – The Challenge of the Transkei*, pp. 5–8.
44. It is not relevant to the purposes of this study to delve into the casuistic polemics conducted among Afrikaner Nationalist ideologues concerning the question of whether or not the different 'spheres' (such as work, family, nation, state, individual, etc.) are 'equal in sovereignty before God'. Although this polemic, often fought out with the great bitterness of theological disagreements, has a bearing on the ideological conflicts between *verligtes* and *verkrampes* in the National Party today, it is not necessary for the refutation of the theory to consider it in any detail. The matter is treated tangentially by Moodie, *op.cit.*, p. 269ff .
45. *Op.cit.*, p. 275.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 276.
47. See Chapter 1 above.
48. *Hansard*, 1966, col.4127 .
49. *Hansard*, 1976, col.5557.
50. *Hansard*, 1966, cols.4131–7.
51. W.W.M. Eiselen, 'Wat gaan van die Bantu-tale in Suid-Afrika word?' *Sending Instituut Jaarblad*, 1934, quoted in Moodie, *op. cit.*, pp. 272–3.
52. See I.B. Tabata, *Education for Barbarism*. In June 1976, the Soweto uprising was to exact history's revenge for a theory and a policy which ignored the real dynamic of nationalism among the oppressed people.
53. Quoted in G.D. Scholtz, '*n Swart Suid-Afrika?* (Cape Town, Nasionale Boekhandel, 1964), pp.70–1.
54. See J.A. Coetzee, *Nasieskap en Politieke Groepering in Suid-Afrika (1652–1968)*, pp. 322–3.
55. *Ibid.*, pp. 14–5.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 318.
57. 'The Liberal Party of South Africa Programme'. Printed in D.W. Kruger, *South African Parties and Policies*, p. 104.

58. *Hansard*, 1977, cols.6028–9,
59. *Hansard*, 1953, col.2273, quoted in Molteno, 1977, p.31 (my emphasis).
60. Cited in Kruger, *Parties and Policies*, pp. 105–6.
61. L. Marquard, *A Federation of Southern Africa*, p. 37.
62. M.G. Buthelezi, *White and Black Nationalism, Ethnicity and the Future of the Homelands*, pp. 11–2 (my emphasis).
63. For instance, S. Bekker, 'Pluralism and Conflict Regulation', 'The Pluralist Approach of Pierre van den Berghe', and 'The Plural Society: An Assessment'.
64. S. Bekker, 'Pluralism and Conflict Regulation', p. 18.
65. H. Wolpe, 'Pluralism, Forced Labour and Internal Colonialism in South Africa', in Conference on 'The South African Economy and the Future of Apartheid', 30 March–1 April 1973.
66. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
67. L.S. Schlemmer, 'Overview', in S.A.I.R.R., Papers given at the Forty-Fifth Annual Council Meeting: Intergroup Relations in the Common Area (East London. 22–24 January 1975, p. 8).
68. S. Bekker, *op.cit.*, p. 19.
69. M.G. Buthelezi, *op.cit.*, p. 9.

5. THE MOVEMENT FOR NATIONAL LIBERATION

The multi-nationalism of the Congress movement

THE COMING TO POWER in 1948 of the National Party with its unambiguously reactionary programme and policy suddenly confronted the popular organisations of the oppressed with a challenge for which they were inadequately prepared. The declared anti-communist and anti-democratic aims of the ruling party put in jeopardy the continued existence of all working-class and democratic organisations. The assault on the few privileges and freedoms remaining for black people, and the deliberate lowering of their living standards, implicit in the doctrine and practice of apartheid, meant that the radical intelligentsia, the urban and rural poor, and even some of the merchant classes and aspirant bourgeoisie among the blacks clearly realised for the first time that they were faced with an immediate and common enemy. Moreover, the age-old distinctions drawn by the rulers between different sectors of the oppressed became less important since the Afrikaner sectionalsists were now intent on disenfranchising every person not classified as white: The result was an unprecedented upsurge of nationalism among the oppressed people, stimulated by the realisation that the franchise was the only instrument whereby they could escape from the bondage of racist oppression.

The war years and the anti-imperialist victories, especially in Asia but including the stirring of independence movements in Africa, had much to do with

this. The great miners' strike of 1946 on the Rand was a signal to the ruling class that the black workers had become a force that could no longer be ignored. It only needed the challenge of the apartheid strategy to catapult the various organisations into action. In 1946 the progressives in the South African Indian Congress ousted the collaborationist Kajee leadership and launched a passive resistance struggle in conjunction with a diplomatic offensive by India in the United Nations. By 1948–49 the Congress Youth League leadership had succeeded in gaining effective control of the A.N.C. and ridding the organisation of Dr. Xuma's braking tactics. These years were also the hey-day of the Unity Movement which until the mid-1950s grew from strength to strength and radiated an influence and ideological challenge much larger than its actual membership. In particular, its advocacy of Non-European Unity based on a programme of minimum demands to be implemented through a policy of non-collaboration with the institutions of oppression could no longer be ignored.¹ Events themselves were willy-nilly pushing all political activity in this direction. The simultaneous, strategically conceived assault on all 'Non-European' groups by the National Party – the suppression of Communism Act, the Group Areas Act, the Bantu Authorities Act, the Bantu Education Act, among many other legislative invasions of the meagre rights of black people – telescoped the process of oppression and compelled all sectors of the oppressed, irrespective of caste, to realise that they were the victims of a common subjection. Simultaneously, many political leaders and militants realised that they would have to fight this oppression jointly, not severally. But the caste-bound horizons of the majority of the people's organisations, the leaders' assessment of the depth of caste prejudice among the oppressed, as well as the leaders' own limitations and reformist aspirations, still made it impossible for them to think in terms of a single undivided national liberation

movement. The South African Indian Congress and the African National Congress still concentrated on their own particular caste-groups. Their unity was still a tactical affair born in different centres. There was still no strategically based unity, and certainly no theoretically conceived unity based on unalterable principles derived from a study of the history of freedom movements throughout the world and applied in the particular South African context.

Hence the first great mass struggle after the war, the 1951–52 Defiance Campaign against Unjust Laws was directed by a tactical united front of the two Congresses plus the South African Coloured People's Organisation and the South African Congress of Democrats, specifically for the abolition of the six Unjust Laws selected as the target of civil disobedience. This experience, together with the growing influence of ex-Communist Party² members within the Congresses, and the criticism from organisations of the Unity Movement, led to the 1955 Congress of the People, at which the now celebrated Freedom Charter was conceived as the basis of the Congress Alliance. This Alliance consisted of organisations of the African, Coloured and Indian sectors of the oppressed and the (white) Congress of Democrats. These organisations remained separate, caste-restricted organisations each with its own programme, but all expected to be guided by the demands formulated in the Charter. It is clear that at this stage the non-violent tactics of direct action – modelled on the approach of Gandhi and Nkrumah – were designed to create a climate of confrontation between the government and the oppressed people in which the leaders of the organisations of the Alliance would step forward as the 'valid interlocutors' on behalf of the oppressed. The subsequent Treason Trial and the events leading up to Sharpeville, the banning of the A.N.C. and the P.A.C., the virtual smashing of their (and other) organisational networks, are a matter of history and represent the collapse of this strategy. Some of the

implications of the consequent turn to armed struggle will be discussed below.

For our purposes it is to Point Two of the Freedom Charter that we have to turn:

All National Groups Shall Have Equal Rights

There shall be equal status in the bodies of state, in the courts and in the schools for all national groups and races;

All national groups shall be protected by law against insults to their race and national pride;

All people shall have equal rights to use their own language and to develop their own folk culture and customs;

The preaching and practice of national, race or colour discrimination and contempt shall be a punishable crime;

All apartheid laws and practices shall be set aside.³

It is immediately obvious that this idea of four 'national groups' has persisted from the pre-war caste interpretations of the national question which were shared, from different theoretical points of view, by liberals, many marxists and petty-bourgeois reformists. The influence of Soviet theories of nationality is also evident, especially in the guarantee for the use by each 'national' or 'racial' group of its own language and for the development of its own folk culture and customs. Though the concept of the nation advocated here was clearly based on the pluralist approach of taking the 'races' as given, unalterable entities, it was nevertheless clearly insulated against any beckonings from the National Party's Bantustan theory. In 1953, I.I. Potekhin, later to become Director of the Moscow Africa Institute, had written:

There are ... two characteristic threads which run through all these stages [of the national liberation movement]. The first, all the Bantu peoples are opposing imperialism on a united front. There is no

Zulu or Bechuana movement, there are no Zulu or Bechuana organisations, but there is a united Bantu movement led by organisations common to all. In this mutual struggle the idea of a single Bantu nation of South Africa and the Protectorates has arisen and become strong. In literature, particularly in the old ethnographic literature, one can come across 'the Zulu nation', 'the Basuto nation', and so forth. But usually now the reference is to a Bantu or African nation ... 'A new people is being born which calls itself African ... the small isolated worlds of the Zulu, Xhosa or Basuto have been left behind in the past and they will never return', writes ... Dholomo.⁴

From this astounding document (in parts it could almost have been written by a member of the Afrikaner Broederbond, but for its anti-tribal point of departure) it becomes obvious that the prevailing theory on the national question in South Africa espoused by the Communist Party, which in this respect seems to have relied on the views of people like Potekhin, intersected neatly with that of the Africanist leadership of the African National Congress and the caste-orientated leadership of the other groups. Basing himself on a lifeless, logic-chopping interpretation of Stalin's definition of a nation, Potekhin, amidst unpardonable confusion of historical and cultural facts, arrives at the unadulterated liberal bourgeois conclusion that:

Today in the Union of South Africa the process of forming two national societies continues, that of the Bantu and of the Anglo-Afrikaner. There are no grounds for assuming that one nation can be formed which would embrace the Bantu, the Coloureds and the Anglo-Afrikaners. The Coloureds could not at the present time become a component of the national Bantu group, they do not know the Bantu languages and in language, cultural forms and self-consciousness they tend to identify themselves with

the Anglo-Afrikaners. The Indians are a completely separate group.⁵

In actual fact, it is clear, Potekhin's theory is merely an *ex cathedra* benediction of the pro-Congress tactics finally decided upon by the Communist Party of South Africa after the Second World War, and especially after the dissolution of the C.P.S.A. in 1950.⁶ In 1962, when the C.P.S.A. emerged again as the S.A.C.P., it adopted the Freedom Charter as an adequate expression of the short-term aims of the Party.⁷ Potekhin's concluding remark in the above work holds within it a fatal ambivalence both as to the concept of the nation and as to the class leadership of the struggle for national liberation. Again it is necessary to quote him in full, lest paraphrasing him appear like distorting the real meaning of this celebrated 'Africanist':

The South African Bantu have not yet united as a nation. At present we emphasise only that there are potential possibilities and grounds for assuming that the process that will lead to the formation of a nation has begun. These nations do not as yet have clear concise contours and it would be unjust to try to give a precise answer to this question now. The question of national boundaries will be decided by the peoples themselves once they have freed themselves from the imperialist Government. *At this given stage of development the chief task of all Bantu peoples must be to unite their strength in one national front; and together with the progressive forces of the Anglo-Afrikaners, Indians and Coloureds, to liquidate the regime of racial discrimination and to conquer political rights equal to those of the European section of the population.*⁸

With a single significant exception, to which I shall refer below,⁹ the ideas expressed in this document have remained the stock-in-trade of the Congress Movement and the S.A.C.P. ever since. Indeed in some respects, it has been rigidified into a dogma which has a significant point of

intersection with the dogma of the Afrikaner sectionalists on the national question – their characterisation of South Africa as a ‘multi-national’ polity. Thus, for instance, a leading member of the A.N.C. executive, and later the director of the Luthuli Memorial Foundation, wrote *circa* 1971 in answer to Minister M.C. Botha’s claim that the Bantu-speaking people of South Africa consisted of eight different nations, that in fact there is only one African nation based on community of oppression:

Those who know something about South African history will remember that long before it was fashionable to speak about White unity and the White nation, the African people from different tribes, the Xhosas, Zulus, Sothos, Swazis, Shanganes, Tswanas and others met in Bloemfontein in 1912 and *decided to form themselves into one nation – an African nation* and then and there formed the African National Congress, their political mouthpiece.¹⁰

It is also clear that this A.N.C. leader accepts the validity of the concepts: ‘White nation’, a ‘Coloured nation’, and an ‘Indian nation’.¹¹ Similarly, in the important Political Report adopted by the Consultative Conference of the A.N.C. at the Morogoro Conference, Tanzania, in May 1969, the idea of the four ‘national groups’ is entrenched, but with the incipient emphasis on the ‘African nation’ as the ‘majority nation’, the national liberation of which is ‘the main content of the present stage of the South African revolution’. The Report maintains that:

The African, although subjected to the most intense racial oppression and exploitation, is not the only oppressed national group in South Africa. The two million strong Coloured community and three-quarter million Indians suffer varying forms of national humiliation, discrimination and oppression ... Despite deceptive and often meaningless concessions they share a common fate with their

African brothers and *their own liberation* is inextricably bound up with *the liberation of the African people*.¹²

Although the question of the class leadership of the national liberation struggle is raised later on in the Morogoro Political Report, there is no attempt to explain how working-class leadership of this struggle is consistent with the idea of several nations each consisting of antagonistic classes, and the privileged classes of which are pulled in the direction of the ruling classes in the South African state. There is no attempt at all to analyse the idea of the nation theoretically, to consider for instance the link (if any) between the assertion of nationhood and the right of self-determination. This lack, which is evident in almost all writing on the question by South Africans, I shall examine in more detail below.

At the same Morogoro Conference an analysis of the Freedom Charter was presented whose purpose was to update the interpretation of the Charter in the context of the tactical changes brought about by the armed struggle. Moreover, ever since the adoption of the Charter in 1955, many individuals, especially people from the Western Cape where Unity Movement influence was greatest, had questioned the validity of the assumptions inherent in the Charter's formulation of this question. At Morogoro in 1969 the question came to a head, since it also involved the problem of organisational structure and non-racial membership of Congress organisations, specifically of the A.N.C. It is significant, therefore, that despite concessions at Morogoro to the 'equality of rights of all national groups', the primacy of the 'African people' is still asserted unambiguously:

The African people as the indigenous owners of the country have accepted that all the people who have made South Africa and helped build it up, are components of its multi-national population, and are

and will be in a democratic South Africa people inhabiting their common home.¹³

An interesting, but by no means peripheral, development here is the A.N.C.'s discovery of new 'national groups'. For it is asserted that 'At the moment the Afrikaner national group is lording it over the rest of the population with the *English group* playing second fiddle to them'.¹⁴ This tit-for-tat response to Bantustan theory ('If you split up the "African nation" we'll split up the "white nation"') not only does not illuminate the national question but leads away from the question of the class leadership of the struggle. This approach also presents the struggle as one being waged by various 'nations' against especially the 'Afrikaner nation', a conclusion that leads potentially to strategic errors of catastrophic dimensions.

In view of these unambiguously liberal bourgeois formulations of the question in South Africa, it is ironic that Ben Turok, a member of the S.A.C.P., who himself postulates the existence of '... large national minorities of whites, coloureds and Asians', should claim that '... no final definitive formulation on the national question as ever laid down' by the A.N.C.¹⁵ This claim is all the more astounding since Turok says himself, in his brief review of A.N.C. and C.Y.L. statements on the national question, that:

The thrust of all these statements is for national liberation in the sense that white domination must be ended and that *the African people who in some way constitute a national entity* will establish a democratic society in which people of all colours will be able to participate.¹⁶

The uncomfortably close parallel between Bantustan theory and the essentially pluralist theory of the Congress Movement and the S.A.C.P., together with mounting criticism both inside and outside these organisations, *has led in recent times to soul-searching and reassessments which may still prove to be of great significance to the whole liberation*

movement in South Africa. Ironically enough, the (temporary) upsurge of black consciousness as an organised movement lent an agonising urgency to this reassessment since, as I shall show, the black consciousness movement rejects the pluralist thesis in favour at least of black solidarity. Lest, therefore, the theoretical paralysis of the Congress Movement (and the S.A.C.P.) on this question lead to its being outflanked inside the country by this new tendency, it has had to pause for a reappraisal. This was indubitably one of the main reasons for the series of contributions on the National Question run in *The African Communist* in 1976–7.

The first contribution to this new debate is a letter signed *Maatla Ke A Rona!!!* (Strength is Ours). The author, avowedly a member of the A.N.C., stresses that:

The situation in our country is changing very fast, and if we are not careful we shall be caught napping. There is still time to remedy the situation, and that is through a critical appraisal of our work in propaganda and publicity.¹⁷

He/she boldly rejects Stalin's definition of the nation as irrelevant to the Afro-Asian colonial struggles and insists that it refers to 'mature' European nations, in contrast to the African peoples who are still building their nations. Consequently the author arrives logically at the position that there is no South African nation in existence as yet; 'The South African nation is in the process of being born, and we, in the A.N.C. – in an embryonic form – represent the unborn South African nation.'¹⁸

Though this brief contribution does not enter further into the theoretical implications of this statement, it does open a completely new perspective from within the Congress Movement. This is particularly clear when one recalls that the letter is prompted by a criticism of various assertions made in *Mayibuye*, one of the organs-in-exile of the A.N.C. *Maatla Ke A Rona!!!* is especially bothered by the suggestion that the author of these assertions seemingly

thinks that 'the Boers are a "nation"' and, therefore, the question 'how many "nations" do we have in South Africa?' is posed. Moreover, the original *Mayibuye* author's rejection of the demand for self-determination as 'counter-revolutionary in the specific historical and social conditions of South Africa' moves *Maatla Ke A Rona!!!* to remind him of the 'internal colonialism' thesis (with which I deal in the next section).¹⁹

Whether intended by the editors of *The African Communist* or not, it is none the less clear that the letter is flying a kite, an interpretation borne out by the fact that it was followed up by further contributions. On the other hand the letter is clearly in conflict with the received Congress tradition, which it studiously avoids dragging into the bullring. This problem, though not explicitly stated, is treated by Joe Ngwenya in 'A Further Contribution on the National Question', published in *The African Communist*, No. 67. The uneven quality of this article should not obscure its real purpose, which is twofold: to demarcate clearly the difference between the A.N.C.'s multi-nationalism and that of the Afrikaner National Party ideologues; and to show that the A.N.C.'s theory is not at variance with that of Black Consciousness, at least on the national question. The confusions, contradictions and obfuscations in the article need not be dealt with in detail. It suffices to enumerate them: Ngwenya equates 'racial group', 'national group' and 'nationality': he does not consider it contradictory to speak of 'national groups' and 'the nation' in the same breath (a fault common to many writers on the question, as must have become evident by now); he stresses repeatedly the idea of the Africans as the majority national group, in the process falsifying the history of the country by claiming that they are the 'indigenous owners of the land'. (If this refers only to people descended from Bantu-speaking tribes, it is patent nonsense, for it is well known that the Khoi- and the San-speaking people

inhabited Southern Africa even before Bantu-speaking people appeared there. Not that this is of any significance in itself, but it makes nonsense of the idea of 'ownership' by 'Bantu-speaking Africans'.)

This attempt to cast the A.N.C.'s conventional views in terms that would meet the changing situation at home without altering the core of the theory leads to absurd, even mutually contradictory, formulations. An example in Ngwenya's article is the following:

Their [the 'Africans'] acceptance of other groups with open arms clearly shows their non-sectarian approach. The South African nation can only be formed on the basis of democratic processes firmly based on majority rule or more correctly the leading role of the majority, in a non-racial society where the skin of a person will have no role.²⁰

At the same time Ngwenya stresses the correctness of the A.N.C.'s multi-racialism which

has nothing in common with the so-called multi-racialism of the Liberal Party, or the National Union of South African Students ... which is 'multi-racialism' based on minority rule or direction, ignoring the leading role of the African people as the core and the moving spirit of the South African people and NATION.²¹

On the theoretical level, the author tries to do what is virtually impossible – to distinguish between the 'multi-national' approach of the A.N.C. on the one hand, and that of the Afrikaner 'nationalists' on the other, in the same way as he had tried to distinguish between the two supposedly different multi-racialisms. He is embarrassingly conscious of this theoretical dilemma:

The component parts of the South African nation consists of differing racial or national groups. *We have no intention of over-emphasising the racial origin of the various communities; on the contrary, we reserve*

the term nation to emphasise the direction in which we are moving. South Africa is one country in which all groups are economically interdependent and integration is taking place in spite of government policy. *It is only recognition of the fact that the government is depicting tribalism as a manifestation of the nation that makes us cautious to use the term national group.* Many of the national groups – in fact all of them – are dispersed all over the country and intermingled ...²²

This is pitiable stuff to say the least. It is contradicted by a brief burst of unrestrained great nation chauvinism when he maintains that the A.N.C. ‘... seriously takes into consideration *the grievances of the other national groups* in the formulation of the overall revolutionary strategy ... and closely works with the other sister organisations.’²³

Even on the question of the class leadership of the national struggle, confusion creeps in when he attempts to show that the danger of bourgeois deviations from the ranks of the African oppressed is almost non-existent.²⁴ It is not that the point itself is wrong; *the point of departure* is wrong, because he attempts to equate the African ‘national group’ with the working class, so as once again to underpin the leading role of this ‘national group’.

Although this contributor eschews the question whether Stalin’s famous definition is applicable to the South African case (i.e. he refuses to argue his case theoretically), his major assertion is extremely important, if one ignores the flagrant contradictions between the various assertions made in the article. For it is a great step forward, spurred on by Black Consciousness and the growing criticism from other wings of the national liberation movement, to state roundly that ‘In our opinion, the South African nation is the totality of all its people, black and white, who pay allegiance to South Africa as their homeland’²⁵ and even that the consciousness of the African ‘should be broadened so that in it the African

should understand not only his being African but more his being South African. This is the surest blow to Bantustanisation.²⁶

All in all, however, it does not appear that the Congress contributions to the continuing discussion on the national question have taken the matter much further on the theoretical level, and the patent confusions concerning concepts such as national groups, national minorities, racial groups, nationalities, bear this out clearly. This is reflected in the other major contribution to *The African Communist's* series on the national question.

This second contribution – by Ben Molapo – (which only became accessible to me after I had written the above) does go some way towards posing the correct questions. And although he does so very briefly, he subjects previous writings by Communists and others to an extremely relevant questioning. In some respects, e.g. the trap of a mechanistic application of Stalin's definition, he anticipates, even if only in outline, some of my own findings. As such, therefore, the article provides a valuable point of departure. However, since many of his propositions are repetitions of views already criticised by me and since the general approach in this book should help one to read it critically, I have chosen to comment briefly only on those aspects that appear to be new or important.

It is noteworthy that Molapo makes no attempt to establish any connection between the holding of different views on the national question and the respective interpretation and theory of class struggle in each case. No attempt is made to show the effects, in terms of the class struggle, of a 'one nation', a 'two nations', or a 'many-nations' approach to the national question in South Africa. Yet this is the crucial point, an omission which, if it occurs, leaves analysis merely at the level of superficial pigeon-holing.

Moreover, Molapo, apart from the now obligatory swipe

at Stalin and equally obligatory genuflection to Lenin, cannot free himself from the fatal S.A.C.P. thesis of 'colonialism of a special type'. The result is once again lamentable confusion, an opening of many doors to opportunism and even betrayal, as we have seen. Let us quote him:

The great disadvantage of the one nation thesis is, then that it obscures the colonial nature of our society and in consequence the national character of our liberation struggle. It is this flaw that the two nations thesis is deliberately designed to counter ... This view holds essentially that South Africa is a colonial situation of a special type in which two nations, an oppressing nation and an oppressed nation, live side by side within the same territory ... The two nations thesis is, in my view, the correct one, but it is not always clear what is meant by 'nation' in this context. Both the oppressing nation and the oppressed nation fail to meet the general conditions stipulated by Stalin's classical definition of the nation, a definition that continues to enjoy wide currency in Marxist writings ... (p. 84)

Quite consistently with this thesis, Molapo characterises the 'Coloured and Indian communities in South Africa' as 'minority groups', largely on the grounds that they possess neither actual nor potential economic viability as groups. The static and mechanistic character of this argument should be obvious to anyone who has read my book with care.

Tragically, Molapo, after feigning an attack on Stalin's 'entirely mechanical' definition, tries to save it in a kind of 'facing-both-ways' exercise that is almost incredible. By way of demonstrating the resultant confusion let us cite a few sentences from Molapo:

It may be that it is preferable to reserve the term 'nation' as such for a fully developed national community that satisfies all four components [of

Stalin's definition] rather than for a community that is advancing along the lines of national organisation. In this case the two nations thesis in South Africa while designating the general character of the class struggle in South Africa needs slight adjustment, for neither of the nations is complete in the fullest sense.

As though this attempt to salvage the implications of the internal colonialism thesis for the analysis of the national question were not unfortunate enough, Molapo continues with a passage that bristles with contradictions manifest even in his terminological confusion and inconsistency:

Whether one accepts this refinement or not, however, the centring of the national question on the class struggle and the formation of an economic community confirms the general approach of the two nations thesis in South Africa. *While the white nation* (or proto-nation) has not achieved (and may not achieve) a single national language and homogeneous culture, *the white alliance* based on certain cultural and racial criteria has been more important objectively than English/Afrikaans differences. These differences have been subordinated to white national supremacy. This oppressor nation ... has through the control of state power carried through the normal democratic reforms within the confines of the *white nation* ... This white national framework has long since performed its national democratic tasks, and from a democratic point of view, it has become an anachronism, which is not to say that it is therefore about to wither away of its own accord. Further meaningful democratic advance in South Africa can only be achieved within the framework of another national entity, the *African South African nation*. *This nation already exists, at least partially*, in the objective alliance between the great majority of the proletariat, the peasantry and fractions of the petit-

bourgeoisie who are all subjected to the same national oppression ... (my emphasis throughout)²⁷

From the above excerpts it is clear that Molapo's article, however stimulating it might be, remains an incomplete and confusing document, primarily because, being imprisoned within the framework of the internal colonialism thesis of the S.A.C.P., he is unable to perceive the national question from the point of view of the revolutionary working class.

In conclusion, from what has been said earlier concerning the pluralist thesis of liberalism in South Africa it is obvious that only through a consistent emphasis on working-class leadership of the national struggle can the Congress movement cease to be prone to a reformist alliance with the liberal bourgeoisie (as it had been throughout the 1950s.). But in that case, its very concept of the nation and its analysis of the national question must needs change.

The internal colonialism thesis

Ngwenya, like the previous contributor to *The African Communist's* series on the national question, bases himself on the thesis that, 'In fact, the white minority has established a special colonialist system differing from the classical model in that the coloniser and the colonised share the same country.'²⁸

The immediate source of this internal colonialism thesis is the 1962 programme of the Communist Party in which it was stated that:

South Africa is not a colony but an independent state. Yet the masses of our people enjoy neither independence nor freedom. The conceding of independence to South Africa by Britain, in 1910, was not a victory over the forces of colonialism and imperialism. It was designed in the interests of

imperialism. Power was transferred not into the hands of the masses of people of south Africa, but into the hands of the white minority alone. The evils of colonialism, insofar as the Non-White majority was concerned, were perpetuated and reinforced. A new type of colonialism was developed, in which the oppressing White nation occupied the same territory as the oppressed people themselves and lived side by side with them.²⁹

The programme, called *The Road to South African Freedom*, climaxes in the assertion that 'Non-White South Africa is the colony of White South Africa itself.' It is worthwhile quoting the whole of the relevant passage:

On one level, that of 'White South Africa', there are all the features of an advanced capitalist state in its final stage of imperialism. There are highly developed industrial monopolies, and the merging of industrial and finance capital. The land is farmed along capitalist lines, employing wage labour, and producing cash crops for the local and export markets. The South African monopoly capitalists ... export capital abroad ... But on another level, that of 'Non-White South Africa', there are all the features of a colony. The indigenous population is subjected to national oppression, poverty and exploitation, lack of all democratic rights and political domination by a group which does everything it can to emphasize and perpetuate its alien 'European' character. The African Reserves show the complete lack of industry, communications, transport and power resources which are characteristics of ... territories under colonial rule ... Typical, too, of imperialist rule, is the reliance by the state upon brute force and terror, and upon the most backward tribal elements and institutions which are deliberately and artificially preserved. Non-White South Africa is the colony of White South Africa itself.³⁰

Harold Wolpe, in his study of this question, has pointed to the fact that the notion of internal colonialism has been used by many writers to describe the politico-economic domination of white people over black people and stresses correctly that 'Used in this way, the term "internal colonialism" is interchangeable with the notion of "pluralism"'.³¹ In regard to the S.A.C.P.'s propositions Wolpe concedes that the Party Programme's use of the term internal colonialism is linked with capitalism, but the programme 'fails to clarify the nature of the imperialist relationship between the two South Africas' and, more importantly, '... despite the reference to capitalism, and no doubt to the failure to specify the crucial relationship, the analysis slides into an account in terms of White and Non-White South Africa which is very similar to that provided by the pluralists'.³² Up to this point Wolpe's findings concerning the position of the S.A.C.P. are congruent with what I have repeatedly stressed concerning the pluralist core of Congress-orientated theories of the nation which are accepted by the S.A.C.P. The Party's internal colonialism thesis is, in fact, not much more than a neo-pluralist thesis which, though prefigured in its much earlier slogan of the 'independent native republic',³³ is clearly tailored to suit the post-war alliance between the Communist Party and the A.N.C. Because (as I shall show in the final chapter) a pluralist position on the national question carries the inevitable implication of a two-stage revolution, it also – objectively – says something about the position of its advocates on the question of class leadership of the national liberation struggle. *In the South African context* a 'multi-national', i.e. pluralist, position, however defined, is inextricably linked with the proposition that the national struggle shall be led by the liberal bourgeoisie and the aspirant bourgeoisie, rather than by the working class.

