



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

# **BLACK PERCEPTIONS OF SOUTH AFRICAN HISTORY**

By

**WOLFGANG ROBERT LEO GEBHARD**

PRESENTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR  
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS, FACULTY OF ARTS,  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA.

PROMOTER: DR J E H GROBLER

PRETORIA  
NOVEMBER 1988



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FOREWORD

South African historiography is a subject surrounded by controversy, but it is also a topic that has enjoyed considerable attention in recent years. However all the historiographical works consulted had limitations with regard to how Blacks expressed their vision of South African history. The concept of a unique Black perception was rejected for a variety of reasons. Either on the grounds that no substantial body of work existed that could be called a "Black school", or on the basis that the recognition of such a school would imply the acceptance of race as a distinguishing feature in society. Consequently Black interpretations were neglected.

To overcome this shortcoming "documents" that generally do not concern the historian are utilized. The primary area of interest is to establish how Blacks understand the contribution of the past to the present. Frequently the expression of this perception is not to be found in primary sources. A rich mine of insight is to be found in literary works, and the critiques of Black literary critics. The former works include the historical dramas of HIE Dhlomo that have been so comprehensively collated in H.I.E Dhlomo. Collected Works, edited by T Couzens and N Visser. The latter critiques are significant because they argue that Black literature is formed by the experience of being-Black. Here the works of NC Manganyi, Looking Through the Keyhole and Being-Black- in- the World; of L Nkosi, Home and Exile; of S Biko, I Write What I Like; and of E Mphahlele, The African Image are of particular significance.

Where possible extensive use was made of published histories such as the works of the early writers like SM Molema's, The Bantu Past and Present, ST Plaatje's, Native Life in South Africa. One work that proved impossible to locate, either locally or overseas, was that of WB Rubusana, "History of South Africa from the Native standpoint", allegedly published early in the twentieth century. Although the existence of this work is in doubt its title indicates that by the beginning of



this century there was already a feeling that there was more than one perspective of South African history.

For the modern generation of writers WM Tsotsi's, From Chattel to Wage Slavery; BM Magubane's, The Political Economy of Race and Class, amongst others, were analysed. In addition works that addressed specific issues such as the collection by DDT Jabavu of papers and addresses on The Black Problem and The Segregation Fallacy were also included.

Autobiographies such as Freedom For My People, Let My People Go and The Autobiography of an Unknown South African by ZK Matthews, A Luthuli and N Mokgatle respectively were included in this dissertation because the authors showed a great concern with the past through which they had lived, and the past that contributed to the situation into which they were born.

The scope of the sources is deliberately eclectic in order to establish whether the themes that come to fore are peculiar to a specific era, generation of writers or genre of writing. The broad spectrum of sources indicates that there is a consistency in the themes that are to be found irrespective of when they came under discussion. Nevertheless there are shifts in emphasis depending on the era from which the source emanated.

Nevertheless some reliance is placed on published documents because they frequently contain an implied or explicit interpretation of the past to justify the statements being made or action being taken. Therefore the latter documents are approached from a different angle than that which is usually adopted by the historian.

In conclusion I would like to express my thanks to a number of people. Firstly to my promoter Dr JEH Grobler for being a patient, tolerant and unobtrusive guide during the course of this study. His extensive library and document collection was most useful. And to his predecessor as promoter, Prof FA van Jaarsveld, whose thoughts and library were readily available.





A word of thanks to Danie and Elsa de Jager who many years ago started me on the road to this dissertation by persuading me to return to university and financing the resumption of my undergraduate studies.

A further word of thanks are due to my brother and his wife, Ditch and Paula who stepped into the financial breach at a critical moment. And to my other brother Ulrich thank you for providing "technical support" in the form of computer equipment.

On a more personal note sincere thanks and appreciation to my wife Pam, who had to cope with physical and emotional crises while work was in progress yet never intruded in the completion of this dissertation. Thank you for your proofreading and suggestions on style. To my son Otto I would like to say that I hope that we can get on with the business of being father and son.

Lastly I dedicate this dissertation to my late father, and to my mother who in her own way has been supportive of my endeavours.



## CHAPTER 1

### THE PROBLEM STATED

An extensive body of literature has been written and is emerging on South African historiography. All have addressed themselves in one way or another to the various schools of South African history writing. When referring to "schools" reference is being made to the theoretical and ideological foundations that underlie the various interpretations of South African history. It is clear that there are several schools discernable, viz., the colonial, the Afrikaner, the liberal, the radical and latterly the Black schools. It is this latter school that is intended to be the major thrust of this dissertation.

The motives for this are various. While the works dealing with South African historiography acknowledge the existence of the first four mentioned, the attention given to the fifth, namely the Black school, is generally limited on the grounds that there is an insufficient body of works to justify defining it as a "school". Secondly, the point can be made, with some justification, that many of the purely historical works are written under the aegis of tutors who subscribe to a specific theoretical and ideological format which makes the student's interpretation that of his promoter. However there is one glaring deficiency in the works referred to in that they generally neglect the works of Blacks which reflect their perception of the South African past. This perception is hardly found in academic works but rather in polemical, creative, popular historical works and renditions of the oral tradition.

Outside of the pioneering works of Prof FA Van Jaarsveld on South African, historiography there were few other contributions to the debate until the emergence of the liberal-radical debate in the 1970s. Even in the case of Van Jaarsveld his early works,<sup>1</sup> showed a preoccupation

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The Awakening of Afrikaner Nationalism 1868-1881 (1961); The Afrikaner's Interpretation of South African History (1964); Geskiedkundige Verkenninge (1974); Probleme by Die Onderrig van Geskiedenis (1976); and Wie en Wat is die Afrikaner? (1981)



(albeit not exclusively) with his own cultural milieu, that of the Afrikaner. In his most recent publications, however, he has broadened the scope of his enquiry to include fairly comprehensive sections on Black historiography.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, he often implies in these sections that the works he has reviewed owe their origins to some form of external influence and that they view the world through White eyes, or are informed by an inimical ideology,<sup>3</sup> i.e. inimical to the status quo. However it must also be remembered that Van Jaarsveld frequently speaks out against overt and covert ideological influences of all persuasions detracting from historical objectivity.

Two recent works allude to the problem of Black historiography and both are fairly agreed that there is no such thing as a "Black school", but that there are works that reflect a very definite Black perception of the past. Saunders in the chapter titled "Early Africanist Work" discusses some of the works to be cited in this dissertation and makes the telling comment that in the case of the early creative and non-fictional writers they "offered a view of the past very different from that offered in the textbooks written by whites ... When they wrote of the past ... they were addressing the present as well." A pertinent observation is made when he says that although these viewpoints of the early writers were already in circulation the "[c]ontemporary professional did not take note of what such writers said; their work headed in quite other directions."<sup>4</sup> A study of Saunders's references for this particular chapter shows that he has consulted these texts in some detail. Therefore it might be assumed that spatial limitations stunted this aspect of his work. Nevertheless he does outline some perspectives that became clearly apparent during the research for this dissertation.

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<sup>2</sup> Omstrede Suid-Afrikaanse Verlede. Geskiedenis-ideologie en die Historiese Skuldvraagstuk, pp.123-169(1984) and "Das Afrikaanertum - Weg und Selbstverständnis", in R Hilf(ed), Südafrika - Krise und Entscheidung - Raum - Geschichte - Kraftfelder, p. 83. (1987)

<sup>3</sup> FA van Jaarsveld, Omstrede Suid-Afrikaanse Verlede. Geskiedenis-ideologie en die Historiese Skuldvraagstuk, p. 124.

<sup>4</sup> C Saunders, The Making of the Past..., pp. 105-111 and p. 110.



The second work referred to in the previous paragraph is Ken Smith's The Changing Past. Trends in South African Historical Writing. For the purposes of this study an earlier article by Smith has been utilized as there is no substantive or qualitative difference between the article and what is scattered throughout his recently published book.<sup>5</sup> The central thrust of Smith's article is that there is in fact no "Black school" of history writing, and that in effect one can only talk of views. In fact he rejects the concept of a Black school because of the ethnic connotations that this has. But his concept of a Black school is that which places the Black man at the centre of the historical stage. He argues that this has already been done with the work of Eddie Roux, Time Longer Than Rope, and has been continued to be written by historians such as Omer-Cooper, Guy, Beinart, Peires and Shillington.<sup>6</sup> He expresses the hope that when Blacks come to write on various topics in South African history "although their approaches may differ, this will hopefully not be because they are black, but rather as a result of their own perception of events as historians."<sup>7</sup>

There is no quarrel with this viewpoint but then Smith goes on to cite an essay by Grundlingh that in turn has drawn on a work that deals with Black Consciousness. The aspect that both Grundlingh and Smith refer to is the need to decolonize the past. This perception appears to be based on the work of Franz Fanon, whose philosophy had some influence on the thinking of Steve Biko. Biko was a leading and articulate protagonist of Black Consciousness which made clear statements on the need for

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5 K Smith, "The Black Man's View of South African History", in BJ Liebenberg, Leesbundel oor Strominge in die Suid-Afrikaanse Historiografie / Reader on Trends in South African Historiography, pp. 208-222

6 K Smith, "The Black Man's View of South African History", in BJ Liebenberg, Leesbundel oor Strominge in die Suid-Afrikaanse Historiografie / Reader on Trends in South African Historiography, pp. 208-209.

7 K Smith, "The Black Man's View of South African History", in BJ Liebenberg, Leesbundel oor Strominge in die Suid-Afrikaanse Historiografie / Reader on Trends in South African Historiography, p. 209. (Emphasis in text).



Blacks to write their own history because only a Black could understand what it was and is like to be black. References to those writers who wrote according to the dictates of Black Consciousness in this and later chapters will underscore this observation. It is interesting to note that the reference provided in the article and the book differ although they refer to the same work of Fanon's and both owe their origins to Grundlingh.<sup>8</sup> Grundlingh cites an American doctoral dissertation as source.<sup>9</sup> It is interesting to note that Fatton also credits this viewpoint to Biko in his footnote cited on the relevant page.<sup>10</sup> Nor does Fatton in any way indicate the provenance of this quotation. The only reference that he has to Fanon's Wretched of the Earth is in an entirely different context and to a different page.<sup>11</sup> In a personal communication Grundlingh says that he resorted to this method to avoid a direct reference to a banned publication, that of Biko. Smith would have done well to directly consider the works of both Black Consciousness and African humanism as represented by Biko and Mphahlele respectively. It is hoped that this dissertation will overcome these shortcomings in Smith's work and also indicate that, as objectionable as the concept of a Black school is, there are theoretical foundations for it, and that these cannot be easily ignored.

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8 K Smith, "The Black Man's View of South African History", in BJ Liebenberg, Leesbundel oor Strominge in die Suid-Afrikaanse Historiografie / Reader on Trends in South African Historiography, p. 211 footnote 9. and K Smith, The Changing Past..., p. 4 footnote 15. The original text is in F Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth, p. 169.

9 R Fatton, "Class and Nationalism in South Africa: a study in the radicalization of black politics, 1952-1976", p. 223, as cited in AM Grundlingh, "George Orwell's Nineteen Eighteen-Four: some reflections on its relevance to the study of history in South Africa", in Kleio, Vol XVI, 1984, p. 23

10 R Fatton, "Class and Nationalism in South Africa: a study in the radicalization of black politics, 1952-1976", p. 223.

11 R Fatton, "Class and Nationalism in South Africa: a study in the radicalization of black politics, 1952-1976", p. 163. He refers to F Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth, p. 33.





Echoes of the arguments that are followed in this dissertation and the premises on which they are based are to be found in an article by H J Van Aswegen entitled "Geskietskrywing Deur Swartes Oor Suid-Afrika."<sup>12</sup> In his exposition of themes Van Aswegen neglects an important aspect, that of cultural transformations as a result of colonization and dispossession.<sup>13</sup> In general though the thematic categorization that he applies corresponds with those used in this work, even though they are used in a chronological context here. In addition there is a concurrence with the views on the nature of scientific history amongst Blacks.<sup>14</sup> The term that Van Aswegen applies to classify some of the works he has analysed is also useful. He uses the term "resistance history".<sup>15</sup>

It appears that Saunders is the only one who considered fictional sources as a means of understanding Black perceptions of the past. But neither Saunders, Smith nor Van Aswegen appear to have considered the insight that can be gained into Black perceptions of the South African past from political documents. It is not intended to address this aspect any further as this will be discussed in the later exposition of the type of documents consulted and the reasons for their inclusion.

The publication of M Wilson's and L M Thompson's two-volume work, The Oxford History of South Africa, in 1969 and 1971, can be said to have

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12 Published in BJ Liebenberg (compiler), Leesbundel oor Strominge in die Suid-Afrikaanse Historiografie / Reader on Trends in South African Historiography, pp. 194-207.

13 HJ van Aswegen, "Geskietskrywing Deur Swartes Oor Suid-Afrika", in BJ Liebenberg (compiler), Leesbundel oor Strominge in die Suid-Afrikaanse Historiografie / Reader on Trends in South African Historiography, pp. 196-206.

14 HJ van Aswegen, "Geskietskrywing Deur Swartes Oor Suid-Afrika", in BJ Liebenberg (compiler), Leesbundel oor Strominge in die Suid-Afrikaanse Historiografie / Reader on Trends in South African Historiography, p. 198.

15 HJ van Aswegen, "Geskietskrywing Deur Swartes Oor Suid-Afrika", in BJ Liebenberg (compiler), Leesbundel oor die Strominge in Suid-Afrikaanse Historiografie / Readers on Trends in South African Historiography, p. 200. (My translation)



triggered an (at times) acrimonious debate on the nature of South African historiography. Wilson and Thompson in their preface make it clear that South African history writing has laboured under the influence of an ideologically based subjectivity.<sup>16</sup> The clearly-stated intention to deploy auxiliary sciences such as anthropology, archaeology, phonetics and sociology to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the South African past and to destroy the myth that African history only commenced with the arrival of Europeans on the continent,<sup>17</sup> did not arouse too much dissension. But the suggestion that for too long South African historiography had been preoccupied with group interests, and then more particularly the White groups, would prompt various reactions.

The central thesis of Wilson and Thompson's work is that through a variety of forces South Africa is moving towards an integrated society, and its people are committed to a common destiny that is explicit in a shared history. By their own admission "there are insufficient studies of the experiences of specific African communities since they came into contact with white people".<sup>18</sup> It is not clear whether these lacunae should be filled by studies of African origin. Given Wilson and Thompson's rejection of a group orientation it can be assumed that they would not advocate such a course. Nevertheless the comment does suggest that they chose to ignore the works that were already available at that time. Perhaps it is because they did not consider the works as studies, since they were often written by people who did not have the schooling required to reflect the insights that Wilson and Thompson considered necessary for their own work. Instead they were very often the personal reminiscences of individuals who wished to express the experiences to which Wilson and Thompson referred. Some acknowledgment of this type of writing is, however, made under the heading "Additional

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16 M Wilson and L M Thompson (eds), The Oxford History of South Africa, Volume I, South Africa to 1870, p. vi.

17 M Wilson and L M Thompson (eds), The Oxford History of South Africa, Volume I, South Africa to 1870, pp. vii-viii.

18 M Wilson and L M Thompson (eds), The Oxford History of South Africa, Volume I, South Africa to 1870, p. xii.



Bibliography".<sup>19</sup> Despite these flaws Wilson and Thompson came far closer than any of their predecessors, to satisfying the call made by E A Walker in an article written in 1935, that because Africans had a separate history, a history of Africans should be written.<sup>20</sup> Saunders refers to this article by Walker, but fails to mention that Walker also looked into the future and suggested that as a common identity emerged so the need for a "segregated" history would decline.<sup>21</sup> It is this aspect that Wilson and Thompson's work largely satisfied, despite contemporary radical criticism of their effort.

Attention must be given to the sources consulted for this dissertation. It is hoped that through the discussion that follows the reason for their inclusion will become apparent.

It is realized that the use of the term "Black" creates a number of problems. It can be applied inclusively or exclusively. When applied inclusively "Black" would mean all those who, due to the laws of the country, consider themselves to be the oppressed, and who have taken a conscious decision to act to free themselves from this situation.<sup>22</sup> For the purposes of this work, however, the more exclusive connotation of Black namely "African" has been adopted. The reason for this is that there is a far greater body of literature available relevant to this work. In addition it is contended that the position of the African in society has been complicated by discriminatory measures for a far longer period than that of any other group in South Africa, therefore

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<sup>19</sup> M Wilson and L M Thompson (eds), The Oxford History of South Africa, Volume II, South Africa 1870 to 1966, pp. 553-554.

<sup>20</sup> EA Walker, "A Zulu Account of the Retief Massacre", in The Critic, Vol III, #2, January 1935, pp. 68-69, quoted in C Saunders, "Liberal Historiography Before 1945", in J Butler, R Elphick and D Welsh (eds), Democratic Liberalism in South Africa. Its History and Prospect, p. 146.

<sup>21</sup> EA Walker, "A Zulu Account of the Retief Massacre", in The Critic, Vol III, #2, January 1935, pp. 68-69.

<sup>22</sup> S Biko, "The Definition of Black Consciousness", in A Stubbs (ed), Steve Biko..., p. 48.





the aspects that are pertinent are far more readily discernible and over a far longer period of time. The inclusion of other non-African Blacks would also have made the scope of this work even more far-ranging than it already is. It is hoped that some of the ideas generated in this dissertation might prompt further research to include a comparison of the evolution of Coloured and Indian perceptions of South African history with those of the Africans.

As far as possible the bibliography has been restricted to products of South African Blacks. Once again the urge to express themselves on their situation was to be found far earlier than amongst the other Black groups, the "Coloureds" and the Indians. The notable exceptions to this criterion are the works of Bessie Head and Peter Abrahams. Their works are included because of their frequently stated standpoint that they identified with the cause of Africans.

A somewhat more complex problem is that of works based on secondary sources. Frequently the authors of these works have based their comments and attitudes on the works of White historians and other researchers. It could be argued that the views so incorporated in their works are not theirs but those of their sources. While this argument has a certain amount of validity, it should also be remembered that unless the writers concerned concurred with the viewpoint expressed in their sources, they would not have included them in their own work. This argument may appear to contradict the comments made earlier in connection with historical theses, but this is not so. In the case of the student working under a tutor, he is guided intentionally and unintentionally by his promoter and seeks to satisfy the conscious and unconscious criteria of his tutor. Thus in many respects the product of his work involuntarily becomes a reflection of the values of the tutor. Whereas in the case of the works produced under the writer's own volition the absorption of perspectives of others is voluntary and therefore can be considered to be his own. This is not to say that those authors do not have extraneous influences working on them. After all more often than not they have been written to meet certain criteria, the chief of which is to indict a system that has created the conditions that the Blacks find themselves in, and to suggest solutions to the predicament of



Blacks.

Firstly some attention must be given to the concept of perception. For the purposes of this discussion the following definitions have been employed:-

In early modern philosophy, perception was used in a much wider sense ... Thus, for Bacon, perception designated the mind's subjection to external influence and its adaptive reaction to such influence. (De Augmentis, IV, 3) Descartes and Spinoza designated by perception intellectual rather than sensuous apprehension."<sup>23</sup>

In the same vein but with a somewhat more extended vision:-

Perception. The selection, organization, and interpretation by an individual of specific stimuli in a situation, according to prior learning, activities, interests, experience etc. Perception is a process and a pattern of response to stimuli. It is a function of the situational field, that is, of the total configuration of stimuli, as well as of previous social and cultural conditioning.