Wolpe attempts to salvage the internal colonialism thesis by reinterpreting it in terms of the reserves ('pre-capitalist

mode of production') and metropolitan South Africa ('capitalist mode of production') somewhat on the model of the centre-periphery literature that has proved to be so stimulating in recent years. In the process, however, he jumps from the frying pan into the fire and creates an opening not towards an alliance with the liberal bourgeoisie (which the neo-pluralists have done) but to the Afrikaner sectionalsists themselves! His thesis is simply that the real *colonial* relationship in South Africa exists between the capitalist ruling classes in the 'metropolitan area' of South Africa itself on the one hand, and the reserves ('homelands' in the official nomenclature), on the other. These latter, by reproducing labour power cheaply, i.e. at a cost which is forcibly kept at a minimum through the perpetuation ('conservation') of the underdeveloped state of these reserves, are the 'colonies' of the metropolis, which benefits from the resultant increased rate of capital accumulation.

It is this feature, the introduction into the capitalist circuit of production of labour-power produced in a non-capitalist economy, that denotes one important feature of imperialism. This 'crossing' of different modes of production modifies the relationship between wages and the cost of reproducing labour-power in favour of capital. The uniqueness or specificity of South Africa, in the period of capitalism, lies precisely in this: that it embodies within a single nation-state a relationship characteristic of the external relationships between imperialist states and their colonies (or neo-colonies).³⁴

This thesis raises a host of controversial and interesting questions, but these cannot be allowed to detain us. More relevant to our focus are the comments of Molteno who points out that Wolpe's '... picture of the articulation of a capitalist mode of production with a non-capitalist mode of production is a mere translation of the pluralist notion of a

dual economy into the 'Marxist' code of language he sometimes uses';³⁵ and that he in effect 'concedes to National Party ideology the possibility of decolonization via political "independence"'.³⁶

It is this latter aspect that is especially relevant to the present study. For the logic of Wolpe's theoretical position leads to the possibility of acceptance by men and women in the liberation movement of the legitimacy of 'homelands' and of Bantustan independence as a form of National liberation. The example of Joe Matthews is the most instructive. This one-time almost legendary and long-standing executive member of the A.N.C. and the S.A.C.P., having abandoned his faith in the efficacy of the armed struggle, regressed along the whole spectrum to a position that is now no different from that of Matanzima or Buthelezi. Although this episode deserves much detailed inquiry, I shall refer to only two aspects of Matthews' justification of his change of position and betrayal of former colleagues. He stressed throughout his interview with journalist J.H.P. Serfontein, his commitment to capitalism and his opposition to the pro-communist 'anti-West posture' of the A.N.C.:

The crux of the programme of reform in South Africa lies in the fact that while there are two or three pieces of legislation against communism, the South African Statute Book has about 150 laws preventing the emergence of a capitalist class among Africans.³⁷

Hence despite an obligatory genuflection to the possibility that Bantustan 'independence' may be only a temporary detour to a possible federation of Southern African states at a later stage, his main concern is the reform of the system in such a way that capitalism can flourish without limitations imposed by considerations of 'race'. He conceives of the various language groups as constituting 'nations', each entitled to the right of independent state

creation. According to Matthews, 'The right of any group to establish a state is a most fundamental one. The right to a state cannot be counterposed to hypothetical rights in a future united South Africa whose emergence might still be far off.' Bourgeois leadership of a pluralised South Africa: this is the logic of the multi-national position, whether in the versions of the S.A.C.P. or those of Wolpe or even Matthews.

A recent attempt by Joe Slovo, a leading member of the Communist Party, to salvage the pre-Wolpean S.A.C.P. thesis of internal colonialism or 'colonialism of a special type' does not carry the matter further. Indeed, if anything, it renders the colonial analogy, used in this way, more risky, since it opens wide the portals of the liberation movement to the very kind of opportunism of which a Joe Matthews is such a significant example. Against Wolpe, Slovo holds that:

In South Africa the thesis of internal colonialism sees class relations in an historically specific context in which internal group domination has lent shape to, and influenced the content of, the exploitative processes. The thesis, however, stresses the existence of internal class divisions in both the dominant and subject groups, with these class divisions influencing political and ideological positions in the struggle for social change. To identify 'white South Africa' with an imperialist state and 'nonwhite South Africa' with the 'colony' is undoubtedly a useful shorthand, *at one level*, to depict the reality of the historically specific race factor in both the genesis and the existing nature of class rule.³⁸

The italicised phrase does not serve to answer Wolpe's main contention. Moreover, the cat is let out of the bag when the author attempts to annex Wolpe's thesis to that of the S.A.C.P. and thus to show that the latter is the necessary progenitor of the former. But, ironically, by doing this Slovo

shows up precisely the danger in Wolpe's amended thesis, because he thereby confirms the view that Wolpe lends an air of legitimacy to the National Party's myth of decolonisation à la Bantustan:

What general purpose is the re-structured Reserve system designed to meet and how will it alter the relationships of internal colonialism? In brief, *it is an attempt partially to externalize the colonial relationship in the shape of ethnic states, eventually having all the attributes of formal political independence.*

In other words, the ruling class is, under pressure, searching for a neo-colonial solution especially adapted to South African conditions ...

These new steps to transform the Reserve system reflect a policy which is, therefore, in the direct line of succession from the present internal form of colonialism, showing the strains of its lack of sufficient geographic definition. It is an attempt to legitimize the foreign conquest in a new way.³⁹

Thus we see how Wolpe's brand of internal colonialism has become Slovo's neo-colonialism. This neo-colonialism continues to co-exist peacefully with the original S.A.C.P.'s 'colonialism of a special type'. While Slovo accounts in a manner of speaking for the Bantustan strategy (the Bantustans are, at least in the National Party's view, neo-colonies) he fails to realise that the very same process is taking place within the metropolitan centre of the National Party's 'white' South Africa. The Tom Swartzs and the Reddys are, like the Matanzimas and Buthelezis, the agents of this 'neo-colonialism'. Similarly, the Coloured Development Corporation, for example, plays the same role as the Bantu Investment Corporation and its offspring in the 'Bantu homelands'. But – to continue in Slovo's metaphor – these Coloured and Indian 'neo-colonies' have no foreseeable hope of eliminating 'the strains of [their] lack of sufficient geographic definition' and are therefore doomed to be forever examples of 'neo-colonialism of a

special type' (or perhaps of 'internal neo-colonialism') as too, are those 'homelands' that have yet to choose *formal* political independence.

There is simply no logic in maintaining on the one hand that South Africa's inhabitants of European descent are no longer a settler population, that they have become indigenous to Africa, and so are *Africans*, while on the other hand attempting to stretch the colonial analogy to the point where it negates this valid assertion. There is a great difference between saying for the sake of descriptive vividness, and for understanding certain politico-ideological manifestations of the liberation struggle, that the black people suffer under an oppression *akin* to that associated with colonially subjugated peoples, and maintaining, as the S.A.C.P. (and Slovo) do, that 'Non-White South Africa *is* the colony of white south Africa itself'. The colonial analogy, used in this way, legitimises multi-nationalism and, in the final analysis, therefore also legitimises partition in the guise of independence'. Slovo argues that the pre-1910 colonial status and subjection of the black people has continued, whereas for the whites it came to an end in that year and that 'The ruling and exploitative establishment has always been drawn from the dominant white group (either local or foreign), and the Blacks as a group have always had a subject or colonial status.'⁴⁰

One might as well argue that the bourgeoisie and peasantry nurtured in the womb of European feudalism became, after the bourgeois democratic revolutions of the 18th and 19th centuries, 'imperialists' and 'colonised subjects' respectively. The historical coincidence that in the case of Europe we had people of the same skin-colour whereas in the South African case we have people of different skin-colour merely exposes the fact that those who characterise the latter case as a 'colonialism of a special type' are the prisoners of the pluralist thesis which is based

on a mystified conception of 'race'. I do not, of course, contend that the 'racial' factor in the South African case is non-existent or unimportant. On the contrary, it is of the greatest importance. But unless one sees it in proper perspective, unless one's theory can account for its significance in a scientific manner, one's political strategy remains vulnerable to the winds of sectionalist opportunism.

This is evident from the very consistency of the advocates of the internal colonialism thesis. They really *do* perceive of the colour-caste groups, the four so-called 'racial' groups of South Africa, as nations or national groups who are nationally oppressed like overseas colonials. That national oppression can conceivably have a different meaning is not properly understood. It is understood in part, because the consistency breaks down at the fundamental point concerning the right of nations to self-determination. This right – for *nations* – involves the right to secede from the multi-national state. In this the Afrikaner sectionalists are – theoretically – more consistent than the other multi-nationalists who baulk at the spectre of the logical conclusion of their theory. Yet the National Party's 'multi-national' frame of reference is completely congruent with the colonial analogy used by the S.A.C.P. and – as the example of Matthews shows – constitutes the point of tangency between 'Afrikaner Nationalism' and 'African Nationalism' interpreted in this way. Consistency, on the other hand, is found for instance in Trotsky's Letter quoted above.⁴¹ The former Soviet leader, whose ignorance of South African history absolves him from responsibility for his incorrect conclusions, also believed that the 'races' were nationalities.⁴² Hence he held that:

We must accept with all decisiveness and without any reservations the complete and unconditional right of the Blacks to independence. Only on the basis of a mutual struggle against the domination of

the White exploiters can be cultivated and strengthened the solidarity of Black and White toilers. It is possible that the Blacks will after victory find it unnecessary to form a separate Black State in South Africa; certainly we will not *force them* to establish a separate State ... The proletarian revolutionaries must never forget the right of the oppressed nationalities to self-determination, including a full separation, and of the duty of the proletariat of the oppressing nation to defend this right with arms in hand if necessary.⁴³

The contradictions of the multi-national approach to national liberation have been sufficiently revealed. It is clear that the internal colonialism thesis needs to be recast and that the discourse of 'nationalities' and 'minorities' needs to be rephrased if the liberationist intentions and strategic conceptions of many members of the Congress movement are not to come into irreconcilable conflict with their theory. Moreover, it needs to be stressed that any bourgeois or aspirant bourgeois leadership which takes to heart these theories could without much effort persuade its following that self-determination means 'national' territorial separation from the South African state. The option of 'black majority rule' in a unitary South African state can only remain an effective mobilising slogan in the current Southern African climate of revolutionary optimism. But – as the example of Matthews shows – disenchantment with the tortuous and hazardous road of armed struggle can lead to mass and debilitating defections to the enemy, *using the theory of the national liberation movement* itself. The pluralist thesis – which is what multi-nationalism is – lays the movement open to a fatal alliance with the liberal bourgeoisie.

The single nation born of an indivisible oppression

I have shown earlier⁴⁴ that the Unity Movement, even before 1950, had unequivocally proclaimed its belief in a single South African nation. At the same time I pointed out a certain ambivalence on the national question implied by its occasional references to the caste-groups as nationalities. In order to show clearly where this ambivalence lay, I shall quote a most instructive paragraph from an early work of B.M. Kies, one of the founders of the Unity Movement, who was for a long time one of its most fertile and stimulating sources of ideas:

. . . When we speak of a united front of *all* non-Europeans we do not mean lumping all non-Europeans holus-bolus together and fusing them all together in the belief that, since *all* are non-European oppressed, the African is a Coloured man, an Indian is an African, and a Coloured man is either Indian or African, whichever you please. Only those who are ignorant of both politics and history can believe in this nonsensical type of unity. When we speak of the unity or the united front of all non-Europeans, we simply mean this: they are all ground down by the same oppression; they have all the same political aspirations, but yet they remain divided in their oppression. They should discard the divisions and prejudices and illusions which have been created and fostered by their rulers. They should remember only that they have a common foe and they should unite to liberate themselves. *When they have thrown off the chains, then they can settle whatever notional or racial difference they have, or think they have. After we have rid ourselves of our common oppressor, the national question will remain.* [my emphasis] BUT THE NATIONAL QUESTION MUST BE SETTLED ON OUR TERMS, NOT THE TERMS OF THE OPPRESSOR.⁴⁵

It is clear from this that Kies concedes that there may be a sense in which there are 'national' or 'racial' differences among the various sectors of the oppressed. However, I would be doing him a grave injustice if I did not clarify the strategic and tactical thinking behind his formulation. The exponents of the Unity Movement saw it as their first strategic task to break down the artificial caste-barriers separating the oppressed groups. Unity based on common principles was the precondition for the waging of a successful struggle against the oppressive system. They could not, however, begin by forming 'non-racial' organisations of the working people unless they closed their eyes to the reality of racial prejudice and economic competition. Consequently, a federal structure was created in which predominantly African organisations in the All-Africa Convention and predominantly Coloured organisations in the Anti-C.A.D. accepted the same programme and policy, which were interpreted and co-ordinated by a single non-racial Head Unity Committee. This Committee had – at least in theory – its regional counterparts in Local Co-ordinating Unity Committees.

The main assumption of this strategy was, however, that the federal structure would wither away as the strength of racial prejudice waned among the people, as a result of the political education and organisation undertaken by the Unity Movement, assisted by objective economic-political developments nationally and internationally. The 'minimum' 10 Point Programme:

... was calculated to meet the aspirations of the intellectuals and the aspiring petite bourgeoisie who felt acutely the national oppression; at the same time it voiced the needs of the poor and landless peasantry, as well as the demands of the rightless workers. Basically, the programme was designed to unite two main currents, the agrarian and the national.⁴⁶

Until 1955, when the A.N.C. adopted the Freedom

Charter, the Unity Movement's critique of the caste-based reformist strategies of the Congresses and other organisations was essentially valid. Even thereafter the Unity Movement still attempted to draw a distinction between the Congress *Alliance* and its own federal structure. At that stage, however, the formal aspect of the two movements tended to converge organisationally because in actual practice the federal structure did *not* wither away. Indeed, when the Unity Movement eventually foundered on the rocks of petty-bourgeois opportunism and intellectual cowardice in 1959, the rupture took place largely along lines of colour.⁴⁷

Ironically, but anachronistically, the ultra-left vestiges of the Fourth International equated what it called the 'multi-racialism' of the Congress Movement and the 'Non-Europeanism' of the Unity Movement, condemning both as falling into the category of 'voluntary segregation'. 'Organisation along these lines serves to entrench the existing racial consciousness and nothing more. It is therefore in the interests of the racialist state that such organisation should take place.'⁴⁸ In place of these tendencies the old Fourth International elements advocated the creation of '... a national movement on a non-racial basis which will extend its ramifications to all levels of our society'⁴⁹ and saw as the golden age the period of the 1920s and 1930s when the Communist Party had 'its old "non-racial" organisational form'.⁵⁰ By building up a non-racial trade union movement, youth movement, and cultural and educational movement, the social base for a workers' party would be created. Consequently, these elements saw it as their immediate task to wreck the Congress Movement and the Unity Movement. However, as the Unity Movement itself pontificated with acid contempt, these ultra-leftists not only rejected all the whites as exploiters but at the same time

... refrained from organising the oppressed Black masses, on the ground that it was not the duty of revolutionaries to form nationalist organisations or to encourage their formation. This, they argued, was the task of a native bourgeoisie, and since this class had not crystallised among the Blacks, they limited their activities to discussion clubs.

This group ... having choked itself to death in its own verbiage, vanished unwept from the political arena.⁵¹

In short, the Fourth International, despite many explicit articles on the national question, faced this very question with total incomprehension. Ultimately, at least, some members of this tendency actually denied the reality of nationhood and equated the advocacy of any concept of the nation with bourgeois deviationism.⁵² In recalling Marx and Engels' aphorism that 'the proletariat has no fatherland', they forgot that these authors also insisted that 'Since the proletariat must first of all acquire political supremacy, must rise to the leading class of the nation, must constitute itself *the* nation, it is so far, itself national, though not in the bourgeois sense of the word'.⁵³

Because of its intrinsic political, rather than practical-organisational, importance the evolution of Unity Movement theory and practice on the national question must be followed through to the present day. Essentially, what has happened is that the Unity Movement both at home and in exile has tended in its propaganda and its theoretical writings to deny the reality of alleged national or racial differences among the oppressed colour-caste groups. Its publicists speak either of 'sectors' of the oppressed people or – in the free (underground) press – in explicit working-class terms. The events of 1960–63, the stated intention of the rulers and their subsequent measures to produce an 'African' bourgeoisie, the evident readiness of collaborationist elements to accept this road of separatism

and class concessions by which the people's organisations were to be destroyed, impressed on all consistently democratic organisations the need to draw a line of demarcation between those who – white or black – would perpetuate the *status quo*, and those who have nothing to lose but their chains. In other words, the class leadership of the struggle became the crucial question of the day and this found its inevitable deposit – as we have already seen – in writings on the idea of the nation. The development of the subjective factor in the revolution thus found its expression in clear-cut ideas about the nation. What was *not* done, was to give a theoretical foundation, arising from South African experience, to this concept of the nation. National liberation came more and more to be presented in terms of a *national democratic movement*, i.e. the nation was conceived as being oppressed or stultified by the bourgeois rulers of the country. Liberation of the nation meant consistent and total democratisation of the society, a task which the bourgeoisie, 'white' or 'black', was incapable of performing. Consequently, it was the task of the workers to bring about this historic transformation.

The African People's Democratic Union of Southern Africa (Apdusa), in conception (but not in fact) a non-racial mass political organisation which was designed to inherit the mantle of the Unity Movement and to be the unitary consummation of its federal structure, stated in its 1961 constitution that among its aims and objects were the following:

To struggle for the liquidation of the National Oppression of the oppressed people in Southern Africa, that is, the removal of the disabilities and restrictions based on grounds of race and colour and the acquisition by the Whole Nation of those democratic rights at present enjoyed by only a small section of the population, namely, the White people
...

To achieve the greatest ideological and organisational unity amongst the oppressed people – between the workers in the urban and the peasants and workers in the rural areas ...⁵⁴

In a pamphlet issued by its Durban branch in December 1963, the organisation stressed the leading role of the workers and declared that:

The workers' struggle can come to fruition ... only when the workers find themselves inside the ranks of the oppressed Nation of South Africa. When black and white workers will join hands to end all oppression and ensure decent standards for all ... On this basis ... will the workers help to forge the unity of the Nation ... On this basis will the workers be able to play their full and proper role in lifting the vast mass of suffering, toiling, despised and neglected humanity from its present anonymity to the heights of a free nation.⁵⁵

I.B. Tabata, as President of Apdusa, placed the organisation squarely within a transitional revolutionary framework. He gave notice that the wing of the Non-European Unity Movement to which he belonged was moving away from the idea of 'Non-European unity' as understood hitherto, towards an identification of all the oppressed and freedom-loving people as 'Africans', defined as '... all those who accept this country as their home and therefore regard themselves as Africans'. Moreover, he was fully aware that the time had come to emphasise the paramountcy of 'the democratic demands and aspirations' of the labouring people and devoted his Inaugural Presidential Address to expounding the meaning and significance of the Apdusa Constitution's exhortation that 'The democratic demands and aspirations of the oppressed workers and peasants shall be paramount in the orientation of Apdusa in both its short-term and its long-term objectives'. He emphasised that as far as he was aware this

Apdusa demand represented the first occasion '... that such a clause has been included in the Constitution of any organisations in the Unity Movement. This alone marks a development in the outlook of the Movement and in a way also reflects the time we are living in.'⁵⁶

Developments in South Africa were thrusting the leadership of the movement for national liberation on to the labouring people, and this found expression in all organisations of the people. In regard to the national question the Unity Movement-orientated organisations made the transition to the idea of a single nation without any major theoretical somersaults, despite the fact that tactically and organisationally the Unity Movement failed to make any serious impact on the liberation movement. But other organisations of the oppressed people have been thrown into a turmoil of reappraisal of long-cherished views. We have already seen that certain tendencies within the Congress-orientated organisations (and in the S.A.C.P.) have been moving in this direction. To the extent that they consistently advocate the leadership of the national liberation movement by the working class, they will inevitably have to amend the pluralist conceptions of the nation of South Africa to which they nominally subscribe.

This response to the Bantustan strategy, which was ceaselessly and with great effect denounced as a massive fraud, has proved to be the historically correct one in purely strategic terms. At the level of theory, however, it has not – on the national question at any rate – gone beyond the mere assertion of the indivisibility of the nation. The generally prevalent argument concerning the economic forces making for 'integration' of the various groups, an argument shared by liberals and marxists alike, is hardly an adequate basis for the assertion of such indivisibility. After all the National Party itself acknowledges this when it declares that its strategy is one of 'political independence' in the context of 'economic interdependence'. Mere economic pressures, no

matter how important, are never sufficient in themselves to determine the configuration of a social formation. History is replete with examples of economic units that have been broken up because of the conjuncture of other forces – including economic ones. The theory of the nation in South Africa cannot consist of the claim that the nation is indivisible. It must say why this is so and it must explain why the people of South Africa are a single nation and not, for instance, a multi-national community.

The Africanist thesis

Economic, social and political realities tend to push any movement of the oppressed people in South Africa in the direction of a non-racial solution in spite of the fact that, except for expressly marxist tendencies, most organisations of the people have historically started from an 'anti'white', multi-racial position. This irony of South African history is currently demonstrated in the theory and practice of the Africanist or Pan-Africanist grouping as well as in that of the Black Consciousness Movement. One should hasten to add, of course, that the identification of an historical tendency is not to be understood as an assertion of inevitability. Consistent, scientifically based non-racialism, far from being a law of South African history, is in fact a most difficult achievement in the race-ridden environment of the country.

The Pan-Africanist Congress (P.A.C.) carried on with logical consistency the original strategy of the A.N.C.'s Youth League. Because of the opposition by Africanists to the manner in which whites and other 'non-Africans' were allegedly leading (i.e. misdirecting and aborting) the energies of the A.N.C., and because of the failure of that organisation after 1955 to go over to direct mass action, the Africanists broke away to form their own organisation. The nation of South Africa for them was the African people,

among whom they included those classified as Coloured. Whites and Indians were 'foreign minorities', although workers of Indian origin were expected to throw up their own leadership which would lead them into unity with the oppressed African majority.⁵⁷ Their general position was set out by Robert Sobukwe at the P.A.C.'s Inaugural Convention:

We wish to emphasise that the freedom of the African means the freedom of all in South Africa, the European included, because only the African can guarantee the establishment of a genuine democracy in which all men will be citizens of a common state and will live and be governed as individuals and not as distinctive sectional groups.⁵⁸

The influence of what was happening in the rest of Africa, especially of Nkrumahism, as well as the influence of the Unity Movement's critique of the Congress position on the national question and the alliance with the liberal bourgeoisie, are clearly discernible throughout the early writings of representatives of the P.A.C. Their immediate response to the Bantustan scheme for balkanisation is of special interest because they sensed what I have earlier called the point of intersection between apartheid and the 'multi-nationalism' of the Congress movement.

... We reject both apartheid and so-called multiracialism as solutions to our socio-economic problems. Apart from the number of reasons and arguments that can be advanced against apartheid, we take our stand on the principle that Afrika is one and desires to be one and nobody, I repeat, nobody has the right to balkanise our land.⁵⁹

The P.A.C. may have been undeniably chauvinist in its political practice. And many people in the organisation became almost will-less tools in the hands of imperialist interests during the early 1950s, engaging the organisation in ill-considered armed actions without any proper

understanding of strategy, tactics or theory (and serving only fleetingly to destabilise the National Party government – from which situation liberalism in South Africa hoped to carry off the reward of political office). But the revolutionary potential of the populist P.A.C. is already evident in some of its early statements on the national question. It was, practically speaking, the first national organisation of the people which really shed the straitjacket of concessions to caste prejudice, however necessary these had been in the pre-1960 era. In Sobukwe's Opening Address he stated:

Against multi-racialism we have this objection, that the history of South Africa has fostered group prejudices and antagonisms, and if we have to maintain the same exclusiveness, parading under the term of multi-racialism, we shall be transporting to the new Afrika these very antagonisms and conflicts. Further, multi-racialism is in fact a pandering to European bigotry and arrogance. It is a method of safeguarding white interests, implying as it does, proportional representation irrespective of population figures. In that sense it is a complete negation of democracy. To us the term 'multi-racialism' implies that there are such basic insuperable differences between the various national groups here that the best course is to keep them permanently distinctive in a kind of democratic apartheid. That to us is racialism multiplied, which probably is what the term truly connotes.⁶⁰

The logical result of this position was the advocacy of a single mass political party of the oppressed people (from which 'Indians', however, were at first excluded).

The central concept of the P.A.C.'s political theory was that of 'African'. Already in Sobukwe's address the developmental possibilities of this approach are strikingly obvious, even though for a number of years the openly

black chauvinist tendency was clearly and stridently dominant. Sobukwe proclaimed that:

We aim, politically, at government of the Africans by the Africans, for the Africans, with *everybody who owes his only loyalty to Africa and who is prepared to accept the democratic rule of an African majority being regarded as an African. We guarantee no minority rights, because we think in terms of individuals, not groups.*⁶¹

Despite the obvious ambiguity involved in the phrase 'an African majority' in a country where everybody is an 'African', it is clear that this point of view precedes and converges with the position expressed later by Apdusa.

The populist and originally violently anti-marxist character of the P.A.C. made it into the perfect instrument of the liberal bourgeoisie against the Afrikaner sectionalists. It is an open question whether, if the organisation had been allowed to exist unhindered, it would not have attempted to bring about that re-alliance of class forces on which liberalism depends for the salvation of the sub-continent from a proletarian *Götterdämmerung*. The actual historic forces were, however, ranged differently. The non-collaborationist stance of the P.A.C. drew it inevitably in the direction of armed struggle despite the vacillations and confusions of some of its leaders. Because of the need for assistance in training an army and a bureaucracy in exile, it got embroiled in the Sino-Soviet dispute. The Soviets supported the A.N.C.-S.A.C.P. alliance and the P.A.C. had to turn to China since no Western country would, and few African countries could, support it on the scale required. Opportunistically no doubt, the erstwhile rabid anti-communists of the P.A.C. became revolutionary socialists; and as glibly as some of them had used the discourse of Pan-Africanism, they now began to speak in terms of 'revolutionary marxism'.

Whatever the degree of opportunism and expediency involved, there is no denying the fact that theoretically

there resulted a deepening understanding of the national question. Indeed some admirably clear statements on this question came forth from the headquarters-in-exile of the P.A.C. History was, in one sense, beginning to sort the chaff from the wheat. The genuine forces of the revolution were beginning to take up their positions, even if some of the individuals who served as channels for voicing these positions were in all probability neither genuine nor even very clear about the implications of what they were saying. Thus one of the most significant documents ever to come from the national liberation movement was a communiqué issued and signed jointly by executive members of the P.A.C.-in-exile and members of the former Coloured Peoples Congress, which had dissolved itself in revolt against the multi-racial, Africanist positions taken up in a brazenly opportunistic manner by the A.N.C. in the early and mid-1960s. A reading of this document leaves one breathless, and wondering at the manner in which people can in the space of a few years say almost exactly the opposite things from what they had been saying earlier as fundamental statements of belief. This facility in changing views is itself, of course, a factor which makes one cautious about the sincerity of the individuals concerned, but at the same time the objective content of what is said has to be weighed and judged for what it represents as an advance beyond outmoded positions.

On the character of the nation, this P.A.C.-C.P.C. Communiqué states unequivocally that:

Committed as they are to a non-racial socialist democracy, the leaders are resolutely opposed to a multiracial South Africa on the morrow of the revolution. *The equal treatment of all the liberated people as members of one nation rules out at once the recognition of so-called minority rights and interests with claims for special protection.*⁶²

This is indeed a far cry from the A.N.C. Youth League's

position which declared that 'South Africa is a country of four nationalities' and which found expression again in the second part of the Freedom Charter.⁶³ The importance of this conception of the nation is recognised by the authors of the document as being simultaneously the most effective answer to the Bantustan theory and strategy, a point which history itself is proving at the time of writing.⁶⁴

By the same token the leadership must warn the people of South Africa against the schemes of the Verwoerd regime, backed by imperialism, to balkanise South Africa in an attempt to avert popular revolution and save the interests of local and foreign exploiters. These schemes are designed to fragment the oppressed and regiment them along racial and tribal lines, as in so-called Bantustans, in order to exploit them more viciously and effectively, and thus give imperialism a greater hold on the country.

The liberation movement is determined to render ineffectual these schemes to create illusory self-government, and seeks to maintain and consolidate the unified economy on which an integrated nation, animated by a common will, can alone be sustained.⁶⁵

Moreover, we see once again that, as soon as the idea of a single undivided nation is put forward consistently, the question of the class leadership of the struggle and of the nation is raised in all its sharpness. For, as I shall show in detail, it is *only* the exploited black working class (to be joined later by white workers depending on the relationship of forces then obtaining) who can actually bring into being such a nation. The Communiqué, therefore, says consistently that:

The P.A.C. ... is fundamentally the organisation of the most exploited and enslaved section of the population, the pass-bearing workers and land-starved peasants who, with nothing to lose but their

chains, have a greater stake in the most radical social change by the most radical means.

The C.P.C., hitherto representative of a people 80 per cent of whom live below the bread line, notes with satisfaction that the P.A.C. is the only political organisation in the country that sets itself clear-cut socialist objectives which it seeks to attain concurrently with political democracy.⁶⁶

In this statement that sets the P.A.C. clearly apart from the A.N.C. and squarely next to Apdusa, theoretically speaking, the two executives drew the necessary organisational conclusions from their theoretical and strategic positions:

... The leaders of the two Congresses (the C.P.C. and the P.A.C.) are firmly convinced that the retention of a political organisation based on race conspires to entrench racialism and perpetuate political divisions which help the ruling class in continuing the subjugation of the people. Furthermore, the urgency of our political tasks ... demands a unified movement comprising all the oppressed as one people aspiring to a common nationhood. Consequently coloured Africans take their place in the P.A.C. simply as Africans. The retention of Coloured and Indian organisations as junior partners of the black Africans in the struggle for national emancipation cannot be countenanced. Experience has shown that this multi-racial concept of struggle aggravates racialism and strengthens the race barriers by sowing suspicion and discord among those who are organised along such lines.⁶⁷

The Communiqué then goes on to call on Indian organisations to dissolve and take their rightful place in the P.A.C. Again, within the space of barely six years a complete transformation has been achieved since Indians are no longer considered in this P.A.C. statement to be a 'foreign minority'. That such a change had taken place is

openly acknowledged in an article by the then chairman of the C.P.C., Cardiff Marney,⁶⁸ who contributed a lengthy and worthy article to motivate the dissolution of his organisation and its critique of the Congress Alliance and the Unity Movement. He recognised that evolving theoretical and practical developments had so altered the position of the P.A.C. away from its previous Africanism that a consistent democrat should have no hesitation in linking his or her fortunes with it.

The confidence which the P.A.C. reposed in the strength and revolutionary capacity of a *section* has been translated into a confidence in *the whole people*; the conviction that it could lead *one important section* has been transformed into the conviction that it can and must lead *the whole people* ... This is the subjective revolution in the ranks of the leadership for which objective conditions have been crying out. It has produced a synthesis in P.A.C. ideas on the burning National and Class issues which neither detract from the strivings towards national independence ... nor dull their distinct class interests.⁶⁹

In the same article, Marney gives a brief analysis of the mistakes of sectionalism and the organisational and political disasters to which it has led in the liberation movement of South Africa. In this, he speaks – but in a new context – with the voice of the old Fourth International, sometimes almost verbatim:

The national struggle is, in short, the form the class struggle takes in South Africa. National liberation can therefore be achieved only by placing in power the pass-bearing, propertyless workers who, standing at the head of a united and independent nation, will place socialist reconstruction on the order of the day. In this sense the national and class questions coincide in their social base.⁷⁰

Finally, before we leave this analysis of the P.A.C., it is

important to note that the original anti-white, black chauvinist interpretations of the P.A.C. position on the national question have not been completely transcended by all elements claiming allegiance to the organisation. Just before the present work was submitted for publication, I became aware of a series of articles on the National Question, published in *Ikwezi*, which is described as 'A Journal of South African and Southern African Political Analysis'.⁷¹ Although there is much of great value in this series, I cannot but conclude, after a careful and even agonising study of the material, that the balance sheet of this effort is a negative one. For the series represents in major aspects a decided retrogression as against earlier P.A.C. views on the subject. It will be evident, of course, that although the assumptions and the general line of all these articles are identical, not all of them can be said to represent the official position of the P.A.C.

There is revealed in this series an irony that is almost baffling in its completeness. I shall refer only briefly to a few aspects thereof: – (a) The 1928 Comintern resolutions are now allegedly accepted and advocated by the originally anti-S.A.C.P. Pan-Africanist Congress. Moreover, they are accepted precisely because they support an analysis of the National Question which the P.A.C. at one time rejected, i.e. the idea that South Africa is a multi-national country in which a majority 'African nation' would guarantee the rights of 'national minorities'. (b) The 'multi-racialism' of the S.A.C.P. (and the Congress Alliance) originally rejected by the P.A.C. for a 'non-racialism' without group guarantees, is now described as a 'non-racialism', the aim of which is to disguise the reality of the 'four-nations' (i.e. 'multi-racial') set-up in South Africa. (c) There is an open and unashamed reversion to the preaching of anti-white racism of the most primitive kind. In this respect, it is necessary to state quite clearly that any attempt to justify black or white chauvinism is diametrically opposed to the

real interests of the national liberation movement. The basis of this movement is not the return of the land to the 'indigenous owners' of the land by foreign white conquerors. South Africa is *not* a colonial country. A new division of the land in accordance with the level of political development of the revolutionary forces in South Africa is the principled basis on which the land question has to be solved. Behind the neo-C.P. theory of this P.A.C. and all other theories of a 'colonialism of a special type' looms the ugly spectre of a futile black chauvinism, which must infallibly deliver the revolutionary movement into the hands of the most reactionary elements in our country, those elements who alone stand to gain from decades of communal strife.

Black Consciousness

Black Consciousness, to which we now turn, though also constituting a theoretical framework, is in many respects retrogressive, and in any case inadequate for the purpose. Indeed only the supersession of the Black Consciousness framework, without necessarily negating its important rediscoveries of deep-rooted political traditions, can lead to the production of an adequate theoretical framework. Whereas the early South African Communist Party literature, following Stalin, arrived at an essentially reactionary theory of nationality akin to the present Afrikaner nationalist theory, no theorist, including Black Consciousness spokespeople, seems to have deemed it necessary to give the concept of a single South African nation any theoretical (as opposed to a strategic) foundation. The failure to understand clearly the relationship between colour-caste and class, the preoccupation with the observable racial prejudice of the social groups in the country, perpetuated a conceptual and analytical poverty which has obstructed that breakthrough

on all levels that the objective political conditions inside the country have placed on the order of the day. The *strategic* recognition of the need for unity is a very different level of argument from the *theoretical exposition* of the unity of the nation. 'Internal colonialism', though a theoretical framework, leads in the opposite, multi-national, direction, as we have seen.

In discussing the implications of Black Consciousness for the understanding of the national question in South Africa, one has to distinguish between the broad ideology, derived from the pan-Africanist and American Black Consciousness movements on the one hand, and the practical political activities and propaganda of organisations which have acknowledged their allegiance to the ideology of Black Consciousness. Ideologically, Black Consciousness postulates that 'people of colour' (in the South African context Africans, Indians and Coloureds), should liberate themselves psychologically by shedding the slave mentality. This means essentially that they must cease measuring themselves in Eurocentric terms, discover or rediscover the values of Africa and other areas of the world outside Europe, be proud of their 'blackness', create a culture which does not depend on 'white values' and, in general, realise that 'black is beautiful'. In this respect, therefore, Black Consciousness is an inevitable and historically progressive by-product of the anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist struggles of the 20th century. It is the revenge of the slave on the master and, for the present, it wants to negate whatever is associated with the master. But it must be added that the romantic illusions and political naiveté of this so-called cultural nationalism have been revealed throughout the world by the fact that the more superficial manifestations thereof have been commercialised as a matter of course by the capitalist system in which it has arisen and of which it is a part. Afro hair styles, Afro dress, African or Black poetry, culture, etc.,

have all become part and parcel of the capitalist scene throughout Africa and the world. Whites as well as Blacks have gone Afro as a matter of fashion. *But*, and this is an extremely important consideration, all this is the objective symptom of the fact that the ideological battle against the slave mentality is being waged. The demonstrative, exuberant exhibitionism that so often goes with it will vanish in due course as just a vestige of the inferiority complex that is being excised from among formerly colonised peoples.

The Black Consciousness Movement (B.C.M.), it is important to note, is the name given to a heterogeneous set of tendencies ranging from those who espouse a simple anti-white chauvinism to those who realise that caste consciousness and black solidarity are unavoidable political phenomena on the road to national liberation and emancipation. What is said below, except where I indicate otherwise, relates, therefore, to what one can call the dominant tendency in the B.C.M., although even this statement must be amended in the light of the bannings of Black Consciousness organisations in October 1977.

Politically, the organisations of the B.C.M. propagate 'black solidarity' and declare that '... in all matters relating to the struggle towards realising our aspirations, whites must be excluded'.⁷² Until such time as black and white shall be equal, all that matters are the blacks themselves. Even whites who are genuinely committed to the struggle of the oppressed for national liberation and who cut themselves adrift from their social moorings in order to live out their convictions can allegedly never really understand the 'black man's' experience and struggle. Although they vehemently deny that they preach an anti-white philosophy and insist that they are not, indeed cannot be, racists, they teach hatred of whites because in South Africa 'whites' are the oppressors. Only rarely does any exponent of Black Consciousness attempt in a public analysis to demonstrate

why *whites* as such are oppressors in South Africa. On the other hand, as I point out below, there has emerged a growing tendency (probably always present but not publicly articulated before) that insists that the South African social formation has to be analysed in terms of class as well as colour.

On the surface it would seem, then, that the position of the B.C.M., despite its slogan of 'One Azania, One Nation' leads it to a two-nation thesis. Such a conclusion is at least warranted for some of the component groups in the B.C.M. However, I have no doubt that in their initial vision, the founders of the movement considered that those whites who successfully make the transition to a democratised South Africa would naturally and effortlessly get 'integrated' into the Azanian nation. Thus, for instance, in the S.A.S.O. policy manifesto adopted at their second General Students' Council in July 1971, it is stated that:

S.A.S.O. believes that the concept of integration cannot be realised in an atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust. Integration does not mean assimilation of blacks into an already established set of norms drawn up and motivated by white society. Integration implies free participation by individuals in a given society and proportionate contribution to the joint culture of the society by all constituent groups. Following this definition therefore, S.A.S.O. believes that integration does not need to be enforced or worked for. Integration follows automatically when the doors to prejudice are closed through the attainment of a just and free society.⁷³

Although the difficulties imposed by trying to stay on the right side of the law may be one reason for the B.C.M.'s obscuring of the real character of its strategies, it is clear that its theory is neither a simple two-nation nor an unambiguous single-nation theory. Unlike S.A.C.P. and

Congress theories of internal colonialism, which postulate an 'oppressing white nation', B.C.M. theories, at least officially, postulate the irrelevance of 'the white man'. Thus, for instance, a leader of the B.C.M. is quoted as saying:

Very often it is assumed that if a person is not an 'integrationist' in South Africa he is therefore a 'separatist', and that because an increasing number of black people are rejecting 'integration' as a national goal, they are therefore 'separatists', that is, they make the permanent separation of races a national goal. This is nonsense. The black people who have been accused of being 'separatist' are in fact not 'separatists' but liberationists. Central to both separation and integration is the white man. Blacks must either move towards or away from him. But his presence is not nearly so crucial for those who pursue a course of 'liberation'. Ideally they do whatever they conceive they must do as if whites did not exist at all. At the very least the minds of the 'new blacks' are liberated from the patterns programmed there by a society built on the alleged aesthetic, moral and intellectual superiority of the white man ...

The fundamental issue is not separation or integration. The either/or question does not therefore talk to the point that the new black is making. We will use the word re-groupment to refer to that necessary process of development every oppressed group must travel en route to emancipation.⁷⁴

Whatever the exact position of B.C.M. theory on the national question, two points of a strategic-practical character are indisputable. It is clear that because of a specific historical conjuncture the ideology of Black Consciousness has brought about a radical change in South Africa. Increasingly all oppressed people, especially the urban youth, are identifying themselves as 'black' and beginning to act as such consciously. Without this, the

phenomena associated with the 1976–77 Soweto uprising, in particular the fact that all blacks were simultaneously involved in almost all the major cities of South Africa, would be incomprehensible. Black Solidarity has come to mean, in practice, united action by an oppressed people that feels itself to be one because of a common oppression and common history.

The B.C.M. has also been opposed to collaborating in government-created institutions; they have applied in practice a non-collaboration strategy. The idea of Black Solidarity has now assumed a dynamic of its own and has led to a questioning of some of the obvious contradictions in the concepts of Black Consciousness.⁷⁵ From the start organisations such as S.A.S.O. realised that ‘... not everybody who is *not* white is black’ (in a political sense),⁷⁶ for committed militants knew very well that people like Matanzima, Buthelezi, and other Bantustan ‘leaders’ have as great a stake in the existing system as any privileged white person. These people were as much a part of the system as the police and the rest of the bureaucracy. Shortly before the B.C.M. organisations were banned, analyses that rejected a simple black/white dichotomy were being pushed more strongly within its constituent bodies. The discourse of class analysis was being explicitly introduced, as can be seen from the Presidential Address to S.A.S.O. in 1976:

The White South African government is today carving and promoting an aspiring middle class amongst blacks that is going to do their dirty jobs for them in maintaining the *status quo*. The call today from liberals and *verligte* quarters to the Nationalist government is that the blacks should be given more opportunity to participate in the so-called ‘free enterprise’ system so that they should identify with it and be able to defend it against ‘advancing communist aggression that is now at the doorstep of South Africa’. This aspiring black middle class is at the top of the Bantustan

programmes with its appendages – the Black Bank, B.I.C., X.D.C., Nafcoc, and many others. These are trying to compete with the capitalistic concerns like O.K. Bazaars on the basis that Black markets should be left to the Black entrepreneurs. All they are saying is that the Blacks should be exploited by Blacks and this sounds better to the Black Community ...

Furthermore this black middle class aligns itself with imperialism, the highest form of capitalism, for they have to make trips to Europe and America to seek foreign investment. This black middle class is the victim of a strategy to render them comfortable so that they may worry about their newly acquired comforts instead of worrying about communal commitments. *The need is therefore to look at our struggle not only in terms of colour interests but also in terms of class-interests; skin colour has in fact become a class criterion in South Africa ... There are a lot of institutions and practices even amongst ourselves that are part of the general strategy of oppression.*⁷⁷

When one compares this kind of radical writing with the earlier 1972 statement by Biko, one of the founders of the B.C.M., that: '[The Liberals] tell us that the situation is a class struggle rather than a race one. Let them go to Van Tonder in the Free State and tell him this. We believe we know what the problem is and will stick by our findings ...'⁷⁸ it is clear that a dramatic change has taken place even though it has probably only affected a relatively small number of leading people who have come under the influence of the revolutionary struggles in the Portuguese colonies and the writings of men such as Machel and Cabral. The implications for the understanding of the national question are obvious. With such a class approach, all vestiges of a two-nation theory will be swept away and replaced by that of a single nation in a non-racial, socialist democracy. Indeed, the banning of the movement cannot but be conducive to the rapid development of this theory.⁷⁹

The opposition of the national liberation movement to the Bantustans

In the exposition up to this point I have shown that all the people's organisations, despite vacillations and ambiguities (sometimes manifested as actual betrayals by individual members of organisations), have opposed the Bantustan strategy. They have done so because they have recognised the obvious strategic aim of Bantustans, namely the fragmentation of the oppressed in order to render their labour more (and more permanently) exploitable.

Counter-strategies have been many and varied, depending on the class orientation of the leadership in each given case. In general, the urgent need for unity of all the oppressed as a strategic necessity has been recognised. Except to a limited extent in the case of the Black Consciousness Movement, this recognition has not found practical organisational form inside the country. Unity is the answer to balkanisation, but the historic, cultural, geographical and mountainous legislative obstacles to unity are some of the greatest problems facing the liberation movement. Yet it is equally obvious that without unity there can be no effective action. The implication of this is that all strategies hitherto adopted have failed either wholly or in part. Of course through trial and error, as well as through theoretical study, the liberation movement *will* develop an effective counter-strategy, and in the process a correct theory. For theory and strategy are inseparably interconnected. Although not every theory necessarily implies a particular strategy, any strategy implies a particular theory. Since the question of unity (a strategic question) is related to the question of the nation (a theoretical question), I believe, from what has been said already on the attitudes of the liberation movement and earlier people's organisations towards the national question, that the time has come – in the interest of an

effective counter-strategy – to re-examine the national question from the theoretical point of view.

Because all organisations of the people have, in hundreds of propaganda articles and pamphlets, stressed the fraudulence of the Bantustans, they have deemed it sufficient to follow the essentially liberal line of argument that the obvious (and intended) economic unviability of these patches of territory renders them illusory. This begging of the question has been observed by a few commentators. Thus, for instance, Innes and O'Meara, writing about the 'independence' of the Transkei:

The handing over of power in a chronically underdeveloped region to a collection of paid functionaries of the South African state ... is clearly far removed from the exercise in self-determination claimed by the government, and at this level is tragic farce. Yet this formal transfer of the trappings of power on the 26 October [1976] does have a far-reaching significance for the definition of the arena in which political action and political organisation occur. To dismiss the event as a sham or as meaningless misses this significance.

Opponents of the Vorster regimes and its Transkei lackeys have long been blinded by the *fraudulence* of the Transkei *independence*, and not yet really confronted its meaning, nor analysed the new factors it introduces in terms of political action and organisation.⁸⁰

It is indeed astounding that, where the Bantustan strategy raises so immediately and provocatively the whole national question, there has not been forthcoming from the liberation movement itself any systematic consideration of the question. At most the validity of the National Party's theory of nationality involved in the Bantustan strategy has merely been denied and other concepts of what constitutes nationality simply *asserted* without further elucidation. The series in *The African Communist* referred to above has come

closest to an attempt at re-examining the question. On the level of theory it is only the avowedly marxist organisations, such as the C.P.S.A. and the Fourth International of South Africa, that explicitly discussed the national question before the 1950s. As we have seen, despite valuable insights, none of them was able to put forward an illuminating theory. In some cases lamentable confusion resulted. In all cases they were hamstrung by Soviet theories formulated in a different historical context and elevated to the pedestal of dogma. Basic concepts like nationality, national group, national minority, were imported and transplanted without consideration of whether they actually were capable of naturalisation in the peculiar historical soil of South Africa. In practice the vast majority of writers on political questions wrote on the assumption that there were four 'racial groups' in the country and this *a priori* pair of spectacles, so to speak, distorted their perception and vitiated their analyses of the South African reality.

More recently two other South African scholars, Legassick⁸¹ and Lee⁸² have raised the question of what constitutes the nation in South Africa. Both have raised important questions of theory but it is Lee's work which is more suggestive for this study, since he raises systematically the relevant questions even though he too does not attempt to give any elaborated theory of the nation. (It will, therefore, be necessary to refer to his central theses in greater detail below.) Molteno has outlined very briefly the framework within which the problem has to be tackled:

The strategy which aims at the establishment of a non-racial democracy has to examine in particular the problems of class leadership of the movement for liberation, language policy, the nature of the social groups now and for the foreseeable future living in South Africa, whether or not coalescence or

convergence of these groups is to be postulated and if so, under which conditions ... The strategy of 'unity for freedom' raises questions about what the nation is, what the present groups are, in which direction they are developing, how they are to be organised and mobilised, what values are to be instilled into them, and so forth.⁸³

These are some of the questions that need to be answered. In addition, one has to answer the questions: What does national liberation mean, what does the right to *self-determination* of nations mean in the South African case? Throughout this study the pervasive assumption has been that the theory of the nation is a stake in the class struggle. The same idea is formulated by Lee as follows:

The content of the category 'national' ... cannot be defined simply, since it changes in the course of historical development and is dependent upon the level of consciousness reached at any given stage by the liberation movements and upon their concrete demands for the transformation of social reality.⁸⁴

With this in mind, I proceed to the exposition of the theory of the nation in South Africa.

Notes

1. See Chapter 3 above.
2. The C.P.S.A. disbanded after it was declared an unlawful organisation in 1950.
3. Printed in Karis and Carter (eds.), *op.cit.*, Vol. 3, p. 205.
4. I.I. Potekhin, 'The Formation of the South African Bantu into a National Community', Chapter 12.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
6. Compare Potekhin's dubbing of the Defiance Campaign and the evolving Congress Alliance as an example of 'proletarian internationalism'! *Ibid.*
7. See Lerumo, *op. cit.*, pp. 191-2.

8. Potekhin, *op. cit.*, p. 16 (my emphasis).
9. See p. 100ff.
10. M.B. Yengwa, 'The Bantustans: South Africa's "Bantu Homelands" Policy' in Alex la Guma (ed.), *Apartheid: A Collection of Writings on South African Racism by South Africans*, pp. 111–2.
11. See *ibid.*, p. 113.
12. 'Strategy and Tactics of the South African Revolution', in *ibid.*, pp. 197 (my emphasis.)
13. 'The Freedom Charter', *ibid.*, pp. 231–2.
14. *Ibid.*
15. B. Turok, 'Class Structure and National Ideology in South Africa', p. 5.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 6 (my emphasis.)
17. *The African Communist*, First Quarter, 1976, p. 115.
18. *Ibid.*
19. See *ibid.*, pp. 112–3.
20. *Op.cit.*, p. 52. (Joe Ngwenya, 'A Further Contribution on the National Question', *African Communist*, Fourth Quarter, 1976).
21. *Ibid.*
22. *Ibid.*, p. 51 .
23. *Ibid.*, p. 54.
24. See *ibid.*, p. 56.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 49.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 55.
27. *African Communist*, 1977.
28. *African Communist*, Fourth Quarter, 1976, p. 49.
29. Quoted in Michael Harmel, 'The Communist Party of South Africa', in La Guma (ed.) *op.cit.*, p. 223.
30. Quoted in H. Wolpe, 'Pluralism, Forced Labour and Internal Colonialism in South Africa', pp. 14–5.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
33. See Chapter 3 above.
34. Wolpe, *op.cit.*, p. 22.

35. F. Molteno, 'The ... Bantustan Strategy', p. 14.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 14–5.
37. See *Sunday Times*, 18 April 1976.
38. J. Slovo 'South Africa – No Middle Road' in Basil Davidson, *et al.*, *Southern Africa: The New Politics of Revolution*, pp. 134–5.
39. *Ibid.*, pp. 137–8.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 135.
41. See Chapter 3 above.
42. However, he had no use for the concept of 'Internal colonialism' though he uses the colonial analogy in a way that is extremely fertile: 'The South African possessions of Great Britain form a Dominion only *from the point of view* of the White minority. From *the point of view* of the Black majority, South Africa is a *slave colony*.' ('Trotsky's Letter ...') (my emphasis).
43. *Ibid.*
44. See Chapter 3 above.
45. B.M. Kies, *The Background of Segregation* (Address delivered to the National Anti-C.A.D. Conference, 29 May 1943) pp. 13–4.
46. Unity Movement of South Africa, *The Revolutionary Road for South Africa*.
47. The implications of this neglected episode in contemporary South African history are of great importance to the future of this country and call for detailed examination. At issue were certainly most of the central questions of South African politics today, in particular the Land Question, the National Question and the Question of Organisation. Equally important is the breakaway of the Coloured People's Congress from the Congress Movement in 1966, where some of the main issues were the same.
48. Peter Dreyer, *Against Racial Status and Social Segregation*, p. 4.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

50. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
51. Unity Movement of South Africa, *The Revolutionary Road for South Africa*, p. 7.
52. See, for instance, Zayed Gamiet, 'A Declaration to the People of South Africa from the Non-European Unity Movement: A Critical Analysis', *Discussion*, Vol. 1., No. 4, Dec. 1951, pp. 24–35.
53. K. Marx and F. Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, in Marx/Engels, *Selected Works*, p. 51.
54. Apdusa Constitution.
55. Apdusa (Durban Branch), 'Apdusa and the Workers' (1963).
56. I.B. Tabata, *Presidential Address: The African People's Democratic Union of South Africa* (A.P.D.U.S.A.).
57. See R. Sobukwe's 'Opening Address' at the Inaugural Convention of the P.A.C., 4–6 April 1959, in Carter & Karis, *op.cit.*, Vol. 3., pp. 510–7.
58. *Ibid.*, pp. 515–6.
59. *Ibid.*, p. 516.
60. *Ibid.*
61. *Ibid.* (my emphasis).
62. 'Full Text of C.P.C.-P.A.C. Communiqué', in *C.P.C. International Bulletin*, March 1966 (my emphasis).
63. See Chapter 3 above.
64. The Bantu Affairs Administration Department conceded in 1977 after the Soweto uprising that in Soweto, because of the people's opposition to 'ethnic' councils, a 'non-ethnic' election could be held to elect a 'local authority' for the ghetto.
65. C.P.C.-P.A.C. Communiqué.
66. *Ibid.*
67. *Ibid.*
68. Such are the vicissitudes of politics – and especially of politics in exile – that this same man today calls for a 'Coloured Homeland' and propagates an undisguised anti-white chauvinism. See his article: 'The

- Phenomenon of White Racialism and the Colonial Nature of the White Bourgeois in South Africa', in *Ikwezi*, No. 8, March 1978.
69. Cardiff Marney, 'The Struggle for Unity in South Africa', in *C.P.C. International Bulletin*, March 1966.
70. *Ibid.*
71. The reader is referred to a host of articles in *Ikwezi*, Vol. II, No. 4; No. 5, April 1977; No. 6, August 1977; and No. 7, December 1977.
72. S.A.S.O. 1972 (issued by South African Students Organisation, Durban 1972).
73. Quoted in Henry Isaacs, 'The Emergence and Impact of the Black Consciousness Movement', *Ikwezi*, No. 4, December 1976, p. 11.
74. Quoted *ibid.*, p. 11-2.
75. The amorphous populist character of the Black Consciousness Movement is the explanation for the fact that people like Dr. Motlana, who was a member of the Black People's Convention, advocated the idea of the Soweto Committee of Ten, which basically demands municipal status for Soweto within the apartheid framework, even if not directly under the Department of Bantu Administration and Development. It is clear, of course, that even if such a 'municipality' had been 'created by the people', it would have been done within and for the perpetuation of the system of apartheid.
76. S.A.S.O. 1972 (emphasis in original).
77. S.A.S.O. Presidential Address to VIIIth General Students Conference.
78. Biko, *op.cit.*, p. 19.
79. The above analysis of the B.C.M. was undertaken to elucidate the implications of the movement's position for the *national question*; it does therefore to some extent obscure the fact that the Movement has served as the happy hunting-ground for all manner of bourgeois opportunism and imperialist machinations. This can

only be explained as the result of contradictions arising from the class position of the leadership of the movement and the essentially gradualist strategic conceptions of the dominant tendency until mid-1977. Community projects (such as clinics, hospitals, factories) were organised – with abundant and continuous financial assistance from capitalist-imperialist sources of both South African and other Western origin – in order to ‘conscientise’ the oppressed people and make them ‘self-reliant’. The reformist, accommodationist dangers of such a strategy are all too clear. It is in fact a replica of what the Afrikaans petty bourgeoisie did with their Reddingsdaadbond and other mutual-aid organisations, except that they used a language-cum-colour criterion, whereas the Black Consciousness Movement uses as its criterion the fact of ‘blackness’. Potentially, the strategy would lead to a similar accommodation with the capitalist system as in the case of the Afrikaner sectionals. Consider the following statement made by one of the founders of the B.C.M. in South Africa:

‘We need to take another look at how best to use our economic power, little as it seems. We must seriously examine the possibility of establishing business co-operatives whose interests shall be ploughed back into community development programmes. We should think along such lines as the “buy black” campaign once suggested in Johannesburg and establish our own banks for the benefit of the community. Organisational development amongst blacks has only been low because we allowed it. Now that we are aware we are on our own it is more than a duty for us to fulfil these needs.’ (Steve Biko, ‘Black Consciousness and the Quest for a True Humanity’, in Mokgethi Motlhabi (ed.), *Essays on Black Theology* (University Christian Movement, Johannesburg, 1972), p. 26. The uncanny

echo of the Afrikaner sectionalist movement is too distinct to be missed. Since the banning of the B.C.M. in late 1977, it is clear that it is the 'homelands' leaders (collaborators) such as Buthelezi, Sonny Leon, and others, who will attempt to execute these implications of the strategy.

80. Duncan Innes and Dan O'Meara, 'Class Formation and Ideology: The Transkei Region', *Review of African Political Economy*, No. 7, Sept.–Dec. 1976, p. 69. See also Molteno, 'The ... Bantustan Strategy', pp. 33–4.
81. M. Legassick, 'Class and Nationalism in South Africa ...'
82. F.J.T. Lee, '... Südafrika vor der Revolution?'
83. Molteno, 'The ... Bantustan Strategy', pp. 36–7.
84. Lee, *op.cit.*, p. 104.