Selective perception. The tendency of individuals to perceive those elements of a situation which support previous expectations. All perception is selective, in the sense that all individuals learn to select relevant stimuli and organize them in standard ways, both for understanding and for communication with others.<sup>24</sup>

A further dimension is added to the above definition by the following:-

Perspective. The values, beliefs, attitudes, and meanings that provide the framework and point of view from which an individual views a situation. A perspective consists of assumptions that are usually not consciously defined, but which influence what the individual

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<sup>23</sup> D D Runes, Dictionary of Philosophy, p. 228.

<sup>24</sup> GA and GA Theodorson, A Modern Dictionary of Sociology, p. 295.



perceives and how he interprets his perceptions.<sup>25</sup>

The salient point in these definitions is that perception in its various guises is a reflection of the situation of the observer. In the South African context the situation of the South African Black is unique in terms of his position in society and the place that is accorded him by legislation and custom. This in itself is a product of attitudes of the ruling group. The uniqueness of the situation is further emphasized in that, particularly since 1936, the legislation that has been enacted which has a direct bearing on the lives, economy and culture of Blacks has been passed by parliament without the consent of those directly affected by it- the Blacks. This comment is made with awareness of the fact that at various times since 1936 to the present attempts have been made to create organs that appear to involve Blacks in the decision-making process but which at the same time have been careful to deny them access to the central and dominant structure of power - parliament.

It is for this reason that the polemical works have been included, because in many cases the justification of present and future policies is based on a reaction to and vision of the past. Similarly the inclusion of creative works of a didactic nature can be justified on the grounds that much of the prescription contained in these works is based on a perception of the past. This is particularly so in the case where this genre of works is directed at supplying a political blueprint for the future, which aims to eradicate the errors of the past.

Some Black views on perception also provide some further insight into the interpretation of the term. A significant point is raised by Magubane when he argues that although "beliefs and inherited ideas" are consistent over generations "the social environment within which individuals and groups function is in a continual process of change and affects the implementation of such inherited outlooks."<sup>26</sup> This aspect of the

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25 GA and GA Theodorson, A Modern Dictionary of Sociology, p. 298.

26 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. 229.



influence of the changing social environment is important to this study because it is hoped to show the evolution of perceptions relative to the era in which they were formulated.

That the concept of perception is loaded with ideological implications is clear from Ngubane's comment:-

The ideological conflict assumes interesting forms at the racial level. If the African insists on the validity of his perceptions of reality or his perspectives, he often runs the risk of being laughed out of circulation in the literary world of the whites or of having his bona fides denied. Creating in new forms or in those rooted in his culture, his patterns of expression and the understructure of his very cultural self may all be misunderstood or even be found "incomprehensible". African understandings of the truth are rejected for stylistic or other so-called aesthetic reasons while black observations are dismissed as propaganda, exaggerations or worse.<sup>27</sup>

Ngubane's comment shows that even though he is aware of criticism and rejection of "African understandings of the truth" they are no less valid for the perceiver of this truth. Despite this external criticism he will abide by his "understandings" and determine his actions and attitudes on the basis of these "understandings".

A rather arbitrary definition has been given to South Africa. For the purposes of this dissertation the present geo-political confines of South Africa have been adhered to, without allowing for the present internally created divisions. Occasionally the territorial confines have to be exceeded, but then only to look at works that have been written to comment on the situation in South Africa or to give an opinion on relations between the country where the writer is based and South Africa. Nevertheless as far as possible an attempt has been made to restrict this input to those writers who have their origins in South Africa, but

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<sup>27</sup> JK Ngubane, Ushaba: The Hurtle to Blood River, p. 2.



who, for a variety of reasons, have taken up residence outside the country. The most notable inclusions in this regard are once again Bessie Head, Peter Abrahams and Lewis Nkosi. Some of the writers produced some of their work while in exile, which lent a particular complexion to their productions. Subsequently, however, they have repatriated themselves and produced works whose tone has changed according to their changed environment.

Had the research been restricted exclusively to written scientific history then the number of works available for this study would have been severely limited and subject to the constraints mentioned in the introduction. Therefore the term "history" is used in a wider sense. The meaning adopted is that of an awareness of the past, irrespective of whether it is a conscious interpretation of this past, or whether it is merely a rendition of the past without any attempt to place it into context or relate it to the present. Even in this case there is a deliberate portrayal of the past to justify an action(s) or, in some cases, to evoke a sense of political awareness and activism based on a sense of grievance.

As part of this section of the discussion it is important to reflect Black views on history with regard to its nature, aims, functions and their criticisms of the discipline - with reference to the current state of the subject in South Africa.

History is a record of the past that is essential to the understanding of the present.<sup>28</sup> History also lays an onus on the oppressed to take up the struggle against their oppression, which makes it "a struggle, not an orgy."<sup>29</sup> The past is also like part of the "national dress" of a people,<sup>30</sup> thus it forms part of their culture and the process of enculturation. For a people trying to redefine their culture after the ad-

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28 M Tlali, Amandla. A novel, pp. 244-245.

29 BA Khoape, "The New Black", in S Biko(ed), Black Viewpoint, pp. 64-65.

30 ZK Matthews, Freedom for My People..., pp. 58-59.



vent of colonization this facet would have serious implications on how they viewed their past. If the representatives of a historical tradition were to recover their dignity as a people they would have to restore the status of their history so that they could reflect on it with pride, instead of as a source of humiliation and denigration. Biko confirms this viewpoint with the comment that a "people without a positive history is like a vehicle without an engine."<sup>31</sup> People must realize through their experienced lives that "history is a culture of resistance."<sup>32</sup>

An important link in the creation of an historical awareness was the patronymic legend which served as the repository of the "history or achievements of the greatest ancestors of each group" which "preserved the chain of cultural continuity by reminding the individual that he was the extension into the future of a cluster of ancestors and that his destiny was defined in the patronymic legend."<sup>33</sup>

History is conceived of as having a "particular logical direction" that will inevitably take Blacks to liberation.<sup>34</sup> A far earlier concept of the nature of history also, articulated by Molema, attributes an element of progression to history, but without attaching the idea of political inevitability to it. The same author continues that while history is a reflection of cultural growth it is not a justification of cultural superiority.<sup>35</sup>

Of the writers consulted only one, Modisane, ascribes a motive force to

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31 S Biko, "We Blacks", in A Stubbs(ed), Steve Biko..., p. 29.

32 M W Serote, "time has run out", in M Mutloatse (Comp and Ed), Reconstruction..., pp. 225-226.

33 JK Ngubane, "Shaka's Social, Political and Military Ideas", in D Burness, Shaka King of the Zulus in African Literature, pp. 134-135.

34 S Biko, "The Righteousness of Our Strength", in A Stubbs (ed), Steve Biko..., pp. 133-134.

35 S M Molema, The Bantu Past and Present, p. 335.





history itself, when he blames racial subjugation "on the commitment of history; blame the bigotry on history; blame black nationalism on history."<sup>36</sup> In this extract from Modisane on the nature of history he indicates that it is not a means to explaining the past or understanding the present in terms of the past. Instead he sees it as the cause of the present.

From the above it is clear that the overriding concept in the nature of history is that of culture. Because culture encompasses the totality of human activity and man's interaction with his environs, whether they be animate or inanimate, the scope of historical concerns of Black writers encompasses all aspects of life.

While a clear concept of the nature of history is not always apparent, when it comes to the aims of history then there are far more definite ideas evident. Irrespective of the view on the final aims of history, most have one underlying principle - that history has no justification in itself, but in an ulterior motive. This motive in one way or another is found in the political situation of Blacks. The articulation of the response to this situation varies. Among the earliest writers one finds a strongly atavistic note, which frequently looks back at the African past with a sense of nostalgia, and seeks to provide some form of explanation for the current condition, that prevails at the time of writing. Generally the tenor of this group of writers is to accept the situation as a fait accompli and to encourage their audience to adapt to their changed circumstances by emulating the values and beliefs of those that have brought about these changes in their society.

Later and contemporary writers frequently start their discussions on the same premise, although they do not have the same preoccupation with their ancestral roots. Instead they are more concerned with explaining how the changes came about in their society, rather than in describing the nature of these changes. The object of this approach is to castigate the economic and social systems and ideologies that brought about

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<sup>36</sup> B Modisane, Blame Me on History, pp. 217-218.



these changes. At the same time as the scapegoat has been defined, alternative economic, social and ideological paradigms are offered to replace those that these writers have sought to discredit. Thus there is a far more overt and vehement political thrust to these writings.

Although it is hoped that the points raised in the preceding two paragraphs will be illustrated in the discussion of individual themes during the various phases of writing, attention should be paid to the views on the aims of history of some of the writers whose contributions will come under discussion in succeeding chapters.

History has to be a search for what went wrong for the Black that has created his present malaise. History should have "the open pen of truth" that will restore to the Black his rightful place in society and refurbish his dignity.<sup>37</sup> There is also, as Champion noted, an awareness that the writing of history can lead to racial antagonism and feelings of insurrection, but this particular author does not seek to do this. Rather he just wishes to correct the misrepresentations that have occurred in South African histories right from those dealing with "the Kings Tshaka, Dingaan and Chief Bambata".<sup>38</sup> It has to be established whether "our position is a deliberate creation of God or an artificial fabrication of the truth by power-hungry people whose motive is authority, security, wealth and comfort."<sup>39</sup>

Kekana makes a distinction between the "naïve" historian who, with the best of intentions, sought to write histories of South Africa that neglected or distorted the history of Africans. He condones their naïveté on the grounds of a lack of information. But he notices an important

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37 P ka I Seme, "The Regeneration of Africa", in The African Abroad, April 5 1906, quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 1, p. 70.