6. ELEMENTS OF THE THEORY OF THE NATION

IN ORDER TO CONSIDER the national question comprehensively and systematically it will be necessary to answer the following questions: (1) If the officially classified 'population registration groups' are not 'nations', as this book has implied throughout, how are they to be characterised? In this regard, we must consider the applicability or otherwise of the following concepts: 'race', 'ethnic group', national group, national minority, and colour-caste. (2) What defines the nation in South Africa? How is this definition related to the attributes held to be defining of nations in general? (3) What is the content of national liberation in the South African case? How is this related to the question of the class leadership of the national struggle? (4) What is the meaning of self-determination in the South African case? (5) What is the relationship between the Afrikaner sectionalist movement and the national liberation movement? Or, put differently, how is the historical movement against imperialist exploitation to be interpreted in view of the peculiar discontinuity and contradictions introduced by racist ideology? (6) What is the prospect for the South African national liberation movement? Is the theory here expounded representative of the stage that has been reached by the movement? How is it related to the international struggle against exploitation and racism? What class alliances are possible and how will these affect the theory of the nation and the practice of the national movement?

My approach, therefore, is to clear away the problems (terminological and conceptual) which have obstructed

analysis of the national question before I go on to investigate the concept of the nation itself. It is clearly necessary to pass beyond a mere assertion of the indivisibility of the nation to an examination of the *reason* for making this assertion.

'Race'

It is a measure of the inadequacy of the theoretical frameworks of the South African liberation movement that many organisations and individuals speak, write and act as though they accept the validity of 'race' as a biological entity. In the only country in the world where this belief constitutes the basis of state policy, it is amazing that so few have bothered to examine the concept of 'race' as a political priority. Indeed, except for the Unity Movement and less consistently the P.A.C., few political publicists seem to be able to write on their country without using the concept of 'race'. With minor exceptions, there does not exist a single document by a South African which sets out the scientific position regarding 'race' for the activists in the liberation movement.¹

Of course there is no paucity of reference to the absurdity and invalidity of racist doctrines, and the exploitative nature of racist practices. The anti-imperialist struggles worldwide, together with the monstrous insanities of the Nazis in Europe, have led to an abundant literature in which the history and also the absurdity of such doctrines have been described. This literature has found an eloquent deposit in the work of the liberation movement in South Africa. Today, when even the Afrikaner chauvinists have given notice of their intention 'to move away from discrimination based on "race"', however disingenuous this claim may in fact be, only the lunatic fringe still maintains that people of different 'race' differ in ability and potential for development by virtue of that fact.

Yet there is something fundamentally wrong in the assertion, based on impeccable scholarship, that all 'races' are equal! There is something fundamentally wrong in accepting that the 'population groups' in South Africa are 'races' at all and that our difference with the ideologues of the 'Herrenvolk' is that we believe – on the basis of scientific investigation – that they are equal whereas they believe in the inferiority of the oppressed groups, an inferiority allegedly determined by their 'racial' descent. For just as the supposed inferiority or superiority of 'races' necessarily assumes the existence of groups of human beings called 'races', so does the assertion that 'races' are equal in their potential for development and the acquisition of skills. In other words, the crucial question is not whether this or that 'race' is inferior or equal to any other, but whether the category 'race' is a valid one, i.e. whether there are in existence human groups that correspond to the concept of 'race' as generally understood or as used by numerous scientists throughout the world.

The voyages of 'discovery', as Europeans saw them, stimulated the need for navigators to study the heavens more accurately, and eventually contributed towards the Copernican revolution that overthrew the geocentric concept of the universe. People's perceptions were shown to be a matter of ideological conditioning. In an epoch where the anti-imperialist struggle continues at one level as an international struggle against racism, a re-examination of biological science is required, a Copernican revolution that will once and for all lay to rest the pernicious phlogiston of 'race'. The dilemma that faces the social scientist in South Africa who is dependent upon the results of the biological scientists can be seen very clearly from the problems raised by the intellectual output of Professor Tobias of the University of the Witwatersrand, a man acknowledged as a renowned physical anthropologist. His booklet, *The Meaning of Race*, is a well-known refutation of doctrines justifying racial prejudice and unfounded claims about the

intellectual capacities of different 'races'. Yet in it he states confidently that 'race is a biological concept that helps us to bring order out of the otherwise chaotic nuances of human variation',² and that 'the present consensus of opinion recognises the existence of races as valid biological entities'.³ These are categorical statements made by a scientist prominent for his exposure of racialist myths.

But there is another tradition within genetic science which argues in exactly the opposite direction. It identifies three phases in the evolution of the concept of 'race': an anthropological, a biological/genetic, and a sociological phase. In the original anthropological conception, the defining criteria of 'race' are certain external characteristics which mark off an individual from individuals in all other groups. Thus a sharp nose and lanky hair have distinguished one 'race'; conversely a broad nose and black skin describe another. Despite the fact that this approach has long since been discredited in scientific discussion, it still prevails amongst people at large, and certainly those who describe South Africa's 'population groups' as 'races' can have no more than this in mind. Yet this conception was eventually exposed as untenable. Different scientists, using the same combination of characteristics as classificatory criteria, identified completely different 'races' of the human species. Different combinations of characteristics, even when used by the same anthropologist, produced different 'races'. Above all, the development of genetics demolished these anthropological conceptions of 'race'. To quote Montague: 'Taxonomic exercises in the classification of phenotypical (external) characters will never succeed in elucidating the relationships of different groups of mankind to one another for the simple reason that it is not assemblages of characters which undergo changes in the formation of the individual and the group, but single units, i.e. genes or alleles, which determine these characters.'⁵

In short, once the mechanism of biological heredity had

come to be understood, it was seen that the premises on which the anthropological conception of 'race' was based were false. It became evident that the commonly held view of what a 'race' is is meaningless in scientific terms. The French scholar, Jean Hiernaux, rejected unequivocally even the 'obvious' classification of the human species into whites, blacks and yellows, 'or whatever more sophisticated terms are used',⁶ and concluded that 'unclassifiability seems to me inherent in the modalities of human variability'.⁷

The anthropological concept of 'race', then, was displaced by the biological or genetic concept once Mendelian genetics and Hitlerite practice had demonstrated the inadequacy and dangers involved in the earlier conception. The geneticists now define 'races' as 'populations which differ in the frequency of some gene or genes'.⁸ And 'all mankind has far more genes in common than the alleles which differentiate the various races ... Only 5–10 per cent of all our genes are concerned with the little superficial frill of variation on which races are classified.'⁹ Since it is one of the tasks of the geneticist to describe populations in terms of their gene differences, Montagu holds that: 'It is wholly redundant, and confusingly so, to distinguish as a 'race' a population which happens to differ from other populations in the frequency of one or more genes. Why call such populations 'races' when the operational definition of what they are is sharply and clearly stated in the words used to convey what we mean, namely populations which differ from one another in particular frequencies of certain specified genes?'¹⁰ In the same context Montague gives an impressive list of biologists and geneticists who either reject outright or question the usefulness of the term 'race' in population genetics.

From the point of view of genetics, the position can be summed up briefly as simply as follows. Human *breeding populations* in the course of history become relatively isolated, so that a finite number of gene pools can –

theoretically – be identified at any historical moment, provided one assumes that such isolation is not absolute. In other words, some communication and, therefore, interbreeding (or exchange of genes between gene pools) is always taking place, so that the position described is always changing at the very moment of description. Since the communications explosion inaugurated by colonial conquest, such description has become more and more arbitrary and untenable except under carefully defined conditions. Migration is today the mode of life of the majority of human beings.

For the social scientist, on the other hand, the crucial question is not the actual description of any given gene pool (which is the field of population genetics) but rather the genesis, development and reasons for persistence of what appears to be a relatively stable gene pool. Geographical isolation (oceans, mountains, deserts, etc.) or isolation caused by socio-economic factors (class and caste divisions, legislation, etc.), cultural factors (language, religion, other customs), are the main causes of endogamous groups, groups the component individuals of which breed largely or exclusively with others from the same group, thus transmitting the same, though not a constant, genetic heritage.

The exponents of 'race' in the social sciences, having been driven out of their anthropological and biological cages, find refuge today in a third category which they call 'sociological races':

In sociology a 'race' is understood as a category of persons whose social positions are defined in terms of certain physical or other characteristics that are *believed* to be hereditary ... If individuals or groups act on the assumption that genetically determined racial differences exist and govern social behaviour the consequences for society are the same, even if the assumption has no scientific foundation in

human biology. Whether or not biologists continue to use the term, the reality of race as a socially defined attribute cannot be denied.¹¹

This view of 'race' is held by many scholars who otherwise are intransigent opponents of racist doctrines.

The methodological problems raised by this empiricist procedure are well known. In the South African case it is obvious that 'sociological races' are merely a subjective rendering of the old and discredited anthropological conception of 'race'. Since the supposedly objective classificatory characteristics of the anthropologists have turned out to be illusory, the sociologists have tried to cling to a qualification of *beliefs* about 'race'. Put very simply, this approach implies that, because a very large number of human beings (but how many? by what statistical formula is an adequate number to be arrived at?) *believes* that there are '*ghosts*', science must accept the reality of '*ghosts*' because the belief in their existence occasions individual and group behaviour that could be expected if such things did in fact exist. Because 'many' people still believe that the sun revolves around the earth, therefore the sun does revolve around the earth! Or because racial prejudice is a very real phenomenon, therefore 'race' is a reality.

But there is no logical reason for inferring the reality of 'race' from the fact of racial prejudice! The very term 'prejudice' implies that the basis of the belief is erroneous. We can describe, analyse, condemn, or attempt to eradicate racial prejudice without once having to concede the existence of a quasi-reality called 'race'. Indeed, it is one of the main conditions of our success that this unwarranted concession shall not be made. 'Race' is nothing if it is not genetic, and we have seen that there is no reason, from the point of view of genetics, for employing the concept. To wish to give a new content to a term that is so pregnant with confusion and disaster is to reap confusion and disaster.

It may be difficult for those who believe in what I.A. Richards has called 'The Divine Right of Words' to accept the suggestion that a word such as 'race', which has exercised so evil a tyranny over the minds of men, should be permanently dethroned from the vocabulary, but that constitutes all the more reason for trying, remembering that the meaning of a word is the action it produces.¹²

It follows that I reject without further discussion any characterisation of the so-called 'population groups' inhabiting South Africa as 'races' of any kind, for such a view is devoid of any scientific basis and is a purely ideological description which exposes a clear political tendency. For the limited purposes of genetic science these groups can certainly be described as 'breeding populations' which are constantly changing despite the legislative walls erected to maintain them in their defiled 'purity'. However, such a description has no inherent political, economical or ideological significance. It can, of course, be used in any of these spheres in the pursuit of definite purposes and strategies, as the racist practices of South African government demonstrate all too clearly. *En passant*, one should stress that those well-meaning people who often try to equate 'multi-racial' with 'non-racial', and even those who define 'non-racial' as meaning 'the irrelevance of race', need to revise their vocabularies. For to speak of the 'irrelevance' of 'race' still assumes the reality of 'race' as a biological entity. It is necessary to stress that my position, backed by a continuing scientific tradition, leads to an interpretation of 'non-racial' as meaning *the denial of the reality of 'race'*.

'Ethnic groups'

For a long time the various classified 'population groups' and sub-groups have been described in ruling-class

literature as 'ethnic groups'. Indeed, as we have seen on occasion, publicists in the liberation movement have often unthinkingly adopted this terminology.¹³

In the 1940s Montagu and others suggested the term 'ethnic group' to describe human breeding populations however they might have originated. They did this because the idea of 'race' had become so repugnant to them that they wanted to find some euphemism 'as a means of avoiding the word, yet retaining its meaning!'¹⁴ As Montagu explains, the term 'ethnic group' leaves the matter of exact characterisation open; it raises issues rather than just begging the question, as the category 'race' does. Only their point of departure was genetic; the term 'ethnic group' did not indicate more than the fact that the group concerned had for some natural, social or cultural reason come to constitute a (temporary) breeding population.

However, precisely because of the Humpty-Dumpty character of the term, which can be made (and has been) to mean virtually anything, it is at best useless, at worst dangerously misleading. It is more correct and less open to abuse to investigate the historical genesis of any demarcated social group and name it for what it actually is (for instance, a nation, a language group, a caste, a religious sect, a class, etc.) than to confuse the issue with a meaningless term such as 'ethnic group', which suggests some basic similarity where there is none. Thus, for instance, nations and castes as politically mobilised groups of people behave very differently. By describing both as 'ethnic groups' such crucial differences are obscured, analysis becomes arbitrary, and political opportunists can have a field day claiming to represent bogus 'isms' where there are none.

Whereas Montagu and others conceived of the 'ethnic group' essentially in genetic terms, sociologists, anthropologists and politicians have turned it into a concept almost as dangerous as the concept 'race', by defining and

using it in terms of cultural and political attributes. They have tried to reduce the diverse reasons for the emergence of group solidarities to a single quality called 'ethnicity', thereby obscuring precisely what has to be explained – the basis of such solidarity. Conversely, 'ethnicity' is used to explain any political manifestation of group cohesion which cannot be attributed immediately to, for instance, economic interest. If various activists try to mobilise politically a group of people cemented by community of language the ensuing political action may be assessed differently, depending on concrete circumstances, from a similar attempt with a group of people cemented by community of religious beliefs and practices. To call both collectivities 'ethnic groups' cannot help to clarify our analysis; indeed, it may prevent us from distinguishing a legitimate political claim from a bogus one, or legitimate aspects of a struggle from bogus aspects introduced by self-interested groups.

The tautological nature of ethnic group theories is well illustrated by the following, which is typical of a wide range of modern American sociological studies on social stratification.

The basic theoretical framework developed throughout this book ... is that society is composed of various interest groups vying for economic, political and social power. Ethnic groups become salient interest groups if their social position is based on their ethnicity.¹⁵

These authors see 'ethnic stratification' as a system of stratification 'wherein *some relatively fixed group membership* (e.g. race, religion or nationality) is utilized as a major criterion for assigning social positions with their attendant differential rewards'.¹⁶ To this one needs only to add Van den Berghe's definition of a nation as 'a politically conscious ethnic group'¹⁷ to realise the possible consequences of accepting the idea that South Africa's social groups are 'ethnic groups'.

Precisely because 'ethnic group' is such a portmanteau concept that can be made to include or exclude as much as one likes or, put differently, because the concept states nothing else about the group concerned other than that it is (potentially) open to manipulation by political operators, it cannot be used for purposes of characterising the four groups we are concerned with. A single example should suffice. 'Coloureds' are often described as an 'ethnic group', yet 'Cape Malays' (a predominantly religious category) and 'Griquas' (originally a tribal and linguistic category) are also described as 'ethnic groups' despite the fact that they are subsumed under 'Coloureds' (who differ, apparently, from 'Cape Coloureds'). Similar anomalies and contradictions can be shown for any of the other social groups in South Africa. As I pointed out above,¹⁸ the pluralists have the greatest interest in perpetuating the idea of ethnicity and model themselves quite consciously on the example of the United States, the main base of all 'ethnic' theory.

Gelfland and Lee say (in their introduction to the work cited previously) that they 'hope to produce the type of conflict resolution that occurs not through the destruction of ethnic groups but through the acceptance of ethnic pluralism within society'.¹⁹ The South African echo of this kind of reasoning is heard in a recent newspaper article by Harry Schwartz, Progressive Reform Party Chairman and M.P. for Yeoville, one of the most vocal spokesmen of liberalism in this country. In this article he puts forward a more blatant version of the pluralist thesis, one that contemplates the possible multiple partition of South Africa, without the ideological justification of separate development but on the basis of pluralist 'ethnic' interests. He says:

Partition is not what I would, in ordinary circumstances, hold forth as an ideal solution. As an ideal, this should be a non-racial society, in which merit is the standard, in which there is no

domination, no discrimination, full democratic rights are practised; in which identity, culture, language and religion are respected and protected. Where rights are exercised without infringing on those of others all in a federal structure. But one must face the realities of life. That we are a plural society is a fact, not a political policy. Whites want to stay in Africa and survive. They see no reason to commit suicide to please world opinion, or satisfy the aspirations of others ...²⁰

We see, therefore, whoever takes the theoretical hurdle of accepting the concept 'ethnic groups' as implying a politico-cultural identity of some group of people that temporarily constitutes a recognisable gene pool, is well on the way to opening the doors to bogus nationalities which then become entitled to their own statehood, whether they like it or not!

National groups and national minorities

It is unnecessary to expound at length on the concept 'national group'. In the South African context it is clearly a direct substitute for the term 'race'. The originally unchallenged belief that the four 'population groups' are 'races' has become so deeply entrenched that, with the disgrace of 'race' and everything that is associated with it, elegant variations for the term had to be found. National groups, strictly speaking, are either nations properly so called, or they are groups striving towards nationhood including the political fulfilment of nationhood, the creation of a separate state. The 'races' of South Africa are not 'national groups' precisely because they are not nations and because they do not desire separate statehood. The term 'national group', like 'ethnic group', shifts the emphasis from alleged biological to alleged cultural and political attributes of the group. Whereas 'race', however, has either no political significance at all or, if it has, implies some state

of inequality, the term 'national group' implies specifically a political dynamic towards separation or accommodation among various 'national groups' each retaining as much sovereignty as possible within a federal or confederal set-up. By definition, therefore, the concept favours tendencies interested in the fragmentation of the population into potentially or actually antagonistic groupings. Such fragmentation then facilitates the maintenance of hegemony by the ruling classes.²¹ In South Africa this means simply that the bourgeoisie, in the absence of a radical change in property relations, will continue to hold real power, since it can enforce its will on the political leaders of the 'national groups'. At the same time it can appear as the benefactor that keeps the mutually antagonistic groups coexisting peacefully !

If 'national group' is a concept that is, from the point of view of the exploited people, positively dangerous, the concept 'national minority' is in most cases irrelevant to South Africa. Historically, the term describes two categories of people. On the one hand it refers to a group (whether actually a numerical minority in relation to the ruling nation or not) which inhabits a specific territory adjacent to the nation to which the group belongs, but falls under the political jurisdiction of a foreign nation. A well-known example is that of the Italian minority of the Trentino (South Tyrol) under Austrian rule. In general there are usually economic, political and historical reasons why the dominant nation will not or cannot permit the minority group to break away and join its parent nation. Usually, too, irredentist movements arise both in the parent nation and among the national minority, striving for the incorporation of the disputed territory into that of the independent nation. Often the direct cause of the rise of these movements is the denial by the dominant nation of the separate nationhood of the minority, a denial which involves the suppression of language, cultural and other

rights. More usually, however, the claims of the minority are so far-reaching that the dominant nation (i.e. the ruling class thereof) considers that its hegemony will be thereby undermined.

On the other hand the term 'national minority' is used to describe minority groups, belonging to adjacent nations, which are scattered throughout the territory (invariably in the towns) of a foreign nation, although there is always a long historical association between the nations concerned. Examples of such groups were the Poles, Lithuanians, Ukrainians and others who were dispersed over the Russian Empire. This kind of minorities problem is the more difficult for, whereas in the former instance a change in policy can bring about the separation of the minority from the foreign nation, in this latter case such a possibility does not exist. It is in this kind of case, in particular, that minority rights become guaranteed, in the sense that there is statutorily entrenched equality of language, religion, etc. This is essential since in most cases the minority cannot or will not move to the territory of the parent nation. Often too, the minority holds a pivotal position in the economic structure of the country so that it is in the interests of the dominant nation to guarantee it the rights of full cultural and political participation.

This schematic representation of the question of national minorities has been made in order to throw into relief what is important for this study: the fact that national minorities in all cases belong to an existing nation which may or may not (temporarily) enjoy existence within a separate state. For this reason it should be obvious that the problem is essentially a European one deriving from the historical migrations of the people of Europe and from the uneven development of capitalism there. Similar problems have, for the same reasons, arisen in Asia and Africa, but not to the same extent, because of the completely different context in which capitalism was imposed on these continents.

However, it has become fashionable to equate the problems of so-called 'racial minorities' (which exist predominantly outside of Europe), and even of religious minorities, with that of national minorities. Such an equation exposes either the naiveté of the theorist who sees the problem of minorities as a purely arithmetical question, or it exposes the theorist's racism, in that he/she fails to analyse a colour-caste system in terms of class. Thus, for instance, many American sociologists and politicians refer to the blacks as a 'racial minority' (and also to people of Japanese, Chinese, Indian, and other non-European descent). Usually they equate the problems arising from discrimination against these groups with the problem of national minorities, but sometimes they distinguish them as a separate category.²² These authors fail to accept that the peoples concerned are not nations but castes which, because they are denied full cultural, political and economic opportunities within the polity, are compelled to act together politically. In the process, not unnaturally, they put forward demands which are similar to those of oppressed nationalities, with the significant exception that they neither wish to secede from the nation nor desire cultural autonomy or segregation.²³

In the South African case it is essential to emphasise explicitly that the dubbing of colour-castes as 'racial minorities' in analogy with national minorities, and the attempt to treat them as such, has no basis in fact. The historical antecedents of such groups and the dynamic inherent in their evolution are vastly different from those related to the problem of national minorities, even though some of the purely formal manifestations appear to be similar. In most cases, when one examines carefully this equation of 'racial minorities' with national minorities, one finds that in so far as it is not the result of an unthinking imposition of a typology belonging to one set of conditions on a totally different set of conditions, it is the product of the ambitions of both 'majority' as well as 'minority'

politicians. These are themselves a reflection of bourgeois or petty-bourgeois attempts to create an economic base for an entrepreneurial class (or to divide and – in the case of the ‘majority’ politicians – rule) on the basis of an as yet primitive consciousness of the labouring people, who have not yet come to a clear understanding of their political destiny.

Colour-caste

The concept ‘colour-caste’ has been referred to at various stages in this work but for expositional purposes it has hitherto been necessary to defer a full discussion of it. It is my central thesis that the officially classified population registration groups in South Africa are colour-castes and that it is of pivotal political importance to characterise them as such. It will, therefore, be necessary to pay close attention to the criticism that such characterisation has been subjected to in the past. Since I maintain further that the colour-caste characterisation is *only* tenable on the assumption that the castes articulate with the fundamental class structure of the social formation, the crucial relationship between caste and class will be given special attention.

There is no need to go into the history of the controversy concerning the applicability of the concept of caste to the analysis of so-called ‘race relations’ in countries such as the U.S.A. and the Republic of South Africa. The applicability of the caste concept to the study of the United States as originally, but differently, raised by W. Lloyd Warner, Robert E. Park, and Gunnar Myrdal, amongst others,²⁴ was first questioned seriously in 1948 by Oliver Cromwell Cox in a work²⁵ that has given rise to a series of studies, seminars, and conferences on the subject. Cox’s argument rests on the following two propositions:

It has been accepted that the form of social organisation in Brahmanic India constitutes a caste

system. This system has certain distinguishing characteristics; hence we shall consider these the norm ...²⁶

It is not so much an insistence that every social fact in the caste system of Brahmanic India must be identical or duplicated in detail in the social structure of race relations in the United States as it is absolutely necessary that at least every detail, which the race-caste hypothesis itself considers significant enough to mention in its own support, should be tested and compared to the social norm. We should consider the race-caste hypothesis invalid if its postulates are inconsistent with the caste system of India.²¹

Apart from questions concerning the genesis and modalities of the Brahmanic caste system in India compared with the racially discriminatory and oppressive systems in the U.S.A., South Africa, and similar situations, Cox's major quarrel with the 'caste school of race relations' was that 'the Indian system is a coherent social system based on the principle of inequality, while the American "colour bar" contradicts the equalitarian system within which it occurs and of which it is a kind of disease'.²⁸

Cox calls social inequality the 'keynote' of the caste system and explains that 'By keynote we mean that there is a fundamental creed or presumption in Hindu society that persons are born unequal in status according to the caste to which they belong; this is the antithesis of the Stoic doctrine of human equality, adopted in Western democracies'.²⁹ The inevitable result of this view is his belief that all castes (low castes, high castes, and outcasts) *voluntarily* accept their status despite the general tendency to strive for upgrading within the hierarchical system. In short, it is an accommodative principle by which Hindu society is held together and prevented from being rent asunder by profound contradictions. 'Caste barriers', says Cox, 'in the caste system are never challenged, they are sacred to caste

and caste alike.³⁰ In contrast, the position with black 'racial' groups is, of course, exactly the opposite:

Negroes, in America at least, are working towards the end that Negroes as a social symbol would become non-existent ... The ideal of Negroes is that they should not be identified; they evidently want to be workers, ministers, doctors, or teachers without the distinction 'Negro workers', 'Negro ministers', and so on. In short, they want to be known unqualifiedly as American citizens, which desire, in our capitalist society, means assimilation and amalgamation.³¹

It is unnecessary to follow in any further detail the voluminous and eclectic arguments brought forward by Cox concerning questions such as the 'racial' origins of caste, endogamy, commensality, job specialisation, culture, etc. But before I go over to a critique of Cox it is necessary to emphasise that although his conclusions, methodology and factual research are all inadequate and deficient, some of the points he made were extremely important. In particular, the immediate motivation for writing his *magnum opus* was the real political danger inherent in the caste thesis put forward by Warner: the inevitable conclusion that the caste system in the U.S.A. was a permanent phenomenon; in other words, that some type of segregation is inevitable and that whites and blacks were doomed to a kind of 'racial fate' by virtue of their 'racial descent'.³²

However it is immediately obvious that acceptance of the concept colour-caste does not necessarily involve acceptance of segregation as a policy or practice, just as acceptance of the existence of the class dichotomy between bourgeoisie and proletariat in capitalist social formations does not imply a favourable attitude towards capitalism. This is a question of one's political philosophy. Cox's error was that he failed to distinguish between the political

position of many of the advocates of the 'caste school of race relations' and the fact of a colour-caste structure in the United States, especially in the Southern States.

There was also much truth in his claim that many of those students 'who have conceived of race relations as caste relations ... have not employed the caste concept as a hypothesis of theory, but rather they have used it mainly as a substitute title or name for "race"'.³³ In so far as this claim is correct, the use of the elegant variation 'caste' for 'race' could not, of course, advance the argument of such authors, and it was, therefore the simplest matter to expose the racist basis of their reasoning.

Since the work of Cox much has been written on this subject.³⁴ The most systematic reply to Cox's thesis has been formulated – from a pluralist point of view – by Berreman.³⁵ Though much of the theoretical work of scholars like Berreman is of great interest and importance to the understanding of caste generally, their preoccupation with the pluralist model, which was their conceptual frame of reference, opens them to attack from another side, as I shall show below. However it is in the area of field research and historical studies related to India, in particular, that they have made progress. They have effectively overthrown, or at least called into question, the conclusions and factual basis of Cox's research.³⁶ Berreman in particular challenges 'the common view that subordinate caste members passively accept their position'³⁷ and instead holds that caste systems

seem to depend far less on general consensus than do other systems of stratification and also to rely more heavily on behavioural conformity achieved through the threat or exercise of power in the context of socio-cultural diversity and minimal consensus ... The emergence of broad consensus is inimical to caste organisations, for it leads to common behaviour, common attributes, and

common aspirations which threaten to blur or eliminate caste boundaries, caste prerogatives, and other distinctions crucial to the system. At the same time there is a constant possibility that consensus will emerge because of the juxtaposition and potential interaction of castes. In fact, Watson ... suggests that caste systems are for these reasons 'inherently transitory' ... These facts contribute to the heavy emphasis that is placed in caste systems upon social separation between castes and the readiness of those with power to exercise it, in order to maintain that separation, and to enforce status – maintaining differential power.³⁸

Concerning India itself, Berreman claims that on his first research visit to India he had expected to find the Brahmanic caste system to be a 'non-conflictive' system, as much of the literature suggested. He found this to be inaccurate and concluded that 'there may be all kinds of differences between the situations of caste in India and the United States, but if you think the critical difference is whether or not it is conflictive, you are wrong. It is conflictive in both places.'³⁹ In reply to Professor Edmund Leach who adopted Cox's position at a discussion seminar on the subject, Berreman maintained that the problem was that the generally prevalent views about Hindu caste are those held by the Brahmanic upper castes. The pariahs and lower castes (Harijans and Shudras)

have a very different view of the caste system, including the absence of any conception that it is as a result of sacred rules. They see it as strictly a matter of interaction, of numbers and of economic exploitation ... One must consider the value systems of all the groups concerned and ignore neither the Brahman's view nor that of the Harijans nor the low Shudras. Their very different views have not been investigated or clearly reported in most studies of caste.⁴⁰

Indeed it is relevant to point out that Cox himself was not unaware of the discontent of the lower castes. In a revealing footnote he says: 'Under the impact of Western culture the caste structure in India is being shaken but it should be remembered that Western civilization is not attacking another civilization in the South (of the U.S.A.), for this is itself Western civilization.'⁴¹

This view of Cox, logically, would restrict the use of the term 'caste' to pre-capitalist Indian society and deny its sensible application to caste-like structures in modern capitalist social formations. Berreman points out that the changes brought about by phenomena such as bourgeois democratic voting procedures, education, mass media, etc.

are likely to be traumatic in their achievement, but they are sought by the dispossessed precisely because of the heavy industrial and group costs of maintaining caste systems. The fact that they are sought belies the notion of caste system as intrinsically consensus-based, equilibrium-maintaining, personally satisfying, conflict-free systems.⁴²

Moreover, he makes the valid and important point that one of the major flaws in Cox's type of argument lies in the mistake of comparing Indian *jati* (village-based caste groups) with predominantly urban-based caste in the U.S.A.⁴³

Ultimately, therefore, the social scientist who sees the illuminating possibilities of applying the concept of caste to a racially oppressive society such as South Africa is faced with a dilemma:

Either we ... adopt a very broad definition, and as a result we may have to distinguish sub-types, as some authors who have opposed the 'racial caste' (U.S.A.) to the 'cultural caste' (India) or we refuse any extension of the term and apply it exclusively to the Indian type precisely defined, and in this case

other terms will be necessary to designate the other types ...⁴⁴

This is clearly a problem of the level of abstraction at which one is operating. Berreman has suggested that the broad illuminative metaphorical content of 'caste' should be saved for general usage and that those such as Cox, who wish to restrict the term to India, i.e. to the Brahmanic caste system, should use some such indigenous term as *jati* for that system.⁴⁵ As Passin puts it:

We should not push each definition to an extreme. 'Caste' can be defined in such a way that it does not occur in India, or so that all the characteristics of the definition come together in only one single village somewhere in Andhra. It can also be defined in such a way that it occurs anywhere in the world ... From a practical point of view what we want to know is the intermediate range of problems that can be fruitfully illuminated by seeing what the similarities are and whether they have regular consequences or why they have certain consequences in some places and not in others ... To make this limited statement does not imply that we assume that *everything* is the same when we make these comparisons.⁴⁶

Having cleared the hurdle placed by Cox in the path of adopting the concept of caste for characterising the social groups in South Africa, one is confronted with the actual problem of definition. I shall again avoid the tedious discussion about which definition is the correct one. Definitions are themselves the result of ideological frameworks.⁴⁷ Concepts such as class, nation, caste, are defined variously depending on the ideological framework of the theorist. There is no point either denying this or claiming that one definition is more scientific than another, excepting, of course, clearly aberrant fantasies. Science, in this field, is as much a question of practice as it is of theory. Social scientists will use that theory which illuminates for

them their particular socio-political practice and it is the clash of such practices that in the ultimate analysis decides the question of 'science'. I shall refrain, therefore, from discussing such pseudo-problems as the 'social essences' theory of definition, or the merits and demerits of, for instance, Berreman's explicitly pluralist definition of caste. I shall simply begin by quoting the latter's most general definition of a caste system, in the full knowledge that it is formulated at a high level of abstraction, and then proceed to specify those tendencies in the system which, for the purposes of this study, illuminate the problem I am investigating – the national question in South Africa.

According to Berreman, 'A caste system occurs where a society is made up of birth-ascribed groups which are hierarchically ordered and culturally distinct. The hierarchy entails differential evaluation, rewards, and association.'⁴⁸ Any caste system will exhibit two fundamental tendencies, economic integration and non-economic separation within a single politically defined territory.⁴⁹ At the economic level there is a tendency towards job specialisation. It is germane to recall here once more that it is *not* necessary that such specialisation be either voluntary or hereditary since these aspects of the problem are related not to the economic but to the ideological and political modalities of the system involved. In pre-capitalist class societies it was possible to keep the labour specialisation involved in caste systems relatively rigid, giving rise to the stereotype of a static, unchanging Orient. Today this is no longer possible, although it is interesting to see that even here Trotsky's law of uneven and combined development is at work. It is a fact, for instance, that whereas the mobility of the intensified division of labour implied by the capitalist mode of production should have led to the rapid disintegration of caste barriers in the field of labour specialisation, in the context of industrial recession and minimal growth the existence of caste leads to a temporary hardening of the

barriers, since caste members tend to be favoured in specific occupations as a matter of course. However, change takes place all the time. Economic pressures necessitate the changing of occupational roles. When this happens – and not only in the narrowly defined economic sphere – the upper castes have to find ways of justifying such changes in terms of the caste system as a whole: ‘When change occurs it is quickly rationalized in order to maintain the system and the myth of its stability. That social order prevails most of the time does not mean that those who comprise the system willingly accept their position within it any more than it means that it is static.’⁵⁰ From this point of view the shifting by the Afrikaner National Party of the ideological fulcrum from ‘race’ to ‘nation’ makes eminent sense.

The unequal distribution of privilege and power among the castes comprising the system is embedded in an ideological and political framework that justifies and maintains the system. Non-economic separation is the most enduring aspect of the caste system. The tendency towards caste endogamy and extreme social distance in general is the primary index to the existence, and the most visible feature, of any caste system. The resultant caste consciousness makes the individuals within the system ‘instinctively’ aware of their place in it, a place which they may or may not accept but will generally appear to do so, except in moments of extreme, antagonistic crises which put the whole system in jeopardy. Although the idea of the ‘costs of maintaining caste’⁵¹ must be rejected, since it is based on an *a priori* utopia of a ‘costless society’, the following description of caste-specific contradictions and frictions illuminates the kind of situation with which we are confronted in South Africa.

I refer not to the costs of mobility ... but to the personal and social costs of maintaining the system. Many of these are the costs of maintaining an inherently unstable, conflictive situation in a

semblance of workable order. It takes much physical and psychic energy to do so. Mobility striving must be suppressed or controlled; rules of deference must be enforced; rules restricting social interaction must be enforced; the genetic purity and integrity of the group must be maintained – specifically, the purity of the women must be guarded against the presumed threat of inappropriate sexual contacts; political and economic differentials must be maintained. A myth of stability must be supported in the face of overt evidence to the contrary. On the part of people of low status, self-respect must be maintained despite constant denigration; resentment must be suppressed or carefully channelled. On the part of people of high caste, guilt may have to be assuaged or inconsistencies rationalised.⁵²

Of course, to the extent that this situation is conceived as being *caused by* the caste system it is a completely misleading description, one that is confined to a certain level of description.

Unless it can be shown how the caste system articulates with the mode of production as a whole within the given historical context the phenomenon of caste becomes either inexplicable or leads one to accept – as Cox did – the premises of the ruling class. This is also the reason why it should be stated unequivocally that all caste systems present one with caste-like features. One can view a question such as production relations in capitalist social formations in the same way. No two capitalist social formations have identical production relations. Even though the general category of ‘workers’ is generic to all of them, the social scientist cannot evade the duty of examining the specific historically evolved relations of the workers to the means of production. Nobody objects to the category of ‘migrant workers’ in South Africa since it indicates a certain kind of production relation, i.e. a wage

worker who has some access to means of production elsewhere.⁵³ I have already discussed the difference between migrant workers and contract workers in South Africa and have emphasized that both are undeniably workers in regard to their structurally determined place in the economy. For similar reasons, therefore, I postulate the validity of the distinction between colour-caste and Brahmanic (or any other) caste system embedded in a religious matrix and reject the objection raised by Cox according to whom

It is true that sometimes members of the modern caste school have referred to race relations as 'colour-caste', but so far as we know, they have never shown in what colour-caste is different from caste. In fact, some of the early theories on the origin of caste have sought to identify caste with racial antagonism. Therefore, the substitution of the term 'colour-caste' for caste does not seem to have relieved the fundamental confusion.⁵⁴

Whether or not the origin of the caste system in India is related to the question of colour⁵⁵ – and I accept Cox's strictures on the suggestion that racism could have been a cause of the system in India – the fact is that racial ideology has played the same role in countries such as South Africa as the Hindu religion has done in India: it has been produced originally and dialectically reinforced by a set of social relations based on private property carried over in amended form from the pre-capitalist colonial situation to the present capitalist period. These relations – which are ultimately class relations – I call a caste system, and to distinguish it in its historical specificity from the Indian system, particularly in respect of its ideological dimension, I call it a colour-caste system. Whereas, therefore, in India caste rituals and privileges, the mode of life, are legitimised by cultural-religious criteria, in South Africa they are legitimised by so-called 'racial' criteria.

The importance of acknowledging that 'race relations' are caste-like lies simply in the fact that castes possess an integrative as opposed to a separatist dynamic, a question I shall refer to when I discuss the relationship between caste and class. Whereas it is not inconceivable that certain very large castes in India with a clear territorial definition could also constitute nationalities, in South Africa the lack of coincidence between colour-castes and territorial-political-economic boundaries precludes a separatist gravitation from emerging within the given system of class relations. By accepting the fiction of 'sociological races', as Cox for instance does,⁵⁶ this basic orientation of the articulating groups is passed over to the detriment of the analysis. It becomes impossible to explain why 'races' behave in one way under certain circumstances and differently under others. By accepting the caste concept, the *a priori* disposition of the groups concerned towards integration in a single political entity on a demarcated territory is postulated in one's analytical framework. Of course, one has to prove that such an integrationist political dynamic actually does inform the historical groups investigated.

Class and colour-caste

One important objection to the concept of caste comes from the left which has quite properly rejected the attempts by liberals of the pluralist school to contend that the determinative role in historical development has been played by caste rather than class.⁵⁷ The most blatant analysis of the South African situation in these terms has been undertaken by P.L. van den Berghe in various works, notably his *Race and Racism: A Comparative Perspective* and *South Africa: A Study in Conflict*. Van den Berghe maintains that:

South Africa is probably the most complex and the most conflict-ridden of the world's multi-racial

societies. The most salient lines of cleavage are those of race. According to the dominant group's definition of the situation, the population is divided into four rigid colour-castes ... Contrary to government claims that these group boundaries are culturally defined, the castes are racially determined.⁵⁸

He gives a competent and often brilliant description of the caste system in South Africa and finally relates it to what he calls social classes as follows:

In addition to the overlapping but discreet cleavages of race and ethnicity, the South African population is stratified into social classes. More precisely, each racial caste is subdivided according to status criteria which range from traditional ones (such as the Hindu caste system among South Africans of Indian origin) to modern socio-economic strata based on income, education, occupation and life-style. This leads to an extremely complex status system ... Because of the all-encompassing and overwhelming importance of race, however, class distinctions tend to take a distinctly secondary place, or indeed a tertiary one, after both race and ethnicity. Similarity of class position across racial lines has never been a successful basis for political action in South Africa and even the labour movement has been infected by racism. Not only is there an almost total lack of solidarity between white and non-white manual workers, but the prevailing feelings have been ones of bitterness and competition. The white worker is in such a pampered, protected and privileged position as to make his class status, in the Marxian sense of relationship to the means of production, nearly irrelevant.⁵⁹

Elsewhere he maintains bluntly that 'Classes in the Marxian sense of relationships to the means of production ... are not meaningful social realities' in the South African context.⁶⁰

Van den Berghe uses Warner's caste-class model which

postulates an imaginary caste barrier that cuts across potential class alliances. Movement up and down the 'class ladders' existing within each caste is possible and permitted, but there is no possibility of cross-caste movement. The result is permanent conflict between class aspirations and caste barriers. Warner's model theoretically predicts (in the North American case) continual class stratification and parallelisation within the caste frontiers such that eventually the American South will consist of two castes divided along a vertical axis and within each caste a similar and equivalent horizontally stratified series of classes. Hence the 'black' bourgeoisie would eventually (within its own caste) be equivalent in power and status to the 'white' bourgeoisie in its caste.⁵¹ Anyone with the slightest acquaintance with the South African reality knows that, despite the temptations of this model, it in fact cannot be applied here. It represents a mystification that plays straight into the hands of the present rulers. Quite apart from the fact that there do not exist in South Africa merely two castes, this model completely misrepresents the manner in which class formation has taken place in South Africa. It is a static description and a categorisation of prejudicially selected features of the system. The moment one investigates the actual genesis of and interplay between class and caste it becomes clear that the contradictions of Warner's static approach disappear and were in the first instance the result of an ideological influence, a predilection for 'parallel development'. To the extent that the American model theoretically assumes the possibility of 'equality' (vertically dichotomised!) between the 'races', an assumption on which I need not pass judgement, it is certainly inapplicable to the South African case. For it is not the intention of the ruling class in South Africa to 'equalise' the 'races', nor, as I shall show, is it objectively possible to do so, without abolishing both the 'races' and the ruling class.

Analysis of the liberals' use of the colour-caste concept in relation to South Africa establishes the fact that, for them, it is a weapon against marxian class analysis, a means by which they can conduct analysis in terms of the disorganised consciousness of the oppressed, which is itself the result of a dominant (racial) ideology emanating from the ruling classes. Their use of the concept, like their analysis overall, is a mirror image of the categories, assumptions and predilections of the bourgeoisie taken as a whole. Such abuse of a valid concept, one which has a real equivalent in the social stuff being analysed, is no reason to reject the term itself. Because bourgeois chauvinists have abused the concepts of nation and nationalism, one does not deny the validity of these social phenomena. It becomes one's duty to give them a content and a meaning within the framework of an analysis consistent with the class position which one holds. It is clear from what has been said above that only a historical approach which illuminates the manner in which classes were actually formed and which shows how this class formation was related to the colour-caste relations that were thereby generated or entrenched can adequately deal with the conceptual problems thrown up by static liberal analysis. To this important task I shall devote a few paragraphs.

The first systematic answers from the radical left to this pluralist, anti-marxist conceptualisation of the South African social formation, have come from a group of (mainly) South African academics and exiles in England. On the specific question of colour-caste as used especially by Van den Berghe, there is a brilliant methodological refutation of the pluralist argument by F.A. Johnstone in the concluding chapter of his book *Class, Race and Gold*. I shall not repeat the details of his argument here. He shows conclusively that the pluralist predilection for mere classification of social formations in terms of group self-perception (i.e. in terms of 'subjective attitudes and beliefs')

leads only to a circular description of South African society as comprising, for instance, four colour-castes:

Certain societies are ... said to be 'plural' societies which are extensively segmented into institutionally distinct groups along racial or ethnic lines in a dominational system of group relations ... Because South Africa fits this description, it is therefore defined and described as a plural society, characterised by compartmentalisation into four institutionally distinct 'colour-castes' and by a racist ideology.⁶²

He then points out that this kind of description does not have any explanatory power, even though he accepts that at a certain level the description is 'true' and 'factual': 'What we are confronted with essentially, in this concept, is an extensive definition, description and classification of a particular type of society. The problem is not that societies of this type do not exist. They obviously do, and one such society was and is certainly to be found in South Africa.'⁶³ After examining Van den Berghe's analytical framework, in particular his use of colour-caste, Johnstone arrives at the correct conclusion that it is no more than 'a tautological redescription of the phenomenon to be explained ...'.⁶⁴ 'Characterising the South African social system as a "plural" society and as a "caste" society does not explain anything. It is merely an extended description of what needs to be explained. Why are there what are referred to as "colour-castes"? It cannot be "because there are colour-castes".'⁶⁵

Johnstone brilliantly exposes the class basis of pluralist thinking in the South African context as that of the dominant fractions of the capitalist class, and he correctly suggests that pluralists' preoccupation with what he calls 'the job colour-bar'⁶⁶ and the more productive employment (politically implying some measure of 'integration') of black workers, 'may be said to be a preoccupation with the

interests not of non-white workers but of employers, a preoccupation not with social justice but with capital accumulation'.⁶⁷

In refutation of the bourgeois liberal approach he puts forward his own explanation of the 'racial system' as 'a class system – as a system of class instruments, produced and determined in its specific form, nature and functions by the capitalist system of production and its constituent class structure ...'⁶⁸ Except for relatively unimportant flaws in Johnstone's presentation of this thesis, there can be no disagreement with him at the level at which he is writing. If it is merely a question of showing how the 'system of racial domination' is generated and maintained by the system of class relations, of demystifying the ideological and political universe in the guise of which the latter system presents itself, he has succeeded admirably and has indeed rendered a useful service to South African historiography and sociology, as well as to theoretical analysis in general.

However, as I have shown in the introduction to this work, consciousness is real and material. It is not a chimera. People act in response to immediate physical facts. as they perceive them, and how they perceive them depends in great part on how they perceive themselves. My main disagreement with Johnstone's analysis, therefore, is that he fails to accord the proper weight to what I call the 'level of consciousness' in his analysis. In his almost exclusive focus on debunking the assumptions of liberal social science in South Africa he teeters on the brink of the economic abyss. While it is of fundamental importance to show that the political-economic struggles among the social groups in South Africa are in fact class struggles, to get down to the level of what is happening *in-itself*, it is just as important to establish the relationship between this level and the level of what is happening *for-itself*, the level of consciousness. If, for instance, the struggles are conducted through the ideological medium of the discourse of nationality (as was

the case with the Afrikaans-speaking sector of the white working class under the spur of the petty bourgeoisie) this has important dynamic consequences for the system as a whole within the parameters set by the economic relationships at the base of the system. If, on the other hand, caste consciousness is the ideological framework in which the political activities of the groups are formulated (as was and remains the case with blacks, and with whites today) this imparts a different dynamic to the system. An instructive comparison is with the difference between the ways in which the Russian and the Austro-German social democrats handled the national question in their respective empires. In both cases the oppressed nationalities asserted themselves in the revolutionary crisis, but, whereas the Bolsheviks recognised the centrifugal dynamic involved, the Central Europeans did not. Whereas the Bolsheviks in accordance with their analysis placed themselves at the head of the anti-imperialist, secessionist movements of the oppressed nations, the Austro-German social democrats opposed the breakaway of the oppressed nations and offered them instead an apartheid-like 'national-cultural autonomy'. In the former case, the workers of the oppressed nationalities, having tested the trustworthiness of the Russian workers, refused to secede from the workers' state (with the exception of Finland). In the latter case, *all* the nationalities broke away, leaving an Austrian rump that was ignominiously annexed by the Nazis in 1938. The strident nationalism of Eastern Europe, even under militarily installed socialist regimes, is in no small measure to be explained by the historic failure of Austro-German social democracy to understand the national question in Central Europe.

My decision to accept the validity of the concept of colour-caste within a marxian analytical and historical framework is, therefore, determined precisely by an understanding of the dynamic involved in this particular

form of group self-perception, which is the product of a specific history in a specific country, South Africa. Johnstone implicitly accepts the category of 'race' though he at no stage even attempts to refer to the consequences of this assumption at the political and ideological levels.⁶⁹ I would criticise this error along the lines elaborated in the text above. Johnstone's 'system of racial domination' is my system of super-and subordinate colour-castes, with the important difference that the term 'race' is politically empty at best and potentially reactionary at worst, whereas the term 'caste' is neither empty nor necessarily reactionary. That one can examine the peculiar capitalist social formation in South Africa without recourse to the concept of colour-caste, and throw much light on this difficult subject, I admit without further ado. Indeed, Johnstone's work proves this. But then, as I have said previously, for certain purposes, especially political-strategic purposes, such a procedure is inadequate.

A second approach to the refutation of the pluralist position seems to be the attempt (initiated by Simpson and Wolpe) to question the validity of the category 'white working class'. In their view an increasing proportion of the white wage earners belongs (and has always belonged) to Poulantzas's 'new petty bourgeoisie' by virtue of the fact that these individuals fill supervisory and administrative or lower managerial places in the economic system. This is the reason why – objectively and in their subjective experience – destinies of this group are tied to that of the white capitalist class.

Another group of white wage earners, the white aristocracy of labour, does, in their view, constitute a 'fraction' of the working class but its class position is decisively influenced by the dominant racist ideology of the ruling classes. There is thus a residual 'racial', i.e. non-economic, component in the causal explanation of the socio-political action of the classes comprising the South African

social formation.

While their theoretical endeavours are undoubtedly of great value for an understanding of the articulation between class and caste, this approach creates many new problems. To name only a few obvious ones: the analytical contributions of Poulantzas remain a hotly disputed matter, yet they constitute

the basis of this attempt at a revision of the orthodox marxist conception of the class structure of South African society; no attempt is made to differentiate the 'black' working class along similar lines; and, thirdly, the political relevance of this work also needs to be expounded more fully.⁷⁰

The evolution of the colour-caste system in South Africa

As a matter of historical fact, most political action by large numbers of people in South Africa has been conducted on the basis of a consciousness of caste, not on the basis of class consciousness. This has been implicit in all the historical references in this book. What is necessary from a theoretical point of view is, of course, to explain why this has been the case. To do so, it is necessary to look briefly at certain aspects of the development of capitalism in South Africa.

Dutch merchant capital in the guise of the Dutch East India Company had no interest in colonising South Africa at the beginning of its rule in the south-western corner of the country.⁷¹ Because the colonists found here late and middle Stone Age communities which did not yet practise agriculture, the Company was compelled to grow its own crops in order to feed the garrison and its mariners on passing ships. Moreover, because of the intermittent and unreliable nature of the supply of meat from the pastoral Khoi Khoi, it had to acquire its own cattle and undertake relatively large-scale ranching. In an attempt to reduce its

overheads, the Company created the class of free burghers in 1657 and in the next year permitted the importation of slaves. The very first burghers were no more than peasants and would normally have recruited labour from among the indigenous people. But as long as there was sufficient land available for expansion into the interior, these people were not prepared to perform any more than occasional labour. Slavery was practised in other Dutch possessions in the East Indies and norms of production and remuneration as well as norms of behaviour were widely known and statutorily enforced. The Company itself always had a large retinue of slaves to do its menial and heavy manual work. In any social formation compelled to employ slaves, the latter, though a class in the sense in which Lenin defines the term,⁷² simultaneously constitutes a caste in the sense in which I have used the term previously (this statement becomes less valid, of course, as the rate of remuneration increases). Within the colony at that stage, therefore, class and caste coincided. Moreover, because of the historical accident of colour differences, this was bound to become a colour-caste system depending on the development of property relations.

Initially, the European colonists distinguished themselves from the indigenous people predominantly on the basis of religion: Europeans were Christians, Khoi or San 'heathens'. Not that racial prejudice was completely lacking. 'Post-Columbian' Europe fostered racism as the means by which colonial conquest and exploitation of the non-European world was explained.⁷³ Some indication of this can be seen in the occasional pejorative use of colour terms. For instance Jan van Riebeeck referred very early on to certain Khoi Khoi as 'Zwarte stinkende honden' – 'stinking black dogs'.⁷⁴ However it is certainly correct to say that the religious (Protestant) ethic at first established a religious caste system within the small circle of the commercially oriented Cape colony:

The material conditions for colour prejudice did not exist. Armed with the doctrine of Calvinism which gave a religious 'justification' for the commercial rapacity of the day, the merchant capitalists regarded the aborigines as so many heathen predestined to be damned, and whose goods they, as Christians, could justifiably seize. In this respect, the heathen were regarded as inferior beings who could be enslaved and who could not enjoy the same rights as Christians. But as soon as they were converted to Christianity, they were to be freed and placed on an equal footing with whites and Christians.⁷⁵

The shift from religious caste to colour-caste was an imperceptible one and is to be explained in terms of the fact that as the colony expanded or, conversely, as more and more of the original inhabitants were dispossessed, they were compelled to enter into the service of their new masters under various forms of labour contracts, predominantly as labour tenants. On the other hand, through the progressive Christianisation of the 'heathen' from the end of the 18th century onwards, the religious justification for the exploitation and rape of the indigenous people was eliminated. By the time capitalist agriculture, oriented to the export of crops such as wool, hides, skins, wine and sugar, took root from 1840 onwards, a clear cut colour-caste system had come into being, one in which caste and class coincided virtually in all respects. Until then the caste frontiers, like the class frontiers, remained relatively fluid, although only a very few individuals from among the indigenous people could be said to have belonged to the exploiting classes.

The perpetuation of class relations as caste relations in a pre-capitalist mode of production where the lines of cleavage were determined in effect by birth, reproduced certain conventional standards of life and expectations among the dominant as well as the dominated classes. The

first group among the latter to be integrated into the colonial economy were the ancestors of what came to be known as the Coloured people – slaves, Khoi Khoi, San, and Nguni-speaking elements who had been drawn into the vortex of the colony. What Monica Wilson⁷⁶ calls generically a ‘patron-client relationship’ was established where the patron was white and the client ‘Coloured’. After the passage of Ordinance 50 (1828) and the legal emancipation of slaves (1834–1838), the major difference between the two classes was in their economic position, but there was little likelihood that the subjugated ‘Coloured’ population could accumulate wealth except for a thin layer of artisans who inherited the skills of their slave parents. A few preachers-cum-teachers were generated by the system, which had a vested interest by this time in missionary endeavour.⁷⁷ The same process, on a much lesser scale, was repeated among the other African people whose turn for dispossession came with the increasing rate of expansion of the colony, especially after 1840, and then climactically after 1867 when diamonds began to be mined.

By this time, therefore, there already existed a firmly entrenched colour-caste ethos in terms of which the symmetrical class relations were interpreted and lived out in the consciousness of all individuals within the colonial boundaries as well as within the boundaries of the Boer republics. Perhaps the best documented expression of this ethos is to be found in the notorious Piet Retief Manifesto in which the Emigrant Farmers explained their decision to trek away from the British Cape Colony.⁷⁸ In particular his statement should be noted that ‘We are resolved wherever we go that we will uphold the just principles of liberty; but whilst we will take care that no one shall be held in a state of slavery,⁷⁹ *it is our determination to maintain such regulations as may suppress crime and preserve proper relations between master and servant*’, where the master was by definition white and the servant black. By 1858 when the

South African Republic's constitution was drawn up, Article 9 stated unequivocally: 'The people are not prepared to allow any equality of the non-white with the white inhabitants, either in Church or State.'⁸⁰ Needless to say, in this quasi-feudal set-up the life styles and standards of living of masters and servants differed greatly. Moreover, those blacks who had not yet been dispossessed or had not yet been integrated into the Trekboer and colonial systems lived at the rudimentary levels associated with the pre-class communal societies of Southern Africa.

Without this crucial insight – obvious as it may appear – it is impossible to explain why whites became the privileged stratum of the working class or, conversely, why blacks (to whatever extent was necessary) were relegated to unskilled and semi-skilled occupations once the capitalist mode of production became the dominant mode soon after the discovery and development of the gold mines.⁸¹ The initial pattern of occupational specialisation in the mining industry – especially in gold mining – is, of course, easily explicable in terms of the structural conditions of the industry: the lack of indigenous technological know-how and the imperative need of the industry to keep production costs, especially labour costs, at an absolute minimum because of the low-grade quality of the ore on the Witwatersrand and the fixed price of gold on the world market. Neither blacks nor whites in South Africa possessed the skills required and thus European and other foreign white workers had to be imported. Hence the skilled jobs were monopolised – in the South African context – by whites. On the other hand, it was in the interests of mining capital that as many jobs as could be performed by unskilled workers be filled by blacks, in particular by Africans.⁸² The reasons why blacks, rather than whites, were employed in these posts were both economic and ideological-political. On the one hand the costs of reproducing black labour power were considerably lower

than the costs of reproducing white labour power because of the existing reserve system (which was still outside the determining influence of the capitalist mode of production, but which would, through migrant labour and commerce, come more and more under such influence).

From the above exposition of the evolution of the colour-caste status system (originally expressing a quasi-feudal social relationship) it is further clear that the existing ethos made it necessary and possible to *enforce* this dichotomy by means of state power. Only because the pre-existing system of class relations had also been colour-caste relations, was it possible to maintain the super-exploitable nature of the labour power of black people. Since gold was produced exclusively for export and the industry therefore had no need to develop a domestic consumer market, it was in the interests of capital to freeze or even to cheapen the standard of living, i.e. the costs of reproducing black labour power. In this it coincided with capitalist agriculture which was also export-oriented, and in any case still extremely underdeveloped. These needs of capital found expression in political and legal practice through the denial (or, in the Cape, drastic curtailment) of franchise rights for blacks, measures which were interpreted and explained on grounds of 'race'.

It was therefore in the interests of capital to maintain, indeed to entrench rigidly, the pre-existing colour-caste system, since it provided the ideal basis, in the light of the structural conditions of the mining industry, for the most rapid development of capitalism in South Africa. The enduring drive of capital here has been to define as unskilled as many jobs as possible, since this permits the employment of more blacks, whose labour power within the colour-caste system is reproduced more cheaply. This is the source of the contradiction between capital and white labour. For, as with all skilled personnel in a capitalist social formation, the white workers both skilled and semi-skilled⁸³

applied a closed shop principle, keeping out the unskilled blacks from trade-union membership, controlling admission to apprenticeships and resisting job dilution. In short they advocated 'white labour policy' of sheltered employment in order to render their hold on jobs and monopoly of skills secure, permanent and hereditary against any threat from the ranks of the super-exploitable (black) unskilled workers.⁸⁴

The contradiction between capital and white labour is, therefore, not one between a non-racial dominant class and a racist working class. *Both, clearly, have a stake in the perpetuation of the colour-caste system under whatever nomenclature.* Indeed, different fractions of capital at various times have been only too acutely aware of the need for the class alliance with white labour. The contradictions between various fractions of capital arising from differential needs for labour of differential quality are reconciled via state policy, but all fractions are united on the need to divide the working class into competing blocs and groups. I have already shown how apartheid is the latest attempt in a series of ruling-class strategies to meet the needs of a changing and developing capitalism. The growth of secondary industry after 1920 led to the development of contradictions between primary and secondary industry which were dealt with at first by means of 'segregation' and, after approximately 1948, by means of apartheid. This question has already been discussed in sufficient detail.⁸⁵

In terms of the definition used above, it is clear that the proletarianised blacks and whites of South African extraction, together with immigrant white workers and indentured labourers of Indian origin, constituted (and their descendants continue to constitute) a working class-in-itself, i.e. their objective relationships to the means of production make them into a class simply by virtue of the fact that their labour is appropriated by the ruling classes as a result of the place they occupy in the South African

system of social economy. As such, therefore, all of them find themselves potentially (and at times actually) in antagonistic contradiction to capital, as numerous strikes (economic and political) and other forms of class struggle have demonstrated.