38 A W G Champion, "Blood and Tears", extract from pamphlet, quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 1, p. 335.

39 S Biko, "Black Consciousness and the Quest for a True Humanity", in A Stubbs (ed), Steve Biko..., p. 87.





transition at the end of the nineteenth century. At this time the "naïve" historians' conjecture became established "fact". The transition became particularly marked in the time of Theal, who not only sought to add credibility to this conjectural history, but also sought to deliberately negate Black history and so "disrobe the African of his history, cultural heritage and humanity." Even for this development Kekana is prepared to make some allowance for the "Zeitgeist" in which Theal operated. But like Champion he adds that the perpetuation of the myths created by Theal, in the face of contradictory evidence, has ideological origins.<sup>40</sup>

The creation of history should seek to define Blacks on their own terms instead of those laid down by Whites.<sup>41</sup> An important component of the motives for a Black perception of South African history is evident from this viewpoint.

It evinces the idea of a search for an identity on their own terms. In turn this implies that there is no longer a willingness to accept externally imposed norms, with their implied devaluation of indigenous values. If a pride in indigenous values and norms can be instilled then the tendency to depend on external guidance in their struggle for their rights will diminish. Not surprisingly Dube subscribes to the Black Consciousness ideology, which in its early phases stressed the need for cultural liberation as a prerequisite to political emancipation.

There is some correlation between the aims and functions of history from the point of view of Blacks, in as much that the goals set frequently become the functions.

A recurrent comment on the function of history is that the current state of the art in South Africa has left a legacy of division and bitterness, chiefly because it has so frequently been used to justify the

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40 NS Kekana, "A History of the Black People in South Africa to 1795...", p. 110.

41 D Dube, The Rise of Azania..., pp. 12-13.



position that has been assigned to Blacks in South African society. Although it would not be unreasonable to assume that as a result of this perception there would be a tendency to be dismissive of the role of history in a future society, there is not always an outright rejection of it and its functions. For history to be of use to any future society it will have to be purged of the "dehumanising heroism of the past in favour of a new heroism."<sup>42</sup> Manganyi's prescription contains not only a recipe for reconciliation in the future but also a criticism of present history. There is no doubt that the "dehumanising heroism" that he refers to is that history which relegates the heroes of Black history to the status of bloodthirsty tyrants, whose sole function in history is to justify discriminatory policies, by providing the "bogeymen" who will drive the electorate into continued support of the National Party or any other party that advocates policies that will protect it from the "Black Peril" that has been so effectively portrayed in the history books and syllabi of the classroom and elsewhere. Although Kekana is critical of a Euro-centricity in South African history he is also quick to warn that the swing of the pendulum should not be such as to create a Afro-centric vision that will be as limited as that which it is seeking to counter.<sup>43</sup>

History must destroy the myth of the "Dark Continent" which denies any suggestion of historical endeavour.<sup>44</sup> An early writer like Molema was content to ascribe the "hazy mists" that shrouded African history to the lack of written records which has left it "devoid of all historical certainty."<sup>45</sup> It did not occur to Molema that the absence of historical certainty and therefore of a history that showed that Blacks "had also loved, fought wars bravely, painted and sculpted, sung songs and cultivated poetry," might be a deliberate attempt by the colonizer to deny

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42 NC Manganyi, "The Making of a Rebel", in NC Manganyi, Looking Through the Keyhole..., p. 176.

43 NS Kekana, "A History of the Black People in South Africa to 1795...", pp. 112-113.

44 L Nkosi, Mating Birds, pp. 104-106.

45 SM Molema, The Bantu Past and Present, p. 192.



the African his humanity and therefore his claims to fair treatment from his new ruler.<sup>46</sup>

Despite the concern with history and its contribution to future society there is also some involvement with history and the present, particularly with reference to current political trends. Several writers are concerned with the fact that the young Black political activists of today lack an awareness of the struggle of their predecessors in the past. If these activists have any awareness of past struggles then it is just to be dismissive of them and their participants. This criticism is not only aimed at the young, but also at their elders for not informing their successors of what preceding generations had tried to achieve.<sup>47</sup> A proper historical awareness is a part of politicization. Unless Blacks want to remain ignorant of the legislative processes that have dispossessed them of their land and segregated them in all spheres of life from their fellow South Africans,<sup>48</sup> they will have to develop a political awareness through a proper historical awareness.

It may appear ironic that the last part of this section of this chapter, viz., that dealing with a criticism of the various parts of the practice of history, contains most of the expectations that Blacks have of history. Therefore there will be a tendency for the following criticisms to overlap with the views expressed on the aims and functions of history.

The criticism takes on various guises which range from complaints about methodological limitations, to ideological and racial bias and prejudice, to insufficient ideological commitment and a lack of a comprehensive enough vision amongst others. It should be pointed out that the criticisms levelled at the interpretations were made at specific junc-

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<sup>46</sup> L Nkosi, "Black Power or Souls of Black Writers", in L Nkosi, Home and Exile and Other Selections, p. 111.

<sup>47</sup> M Tlali, Amandla. A Novel, pp. 244-245.

<sup>48</sup> AWG Champion, "The Great Announcement. April Fool", in M W Swanson (ed), The Views of Mahlathi...., p. 98.



tures in time, when either new directions in South African historiography were still to be taken, or where a specific set of circumstances prevailed that prompted the criticism. These circumstances may have changed subsequently, but this does not alter the validity of the views in the specific era in which they were made. Ironically some authors suggest a "correct" ideological application of history, while at the same time complaining of historical distortions to satisfy external ideological demands.

Irrespective of what the actual nature of the criticism is, there is no doubt that Black criticisms of South African history originate from the situation in which Blacks find themselves. The general explanations offered for their condition do not correlate with their understanding of the forces and ideas that created their situation. To extend the analogy of ZK Matthews where he referred to history being part of the national dress of a people, it is clear that the main objection is to the fact that the fabric of the national dress has been woven by people who have no empathy for the fibre that makes up the warp and woof of Black history. And if this were not enough then the unsatisfactory cloth was cut according to patterns that had no relationship to the people who were supposed to wear it. The worst aspect of this ill-fitting suit was that the pupil had to wear it if he was to enjoy the accoutrements of White science and literature.<sup>49</sup>

A pervasive sentiment is that history is in the dock of a court of law and is not telling "the whole truth and nothing but the truth". History as it is taught at school in South Africa seeks to glorify Western civilization, but omits to mention that it is the same civilization which left "tyranny ... among the legacies of the civilisation that was Rome."<sup>50</sup>

The heroes that history has created have caused divisions rather than unity. Heroes such as Cecil John Rhodes of the English, Piet Retief of

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49 ZK Matthews, Freedom for My People..., pp. 58-59.

50 B Modisane, Blame Me on History, p. 40.



the Afrikaners and Shaka and Langalibalele and the history of Black-White conflict that they represent,<sup>51</sup> will never act as the inspiration for a common destiny. The heroes that often form the centre of South African public holidays revive the humiliation of defeat and satisfy White yearnings for a hero.<sup>52</sup> Too often history is used to act as the "echo of hate and vengeance" that makes the Afrikaner succumb to an arcane influence to grope "back through the corridors of history to pick up some of the broken threads that linked his life with a terrible past", to bolster his "violent desire to remain part of a brutal historic past, lest he should be crushed by the brutal necessities of the present, lest he should be forced to lose his identity." The "layers of crocodile skin" so created prevent him from revealing and experiencing his humanity, with its emotions and feelings.<sup>53</sup>

Because the primary area of concern is that of the situation that Blacks find themselves in today, much of the criticism is aimed at what is perceived to be the mainspring of that condition - colonialism and the establishment of White settlements. It is not the intention to discuss Black perceptions of colonialism per se at this stage. What is of importance at this time is to look at the criticisms that are directed at the historiography that concerns itself with the question of colonialism. Equally important is to understand the comments on the perceived bias and the motives for it in this history.

Through the impact of colonialism, Black history was abruptly truncated and the colonized were suddenly reduced to being "pagan and savage", members of "an inferior race, destined by the Christian God to slave to Europeans."<sup>54</sup> The bland assumption that the colonists had come to

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51 NC Manganyi, "Culture and Identity: The Tyranny of the Symbolic", in NC Manganyi, Looking Through the Keyhole..., p. 67.

52 S Biko, "We Blacks", in A Stubbs (ed), Steve Biko..., p. 30.

53 E Mphahlele, "The Living and the Dead", in Africa South, Vol 2, #2, January-March 1958, pp. 109-110.

54 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, pp. 68-69.



lift the "hazy mists" that shrouded the "Dark Continent", to refer back to Molema, are rejected outright in this statement. Magubane brings a further facet to the fore in that he brings into question the role of Christianity in colonialism. The argument that colonialism was acceptable because it had a Christian foundation is rejected. What emerges from this standpoint is that history written from this perspective is also unacceptable because it seeks to justify the unjustifiable. The crux of the matter is that in order to accept Christianity, Blacks had to accept those who had brought it - the missionaries and the colonists. There could be no rejection of the subjugation and dispossession that went with colonialism without rejecting Christianity, and the historical apologists of colonialism were careful to create the impression that the only means out of the "benighted" state that the African found himself in was to accept all tenets of Christianity. More specifically he had to accept the dictum of "rendering unto Caesar what was Caesar's", and not harbour any feelings of revolt or overt resentment towards his colonial ruler.