By means of the colour-caste system, and its sub-systems such as the reserve system and the Bantustan system, the proletariat are disorganised by the dominant classes, and therefore unable to constitute a class-for-itself, a group of people who have become conscious of the objective coincidence of their interests as a class. To the extent that white wage earners have graduated into the ranks of the new petty bourgeoisie they increasingly see their destiny as tied to that of the capitalist system and the racist state.⁸⁶ It is inevitable that the working class in South Africa will become increasingly 'black'. However there is as yet no coincidence of colour and class. This does not mean, as the pluralists and liberal caste theorists will have it, that 'race' and not 'class' is the motor of South African history. An interesting parallel suggests itself here. The Bolshevik party could only succeed in formulating an effective political strategy towards the Russian peasantry once it was realised that this class was differentiated roughly into poor, middle and rich (kulak) peasants, and that the *smytchka*, the alliance between urban workers and peasants, would have to take cognisance of the expectation that the poor, middle and rich peasants would join the revolution against tsarism in that order and defect from the revolution against capitalism and private property in the reverse order. A similar process can be expected in South Africa as regards the working class. As the revolutionary struggle of the oppressed and exploited classes deepens, some groups of white wage-earners will go over to the side of their class comrades while the majority, who constitute the social base for a fascist dictatorship, will fight on the side of their class enemy, and provide the core of counter-revolutionary intervention after victory. *But large*

numbers of white workers, especially Afrikaans-speaking workers, will support the struggle – because they will have to – provided it is led by the working class and not trapped by a petty-bourgeois black chauvinist leadership that conceives of the struggle as being against ‘the white man’ or ‘the white race’.

Through residential and general social segregation, as required by the colour-caste system, capitalism has engendered a thin layer of ancillary, complementary and satellite petty-bourgeois and aspirant-bourgeois classes among all black groups. These classes comprise mainly members of the traditional and new petty bourgeoisie, apart from a handful of large merchant capitalists and (lately) small industrial capitalists among people of Indian origin. As I have shown, the Bantustan strategy requires the deliberate creation of a special satellite *Bantustan bourgeoisie*, as yet a tiny number of people. The class interests of all these people tie them to the *status quo*, but the limitations on their access to capital propel them to demand a new political dispensation in which their alliance with the ruling class will be expressed in terms of ‘joint decision-making’, ‘plural democracy’, abolition of ‘petty apartheid’, etc. without, however, altering the capitalist relations of production. At the same time these black bourgeois elements have to support any action on the part of the labouring people that tends to increase their unrestricted access to capital and human dignity. This dilemma, derived from the conflict between caste membership and class interest, makes them attempt the impossible task of facing both ways at the same time. They have to be seen to be with the people while at the same time they cannot oppose the basic principle of private property. Consequently they find themselves entangled in contradictions of an antagonistic as well as of a non-antagonistic character in both directions. When, for instance, a homelands leader demands more land for ‘his people’ from the South African government, he

is voicing a demand that arises from an antagonistic contradiction between the oppressed and the oppressor. Not to do so would place him unmistakably in the camp of the oppressor. But to demand a completely new division of the land in accordance with the people living and working on the land would equally unmistakably place him in the camp of the oppressed.

The actual political-strategic options are wide open. The ruling class, in almost daily consultation with imperialist interests (portrayed in the daily press as international pressure on the Vorster regime to bring about 'meaningful change'), is groping its way towards an accommodation at all levels such that it can gain the unqualified support of these black bourgeois elements without losing that of the white wage-earners and without impelling the black working class into a revolutionary armed struggle. In short, colour-caste is breaking down and the underlying class relations are increasingly expressing themselves overtly though necessarily still in colour terms. For blacks, as a result, it has become less and less a question of co-operation or alliance between caste-based organisations and more and more a question of which class shall lead the national liberation movement.

The development of the productive forces has broken down the walls of caste consciousness among blacks and among whites, ironically at a time when the statutory and other objective foundations of this caste system appear to be at their strongest. The majority of whites no longer see all blacks as one undifferentiated mass. Clear distinctions are made between those who are prepared to 'work with the whites' and those who are not, between 'terrorists' and their supporters on the one hand, and anti-terrorist blacks such as Matanzima, Buthelezi, Sonny Leon, Reddy and their ilk. Class relations and caste relations are inextricably interconnected and the fact that caste consciousness is breaking down is itself an indication that the underlying

class relations are changing rapidly. For these reasons, as I have shown, new ideological mechanisms are required to explain what is happening.

All class alliances in South Africa are in a state of flux at the moment. What needs to be stressed is that the development of the productive forces has now faced the dominant classes with a crystal clear historic choice: *either* to ally themselves with the 'black bourgeoisie' and the 'white working class' to crush the revolution of the urban and rural poor in the hope that, in the ensuing period of calm and stability, they can press ahead with the balkanisation and neo-colonisation of the country; *or* to jettison the albatross of the 'white working class' in favour of an alliance with a petty-bourgeois-led black 'nationalist' movement in the hope that the resultant change will stop short of shattering the basis of capitalism itself. At present the advocates of the former strategy hold political power but, as I have indicated, an attempt at reconciling the contradictions among the strategists of the ruling class is under way. Although these differences are based politically on different assessments of the potential strength of African nationalism and ideologically on differences regarding the theory and practice of human rights, there is a less clear-cut division at the economic level. This is a sure sign that we are dealing with non-antagonistic contradictions. Only thus can one explain how a man such as Harry Oppenheimer, Chairman of the Anglo-American Corporation, can support the National Party outside South Africa and the Progressive Federal Party inside the country, whereas Afrikaner magnates like Anton Rupert, Louis Luyt and Jan Marais often speak the language of the P.F.P. and are critical of the National Party government's actions. From a historical point of view, we are reminded once again that the bourgeoisie *cannot* solve the national question in a democratic manner.

I need only add that developments in Africa, and in

Southern Africa especially, more particularly the overall interests of imperialism on the continent, will in the final analysis co-determine the strategic decision to be made by the ruling classes in South Africa. It is against this background that the question of the nation of South Africa must be analysed, for it is clear that the political attitudes and actions of the oppressed classes are now, more than ever before, going to be decisive in influencing or thwarting whatever decision is made.

Notes

1. An ineffectual few pages on 'The Lysenko Controversy in Biology', dealing with 'Genetics, Heredity and Race' by R.K. Cope, and 'Some Notes on the Degeneration of Soviet Science' by E.W. Ernstzen, are all I could trace. See *Discussion*, Vol. 1, no. 4, Dec. 1951. Of course, the heuristic problems in a country where the opposition has been driven underground, by and large, are enormous.
2. P.V. Tobias, *The Meaning of Race*, p. 3.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 4 (my emphasis).
4. Some of their more important works on the concept of 'race' are listed in the bibliography.
5. Montagu, 'The Concept of Race', in A. Montagu (ed.), *The Concept of Race*, p. 32. Also see *ibid.*, 'Man's Most Dangerous Myth: The Fallacy of Race', pp. 53-79 and N.P. Dubinin, 'Race and Contemporary Genetics', in L. Kuper (ed.), *Race, Science and Society*, pp. 74-85.
6. J. Hiernaux, 'The Concept of Race and the Taxonomy of Mankind', in Montagu (ed.), *The Concept of Race*, p. 37.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
8. Dunn and Dobzhansky, *Heredity, Race and Society*, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 18.
9. P.V. Tobias, *op.cit.*, p. 6.
10. Montagu, *op.cit.*, pp. 19-20.

11. Anthony H. Richmond , *Readings in Race and Ethnic Relations*, p. 1.
12. Montagu, 'The Concept of Race', p. 27.
13. I suspect that this unthinking usage of the term – as also with the term 'race' – is facilitated by the fact that Soviet scholars continue to use it even though they define it precisely. As in other spheres, Soviet practice, however justifiable in the Soviet context, has had a baneful influence on the South African political movement.
14. Tobias, *op. cit.*, p. 14.
15. Donald E. Gelfand and Russel D. Lee (eds.), *Ethnic Conflicts and Power: A Cross-National Perspective*, p. 7.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 19 (my emphasis).
17. P.v.d. Berghe, 'Integration and Conflict in Multi-National States', p. 3.
18. See Chapter 4 above.
19. Gelfand and Lee (eds.), *op.cit.*, p. 4.
20. H. Schwarz, 'I'm in P.R.P.; I will tell you how partition could work', *Sunday Times*, 7th August 1977.
21. See Chapter 6 above, where Ngwenya reveals the embarrassment of Congress theorists about the fact that they share the same universe of discourse as do the ideologues of the National Party.
22. Thus Oscar I. Janovsky writes: 'Negroes, Chinese and Japanese constitute racial minorities, but these have, until recently, been docile and undemanding. Nationalities or national minorities, we have hardly known at all and, since national minorities constitute the heart of the European problem, it is not surprising that we fail to comprehend it.' (Oscar I. Janovsky, 'Ethnic and Cultural Minorities', in R. McIver (ed.), *An Introduction to Sociology*). Janovsky also puts his finger on the right spot when he writes: 'The peculiarity of the United States is that our multi-group society has one pervasive culture that is not localized in territorially defined groups within it. We do not have in the United

States, for the most part, compact cohesive groups traditionally settled in different parts of the country, each maintaining its exclusive culture. The groups we have are for the most part dispersed in the larger inclusive system of things, unlike the situation in many parts of Europe'.

23. This 'Nationality School of Race Relations' is constantly knocking its head against the wall of the right of nations to self-determination. At the same conference at which McIver and Janovsky, among others, delivered papers on minority problems, the following impassioned protest was made by Mrs. P.A. Wallace: 'The Negro people in this country have used the same language, have the same life and live on the same soil and their grouping is mechanical. It is mechanical, born of prejudice. Why should we have a special culture, even though we grow up as Americans, and contribute to our country; why do you insist on the Negro people being a minority group or classifying Negroes as a part of a minority group? It is a mechanical thing and it is based simply on the colour of the people and that is traditional. I protest against being put in any group as an American (*ibid.*).
24. See W. Lloyd Warner, 'American Class and Caste', in *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 42, 1936; Robert E. Park, *Race and Culture*; Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*.
25. O.C. Cox, *Caste, Class and Race: A Study in Social Dynamics*.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 493.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 541.
28. L. Dumont, 'Caste, Racism and Stratification: Reflections of a Social Anthropologist', in Andre Breteille (ed.), *Social Inequality*.
29. Cox, *op.cit.*, p. 14.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 498.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 453.
32. *Ibid.*, pp. 494–6.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 161.
34. For a reasonably comprehensive bibliography, see Gerald D. Berreman, 'Stratification, Pluralism and Interaction: A Comparative Analysis of Caste', in Anthony de Reuch and Julie Knight (eds.) *Caste and Race: Comparative Approaches*, pp. 71–3.
35. See *ibid.*; also 'Caste as Social Process' in Gelfland and Lee (eds.) *op. cit.*; 'Caste in India and the United States', *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 66, 1960, pp. 12–127; 'Caste, Racism and Stratification', *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, Vol. 6, 1962, pp. 122–5.
36. It has been pointed out that Cox was 'working at second and even at third hand' (L. Dumont, *op.cit.*, p. 347).
37. Berreman, 'Caste as Social Process', *op.cit.*, p. 33.
38. *Ibid.*, p.37.
39. Berreman, 'Stratification, Pluralism and Interaction: A Comparative Analysis of Caste', *op.cit.*, p. 115.
40. *Ibid.*, pp.25–6.
41. Cox, *op.cit.*, p. 498.
42. Berreman, 'Caste as Social Process', *op.cit.*, p. 69.
43. See Berreman 'Stratification ... A Comparative Analysis of Caste', *op.cit.*, p. 83.
44. Dumont, *op.cit.*, p. 338.
45. See Berreman, 'Stratification ... A Comparative Analysis of Caste', *op.cit.*, p. 57.
46. H. Passin, 'Discussion', in De Reuch and Knight (eds.) *Caste and Race: Comparative Approaches*, pp. 329–30.
47. See Chapter 7 below.
48. Berreman, 'Stratification ... A Comparative Analysis of Caste', *op.cit.*, p. 48.
49. 'The quality of being comparatively self-contained in social and cultural activities and at the same time being linked with other groups in economic activities is a

- fundamental characteristic of the groups called castes (in India).’ (Irawati Kawe, *Hindu Society: An Interpretation*, Poona, 1961, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 54.)
50. *Ibid.*, pp. 67–8.
 51. *Ibid.*, p. 68.
 52. *Ibid.*, pp.68–9.
 53. See Chapter 2 above.
 54. Cox, *op.cit.*, p. 506.
 55. J.N. Nehru maintains that ‘The very word for caste in Sanskrit is *varna* or colour’, ‘Glimpses of World History’, p. 25.
 56. See Cox, *op.cit.*, p. 319: ‘For the sociologist a race may be thought of as simply any group of people that is generally believed to be, and generally accepted as, a race in any given area of ethnic competition.’
 57. One of the first works on South Africa to be written with a colour-caste frame of reference was I. MacCrone, *Race Attitudes in South Africa* (London; O.U.P. 1937). For a more detailed discussion of the liberal-pluralist fallacy undertaken in slightly different terms from my own, see H. Wolpe, ‘Class, Race and Occupational Structure’.
 58. ‘Race and Racism in South Africa’ in Beteille (ed.) *op.cit.*, pp. 324–5.
 59. *Ibid.*, p.330.
 60. *South Africa: A Study in Conflict*.
 61. See W. Lloyd Warner, ‘American Class and Caste’, in Paul Baxter and Basil Sansom (eds.), *Race and Social Difference: Selected Readings*, pp. 365–6.
 62. Johnstone, *op.cit.*, p. 207 .
 63. *Ibid.* (my emphasis).
 64. *Ibid.*, p.209.
 65. *Ibid.*
 66. See discussion later in this chapter.
 67. Johnstone, *op.cit.*, p. 214.
 68. *Ibid.*, p. 215.
 69. In his introduction he discusses methodological and

conceptual problems connected with the field of 'race relations', which field of study he rejects, and 'ethnicity', towards which he is more ambivalent, but stresses that his basic goal is the demystification, unmasking and deciphering of what he conceives of as phenomenal forms of something else. This, though a valuable contribution at one level, is not nearly enough.

70. See, for instance: R. Davies, 'Mining Capital, the State and Unskilled White Workers in South Africa 1901–1913', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, September 1976; M. Legassick, 'The Analysis of Racism in South Africa: The Case of the Mining Industry' (IDEP/UN Seminar Paper, 1975); H. Simpson, 'The Myth of the White Working Class in South Africa', *African Review*, 1974; H. Wolpe, 'The White Working Class in South Africa: Some Theoretical Problems' (IDEP/UN Seminar Paper, 1975).
71. In its *modus operandi* commercial capitalism differed fundamentally from industrial capitalism. It simply regarded the Orient as a field for piracy and trade. Indeed, piracy was the main source of profit for the Company. Colonisation was made strictly subordinate to and limited to the interests of trade.' (K. Jordan, 'Jan van Riebeeck: His Place in South African History', in *Discussion*, Vol. 1, no. 5, June 1952, p. 25.)
72. 'Classes are large groups of people, differing from each other by the place they occupy in a historically determined system of social production, by their relation (in most places fixed and formulated in law) to the means of production, by their role in the social organisation of labour, and consequently, by the dimensions of the social wealth of which they dispose and the mode of acquiring it. Classes are groups of people, one of which can appropriate the labour of another owing to the different places they occupy in a definite system of social economy.' (V.I. Lenin, *Selected*

- Works*, p. 486).
73. See O.C. Cox, *op. cit.*, pp. xxx–xxxi and p. 322ff .
74. See E.A. Walker, *A History of Southern Africa*, p. 33.
75. K. Jordan, *op.cit.*, p.33.
76. M. Wilson and L. Thompson, *The Oxford History of South Africa*, Vol. 1, p. 63.
77. See N. Majeke, *The Role of the Missionaries in Conquest, passim*.
78. For a full reproduction and exposition of the Manifesto, see A.J.H. van der Walt, J.A. Wild and A.L. Geyer, *Geskiedenis Van Suid-Afrika*, Deel I (Nasionale Boekhandel Bpk., Cape Town 1955) pp. 269–74. Retief's niece, Anna Steenkamp, gives as one of the reasons for her defection the fact that slaves were emancipated and moreover without proper compensation to their former owners. She claims, however, that they were more upset at the equality of status with Christians accorded to the former slaves which, she says, was '... strijdig met de Wetten van God en het natuurlyk onderskijt van afkomst en geloof'. This was felt to be intolerable and thus they were rather dispersing, 'des to beter ons geloof en leer in suiwerheijt to behouden'. (Cited in *ibid.*, p. 273.)
79. In fact slavery continued to be practised in the guise of the 'apprenticeship' of infants of dispossessed or conquered people until they turned 18 years of age. See, for instance, Wilson and Thompson (eds.) *op.cit.*, pp. 207, 248 and *passim*.
80. Quoted by L. Thompson, 'Cooperation and Conflict: The High Veld', in *ibid.*, pp. 431–2.
81. I shall not discuss here the liberal thesis that such apartheid or segregation is economically dysfunctional. What I call the Sussex school has exploded this myth effectively. See, for instance, the publications listed in the bibliography under Wolpe, Legassick, Kaplan, Davies, Johnstone, Fransman, Williams, and Bundy.

82. Johnstone calls the resultant pattern of coercive regulations and labour practices 'exploitation colour bars'. This system aimed at maximising profits and was initiated and patterned by mining capitalists on the basis of already existing practices of agrarian capitalists who by means of taxation, *inter alia*, forced African men to work but left them access to partial (but inadequate) means of production. See F.A. Johnstone, *op.cit.*, p. 26ff. He does not, however, explain adequately why blacks rather than whites were employed in the unskilled jobs. There is a good, if brief, critique of Johnstone on this point in a book review by R. Davies. See *Africa Perspective*, no. 5, 1977 .
83. Most semi-skilled jobs were occupied by whites of South African, mostly Afrikaans, extraction, who had become proletarianised in the wake of the Anglo-Boer War and the capitalisation of agriculture.
84. Johnstone calls this pattern 'job colour bars' and establishes elegantly the interconnection between these and the 'exploitation colour bars'. 'The extension of the exploitability of the majority of workers, by the racially discriminatory forced labour system of the employers, extended the structural insecurity of the proletarianised but politically free and less exploitable (white) group of workers, leading the latter to institute an extensive system of employment protection, and determining that it, too, should take the specific form of racial discrimination. It was thus a case of one system of class colour bars – the exploitation colour bars of the dominant (owning) class – generating another – the employment colour bars of the politically free section of the economically dependent (working) class' (*op.cit.*, p.74). For a suggestive analysis of the conditions that determined the employment of white workers in the mining industry, see M. Fransman and R. Davies: 'The South African Social Formation in the Early Capitalist

Period circa 1870–1939: *Some Views on the Question of Hegemony*, (unpublished mimeo., n.d.) pp. 32–4.

85. See Chapter 4 above.

86. The present policy of the late 1970s of moving more and more white wage-earners into supervisory and administrative posts in order to employ black workers in semi-skilled jobs must snowball, unless a major economic disaster overtakes South Africa.

7. THE NATIONAL QUESTION IN SOUTH AFRICA

On the definition of 'nation'

FEW WRITERS ON THE SUBJECT of nationalism have avoided the temptation to add to the growing list of definitions their own particular idea of what a nation is. Indeed it was only after a long detour involving the thorough study of national and nationalist movements that I myself reached my present position which is – stated simply – that it is impossible to give a definition valid for all time and place of what a nation is; all that the theorist can do is to define what the nation is in a given historical context. Such definition does not involve the enumeration of indispensable or essential features of a nation, but rather the explanation of the social content which characterises the particular national movement. Yet the heritage of the past cannot be brushed aside in this perfunctory manner without some theoretical justification for the procedure adopted.,

One of the main problems that has dogged those who have attempted to discuss the national question in South Africa is the deserved reputation of Stalin's definition of a nation.¹ Though Stalin pointed out some years after writing his pamphlet on *Marxism and the National Question* that his definition referred only to the period of the 'bourgeois democratic world revolution',² i.e. to the period of capitalism up to 1917, it is nonetheless obvious that the form in which his definition is couched, (i.e. the stipulative character of his definition)³ is a trap for the unwary. Because of the undoubted value which his pamphlet had in exposing the mysticism of the Austro-German Social

Democrats such as Otto Bauer and Karl Renner who insisted that a nation is a 'community of fate' bearing a particular 'national character', Stalin's definition assumed for most leftists and marxists the *ex cathedra* validity of a papal decree.⁴ The fact is that, armed with this magic formula, one is inclined to go about looking for groups that fit the arbitrary limits set by the definition. Indeed, as my discussion of Potekhin's work above demonstrated, the National Party's own theory of nationality, though it bears more affinity to the Austro-German theory of 'national-cultural autonomy',⁵ is logically comparable with the Stalinist position. In this approach the national question becomes a verbal game, a question of which attributes are, from a historical point of view, more essential than others. This verbal game clearly is related to political strategies and problems. For example there is the ambivalence which even Stalin evinced on the question of whether or not the Jews are a nationality.⁶

The anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggles conducted, especially since the end of the Second World War, in Asia, Africa and Latin America, have thrown this originally Eurocentric theory of nationality into a crisis. Theorists in the socialist countries as well as in the capitalist world have been compelled to re-examine the whole question and to face the problem of definition anew. Developments in science itself, for instance the paramuncy in the West of the idea of operational definitions, have made it necessary to re-investigate first principles, such as the very object of the science of society. Stalin's fall from grace after 1956, with the subsequent de-Stalinisation campaigns waged in Eastern Europe, made it necessary for academics concerned with questions of nationality in those countries to bring their thought into line with new official attitudes. Moreover the partition of Germany and the projected permanence of the two German states also imperatively demanded a theoretical

examination of whether or not there were two German nations. This has, incidentally, been resolved by the postulation of a difference between bourgeois nations and socialist nations, a rather esoteric sphere which can be avoided with profit.

In the socialist countries, academics do not seem to have reached any finality on the subject. A controversy on the concept of nation conducted in various Soviet and other East European journals during the period 1961–65 serves to demonstrate the range of disagreement.⁷

The most important aspect of this controversy is that, while all agreed that Stalin's original definition served the polemical purpose of exposing the reactionary and strategically inept approach of Bauer, Renner and others, his examination of the subject was based exclusively on historical material relating to European experience.⁸ It was further stressed that one has to bear in mind 'the conditional character and relativity of scientific definitions'. As perfect and flexible as the definitions may be, they can 'never ... embrace all the relevant relationships that determine the development of a phenomenon' (Lenin).⁹ From the point of view of the present study an important contribution to the discussion derives from the pen of one M.O. Mnacakanjan, who cut through the conceptual jungle by proclaiming boldly that:

The limited scientific value of a general definition is evident not only in the fact that it is incapable of revealing the essence of nations and the laws of their development but also in the fact that it cannot characterise fully and in a rigorous scientific manner the multiplicity of forms and the peculiarities of the origins and evolution of nations in all their phases of development, and finally it cannot include all types of nations with their peculiarities under a general concept. *In order to achieve this, differentiated definitions of the concept 'nation' are necessary.*¹⁰

In Western Europe and the United States the same problem has been raised, because of the phenomenon of the 'emergent nations' in the Third World.¹¹ Anthony Smith argues that, despite Popper's logical objections to the possibility of definition (because definitions do not capture the 'essences' of phenomena) and despite Coleman's methodological objections (because of the qualitative nature of the social sciences), definitions of a kind remain a necessity. These have to be 'ostensive, substantive' definitions 'which would demonstrate the limits of the field. Only an ostensive definition would help us to designate "nationalist" phenomena, and give the term jurisdictional limits.'¹² He finally decides in favour of a working definition, 'stripped of essentialist notions', and uses a combination of what he calls a 'stipulative definition' and an 'empirical definition'.¹³ But he warns that 'there is no once-for-all unique definition of "nationalism" or "the nation". We are simply singling out clusters of recurrent features only, and "nationalism" refers to these.'¹⁴ This brief reference to Smith's presentation of the problem shows that the Western theorist has got no further than his Soviet counterparts.

The reason, of course, is that the problem is *not* one of definitions.¹⁵ The concept 'nation' refers to a category of phenomena that encompass both delimitable quantitative elements as well as elements of consciousness. Since both sets of elements can vary without any *apparent* symmetry, definition – setting limits to the content (meaning) of such a category – becomes an insoluble theoretical problem. The decision as to whether or not one is confronted with a nation cannot be made merely on *general* grounds. It is eminently a *historical* question, a question that requires an examination of the *specific set of circumstances*. Unlike a concept such as 'mode of production', which defines at a highly abstract level the relations of classes of people to one another on the basis of their relationship to the ownership

of the means of producing their subsistence (and which is, therefore, a supra-historical category not admitting any element of consciousness), a concept such as 'nation' can only be related to *changing* forms of state formation, i.e. to a historical category. An analogy is that between a class-in-itself and a class-for-itself. Whereas the former is definable in general terms, the latter is definable only in specific historical terms. Since historical interpretation proceeds from the historian's class standpoint,¹⁶ the answer to all questions such as 'what is the nation?' requires the answer to a prior question – what is the class position of the person who answers the question? My exposition has indicated that even though most writers on the question in South Africa have not explicitly defined their class position when examining the national question, their position is implicit in the answers they have given.

On general grounds all that one can say about nations in the modern world is that they will consist of antagonistic or potentially antagonistic classes. This, of course, is not saying very much since exactly the same could be said of the state. Although it can be further asserted on empirical grounds that *oppressed* nations tend to create their own states unless there are insuperable obstacles to such state formation, and that consciousness of nationality arises in the course of the struggle for national liberation, it is clear that these features are class-determined. The content of the term 'national' is dependent on the level of political consciousness attained by the classes of people concerned and their representatives. In the course of class struggles each class aims to become the leading class in the state and its articulate representatives will, therefore, define the nation in terms of the interests of their class. I have demonstrated that for the purposes of the ruling class in South Africa the National Party has propagated its theory of nationality while simultaneously the liberal bourgeois fraction has put forward variants of a pluralist doctrine of

nationality. What is happening today, and what this study has demonstrated, is that the working people in their drive to hegemony are compelled to spell out explicitly what has been mainly implicit hitherto, namely, *their* theory of the nation of South Africa.

Yet it is not possible to leave Stalin's definition, and by implication that of the National Party, without referring to its inadequacy on theoretical grounds, for it is so firmly entrenched in the political thinking of South Africans. What I have said about nations consisting of antagonistic classes obviously implies in some sense a 'community of economic life' in the same way as the tendency to create separate states implies some 'community of territory'. However a careful historical examination of both these alleged features of nationality shows that they are highly problematical concepts themselves. I need not, however, enter into a general analysis of what they signify although in regard to the concept of self-determination, which in the Soviet theory of nationality hinges on some sort of 'community of territory', I shall refer to the matter again briefly.

The other features of Stalin's definition – community of language and community of culture (i.e. national character) – are not only problematical but indeed irrelevant. In effect Stalin, like most writers on the subject, understands 'language' in a purely morphological sense (itself a vexed problem for the linguist). Although it is axiomatic that a group of people cannot constitute a nation unless the individuals understand one another, it does not follow at all that they have to be able to do so in one particular language, in some 'mother tongue'. The real problem here is one of *ability to communicate* and this is never a mere morphological question. In a multi-lingual nation the ability of the majority of people to speak more than one language solves the question of communication unless other questions arising from antagonistic contradictions in the social formation obstruct such communication. As for

'culture' or 'national character', these are indefinable and completely amorphous umbrella terms with merely emotive significance. At most it can be said that culture is the product of classes. That, therefore, what is conducive to the humanisation of men and women – international culture – is the product of the classes that are committed to liberation. In the modern capitalist world these classes are the working classes. It follows, therefore, that a nation cannot be 'a community of culture' since it is necessarily composed of antagonistic classes.

Imperialism and the nation

In the genesis of nations the state has played the most important role. Lest this unqualified statement be misunderstood to mean that the decisions and interactions of politicians of the ruling class have been the decisive factor, I hasten to say that states are themselves the products of the pursuit of definite economic objectives by dominating classes who exploit other classes in order to attain these objectives.