In order to encourage the sense of obligation towards obedience and compliance with colonial rule, the history of Blacks had to be voided of any content that might create a sense of longing for an inspiring but lost past. In order

to destroy completely the structures that had been built up in the African society and to impose their imperialism with an unnerving totality the colonialists were not satisfied with merely holding a people in their grip and emptying the Native's brain of all form and content, they turned to the past of the oppressed people and distorted, disfigured and destroyed it. No longer was reference made to African culture, it became barbarism. Africa was the "dark continent". Religious practices and customs were referred to as superstition. The history of African Society was reduced to tribal battles and internecine wars. There was no conscious migration by the people from one place to another. No, it was always flight from one tyrant who wanted to defeat the tribe not for any positive reason but merely to wipe them out off the face of this earth.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> S Biko, "We Blacks", in A Stubbs (ed), Steve Biko..., p. 29.





(Here Biko is drawing directly on the ideas of Franz Fanon as he also does subsequently.<sup>56</sup>)

Similarly "by some strange logic" colonialism must turn on the past of the colonized and so transform it into "most disappointing reading", where the Xhosa went to war for plunder and the Boers were obliged to go on "punitive expeditions" against the thieves. Shaka was not a nation-builder but a cruel tyrant. Against this background it would be "naive to expect our conquerors to write unbiased histories but we have to destroy the myth that our history starts in 1652."<sup>57</sup> Until this myth is destroyed history will not satisfy the criterion of being a "record of humanity's strivings for complete self-realisation."<sup>58</sup>

History contains too many a "deliberate distortion" that seeks to relegate the Khoi-Khoi to nonentities, that made early Black-White conflict insignificant. The aim of this distortion was to deny any claims that the Khoi-Khoi may have had on the land of which they were dispossessed. And so deny a precedent for anyone else making claims to land of which he had been dispossessed. The dispossession of the Khoi-Khoi was to be the overture to the alienation of the Xhosa land, which would be met by much more forceful resistance.<sup>59</sup> Even the historian allegedly sympathetic to Blacks - the liberal historian - attempted to explain the evolution of South African history in terms of the law of the jungle. In

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56 S Biko, "White Racism and Black Consciousness", in A Stubbs (ed), Steve Biko..., p. 69 and F Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth, p. 169.

57 S Biko, "Black Consciousness and the Quest for a True Humanity", in A Stubbs (ed), Steve Biko..., p. 95.

58 AM Lembede, 'Some Basic Principles of African Nationalism', in Inyaniso, February 1945, quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 2, p. 315.

59 WM Tsotsi, From Chattel to Wage Slavery..., p. 19.



so doing he failed to appreciate that the creation of the status quo was not accidental nor an act of God but the "necessary result of imperialist expansion, colonial conquest, white domination and capitalist exploitation."<sup>60</sup> To add to this deficiency Black attitudes are conditioned by a history which they had no part in making, and which teaches them that any attempt at asserting their demands will be met with the full force of the state.<sup>61</sup> Thus history stands indicted for firstly applying a misleading paradigm of explanation, and then for contributing to the emasculation of Black resistance.

An answer is still being sought, but it appears that a double standard of morality applies in history, in that the White uses history "to argue his cause and state his case, to represent the truth as he saw it;" and to invoke Divine intervention in subjugating the Blacks and taking their land. In so doing history was made incomprehensible, and showed a truth that was unacceptable.<sup>62</sup> So forcefully "did subjective compulsions impose themselves on the objective imperatives of history" that they led "to a deformation of the historical process."<sup>63</sup> In reaction to this deformation Blacks were forced "to plunder the painful facts of history" in an act of public self-flagellation, either as a demonstration of humiliation or power, or to garner votes and esteem. Blacks appear to take pleasure in being part of a history that reflects three centuries of conflict. Thus for whatever reasons, "anger becomes a compulsive way of asserting our ethnic or racial or political identity."<sup>64</sup>

The ventilation of the anger that is felt can perhaps be attributed to the bemusement that the Black child feels when confronted with the his-

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60 WM Tsotsi, From Chattel to Wage Slavery..., p. 6

61 N Mandela, "Black Man in a White Court", in N Mandela, No Easy Walk to Freedom..., p. 155.

62 B Modisane, Blame Me on History, p. 41.

63 WM Tsotsi, From Chattel to Wage Slavery..., p. 48.

64 E Mphahlele, Afrika My Music..., p. 156.





tory lesson in the classroom, which showed the Boers in conflict with the "savage and barbaric hordes" that were led by psychopathic leaders like Shaka. Unfortunately when the teacher was confronted with the distortion of the past, as the children had learned it at the knees of their elders, his answer was that pupils would have to learn the truth for themselves.<sup>65</sup>

History has failed to produce entertaining stories about African civilizations and heroes. Nor are children encouraged to provide their own accounts of local history as passed down to them by tradition. The syllabi have failed to comply to the national philosophies of education as formulated by Blacks, rather than those designed for them by Whites.<sup>66</sup> In this way the tendency of Whites to reduce Blacks to the source of a "problem" and portray them "as sub-humans, anthropological specimens whose existence and activities have contributed little or nothing to the historical process in South Africa" is enhanced.<sup>67</sup> It is as if even the terminology employed in historical writing is meant to demean Blacks.<sup>68</sup> The application of the subtleties of language allows Blacks to emerge as murderers and thieves while Whites were merely defending their position from the aggressive Blacks.<sup>69</sup> Many of the distortions can be attributed to the viewpoint that South African history "can legitimately be described as the story of how Europeans defeated, robbed and ruled the blacks for the enrichment of the whites."<sup>70</sup> History is too often used to vindicate ideological premises at the expense of a broader perspective.<sup>71</sup> To compound the problem, pupils are expected to regurgitate this bias in their

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- 65 B Modisane, Blame Me on History, p. 41.
- 66 E Mphahlele, The African Image, p. 21 and p. 31.
- 67 WM Tsotsi, From Chattel to Wage Slavery..., p. 5.
- 68 D Dube, The Rise of Azania..., p. 32.
- 69 ZK Matthews, Freedom for My People..., p. 23.
- 70 WM Tsotsi, From Chattel to Wage Slavery..., p. 6.
- 71 E Mphahlele, Afrika My Music..., p. 105.



examinations and leave them innocent of any personal insight.<sup>72</sup> History has failed to reconcile the "compulsive images" of the Whites' nostalgia for Europe and the Blacks' memories of "vanished nationhood; cattle."<sup>73</sup>

South African history has, according to Magubane, failed to take cognisance of "the role of ideas or illusions" and will only be able to do this by following "Marx and Engels and separate the ideas of those ruling for empirical reasons, as empirical individuals, from the ideas of the actual rulers."<sup>74</sup> There is a great deal of condemnation of the various schools of South African history, until the arrival the neo-Marxist or radical historians.

It appears that the condemnation arises from the fact that the rationale of the other schools, while providing an explanation for the situation that Blacks found themselves in, did not provide a solution by correctly identifying the source of the Black malaise.

To an extent the Marxist paradigm appeared to offer the answer to this criticism. By analysing the South African condition in material terms and seeing the motive force in the evolution of South African history as lying in the struggle for control of the means of production, a significant contribution was also being made to the liberation struggle. There was little point in focusing on racism as the driving force in South African history, and then seeking to redress the injustice of White supremacy by establishing Black primacy. This left those fighting for the rights of Blacks open to the accusation of inverse racism. A far more amenable focus for opposition would be the fairly inanimate capitalism. It also provided a target that transcended racial barriers and thus created a non-racial foundation to political activity. For

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72 ZK Matthews, Freedom for My People..., pp. 58-59.

73 N Jabavu, The Ochre People, p. 41.

74 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. 118.



this reason one finds a far greater enthusiasm for the Marxist paradigm amongst the modern writers than amongst the earlier ones such as Ngubane. The modern writers seem to opt for this framework of interpretation for ideological reasons as well. Similarly Ngubane would not countenance this method of explanation because of the ideological implications inherent in its unquestioned application. To suggest that there is a carte blanche acceptance amongst modern writers of alien philosophical foundations for understanding their past is incorrect. Nkosi warns that the Black:-

has to be certain that the anguish he experiences is properly his and not imbibed through the process of osmosis by rubbing shoulders with Heidegger and Satre; and this means, generally, being on guard even about methods one uses to analyse or rediscover Africa, for false answers and false questions are likely to arise out of false methodological concerns and vice versa.<sup>75</sup>

South African historiography has also, until recently, tended to be a reflection of the record of the ruling classes, and neglected the significance of oral history. Oral history also fills in those "particular historical moments devoid of descriptive and personal material that take sufficient account of the human dimension."<sup>76</sup> Frequently the impression is gained that much of the criticism of South African history writing is the omission of the "human dimension", and that where it is included it is merely to portray Blacks as non-human "savages". Attempts to overcome this shortcoming will become apparent in subsequent chapters.

A review of the sources so far cited may elicit some comment as to their validity. Therefore attention should be given to the motives for

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<sup>75</sup> L Nkosi, "A Question of Identity", in L Nkosi, Home and Exile and Other Selections, p. 33.

<sup>76</sup> T Matsetela, "The Life Story of Nkgono Mma-Pooe: Aspects of Sharecropping in the Northern Orange Free State, 1890-1930", in S Marks and R Rathbone(eds), Industrialisation and Social Change in South Africa..., p. 212.



their inclusion, particularly as they form the foundation of this work.

Generally it is accepted that an historical thesis should be based on primary sources. In a work of this nature there would appear to be little justification for satisfying this criterion. What is under scrutiny here is not the factuality of history, but how history is experienced. The expression of this experience is far more readily discernible in the sources to be employed in this work.