The history of Western Europe shows that as a general rule the bourgeoisie took as its point of departure the language group to which they belonged and on this demographic basis created a market. In some instances this entailed the breaking up, in others the unification, of the pre-existing feudal state structures – compare Germany and Austria-Hungary, for instance.¹⁷ In the imperialist epoch, however, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, the state in most cases was imposed on classless societies. In other words, the intrusion of capitalism, and thereby of private property in the means of production, into tribal and pre-tribal societies gave rise to states which paid scant attention to questions of language affinity, culture and historical association of peoples. The historic role of the bourgeoisie had changed in the interim. From having been a

progressive force that spearheaded the people's movement for democratic rights against the old feudal order, it had itself become the dominant class, rapaciously attaching to itself as much capital as it could, irrespective of who the previous owners had been. The carving up of the world proceeded according to the rules laid down by the modalities of imperialist expansion so that in the short term many state boundaries were, by the yardstick of the typical bourgeois nation state, artificial.

The coalescence of peoples that had taken place in Europe in the course of many centuries, during which first commodity exchange and later industrial capital had knit these peoples together with enduring economic bonds, did not occur in sub-Saharan Africa. The capitalist market was the alien imposition of a foreign bourgeoisie that had every interest in either preventing or stultifying the development of a potentially competitive indigenous bourgeoisie.

Ultimately we have to answer two fundamental questions that are closely related to each other. Firstly we have to ask which classes are contending against each other, what is the *content* of self-determination? And secondly it has to be established which is the leading class in this struggle, which class represents the interests of the majority of the people? From the answer to this second question the genuine, or alternatively the bogus, nature of demands of a 'national' character put forward by different groups involved in the struggle can be judged. In regard to the first question it is necessary to stress that the content of self-determination is decided during the course of the struggle itself and depends upon the changing interests and strategies of the classes concerned. I shall deal with both these questions presently, in the specific context of South Africa. But it is first necessary to situate the South African question in the context of the historical development of the idea of the nation.

What happens to the social structure in the areas

conquered by imperialism? In certain respects there takes place a repetition of the processes which took place in Europe as a result of the rise of capitalism. Now, too, industry and war break up the pre-capitalist structures; large sections of the agrarian masses are dispossessed, becoming a class of landless wage-labourers tied to the machine and subject to the tender mercies of the capitalist entrepreneur. Macadamised roads and railways replace jungle footpaths; towns and cities are conjured out of the wilderness; the ocean, which was formerly a source of superstitious dread and an obstacle to communication, becomes an international highway; tribes and peoples, who had formerly never heard of one another, become next-door neighbours. In short, the new mode of production revolutionises the whole mode of life.

But there are fundamental differences between the process of change as it manifested itself in Europe and the social revolution in the countries conquered by imperialism. Whereas in Europe the development of capitalism – in spite of economic and political revolutions – was a relatively gradual and organic process, in the conquered territories the process assumes the character of a cataclysm. Whole peoples disappear in the space of a few decades, cultural treasures and historic patterns are suddenly obliterated, and a painful process of adaptation to the new conditions begins. Imperialist rivalry changes the whole pre-existent territorial configuration. Tribes are split in half, lines are drawn on maps in London, Paris, Berlin and Brussels through deserts, mountains and lakes in Africa. And these ‘accidental’ political entities congeal into fixed proto-national units. Alien tribes are thrown together into the cauldron of the imperialist state and are compelled to coalesce. Some elements, mostly from former ruling chiefly families, collaborate with the foreigners; they receive education and proceed to the metropolitan centres for study, imbibe the capitalist ethos, and return to unite and

lead their peoples, most of whom for a long time 'live suspended in a disoriented way between two cultures'.¹⁸ This new leadership, depending on whether it is tied to a feudal landowning aristocracy or not, finds itself willy-nilly thrown into opposition to its imperialist masters.

In Africa there were few instances of such an aristocracy finding it in its interests to collaborate loyally with the foreigner. More usually it is the native bourgeoisie, born and bred by imperialism (albeit in hot-house conditions), or the radical intelligentsia (responding to the pressures from below), which begins to question the manner in which imperialism exploits the country without doing anything to develop it for its own people. The native bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie are especially concerned about their own subordinate position. Imperialism, of course, is interested in the colonies only in so far as they secure for it ready access to raw materials, markets for its goods and fields for capital investment. Such investment by the imperialist state is usually confined to the development of the essential infrastructure of roads, railways, harbours, water-power, etc. Only in exceptional cases does metropolitan capital invest in productive heavy and secondary industry (or even in the local food-producing sector), for the development of the metropolis, it well knows, is predicated upon the underdevelopment of the colonies. Whereas in Europe the capitalist class had stormed heaven in order to free the development of the capitalist mode of production from the fetters of feudalism, in the imperialist epoch the same capitalist class strangles the development of a native industry in the colonies at birth. The world capitalist system itself becomes the main obstacle to the further development of the productive forces in the colonies. In the consciousness of the exploited and oppressed people, capitalism itself becomes the enemy.

The colonial bourgeoisie and radical petty-bourgeois intelligentsia are concerned with their own advancement

(and that of the emerging nation on which their possibilities of advancement rest), not with the profits of the financiers in the metropolises. To a certain extent, therefore, there is a coincidence of interests between them and the labouring people. Consequently, they place themselves at the head of their people who still recall the recent loss of their lands and take up the cudgels against the foreigner. The European capitalists and their skilled white workers, supervisors, clerks and managers, as well as their civil service, police chiefs and garrison commanders, remain an alien element in the colonial country. These people regard the metropolitan, not the colonial, country as their home, Taking in most cases the given imperialist boundaries of the state, and not the old, useless tribal and semi-feudal traditions, as their point of departure, the colonial bourgeoisie and, more especially, the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia, create movements for national liberation the goal of which is the creation of an independent state. It is, therefore, not the language group but the imperialist economic-territorial boundaries that have delimited, in most African countries, the confines of the emergent nation quite regardless of such factors as homogeneity of 'culture' or consciousness of a 'calling', divinely or otherwise inspired.

The colonial bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie take up the national struggle against the imperialist system of domination. But they cannot be consistently anti-imperialist for they are tied hand and foot to the system itself. As far as they are concerned the 'mother countries' are the main sources of investment capital needed for the development of industry. Under their leadership, therefore, the new nations cannot become economically independent and a system of neo-colonialism replaces the crude imperialism of the recent past. By playing off the socialist countries against the imperialist West some of these regimes can for a while adopt postures of non-alignment and strut large on the

stage of contemporary history. In reality they are merely protecting the long-term interests of private capital accumulation under the guise of a state capitalist economy. In spite, therefore, of ostentatious xenophobia, into which all bourgeois nationalism degenerates, the colonial bourgeoisie cannot liberate the nation. The urban petty bourgeoisie is not an independent force and the landowning aristocracy, where it exists (together with tribal chiefs), usually side with the enemy. The peasants wait for a lead from the cities and are incapable of organising themselves nationally because of their necessary parochialism and petty-bourgeois ethos, so that only the colonial working class is sufficiently committed to total liberation and organisationally sophisticated enough to lead the struggle further. A struggle rages in all these countries between these various classes to give a particular class content to the nations that are emerging. In Africa the working class is, generally speaking, still much too small and without a tradition of independent organisation; so it too has not been able to take the lead decisively. Hence the bureaucratic, usually Western-educated, military and civilian elites can still continue with their thermidorian consolidation of the system of private (capitalist) enterprise sometimes dressed up as 'African socialism'.

The South African case

In South Africa, however, the case is different. As I have shown, imperialism found here a native (mainly agrarian) bourgeoisie of European origin which by the end of the 19th century had become indigenous to the country. This bourgeoisie had emerged in the course of two centuries of merchant capitalist exchange and petty commodity production, amidst congeries of people living in pre-capitalist societies who were gradually being dispossessed. As a result of this process the basis of traditional production

was being undermined and the direct producers increasingly transformed into a rural working class. Because of the colour-caste/class relations that had emerged prior to the establishment of the dominance of the capitalist mode of production in South Africa, this agrarian bourgeoisie was the perfect instrument (akin to the rajahs of India) for the purposes of imperialist exploitation.

Imperialism's intense struggle against the backward looking Krugerist elements representing the small white farmers outside the Western Cape and Natal was decided finally by the outcome of the Anglo-Boer War (1902) and led to the compact between imperialism and the native bourgeoisie known as the Union of South Africa. But the struggle led by the Afrikaans-speaking bourgeoisie and aspiring bourgeoisie, which I have traced in Chapter Two of this study, was more than a mere confrontation between an outdated Calvinist past and a modernised capitalist future. *It marks the beginning of the struggle in South Africa for national liberation.* The idea of a united South Africa was an idea that emerged logically from the struggle of the Afrikaners against British imperialism.

From what has been said previously about the development of capitalist domination in South Africa, it is clear why the local bourgeoisie compromised with British imperialism. It was in its immediate economic interests to perpetuate the colour-caste system and thus effectively to exclude the vast majority of labouring people from the economic, political and social fruits of nationhood. In other words the national struggle was aborted, the bourgeois-democratic revolution remained incomplete and became the system of racial domination that has made South Africa a byword among the nations.

The national liberation movement today is, therefore, returning to the source of the anti-imperialist struggle. Its purpose is to make this struggle into a *national* struggle as opposed to the *nationalist* struggle into which the

bourgeoisie had by force of its historic supineness transformed it. National liberation in the present South African context, therefore, can mean three different and antagonistic things. The term denotes three options that are open to the oppressed people of South Africa; which one is realized depends crucially on the class leadership of the movement. Each of these options, representing as they do three different contents or meanings of the term 'nation', needs to be looked at from the point of view of the interests of the oppressed people, specifically of the workers, urban and rural, and the peasants.

In the first place, national liberation can mean the complete territorial separation of the black people from the white people of South Africa, in two or more states. As this work has shown, this is the option which the present South African government is advocating, justified by means of the neo-Fichtean theory of nationality that postulates the existence of supra-historical 'nations' each with its own 'culture' and 'calling'. That this option is clearly in the interests of the bourgeoisie has been demonstrated throughout this book's examination of the class-determined economic functions of this theory and strategy. What still needs to be asked is whether it is an option that is at all considered by the oppressed people themselves. Since self-determination literally means that the people themselves have to decide what form of state they want (a question I shall refer to again below), it is necessary to ask whether any considerable group of black people in South Africa has ever made, or does now make, the demand for a separate black state or states. If so, who are these people? The second question is easily answered. It is common knowledge that at least some so-called homelands leaders – Matanzima and Mangope – unequivocally demand separate states for their 'nations'. They express these demands on behalf of and through the political parties they have created. But any analysis of the facts reveals that they have neither majority

support even of the people domiciled in the reserves, nor has any of them been prepared to submit to the test of a referendum, even under political and security conditions that put them in an undeniably advantageous position.¹⁹ Moreover, they represent the most grasping aspiring-bourgeois stratum among the people, one which is prepared to thrive on the offal of the capitalist class while the rest of 'their' nation continues in wretched poverty and under-development. There can be no shadow of doubt that they represent neither the interests of the oppressed workers and peasants nor even the opinion of any but the tiniest minority of black people.

In the 1920s the Communist Party put forward the slogan of an 'independent native republic' as the prelude to a workers' and peasants' government. But this slogan was doomed to oblivion from the start since it in fact advocated what the oppressed people had never yet demanded. Trotsky conceded that one should not close the option that the blacks after victory might wish to establish their own state and would then have to be supported by the workers' party but – in the context of a similar discussion on the 'Negroes' of the southern states of the U.S.A. – he made it clear that the workers' party can never foist a decision regarding the content of self-determination on the people against their wishes: 'So far as I am informed, it seems to me that the C.P.'s attitude of making an imperative slogan of it [self-determination/secession] was false'. It was a case of whites saying to the Negroes,

You must create a ghetto for yourselves. It is tactless and false and can only serve to repulse the Negroes. Their only interpretation can be that the whites want to be separated from them. Our Negro comrades of course have the right to participate more intimately in such developments. Our Negro comrades can say, the Fourth International says that if it is our wish to be independent, it will help us in

every way possible, but that the choice is ours. However, I, as a Negro member of the Fourth, hold a view that we must remain in the same state as the whites, and so on. *He can participate in the formation of the political and racial ideology of the Negroes.*²⁰

If one accepts – and one must accept – that the liberation movements that have been born out of the political organisations of the people represent the views of the oppressed, it is demonstrably clear that this matter has already been decided, that the oppressed people are exercising their right to self-determination in the process of the struggle itself. The oppressed people of South Africa are unalterably opposed to a separate black state or states, because they are fully aware that such separation would effectively perpetuate the exploitative system under which they have lived for centuries and because they claim control of the wealth they have produced in South Africa as a whole. The ‘whites’ (i.e. the National Party and Harry Schwarz, a leader of the right wing in the Progressive Reform Party, among others) have made the very mistake against which Trotsky warned the marxists in America – they have ‘determined’ for the blacks that they shall live in their own states and that they shall have ‘national liberation’. Such gifts from the oppressor, more than anything else, have turned the oppressed workers and peasants against the idea. They have chosen to follow the ancient injunction: beware of the Greeks when they come with gifts! It is significant that as far as the position of black people in the U.S.A. is concerned, the Soviet theorists have come to the same conclusion. P.I. Semenov maintains without qualification that the black Americans’ struggle is not one for their own fatherland but for effective legal equality with other members of the social organism.

It is true that at the time when the majority of blacks lived in the South of the U.S.A. there may have been a possibility of them constituting a separate nation

distinct from the American nation. Today, however, when they are dispersed over the whole country, this possibility no longer exists. The American Negroes have no other fatherland than the U.S.A. and in this sense one has to speak of them as part of the American nation.²¹

As long as they are discriminated against, he continues, they will have their own movement with its own interests which differ from those of the rest of the American nation. Nonetheless, Semenov ends off his comments on the Negro question in the U.S.A. with the remarkable assertion that the Negroes are fighting solely for legal equality and final inclusion in the American nation and that they do not have any desire to form in future a special political power centre, i.e. a special ethnic group.²²

However, if my exposition has revealed nothing else, it has shown that nations are not inevitable, god-given entities that will manifest themselves in some specific form at any given time. The nation, its physical limits and its social content, is determined in political struggle. The history of Palestine and of India proves, as does the history of Germany, that notions of what constitutes the nation cherished in the most passionate manner by educated revolutionaries can for decades, possibly for centuries, be negated by the failure to win the allegiance of the revolutionary people for the realisation of such notions. As Nehru said,

To talk of a 'Muslim nation' ... means that there is no nation at all but a religious bond; it means that no nation in the modern sense must be allowed to grow; it means that modern civilization should be discarded and we should go back to the medieval ways; it means either autocratic government or foreign government; it means, finally, just nothing at all except an emotional state of mind and a conscious or unconscious desire not to face realities, especially economic realities. Emotions have a way

of upsetting logic, and we may not ignore them simply because they seem so unreasonable. But this idea of a Muslim nation is the figment of a few imaginations only, and, but for the publicity given to it by the press, few people would have heard of it. And even if many people believed in it, it would still vanish at the touch of reality.²³

Of course, imperialist machinations and colonial bourgeois leadership of the national movement in India have made of Pakistan a reality that will not simply vanish. And Nehru was as clear as is the liberation movement in South Africa of the strategic purposes behind the propagation of a bogus Pakistani nationality:

Stress has been laid on the 'Muslim nation' in India, on 'Muslim culture', on the utter incompatibility of Hindu and Muslim 'cultures'. The inevitable deduction from this is (although it is not put boldly) that the British must remain in India for ever and ever to hold the scales and mediate between the two 'cultures'.²⁴

Similarly Marx and Engels in the 1840s advocated the idea of a Greater Germany as being in the interests of both the German workers and the progressive bourgeoisie. Historical developments, in particular the defeat of the national revolutions of 1848 in central Europe, led to the (now) permanent separation of Austria from Germany.

These historical examples show no more than that the development of the national idea is inextricably linked with the class leadership of the national struggle and that, therefore, the effective mobilisation of the oppressed people under working-class leadership is an imperative both of political practice and political theory.

The second meaning that can be attached to the term 'national liberation' in South Africa is the democratisation of the polity within the existing capitalist framework. This means simply that the black people should be *integrated* in

the existing system by being given formal political equality. This bourgeois-democratic programme was, until 1960, the official platform of all the political organisations of the people in one form or another. Of course, there were important differences. Whereas, in general, the largest section of the movement believed literally in this liberal ideal and trusted to the numerical superiority of 'Africans' to bring about eventually some more equitable sharing of wealth (thereby following the example of the Afrikaner sectionals), there were some in the movement, such as marxists in the Unity Movement and in the South African Communist Party, who believed that no power on earth would be able to contain the people's struggle within the confines of bourgeois democracy, that the revolution would assume a permanent character as a matter of necessity. Hence they were not only willing to preach a 'mere' democratic programme but also realised that the demands of the democratic programme reflected the real (revolutionary) consciousness of the majority of the oppressed people at this stage. Thus, for instance, the demand made in the Ten Point Programme of the Unity Movement for a new division of the land was potentially the pivot on which the revolutionary movement would turn from a movement for bourgeois democracy into one for the realisation of socialism in South Africa. It was realised that not even the pinkest of bourgeois liberals could genuinely advocate a change in existing property relations without becoming a sorcerer's apprentice who would unleash uncontrollable forces.

Nonetheless, the old guard of the Congress Movement in particular, as well as strong factions of the leadership of the Unity Movement, did not conceive of the struggle as a permanent, uninterrupted revolution. A good illustration of the validity of this interpretation comes from the record of the Treason Trial. Having due regard to the nature of political trials and the constraints under which witnesses for the defence have to speak, it is none the less true that

what Nelson Mandela said on the occasion quoted here reflects generally the views at the time of many of the old guard (but, ironically, not necessarily those of Mandela himself, despite his explicit statement to that effect!). In answer to a question from the prosecution about whether he thought that the demands of the Freedom Charter could be achieved by means of a process of gradual reforms, Mandela replied as follows:

Well, this is how I approach the question. I must explain at the outset that the Congress, as far as I know, has never sat down to discuss the question ... We demand universal adult franchise and we are prepared to exert economic pressure to attain our demands, and we will launch defiance campaigns, stay-at-homes, either singly or together [referring to the various components of the Congress Alliance], while the Government should say, 'Gentlemen, we cannot have this state of affairs, laws being defied, and this whole situation created by staying at homes. Let's talk.' In my own view I would say Yes, let us talk and the Government would say, 'We think that the Europeans at present are not ready for a type of government where there might be domination by non-Europeans. We think we should give you 60 seats. The African population to elect 60 Africans to represent them in Parliament. We will leave the matter over for five years and we will review it at the end of five years.' In my view, that would be a victory, my lords; we would have taken a significant step towards the attainment of universal adult suffrage for Africans, and we would then for the five years say: we will suspend civil disobedience, we won't have any stay-at-homes, and we will then devote the intervening period for the purpose of educating the country, the Europeans, to see that these changes can be brought about and that it would bring about better racial understanding, better racial harmony in the

country... Then at the end of the five year period, we will have discussions and the Government says, we will give you again 40 seats more,' I might say that this is quite sufficient, let's accept it, and still demand that the franchise should be extended, but for the agreed period we should suspend civil disobedience, no stay-at-homes. In that way we would eventually be able to get everything that we want; we shall have our People's Democracy, my lords. That is the view that I hold – whether that is Congress' view I don't know but that is my view.²⁵

The adoption of armed struggles, the influence of Communist Party members in the Congress movement, the developments in Southern Africa, and the rapid growth of working-class consciousness because of the Bantustan policy, have in the interim shifted the whole organisation to the Left in spite of numerous split-offs by anti-Communist elements. There is now a tendency to see the revolutionary struggle as a continuous process towards the establishment of a socialist order.²⁶ However it is clear that, in the testimony cited above, Mandela was voicing the typical liberal bourgeois point of view which was held by most of the official leadership of the Congress Movement at the time and which is still held by many 'leaders' who now operate in the 'opposition' parties in Bantustan legislative assemblies and even in the Black Consciousness Movement.²⁷ It should also be clear from what I have said previously that in this view the 'nation' consists of 'majority' and 'minority' nationalities and that democratic rights would be guaranteed for those groups that would require such guarantees. On the other hand, it must be obvious that the actual course of history – *inter alia*, the intransigent resistance of the National Party to negotiations with the liberal bourgeois and aspirant-bourgeois leadership of the national movement – has weakened this tendency. I have already shown that the previous ruling-

class strategy of aborting the growth of an indigenous black bourgeoisie is coming home to roost by way of the fact that there is no strong bourgeois leadership among the people, that the social base of the movement for national liberation is unquestionably a proletarian-peasant one, and that the armed struggle itself is throwing up a working-class leadership steeled by failure, disappointments and betrayals.

It is to the third option, therefore, that we have to turn. In this interpretation the 'racial' oppression of the black people is understood as a function of the capitalist system itself. It is not an aberration or a disease that can be healed by applying political therapy to the white electorate. What is necessary is the liquidation of those institutions and practices which have given rise to national oppression, to the exclusion of the majority of the people from the body politic and from the enjoyment of equal rights in all spheres. This means nothing else than the abolition of capitalism itself. Because of the colour-caste framework of the social relations engendered by the capitalist system in the specific historical conditions of South Africa (i.e. the privileged position which whites enjoy by virtue of their 'colour'), the struggle assumes a national form. But its content is necessarily a social one. It cannot be halted at the mere integration of the black people into the existing economic relationships on a basis of 'equality'. Today, any attempt at such integration must infallibly bring about the more or less rapid disintegration of the capitalist system itself. To believe as some liberals still do – even after the Cuban and Vietnamese experiences – that the mere concession of political rights without an accompanying redistribution of wealth can buy off an oppressed population which consists in the main of exploited workers, is an idle dream. On this the extreme right and left wings of South African politics are in agreement. For the ruling class the time has passed where such a strategy could have

worked and it is literally faced with the National Party alternative of fascist rule for decades, during which the balkanisation and class polarisation of the oppressed can be pursued without fear of Armageddon.

The nation, in this third conception, consists of all the people who are prepared to throw off the yoke of capitalist exploitation and racist oppression. It involves a determined and uncompromising struggle against all attempts to divide the population on the basis of language, religion, tribe or caste. It is based on the realisation that the colour-caste consciousness of the oppressed is a vanishing thing which is replaced *pari passu* by a growth in workers' consciousness and working-class unity. It proposes the solution of the national question by means of the application of consistent democracy in every sphere, by the legal enforcement of equality of all languages. This tendency believes, together with people such as Cabral that:

Ten years ago, we were Fula, Mandjak, Mandinka, Balante, Pepel, and others. Now we are a nation of Guineans. Tribal divisions were one reason the Portuguese thought it would not be possible for us to fight. During these ten years we were making more and more changes, so that today we can see that there is a new man and a new woman, born with our new nation, and because of our fight. This is because of our ability to fight as a nation ... This is not the first fight in our country, and it is not Cabral who invented the struggle. We are following the example given by our grandfathers who fought against Portuguese domination 50 years ago. Today's fight is a continuation of the fight to defend our dignity, our right to have an identity – our own identity.²⁸

Or in Machel's words:

No one can claim that they are representatives of a race, ethnic group, region or religious belief. They represent the working People, their sacrifices and

aspirations, the whole People, from the Rovuma to the Maputo, without distinction as to race, ethnic group or religion. No one fought for a region, race, tribe or religion. We all fought and are still fighting for the same nation, for the single ideal of liberating our land and our people.²⁹

Today the forces of production in South Africa have developed to the extent that, in the teeth of legal sanctions against joint political and economic action by black workers, there is hardly an extra-parliamentary action that does not involve all sectors of the oppressed. Every organisation of the people rejects distinctions made on the basis of caste and even the Church is compelled more and more to speak with the language of the people. The rulers attempt the impossible by, for instance, hounding 'Africans' out of the Western Cape, which they have proclaimed a 'Coloured Preferential Area' for labour purposes. Yet the people continue to stream back and 'Africans' and 'Coloureds' jointly defy the bulldozers and bullets of the ruling class. Students and school pupils throughout the country are refusing to serve as willing tools for the perpetuation of the oppressive and exploitative system by boycotting schools and closing down the segregated political and quasi-political institutions which are working the system on behalf of the ruling class. They appeal to their parents as *workers* to come out in support of the struggle. *And all this is taking place on the basis that it is a struggle for full and equal nationhood, based on the erasure of the status quo as a whole.* 1976–77 was a period of unprecedented mass struggles involving oppressed people against the state machine over economic, educational and political matters. At the time of writing, thousands of children are boycotting schools and thousands of 'illegal squatters' are being hounded from one locality to another. In all these actions the police are confronted directly by urban workers and their children, who demand an end to the system of

oppression, division and exploitation. In the rural areas a massive resettlement of people is taking place amid growing signs of principled resistance. And all these struggles are being linked up with the vocal and articulate student population both in town and country. More and more the struggle is being directed not against 'whites' but against the state as such in both its white and its black visages.

More and more people are becoming aware of the need to forge a new type of organisation that will represent and articulate these aspirations of the labouring people. Strategy and theory are converging in front of our eyes. The nation of South Africa is struggling to be born. The working people are exercising their right to self-determination in the only way that it is possible for them to do. They are resolved to bring to an end the archaic divisions that have debilitated the nation and kept it in subjugation for more than a century.

From their perspective on the national question it is not only possible but necessary to denounce as bogus the reactionary 'nationalism' of the 'homelands leaders' such as Matanzima. *A fortiori* the 'nations' they claim to represent, be they 'Xhosa', 'Zvlu', 'Tswana', 'Coloured', 'Indian' or anything else, are non-existent entities which no recourse to theory can create.³⁰ The only way in which these so-called 'nations' can gain even a Pakistani-Israeli kind of legitimacy is by serving the same functions politically as those two states do, as centres of counter-revolution and division of the colonised peoples of the world. Only through the physical defeat of a revolutionary struggle can the Transkei and those that may follow it become temporarily consolidated for the benefit of imperialism/capitalism in South Africa.

For the same reason bourgeois nationalism posing as 'African nationalism', which aims at no more than the integration of the oppressed black people into the existing

capitalist structures, has been weighed and rejected. However, precisely because bourgeois-democratic demands *are* revolutionary in their implications in the specific historical conditions obtaining in South Africa, this nationalist tendency not only continues to have a resonance among the people but, because of the singularly difficult military problems faced by the South African revolutionary movement, it will continue to be the greatest danger to it, assured as it is of the full support of all the imperialist states. The greatest task facing the national liberation movement in its hour of crisis is, therefore, the need to propagate with all the means at its disposal the fundamental distinction between *national* liberation, and the *nationalist* 'liberation' proffered by bourgeois liberalism in whatever guise.

The working people have resolved in the field of action to create a new South Africa in which the barriers of caste can no longer rise up to tower above the nation and imprison its members in separate cells (whereby the capitalist gaolers of the country can the more easily control them). The working class, in short, has become the leading class in the nation and is about to constitute itself as the nation of South Africa. The people themselves are disproving the validity of the National Party's theories as well as that of all other divisive, multi-national and multi-ethnic theories and the strategies that imply them. They have been able to formulate clearly that the so-called 'ethnic groups' are specifically either language groups, colour-castes, religious groups or administrative groups and no more. The grand attempt to make out of these groups of people socio-political entities comparable to the colour-castes of the recent past is not only doomed to the same fate as the strategy on which the perpetuation of the colour-caste system was based, but is in any case too late. Ever since the emergence and acceptance by the oppressed of the African National Congress and the strategy of 'non-

European' unity, all such attempts, short of massive and virtually permanent fascist repression, were doomed.

The sanguine optimism of this conclusion need not obscure the realistic expectation that the heritage of a divided past will continue to be a liability in the future. The ideological dimension of a social formation always lags behind its political and economic dimensions. Prejudice ingrained over centuries will not evaporate overnight. But to the extent that the property relations are radically restructured the question of the nation is resolved in principle. This is the infallible conclusion to which my investigation of the national question leads me. However steep the ascent from that new point of departure, however deeply entrenched caste prejudice and other forms of ideological conditioning may be among the social groups inhabiting South Africa, with the success of a revolutionary strategy based on the kind of analysis presented in this study, such vestiges of the past will no longer have the soil in which they can thrive. The revolutionary nation will have conquered for itself the historic opportunity to create a new South Africa along a road of its own choosing.

Notes

1. 'A nation is a historically evolved stable community of people based on community of language, territory, economic life and psychological make-up manifested in a community of culture.' Moreover, 'The Nation is not simply a historical category but a historical category belonging to a specific epoch, the epoch of rising capitalism.' (Translated from J.W. Stalin, 'Der Marxismus und die nationale Frage', in *zur Nationalen und zur Colonialen Frage*, (Ausgewählte Artikel), pp. 7, 12.
2. See his polemic against the Yugoslav epigones, *ibid.*
3. See Anthony Smith, *Theories of Nationalism*, pp. 165–6.

4. We have already seen what problems this gave rise to in the early period of the C.P.S.A. See Chapter 3 above.
5. See Otto Bauer, *Die Sozialdemokrati und die Nationalitätenfrage*. Also Stalin, *op. cit.*, *passim*.
6. See E.H. Carr, *History of the Bolshevik Revolution*, Vol. 1, pp. 281–2.
7. The Soviet material was, unfortunately, accessible to me only in German translation, mainly from publications in the German Federal Republic.
8. See, for instance, P.M. Rogavcev and M.A. Sverdlin, 'Concerning the Concept "Nation"' in *Ostprobleme*, Vol. 19, 1967, No. 2, p. 45.
9. M.S. Ozunusov, 'The Nation as a Socio-Ethnic Community of People', in *ibid.*, p. 53.
10. M.O. Mnacakanjan, 'Nation and Nation State', in *ibid.*, p. 63 (my emphasis).
11. See especially the work of Emerson, *op. cit.* Also, Anthony D. Smith, *op. cit.* An informative work on the problems posed by the phenomenon of nationalism to Marxian theory is H.B. Davis, *Nationalism and Socialism: Marxist and Labor Theories of Nationalism to 1917*.
12. *Op. cit.*, p. 165.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 165–6.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 166–7.
15. Martin Legassick, though he does not discuss the methodological problem, adopts this attitude. 'Neither black South Africans nor black Americans, I would argue, form a nation in Stalin's sense. Neither "historical" rights of territory nor historic culture, though they may form an important part of forging identity or claiming resources, are an adequate basis for a national movement in those cases.' M. Legassick, 'Class and Nationalism in South African Protest', pp. 52–3.
16. See Introduction.
17. Trotsky writes on this point that: 'Whereas in nationally

homogeneous states the bourgeois revolutions developed powerful centripetal tendencies, rallying to the idea of overcoming particularism, as in France, or overcoming national disunion, as in Italy and Germany – in nationally heterogeneous states on the contrary, such as Turkey, Russia, Austria-Hungary, the belated bourgeois revolution released centrifugal forces. In spite of the apparent contrariness of these processes when expressed in mechanical terms, their historic function was the same. In both cases it was a question of using the national unity as a fundamental industrial reservoir. Germany had for this purpose to be united, Austria-Hungary to be divided'. L. Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*, Vol. 3, p. 37.

18. *The Economist*, 26 August 1967, p. 728.
19. See, for instance, Innes & O'Meara, *op. cit.*
20. 'Self-Determination for the American Negroes', (4 April 1939), Leon Trotsky on Black Nationalism and Self-Determination (my emphasis).
21. Quoted in Erwin Oberländer, 'Der sowjetische Nationsbegriff: Zur gegenwärtigen Diskussion', *Politik und Zeitgeschichte: Beilage zum Parlament*, Vol. 18, no. 12, 1968, p. 19 (my translation).
22. *Ibid.* (my translation). Compare this statement with Stalin's *obiter dicta* in 1925 when he criticised the U.S. Communist Party's policies towards black workers in the U.S.A. 'The whole approach of the American party to the Negro question is wrong. You are a national minority with some characteristics of a nation' (quoted in M. Legassick, 'Class and Nationalism in South African Protest', p. 45).
23. J.N. Nehru, *Autobiography*, p. 469.
24. *Ibid.*
25. Carter & Karis, Vol. 3, p. 593, 'Does the A.N.C. Advocate Violence? Treason Trial Testimony March–October 1960'.

26. See, for instance, Slovo, *op.cit.*, pp. 144–9.
27. In the same court hearing, Dr. Wilson Z. Conco, in answer to a question from the Prosecutor whether he regarded '... the Liberal Party as a party which agrees and supports the methods adopted by the Congress movement to achieve their objects ...', replied: 'Yes, the Liberal Party ... agrees with us to this extent that it also recognises the universal franchise ... they agree with us there; that racial discrimination must go, we agree with them there; that South Africa must have a Government who should represent all the people, there we more or less agree. And so are the Progressives and all the other groups which agree with our main object I would regard as the "forces of freedom" with us ... We believe in ... attaining our objectives through extra-parliamentary methods ... The Liberal Party believes in fighting in Parliament ... but we have no vote, my Lord, and we could never influence parliament, I mean direct influence through the electorate ... We still want a change through Parliament, my lord, but indirectly by drawing the attention of the voters to our sufferings ... and ... in our Defence Campaign a lot of white people came to our support, not only here but in the world over ...' In answer to the question whether they would retain the present constitution after attaining 'equal rights', Dr. Conco affirmed. (Karis and Carter, *op.cit.*, Vol. 3, p. 580).

It is interesting to note that a variant of this bourgeois liberal viewpoint has been put forward by Martin Legassick. His views on the question seem to me to be formally indistinguishable from those of the previously dominant tendency in the Black Consciousness Movement insofar as they seem to propose the same kind of economic organisation of the oppressed people within the present socio-political context. He apparently assumes, on the basis of the correct proposition that 'In South Africa there is no contradiction between the national and the class

struggle', that certain reformist actions of an economic character will necessarily lead to a rapid development and deepening of working-class consciousness.

Legassick is fascinated by Harold Cruse's analysis of the U.S.A. and sees South Africa as being composed –like the U.S.A. – of a number of 'ethnic collectives'. (See Martin Legassick, 'Class and Nationalism in South African Protest – The South African Communist Party and the Native Republic 1928–1934', Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University, New York, July 1973, p. 55). He is, of course, aware of the reformist implications of his analysis and of what he advocates: 'But the means by which any revolutionary party mobilizes its social base are reformist, whether one talks about a "mass line", "immediate demands" or a "minimum programme". The point is whether these "reformist" demands can win and retain popular support and whether their internal logic leads both to questioning of the system as a whole and to a stronger power base for challenging that system. The strategy of "equal rights" did not fulfil these tasks. either in America or in South Africa ... Cruse's program, in contrast, focuses on reforms which *institutionalize* popular power, just as did the Soviets in Russia or the liberated zones in guerrilla struggles ...' (*ibid.*, pp. 58–9).

With an elegant but futile logic, Legassick concludes that 'The liberation movement has yet to develop a clear perspective on the nature of African nationalism in South Africa ... In the townships, and all the rural reserve areas inside and outside South Africa, the potential foci for "self-determination" and defended liberation still exist. In South Africa there is no contradiction between the national and class struggle, The national struggle, authentically carried out, is the means of destruction of South African capitalism' (*ibid.*, p. 671). A futile logic, since it depends on an unwarranted analogy between the position of black people in the U.S.A. and those in South

Africa. The idea of 'ethnic collectivities' must needs lead to a Buthezi-type 'black consciousness', i.e. one based on a bourgeois- or aspirant-bourgeois-led, federally conceived 'alliance' of 'peoples'. Such a struggle, 'inauthentically' carried out, proves beyond doubt that there is no *necessary* connection between 'institutionalised' economic power bases of a *reformist* character and the growth of workers' consciousness.

Although Legassick may by now have moved away from his position in this paper, it deserves careful analysis since it seems to me to be the perfect theoretical trap for radicals who are disenchanted with the traditional strategic-tactical stock-in-trade of the established organisations of the people.

28. A. Cabral, 'Connecting the Struggles: An Informal Talk with Black Americans', in A. Cabral, *op.cit.*, pp. 78–9.
29. Samora Machel, 'Message from Samora Machel' (Africa Front line).
30. Examples of recent pamphlets distributed by student and other groups (mostly illegally, it would seem) are reprinted in the Appendix.

POSTSCRIPT

SINCE THIS WORK WAS WRITTEN a number of events have taken place that require brief comment. The most important for the perspective adopted here are undoubtedly the so-called 'new constitutional dispensation' put forward by the National Party and the 'new constitutional proposals' (subject to the decisions of a national convention) adopted by the Progressive Federal Party (P.F.P.). Briefly, the National Party proposes the establishment of three parliaments for Whites, Coloureds and Indians respectively. These are to be linked at the top by a Council of Cabinets which would also have power to initiate legislation. This is merely a glorified version of the present set-up as regards these three 'nations' and represents a fanciful but obviously temporising 'solution' of the dilemma posed by the absence of Coloured and Indian 'homelands' in terms of the official mythology. However it is also a clever attempt to destroy growing black solidarity by bribing the more venal elements of the Coloured and Indian petty bourgeoisie and aspiring bourgeoisie. Already these are arguing that this 'solution' (albeit temporary) be 'given a chance', since it 'opens the door' to 'greater things' and will enable 'progressives' to raise the question of 'urban blacks', i.e. permanently urbanised, Bantu-speaking black people. The more audacious visionaries among them even visualise the day when all these 'nations', together with the eight or so 'independent Bantu homelands', will constitute some sort of confederation of states or communities.

The prediction, based on my analysis, that the right and left wings of the ruling class will meet each other on the field of 'plural democracy' is confirmed by the latest Progressive Federal Party constitutional proposals. The

Party now rejects its previously advocated qualified franchise; but it also rejects as totally dangerous the slogan of 'one man, one vote', by which it understands universal adult suffrage within a unitary state, and proposes instead a federation of 'groups' on the lines of the Austro-German theory of cultural-national autonomy. As a commentator in *The Star* put it:

The P.F.P. finally acknowledges the realities of race politics, and the 'strong primordial loyalties' of ethnic groups. It recognises that in power political terms ... compulsory integration is as hopeless as compulsory segregation. The new philosophy is that ethnic considerations in our country need not create a straight majority-minority division, or a winner-take-all government. Instead there is a 'plurality of minorities' who – given sufficient confidence – will bargain and negotiate to consensus. They will do so in their own interests as well as in the interests of all individuals who believe that conflict brings chaos. (Harvey Tyson, 'Is this the best road to peace?' *The Star*, 28 October 1978)

The strategic goal and implications of the political crystallisation of the pluralist thesis is caught in the title of an editorial of the same newspaper on the previous day. In bold letters it calls the P.F.P. plan *A Way to Avoid Revolution*.

The significance of this closing of the gap between the right and left-wing representatives of the ruling class is formulated as follows by Dr. Jan du Plessis, Head of Research for the Foreign Affairs Association:

A very interesting shift has taken place within the political philosophy of both the P.F.P. and the N.P. Both parties find common ground today in the fact that 'groups' have come to play an important role in their political thinking. Within the broader spectrum of world politics, this shift in emphasis is important, for it implies a development away from the individual as corner-stone of society to the group as

the protector and guarantee of human freedom and dignity ... There is a gradual but certain evidence that the Western World and the importance it has put on the individual in society which eventually resulted in the Western type of democracy, that includes majority rule and one-man-one vote, cannot cure the political ailments of countries where groups (or for that matter ethnic units) play an important role in the social compilation ...

It seems that the P.F.P. has not yet resolved the conflict between individual and group interests within their new model. The whole idea is based on the principle of group interests, but somewhere along the road it turns unto the individual as the prime driving force. But in spite of this the P.F.P. has 'come home' building a party policy on the realities of the African continent. Acceptance within the N.P. of the 'group' as prime generator of political activity is not a new policy. In all fairness one should rather speak in terms of a policy adjustment than a total shift in basic premises. There is, however, one important aspect that deserves closer attention. Although the N.P. accepted pluralism as the basis of their policy, segregation and democratic pluralism are in real terms incompatible. Both concepts include the 'group' as the corner-stone of pluralism, with this exception, segregation does not accept the idea of equality among groups while democratic pluralism does. ('New constitution: a shift to group, *The Star*, 11 November 1978.)

So the battle lines are being drawn long before the conflict explodes uncontrollably. The ruling class, under pressure of events in other parts of Southern Africa, especially in Namibia, are going all-out to present a united strategy (disguised by party political 'differences'). This is in order to tie it to as large a segment of the oppressed people as possible through winning over their 'ethnic

leaders' and by trading on the universal and deep-rooted desire for peace and the prevention of war. The Coloured Labour Party, Buthelezi and his Inkatha, the parties in the South African Indian Council and the right wing of the black nationalist movement at home and abroad are being groomed for the historically risky task of winning over the oppressed people to the side of the ruling class at the very moment when the possibility of abolishing that class has finally and irrevocably become the guide to the action of the people! 'Ethnicity' and 'group politics' promise to become life and death issues. One's attitude to the national question becomes a touchstone of one's position in the class struggle!

Finally the involvement of the Western Five (U.S.A., Britain, West Germany, France and Canada) and the Five Front-Line African States (Botswana, Mozambique, Zambia, Angola and Tanzania) in the solution of the Namibian and Zimbabwean conflicts calls for comment on the possible influence this intervention may have on the modalities of the solution of the national question in South Africa.

Imperialism, viewed strictly from the perspective of the complications of the national question in South Africa, is concerned only with the stabilisation and retention of the sub-continent in its sphere of domination. In general, it has no preferences, except that it rejects the apartheid strategy precisely because of its destabilising effects. In general again, because of American influence and the backwardness of bourgeois social science, 'ethnic solutions' are advocated as being 'realistic', i.e. as preserving capitalist property relations. The Kissinger Study of Southern Africa, though consisting of a set of five mechanistic scenarios, is the basis of all imperialist strategies in the region, and all five view the question if not in terms of even smaller 'ethnic' entities, at least in terms of 'white' and 'black'. Imperialism will and does support any class or alliance of classes that promises to save capitalism in Southern Africa. The imperialist powers have a multiple strategy and their ramifications are to be

found in almost every organisation of a political or quasi-political character in South Africa, ranging from the National Party on the right through the churches to the guerrilla organisation on the left. Imperialism is, therefore, well placed, whatever the outcome, provided the permanency of the revolution can be prevented from asserting itself. One way of doing so is precisely by spreading racist confusion on the national question.

For historical reasons, all the African states, including the so-called Frontline States, are committed to the territorial integrity of South Africa and to a unitary democratic, or rather majority-rule constitution. This is where the similarity ends. However, for some leaders this majority rule is merely licensed chauvinism whereas, judging from the writings of Nyerere, Machel, Cabral and others, there are those who have thought about the matter profoundly in terms of the future of Africa and of mankind in general. The influences emanating from the African states are, therefore, by no means uniform. On the contrary, the general position of the states concerned in the international class struggle also determines the direction of influence they bring to bear on the Southern African liberation movements. Bourgeois anthropological clap-trap has so poisoned the intellectual climate in large parts of Africa that one should expect some of the most backward attitudes engendered in the South African situation to be reinforced in the men and women of the liberation movements that are compelled to operate within this climate! As with the former Portuguese colonies, it is to be expected (and hoped) that the South African liberation movement will make a qualitatively decisive contribution to the solution of the national question in the African context.

APPENDIX: DOCUMENTS FROM THE SOWETO UPRISING OF 1976

Introductory note

The following documents, all issued in and around Johannesburg during the historic events of the Soweto Uprising of 1976, are reproduced (in their unaltered form) here because of their intrinsic interest as contemporary documents and also because they show at first hand the reality of the processes which my analysis has tried to lay bare. Despite the fact that they emanate quite obviously from at least three different political 'centres', all of them have the following elements in common:

- The realisation that caste prejudice, at least among the oppressed people, has been largely understood for what it is, an instrument of divide-and-rule policy;
- The emphasis on the need for a united liberation movement of the whole of the emergent nation;
- The realisation that it is the black workers who alone can carry the struggle to its conclusion; and
- The crucial importance of rejecting co-operation with government-created and controlled political institutions, the dummy councils, 'toy telephones', bantustan 'leaders', and so forth.

Having due regard to the literary problems of underground production, it is no less than astounding to find the extent to which all these 'centres' were forced by events (and by inclination, no doubt) to put forward the same basic positions irrespective of the organisational or ideological attachments of the authors.

Document I: The Voice of Black People in South Africa

The Voice of the People is the Voice of God

1. When a government no longer filleth the grade, according to the advancement of the people, behold, Wisdom withdreweth its Divine protection from that government. And Straightway, the people run into anarchy.

Lay not the blame of anarchy and revolution and assassinations on the people; Wisdom's judgment is against the government in all cases. These conditions of vengeance are but the fruit resulting for the government's divergence from the will of Divine Wisdom and Truth, and the march of its light and judgment, and thereupon, red spirits come upon that people, and the people fall upon their government, and destroy it.

2. Top leaders of Southern African government : Balthazer John Vorster, and his assistant Thomas James Kruger had already disclosed their verdicts and judgments towards the grievances of black people of Southern Africa – in the first place, Mr. B.J. Vorster, ignored the plea of this people by tightening up his mouth, instead he chose to meet Dr. K. [Dr. Kissinger, the then U.S. Secretary of State]. He did this on two occasions; not because he needed advice from Dr. K. in connection with Southern African unrest, but to use this as a bridge when he is busy organising arms and mercenaries for Southern African government's protection, which would be used to kill armless people. He is right when he said through the radio on Monday night (6.9.1976) the future of the country is very rosy, yes! This is true the country's future is rosy because of gun-barrel!! Mr. T. Kruger who is the Minister of Justice, police, prison and vice-Prime Minister of Southern Africa, has made it clear that the country is not a police state; while bullet-victims

are buried every week, and cells and prisons are bursting to the seams of detainees, after he has ignored the pleas of children as a Minister of Justice. I may interpret this as being the aim of proving his powers over black man, Mr. Kruger emphasized his vergions by saying, he knows the black man perfectly; he even terms this type of perfection as 'black nazism'. And thereupon, you black man in this country, your existence and needs are within Mr. Kruger's pocket, you may have skipped the country or turn yourself into insenity, fact remains that you belong to him, he may reply or he may not, all are at his will. Zeichman! Zeichman! Zeichman!! This means that as a black man in this country you will reach the point, which Zeichman reached when he faced his own people. This is the emphasis of Mr. Kruger. This was published in Rand Daily Mail, on the 2nd day of September 1976.

3. The government of Southern Africa, if for whites only not for black people, the needs of Southern Africa are arranged by white authorities with their white fellow-men: behind the back of the black man. There is an old biblical quotation saying: 'a woman's needs will be under the supervision of her husband.' This is the way a black man is treated by white government of Southern Africa. Any black man who is still casting his hope upon any white government in the world, he is facing 'two-faced shadow', why because they are alike. No outside white leader can bear the grievances of a black man who was born and bred in Southern Africa, while the white man within boarders of the country cannot.

4. There are the rulers of this country:-

BOTHA – SMUTS – HERTZOG – SMUTS – MALAN – STRYDOM – VERWOERD – VORSTER.

The seventh Prime Minister 'Verwoerd', received independence by 'Common Wealth', in 1961. When Dr. Verwoerd tried to stage the responsibilities of a black man in this country for the first time in history of Union of South

Africa. He was slaughtered in the Parliament, in the heart of Marks building, Capetown, with well polished method planned by Afrikaans speaking Parliamentarians, who were under the auspices of platteland burghers, why because he (Verwoerd) aimed at breaking up the covenant of 'Voortrekkers' which says: under no circumstances should any Voortrekker generation form any type of covenant with a 'kaffer' (kafifiir). After the burial of Dr. Hendrick French Verwoerd, Vorster climbed the 'bloody' throne, and ruled up to this day.

5. Report on June-September riots run as follows:-

(a) 900 black people were killed by S.A. Police and its supporters.

(b) 500 are missing.

(c) 460 are still lying in hospitals, some are maimed for life.

(d) 1,500 are detained by the police.

(e) 5,000 lost their jobs because of children's demands.

The whole of Soweto is covered with a smell of decayed or rotten carcass, we are expecting such cases because this was a battlefield, but we are unable to arrange for the search, why because gatherings are banned by the South African Minister of Justice. Black people in South Africa are not allowed to walk in groups in the streets, during the week they are allowed to travel to work, to and fro, over the weekend they should remain in their areas in small groups, otherwise sport fields are their meeting place, where majority of policemen are.

6. South African Press Associations had decided not to transmit black people's grievances, because they are government's, black Reporters who may perhaps sympathise with their fellowfolkes, they are traced by the police, when they are found are taken to the custody without trial. During the riots, black people are to be discouraged by false reports on the Press; black victims are to be published in great numbers, where else it's not so,

government's victims are to be hid and published in very small numbers. Radio South Africa and its branches are also government's channels, they are to be told what to do, their reports or announcements are very wrong.

7. The Afrikaans question has aroused old grievances of oppression, which started from the British rule in the Union of South Africa. Every black mind seems to have been tired of the white face, even a child aged 5 yrs, is no more in favour of a white person. October, 1976, must be regarded as a deadline of the white rule in South Africa. There is no longer police service among black residents of South Africa, when black community's members happen to report any crime at the police station he is told that – "you go back home and have a good taste of your black-power", this means the end of part one. One can take from treatment that police force offers unto black people of this country; shorting without reasons, burning concealed black bodies, conducting Zulus to loot black residents' properties from their homes, they are now arranging for gas-chambers to kill detainees, as Germans did to Jewish people during the war.

8. The first black demands from Southern African government are as follows:-

- (a) To remove senseless laws of "Influx Control", not to minimise it, but to be destroyed at once.
- (b) To Abolishment of all cheap labours, and equality of salaries, is needed.
- (c) The abolishment of white authority in the education field of black man throughout (SA).
- (d) The release of all black people who are arrested under the laws of Influx Control.
- (e) The release of all parents, teachers, young people, and scholars who were detained during the (SA) riots, let this be for today only.

9. These demands should be met before the *15th day of October 1976*, failing which, all black people in Southern Africa starting from 15 yrs old, both boys and girls, up to 65 yrs old person, shall be compelled to arm themselves with anything and fall upon the face of the present government of white man in this country.

10. There shall be a 9 days' of grace, on the 24th, day of October, 1976, in the night, every black man shall strike at anything he happen to come across appertaining the government of this country, each town must be attacked during that night. No person should be worried about the beautiful figure of South Africa, it shall be rebuilt again, what we want is freedom in our forefathers' land, nothing else.

11. We are appealing to African black states to guard South African borders, so that Voerster's auxiliaries from outside countries, should not take part while *two brothers* are fighting for their own rights.

12. The former South African National Congress should stop misguiding the world, that all achievements done by the black people of South Africa are performed through influences, this not correct its chief officials had skipped the country so, they don't feel the present pinch, how can they claim the latest existence of riots, where were they when children complained about Sister language – Afrikaans! Children must be given their own phame for breaking the "ICE"! The book containing the latest activities should be written and be used as a text book throughout the on coming black schools in South Africa.

13. We want to encourage the Cape students – Africans, Coloureds and Indian students for cooperation during the present riots.

ONE VOICE! ONE MAN!

Document 2: The Black Students' Message to their Beloved Parents

Dear Parents

The Black students throughout Azania have shown their extreme dissatisfaction with the education that is handed out to them, an education which shackles the mind and which is only intended to create a mere efficient black labour force to be exploited by those in power, more than this, the Black students have demanded a radical change from the entire oppressive apartheid system which dehumanises and belittles one, a system that not allow the full development of man, what we have seen in Soweto and in other areas throughout the country appears to be the first stirrings of a monster and we may be standing in the tip of a powder keg which could shake the whole of South Africa. A growing white mountain of repressive laws and suppressive measures (pass laws police brutality detentions without trial etc.) has been met with a new and growing determination by the Black students a determination to rid themselves of the oppressor and to build a free and undivided Azania.

Peaceful demonstrations by the students have been met with force by those in power a call on workers who are also our parents by students to join them in this protest marches has been met with an escalation of police brutality and an increase in the number of legalised murders.

The students believe that South Africa is what it is, and has been built by the blood, sweat and broken bodies of the oppressed and exploited Black workers, it is a wellknown fact that the Blacks carry the economy of this country on their shoulders. All the sky-scrapers, super highways, etc., are built out of our undistributed wages.

It is because of these of facts that the students realise that in any liberatory struggle, the power for change lies with the workers.

Our Parents in the Hostels

We would now like to address ourselves to our parents in the hostels, whom the enemies of Black Unity want to set against us.

The students have nothing against people living in hostels, they are our parents they are victims of the notorious migrant labour system. They are forced to live hundreds of miles away from their families, their needs and grievances are ignored by the powers that be. We are aware that they are packed like sardines in small rooms with no privacy and living under appalling conditions.

Yet when the students rise against these injustices and designers of our miserable lives, the powers that be suddenly remember that these are well meaning citizens.

The puppet U.B.C. [Urban Bantu Council], acting on instructions from Pretoria deem it fit to arm our parents in the hostels against us. The students reject in toto, the entire oppressive system with its lucky packet institutions like the U.B.C.'s and the Bantustans, these toy telephones are designed to divide the Black community. UNITED WE STAND.

Document 3: WHO IS NEXT?

WHO IS NEXT? WHO IS NEXT? WHO IS NEXT?
TEARS ROLL DOWN AS EVERY BLACK MAN IS
ASKING:

WHO IS NEXT, TO BE DETAINED?

WHO IS THE NEXT TO BE KILLED IN DETENTION?

WHO IS NEXT TO BE SHOT IN THE STREET OR AT
SCHOOL?

IF WE ARE NOT GOING TO START THINKING OF
STRATEGIES TO BE USED BEFORE WE ALL ARE
KILLED, FUTURE GENERATIONS WILL HATE TO HEAR
OF US.

ARE WE TO WAIT UNTIL YOU ARE DEAD?
ARE WE TO WAIT FOR FOREIGNERS TO HELP US?
ARE WE TO WAIT FOR GODLY MAGIC TO LIBERATE
US?
ARE WE TO WAIT FOR AN UNBORN MOSES?

NO: NO: NO:

EVERY NATION LIBERATED ITSELF. THEREFORE WE
SHALL AND MUST STAND UP TO FIGHT FOR OUR
GOD GIVEN RIGHTS.

TO WIN WE MUST

HAVE COURAGE AND BE BRAVE
ALL BE FAITHFUL AND DEDICATED TO THE
STRUGGLE
ALWAYS BE PREPARED TO SACRIFICE OUR AND
OURSELVES
HAVE FAITH IN ALL WHAT WE ARE DOING
THERE IS NO NATION WHICH WAS OPPRESSED
UNTIL THE END OF LIFE.
THEREFORE WE SHALL BE FREE.
WE DO NOT CARE WHO SAYS WHAT.

WE CRY OUT AND SAY
AZANIA SHALL BE FREE

POWER IS MY SOUL
POWER IS MY SPIRIT
POWER IS MY BODY
POWER IS MY EVERYTHING

I WILL ALWAYS SHOUT AND SAY AMANDLA

FREEDOM IS COMING FREEDOM IS COMING
FREEDOM IS COMING

POWER

POWER

AMANDLA

AMANDLA

AMANDLA

POWER

Document 4: To Town!!! To Eloff!!! To That Exclusive White Paradise!!

This will be the new step, the fourth in series, by the revolutionary people of South Africa. Countrymen, the liberatory struggle has brought a new base, namely: the shattering of the myth that the Coloureds are more white than black. The killing of many of them in Cape Town and their stand, together with their African brethren to rock the centre of the oldest city, that symbol of white occupation of our country – Cape Town – is the greatest victory and marks another step in the development of a people, namely, common oppression irrespective of degree of intensity has

been at last recognised by the Black man. Divide and Rule has been dealt its death blow.

Johannesburg or Soweto, the Capital and the supposed centre of this national drive, has already lagged behind the countryside. Where the heart of Cape Town – Adderley Street – was rocked by revolutionary demonstrators. Are we made of a different metal from them? Surely not, they are mortals like ourselves. But their discontent about the present oppressive structure has made them bold. They burnt buildings, they took possession of what was forcefully raped from them a few centuries ago. They did not plead for work anymore. They brought so much panic to the already frightened whites, that all guns obtained in public market were sold out.

Police re-inforcements were called as far afield as Johannesburg. Therefore we are in the process of selling out the countryside, which we have stirred to revolt, only two months ago. For we fail to keep busy our local police and soldiers to such an extent that they are free to plunder elsewhere. Countrymen, this is not yet the time to retreat. Surely, not at a time when two universities have been reduced to ashes to support the cause. Surely, not at a time when almost everybody conscious has been arrested, surely, a retreat is impossible when our brothers studying in other parts of the country have raised their schools to the ground and brought educational machinery to a halt. These people also value their education, but have abandoned it for a better cause, namely the elimination of oppression. We cannot retreat to classrooms unless we reverse the whole course of events this year. And reversing the tide is tantamount to treachery.

We cannot succumb to the threats of this wounded and vicious bull Vorster. Ours is to kill it before it creates more harm. Already his police thugs are demanding passes at gun-point, already rents have gone higher. Are these concessions? No, surely let us move forward, Vorster must

not delude himself and think that we will stop anywhere short of freedom. Let us not betray the nation by pursuing selfish ends like writing exams. If we profess to be leaders the first and indispensable character is: INDEPENDENT THOUGHT AND MORAL COURAGE. If we are still looking for favours from M.C. Botha to recognise us as matriculating, it simply means that we are not independent but servants of the system like Gatsha Buthelezi who is paid by Vorster, do we also want Vorster's certificate? To hell with a paper! Certificate! The certificate we want now is our land, and for that we shall fight till the racists are defeated. Criminal Vorster keep your certificates and give us back our birth rights. We won't exchange them for a paper of enslavement certificate. Education is in itself good but the first school for an oppressed people is a revolution.

TO TOWN! TO JOHANNESBURG! TO ELOFF! and surroundings, demonstrate violently your bitterness. Ignore the counter revolutionaries, traitors who will call you a Tsotsi Element. For you are the Revolutionary Element.

We did it early this year, they have done it in Cape Town! What will stop us now? TO TOWN says the most deprived part of humanity! Use every available transport. The Battle Cry will be: VORSTER YOU CAN'T STOP US!

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