A number of the sources consulted are autobiographies. Their significance to this study is that they reflect the views of the author on particular historical situations and developments. In some instances these are merely the views of the individual. In other cases they also mirror the views of a broader group, whose views the author, by virtue of his position in society as a community or organisational leader, hopes to present. It is accepted that these views are political opinions made with covert or overt political objectives. Frequently, however, these opinions are offered in response to and informed by the specific historical perceptions of the author, which are rendered in the work to justify the political statements of the author.

It is also for the above reasons that primarily political documents are included. An important additional dimension to the political documents is that, to underline the need for political actions and policy, the errors and abuses of the past are highlighted. Thus even in this type of source there is frequently an expression of an historical perception, albeit to serve a political end.

Unfortunately there are no works that specifically try to define how Blacks view history and the reasons for this. Instead reliance has to be made on commentators on Black culture. All the works of this genre make a direct or oblique reference to history, because they see history as an essential component in the past and future development of Black culture. The works of Biko, Mphahlele and Nkosi are of particular relevance in this regard.

It is a bit more problematical to justify the inclusion of works of fic-



tion. In particular those works that superficially do not appear to have a particular historical content, as opposed to the historical novels, dramas and epics such as those of HIE Dhlomo, Head, Mofolo and Plaatje. In the case of creative writing in an historical context their inclusion requires no further explanation at this stage.

In the case of those works of a fictional nature that do not have an overtly historical context the following justification is given. Frequently the author places his characters in known historical situations, particularly in the case of the so-called "protest" or "committed" literature, and has them respond to these situations, either verbally or through their actions. In this way the author is reflecting either his own perception of the known historical situation, or that of the character that he has created. The latter qualification is important, because it cannot be said that the fictional character is always representative of the views of the author. In this event the apparently contradictory viewpoints of the author are a literary device employed by the writer to underline his particular viewpoint. A clear example of this style is to be found in Ngubane's Ushaba: The Hurtle to Blood River and HIE Dhlomo's historical plays. In the context of this study this viewpoint echoes the historical perception of the author.

Irrespective of the nature of the sources consulted, what is immediately apparent is that they are closely related to the era in which they were conceived. This in turn brings to the fore the question of how this study is to be structured. In an attempt to give the entire work a comprehensible coherence a chronological-thematic approach has been followed. Within this broad structure a further subdivision will be made, to allow further chronological divisions. The latter divisions differ from the first, as they will seek to categorize authors according to the times in which they created their works. In this way it is hoped to show the reciprocal relationship between historical perceptions and current developments in the socio-political sphere.





CHAPTER TWO

THE PRE-LITERATE PERIOD<sup>1</sup>

Already, at the outset, in the chapter title, there is an indication of being at variance with the standard nomenclature in South African history. In the context of this dissertation, this period refers to the time before 1652, i.e. prior to the arrival of Van Riebeeck and the establishment of a White settlement in the Cape. Unfortunately this division creates certain problems in regard to the thematic-chronological framework followed. It is clear that in some cases the pre-literate period extended to long after 1652 and in others until well into the nineteenth century, with the arrival of White missionaries and settlers on the east coast and the highveld. For the sake of consistency it has been decided, where relevant, to refer to the works that deal with pre-literate society in later periods in those particular chapters dealing with that period.

Generally works on this period, irrespective of which of the non-Black schools they originate from, refer to the period prior to the arrival of the Whites as the pre-historical period, even though the exact wording may differ. By use of the term "pre-literate" the negative implications of alternate concepts are eliminated. Whether intentionally or unintentionally, the terms previously applied imply that there was no history until the arrival of Whites in the sub-continent. Complementary to this viewpoint is that until the present, a people who have no written tradition have no history and are therefore not worthy of inclusion in a history of South Africa. This rather generalized introductory comment has to a large extent been contradicted by the increased sophistication in the use of the oral tradition and literature. Similarly the inclusion of the chapters on the archaeological background and physical and social anthropology of the indigenous peoples in the first volume of The Oxford History of South Africa provided a seminal precedent for

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<sup>1</sup> I owe a word of thanks to my colleague Mr N S Kekana for suggesting this term, but its interpretation in this dissertation is my responsibility.



subsequent works.<sup>2</sup>

It should also be pointed out that most of the works referred to during the course of the research for this dissertation contained little that could be construed to be a direct reflection of the pre-literate era. Instead reliance has to be made on the inferences that can be drawn from the evaluations that are given of the impact of colonization on traditional societies. Frequently a writer will say that a society has changed in one way or the other. And even though no direct exposition of the pre-conquest societies is given, the writer must give some indication of the nature of this society, in order to reach the conclusion that he does.

One of the earliest Black writers, Molema, was content to dismiss the pre-literate period on the grounds that no written records existed,<sup>3</sup> and therefore no history existed. Even though Molema acknowledged the existence of the oral tradition amongst traditional communities he was dismissive of it. He felt that, at best, oral tradition could go back a century in time as the bearers of the past were "pitiful repositories of historical facts, both as to time and truth."<sup>4</sup> The "national historians" were unable to avoid glossing over defeats, and inflating victories, although they did provide a fairly accurate record of royal genealogies.<sup>5</sup> Kekana, in his dissertation, is highly critical of the legacy of Theal. The heritage of Theal has until the modern age created the impression such as Molema laboured under. His whole study is devoted to refuting Theal's theses on the origins of the Bantu-speaker in South Africa.<sup>6</sup> Molema did not conceive that "this rich oral literature" could teach the "children, men and women" about "morality, reli-

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<sup>2</sup> M Wilson and LM Thompson (eds), The Oxford History of South Africa, Volume I, pp. 1-186.

<sup>3</sup> S M Molema, The Bantu Past and Present, pp. 51-52

<sup>4</sup> SM Molema, The Bantu Past and Present, p. 52.

<sup>5</sup> SM Molema, The Bantu Past and Present, p. 192.

<sup>6</sup> NS Kekana, "A History of the Black People in South Africa to 1795...".



gion, philosophy, wisdom, geography, history and politics and the entire spectrum of human existence in the various communities."<sup>7</sup> Nor did he allow that, even without benefit of a formal Western-type education, children were educated to accept "the responsibilities of man and woman when they were married."<sup>8</sup> He did not concede that the high standards of virtue of the Black women, the sound authority relationships in the family, and, more importantly, the power of the chiefs as the arbiters of society, went into decline as a result of the arrival of the White settlers.<sup>9</sup> By implication Dube perceives traditional society to have been based on high moral standards, and respectful of authority. To Molema Blacks lived in a state of barbarism until they made contact with "the missionaries or any other civilising influence."<sup>10</sup>

There appears to be a slight contradiction in Molema's standpoint as he does attempt to provide some information on the early migrations of the Bantu-speakers to Southern Africa, based on archaeological and anthropological sources available to him. Nevertheless he subsequently implies that Blacks had no history of their own making, because they had failed to produce any "enduring monuments, save when they have been forcibly directed by the energies of other races."<sup>11</sup> The general tenor of Molema's work, when dealing with the pre-literate period, is consistent with the idea that Black history, in as much as it demonstrated an evolutionary progression,<sup>12</sup> was non-existent.

That Molema subscribed to such views is not surprising. Apart from his

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7 B Leshoi, "The Nature and Use of Oral Literature", in M Mutloa-tse (comp and ed), Reconstruction..., p. 242.

8 E Mphahlele, Father Come Home, p. 36.

9 JL Dube, in "Proceedings and Resolutions of the Governor-General's Native Conference, 1924" [Extracts], (Published in Native Affairs Commission (Union) Report for 1925), quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 1, p. 168.

10 SM Molema, The Bantu Past and Present, p. 113.

11 SM Molema, The Bantu Past and Present, pp. 329-330.

12 SM Molema, The Bantu Past and Present, p. 192-194 and p. 335.





own innate abilities, he owed much to the missionaries for making his education and medical training possible. It is clear from the work under discussion that he considered the impact of missionary intervention in his life as a relief from the "backwardness" of his people who had remained untouched by the influence of the missionary. To Molema the question of who first settled South Africa was not at issue, in fact his progenitors were also "colonists" in Southern Africa.<sup>13</sup> At the time that he wrote The Bantu Past and Present, the controversy of first settlement and the right to the land, had not become an issue.

Based on the information available, Molema states that the original Bantu-speakers probably migrated here over several thousand years from Asia to reach the south coast of Africa in the seventeenth to eighteenth centuries.<sup>14</sup> Molema's interest in attempting to portray the Blacks of the pre-literate period was merely to provide a basis of comparison with the inception of the colonial period; to demonstrate that only through the arrival of the White settlers did a meaningful evolution in Black society take place. Thus Black history commenced, according to the criteria that Molema set for the nature of history, with the arrival of the White colonists and their active intervention in aboriginal societies through the missionaries.

That Molema and his generation should have adopted this view is not surprising if one takes the following comments of Kekana into account. He says that the missionaries came to Africa as the "self-proclaimed avante-garde representatives of Christian civilization." They saw themselves "as dauntless servants of God", who overcame all manner "of obstacles by force of their racial, moral and technological superiority." These same proselytizers wrote diaries redolent with their attitudes. And these records became the basis of historical works. As a consequence "Africa was presented as a cursed land given over to the devil."<sup>15</sup>

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13 SM Molema, The Bantu Past and Present, p. 20.

14 SM Molema, The Bantu Past and Present, pp. 1-6 and p. 20.

15 NS Kekana, "A History of the Black People in South Africa to 1795...", pp. 111-112.



Despite Molema's apparent disdain for his "barbarous" cousins his use of the term "Bantu" has some interesting connotations. At the time that he employed the word it had none of the pejorative implications that it has today, and he used "Bantu" rather than the then more frequent appellation of "Kaffir", which he recognized as demeaning and insulting. Like JT Jabavu he had "proudly arrogated" to himself "the name Bantu... in the same manner as the early Aryans assumed their name. Those who do not answer to this description are superciliously designated either by their colour or by some striking peculiarity of their physique."<sup>16</sup> Molema was indicating a tendency towards racial pride that was in conflict with the liberals' tenets of the time, and to which he mostly subscribed. Those who employed the word "Bantu" could not apprehend at the time "that the political use of the word is detested and rejected as a symbol of political disinheritance of Africans."<sup>17</sup>

It must be pointed out that although Molema considered his antecedents barbarous, he did not deem them totally devoid of social organization. In the chapter on "Manners and Customs" he outlines customs prior to the advent of Whites, and though he concedes that some of the customs are contrary to Western-Christian civilization they are not without precedent and are entirely acceptable within the framework of what he calls "utilitarianism". By this he means that social customs and manners are based on the need to create and maintain a society that is based on the common good, rather than individual advancement. He is, however, at pains to point out that these conditions pertained at the time before White penetration.<sup>18</sup> His Victorian liberal ideology, that was such a concomitant of missionary endeavours at that time, is evident from his emphasis on the ability of the individual, provided that he had the freedom presumed to emanate from a just society based on a lib-

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<sup>16</sup> JT Jabavu, "Native Races of South Africa", in G Spiller(ed), Papers on Inter-Racial Problems. Communicated to the First Universal Races Congress Held at the University of London, July 26-29, 1911, p. 336.

<sup>17</sup> M Motlhabi, The Theory and Practice of Black Resistance to Apartheid. A Social-ethical Analysis, p. 11

<sup>18</sup> SM Molema, The Bantu Past and Present, pp. 113-133.



eral ethic, to advance himself.<sup>19</sup>

This reading of Molema appears to contradict that of Paul Rich who contends that Molema was more inclined to Garveyism than liberalism.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless it is clear that Molema was not uncritical of liberalism, as is evident from his repeated calls for an adherence to what he believed to be proper liberalism. Thus he could see nothing to recommend an egalitarian society, where "[C]ollectivism was the civic law, communism and a true form of socialism the dominating and uniting principle", which he believed to exist among the traditional societies.<sup>21</sup>

A modern writer, Manganyi, saw no benefit in this individuality which Molema favoured and instead mourned the passing of the "spirit of communalism" that was impervious to a materialist ideology.<sup>22</sup> The ambivalence of Molema's stance towards his people was clear from his failure to commit himself on the question of whether civilization was endogamous or exogamous. Given Molema's generally pessimistic views on his people it can be assumed that, in the case of Blacks, he would take the view that the growth of civilization depended on external influences. Nor did he commit himself as to whether the Bantu represented a civilization that had gone into decline, or, whether they still had to progress up the ladder of "civilization" as he perceived it. Nevertheless he maintained that just as Gibbons described the early Germanic and English civilizations and their progression so will the Blacks evolve.<sup>23</sup>

The Khoisan peoples, as they receive virtually no attention when Molema deals with the pre-literate era, are to be considered in the discussions dealing with the period after the commencement of White settle-

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19 J Butler and D Schreuder, "Liberal Historiography Since 1945", in J Butler, et al, Democratic Liberalism in South Africa. Its History and Prospect, p. 149.

20 PB Rich, White Power and the Liberal Conscience..., pp. 18-20.

21 SM Molema, The Bantu Past and Present, p. 116.

22 NC Manganyi, Being-Black-in-the World, p. 20.

23 SM Molema, The Bantu Past and Present, pp. 192-201.



ment and will therefore be discussed, where relevant, in the following chapters.

A publication that is virtually contemporaneous with that of Molema's The Bantu Past and Present, is Magera M Fuze's The Black People and Whence They Came. Fuze also attributes the Black peoples' origins to a migration from the north, but unlike Molema, he does not hazard a guess as to the time that the migration took place.<sup>24</sup> He is also preoccupied with the period after the arrival of Whites on the continent as slavers and their settlement at the Cape. From his descriptions of Zulu customs and rituals it is not clear whether Fuze is referring to the pre-literate period or that of his own experience, which would be from the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>25</sup> In fact the title of the book is a trifle misleading because the vaguest aspect of the work is that part which deals with "whence" the Black people came.

In line with Molema's work, Fuze also ignores the Khoikhoi except to suggest that they had their origins in Namibia, and then proceeds to describe how they were dispossessed by the colonists. Consequently his concern is also with the period after the arrival of Whites in the Cape and will therefore be discussed, if applicable, in more detail in subsequent chapters .

The polemics of history had not yet emerged to influence the writers thus far discussed. They had not yet become involved in the controversy surrounding the ownership of the land, in which the question of who could claim the right to it would rest on establishing who had arrived on the sub-continent first. For later writers the concern is not with discussing the fortunes of the early peoples in Southern Africa as such, but in confirming that their (the writers') ancestors had been the first settlers in South Africa. They are more concerned with establishing the logical premises for their indictment of subsequent history

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<sup>24</sup> MM Fuze, The Black People and Whence They Came..., pp. 6-8.

<sup>25</sup> MM Fuze, The Black People and Whence They Came..., pp. 31-41. (The translator, HC Lugg, reckons his birth to have been in the 1840s, p. viii.).



and the present.

The term "settlers" is used deliberately. The more recent writers have relied heavily on works like those of Wilson and Thompson to substantiate their claims to the rights of first settlement by people who had migrated here from the north. Technically speaking then Molema's description of his predecessors as "colonists" gains some validity. This has created a dilemma for the modern writers. They cannot deploy the findings of modern research to support their contentions without tacitly or explicitly accepting the results of research into the Khoisan peoples. If it is conceded that the Khoisan were the original inhabitants of the country, then the subsequent arrivals, the Bantu-speakers, were just as much interlopers, as the descendants of the Bantu-speakers would accuse the White colonists of being. In the light of the preceding some attention would have to be given to closing these loopholes in their arguments.

Modern writers are not concerned with attempting to portray the pre-literate past as such, but in discussing the relations between the Khoisan and Bantu-speakers prior to the arrival of the Whites. It is conceded that at times there was conflict between the Khoisan and the Xhosa during the expansionary phase of the latter. The violence was not, however, of such a scope as to be genocidal for the Khoisan. Indeed, the presence of Khoisan diviners among the Xhosa and intermarriage between the two groups is, in Pheko's opinion, indicative of generally harmonious relations between the two groups.<sup>26</sup> Similarly Pheko is at considerable pains to point out that there was intermarriage between the Bantu-speakers and San and this is "another sign of peaceful coexistence between the Iron Age Black people of Azania and their San brothers."<sup>27</sup> Pheko does not however extend this argument in mitigation of White missionaries or marriage across the colour line. Kekana makes a passing reference to interaction between the expanding Bantu-speakers and the Khoisan when he says that they "left some areas to the Khoikhoi

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<sup>26</sup> M Pheko, Apartheid..., pp. 30-31.

<sup>27</sup> M Pheko, Apartheid..., pp. 3-9.





and the San".<sup>28</sup>

In addition to alluding to early aboriginal settlement, based on archaeological findings and the accounts of survivors of shipwrecks,<sup>29</sup> Pheko also leads several arguments in order to destroy the myth of the "empty land". It is clear that he is not aware of Shula Marks's seminal article that finally killed the myth of the empty land,<sup>30</sup> nor does he credit the efforts of Wilson and Thompson. It appears that it is far more important to Pheko to keep the myth alive for the sake of the argument that he is developing. Like Boyd Makhoba, who portrays an Afrikaner as being: "puzzled by the preponderance of natives over whites, when everyone knew that South Africa was the white man's God-given country, belonging to the Afrikaners in particular. Why had his great-grandfathers allowed the natives to settle in the Union and breed like ants?",<sup>31</sup> Pheko also claims to see logical inconsistencies arising from the myth of the "empty land".

Pheko argues that the myth originated to help "justify apartheid and the national dispossession of the African people by Jan van Riebeeck's heirs, the Voortrekkers."<sup>32</sup> In an argument, whose logic is a bit obtuse, Pheko contends that those who claim that the arrival of Van Riebeeck and the Blacks in the Cape coincided tend to gloss over the fact that Van Riebeeck was not the first White to arrive at the Cape. Nor did Van Riebeeck have instructions to found a colony.<sup>33</sup> The suggestion of this argument is that those Whites who preceded Van Riebeeck might have a claim to the land. Alternately had Van Riebeeck had

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28 NS Kekana, "A History of the Black People in South Africa to 1795...", p. 27.

29 M Pheko, Apartheid..., pp. 12-16.

30 S Marks, "South Africa: The Myth of the Empty Land", in History Today, 30, January 1980, pp. 7-12.

31 B Makhoba, On the Eve, pp. 30-31.

32 M Pheko, Apartheid..., p. 2

33 M Pheko, Apartheid..., p. 2.





specific instructions to establish a colony then the claims to the land would not be in dispute, which is counterproductive to Pheko's underlying aims. A more meaningful question is raised when Pheko asks why Van der Stel should find it necessary to have sent Timmerman to buy the Bay of Natal from the indigenous people in 1689 if there were no inhabitants there, as is suggested by the myth of the "empty land"?<sup>34</sup>

Modern writers are not so much concerned with portraying past societies at the time before White penetration, but are more involved with criticising depictions of early society. Magubane avers that the "preconquest peoples" did not exist in some immutable state as is so often depicted by "Western anthropologists and imperialist apologists". Instead pre-literate societies were "complex and differentiated" and "like their European counterparts, they were also growing economically and demographically, and in conflict and cooperation among themselves."<sup>35</sup> In keeping with the ideological foundations of his argument Magubane groups the pre-conquest peoples into three categories based on their "basic modes of production consistent with the level of their material development." Further categorizations are made on the basis of linguistic differences.<sup>36</sup>

The Nguni-communities are seen as "well-organized and highly developed states that were able to maintain themselves in the face of all attempts at physical and cultural genocide."<sup>37</sup> Given the general tenor of Magubane's work the use of the term "genocide" is not accidental. Specifically when used in conjunction with the term "cultural". Aside from the emotive connotations of the first term it is also indicative of a total cultural annihilation; a total destruction of what had exist-

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34 M Pheko, Apartheid..., p. 36.

35 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. 25.

36 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. 22.

37 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. 24.



ed. A further dimension is added to this viewpoint by Vilikazi's assertion that the Zulu tribal system was strengthened by their strong social cohesion, which was reinforced by their cultural and social institutions which were "cohesive and stabilizing forces in their lives."<sup>38</sup> Although Magubane attempts to portray the Nguni as buttressed against all forms of assault he concedes that there were forces working at the erosion of their states, and that these were not only of European origin but also "succession problems, civil wars, the growth of certain states under skilled rulers and the consequent loss of power for others".<sup>39</sup>

A further notion of a society that was not always at peace with itself is presented by Nkosi but, he says, even though there was strife between communities, the conflict did not lie in diametrically opposed worldviews and therefore the conflict would be resolved in a reconciliation between the opposing parties.<sup>40</sup> By implication the inability to resolve contemporary conflict arises from irreconcilable worldviews. The Sotho peoples were also pastoralists and agriculturalists, with the additional economic activity of mining, manufacture and trade.<sup>41</sup>

With reference to the Khoikhoi, the salient point is that they were pastoralists, which in the light of Magubane's subsequent arguments is significant, as a common economy was to be the basis of conflict between the Khoikhoi and the Dutch colonists.<sup>42</sup> Indeed the whole purpose of Magubane's depiction is to demonstrate that viable and dynamic communities existed prior to the advent of White settlers, and that their

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38 A Vilakazi, Shembe..., p. 9 and p. 40.

39 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. 24.

40 L Nkosi, "A Question of Identity", in L Nkosi, Home and Exile and Other Selections, pp. 30-3.

41 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. 25.

42 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. 24.



arrival was the basis of the destruction of these societies. Equally important to Magubane was to show that these societies were based on the relationships of production, so that, by extension, the destruction of these communities could be attributed to material forces. David Dube does not bother to structure his arguments as carefully as Magubane, and is satisfied merely to say that the Khoikhoi were initially strong enough to resist any attempts at colonization.<sup>43</sup> It is ironic that an early writer should confirm this, although in an entirely different context. Molema maintains that due to the barbarous conditions at the Cape at the time of the Portuguese arrival in the region, they were reluctant to utilize the Cape as a way-station for expanding their trade and empire.<sup>44</sup> In a similar vein it is claimed that when the Khoisan began to suspect Portuguese intentions and offered armed resistance Vasco da Gama decided it was safer to raise anchor and leave Mossel Bay.<sup>45</sup>

Just as Molema justifies colonization by claiming that the pre-conquest peoples formed static communities, and therefore had to be colonized to raise them from the inertia that they found themselves in, so Magubane implies that the peoples of the pre-colonial era were evolving communities that required no external impetus in their social growth.

In fact, until the arrival of the colonists, the Blacks had the security of numbers in a predominantly Black continent, the labour that underlay their economy was their own, and they were part of a growing economy.<sup>46</sup> Peasant farmers partook in a diversified economy through agriculture, hunting, craftwork and bartering, but through the communal system the factors of production, such as land and labour, formed part of the communal property. Due to the communality of resources and labour there was no concept of individual ownership.<sup>47</sup> More importantly

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43 D Dube, The Rise of Azania..., p. 34.

44 SM Molema, The Bantu Past and Present, p. 12.

45 ANC, African National Congress of South Africa, p. 2.

46 JK Ngubane, "40 Years of Black Writing", in M Mutloatse (ed), Umlaba Wethu..., p. 141.

47 D Ncube, The Impact of Apartheid and Capitalism on the Development of Black Trade Unions in South Africa, p. 1.



their lives were based on a philosophy that defined "the person in universally valid terms."<sup>48</sup> Even though it is conceded that there were occasional upheavals, the general tone of those writers that comment on the pre-conquest period is that life was lived at an "even tenor".<sup>49</sup> Unfortunately Nkosi does not expand on the comment he makes that recent research is "making startling discoveries about African cultures, the complex nature of the social texture of their communities, their aesthetic philosophies, about their moral and legal systems."<sup>50</sup> Despite the paucity of further comment on this particular aspect the implications of Nkosi's perspective are clear.

Nkosi is rebutting the suggestion that Black societies were static entities, that functioned without reference to any tangible and acceptable norms. Manganyi also does not elaborate on what existed before, but does maintain that a valuable "African ontology", which formed the foundation of an "African personality", pertained before the arrival of the colonizers.<sup>51</sup>

That there should be a lack of perceptions expressed on the pre-literate period is perhaps to be found in the view that this part of the Black past was dead and could never be resuscitated, and that there was little point in a nostalgia for the past, when there were changed and changing circumstances of the present and future to contend with.<sup>52</sup>

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48 JK Ngubane, "40 Years of Black Writing", in M Mutloatse (ed), Umlaba Wethu..., p. 141.

49 A Vilakazi, Shembe..., p. 6.

50 L Nkosi, "Black Power or Souls of Black Writers", in L Nkosi, Home and Exile and Other Selections, p. 111.

51 NC Manganyi, Being-Black-in-the-World, p. 40.

52 Testimony of Professor D D T Jabavu, Walter Rubusana, and the Rev Abner Mtinkulu of the Cape Native Voters' Convention and Meshach Pelem of the Bantu Union, before the Select Committee on Subject of Native Bills, May 30, 1927 [Extracts]. (Published in Minutes of Evidence, Select Committee on Subject of Native Bills), quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 1, p. 206.



Attempts to reconstruct this past by anthropological and allied societies sponsored by or under the aegis of colonial authorities should be treated with the utmost care, if not rejected. Thus argues Magubane, in taking up the views of Franz Fanon, who says that the much-touted respect of the settlers for "the traditions and the personality of the African people is...inevitably tantamount to the most bitter contempt, and to the perpetration of a most elaborate sadism."<sup>53</sup> (The full quotation, which Magubane has taken some liberties with, is as follows: "These bodies appear to embody respect for the tradition, the cultural specificities, the personality of the subjugated people. This pseudo-respect in fact is tantamount to the most utter contempt, to the most elaborate sadism."<sup>54</sup>)

Another sinister motive is attributed to an interest in the pre-literate peoples, and therefore any interest in this topic should be avoided. It is claimed by Tsotsi that the policy of "retribalization" is a ploy to maintain Black divisions and thus create "a mass of docile cheap labour", which in turn is a hindrance to the "normal economic development of the country."<sup>55</sup> In this case there is a clear indication of current preoccupations influencing perceptions of the past. Tsotsi makes it clear that any attempt to contribute to a knowledge of the pre-literate era would in effect be assisting the policy of "retribalization", that is, apartheid.

Even though a clear statement on the traditional roots is lacking there is recurrent recall of this past, generally to serve political motives. The echo of the past "acting as a leavening ferment, shall raise the anxious and aspiring mass to the level of their ancient glory", in order to restore their "ancestral greatness, and the recuperative power of the race, its irrepressibility, which assures its permanence"; all of

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53 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race in Class in South Africa, p. 69.

54 F Fanon, Toward the African Revolution, p.34.

55 WM Tsotsi, From Chattel to Wage Slavery..., p. 51 and p. 52.





which "constitute the African's greatest source of inspiration."<sup>56</sup> Blacks must seek to re-establish their "African personality" by establishing a "dialogue between two streams of consciousness: the present and the living past."<sup>57</sup> A reconstruction of the pre-literate past is essential to indicate a refusal to accept the humiliation of colonization and its concomitant mentality of inferiority. Thus a spiritual liberation is important to the success of a political struggle.<sup>58</sup> The recreation of the past is important unless Blacks are to become foreigners in the land of their birth.<sup>59</sup>

There is a warning of the danger that the historical awareness can degenerate into an atavistic ancestor worship.<sup>60</sup> Or the correlation between Black Consciousness and history could become mere tokenism, where an elitist clique takes to "collecting jazz and dashikis for boasts",<sup>61</sup> as evidence of their ethnic roots. The implicit criticism here is: the manifestations of an historical awareness do not account for a true commitment to doing honour to the past and the political struggle of the present. Despite the dangers that might arise from complying with the call of Black Consciousness to develop an awareness and appreciation of the pre-literate past, Blacks "recognise the existence of a significant past in terms of statesmanship, courage in the face of significant dangers, civilisations and cultures supported by elaborate cosmologies that today make us and our children proud inheritors."<sup>62</sup>

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56 P ka I Seme, "The Regeneration of Africa", in The African Abroad, April 5, 1906, quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 1, p. 71.

57 E Mphahlele, The African Image, p. 70.

58 RM Sobukwe, "Das Program des Pan Africanist Congress. Rede zum Beginn der „Statuskampagne“ des PAC", in RM Sobukwe, Hört die Stimme Afrikas! Reden 1949-1959, p. 55.

59 M Pheko, Apartheid..., p. 170.

60 NC Manganyi, Being-Black-in-the-World, p. 19.

61 M Gwala, "Steve Bantu Biko", in S Ndaba (ed), One Day in June..., pp. 60-61.

62 NC Manganyi, "The Making of a Rebel", NC Manganyi, Looking Through the Keyhole..., p. 170.





In this way the tendency of White historians to include Blacks in history only in as much as they constitute a "problem" to the Whites, or to regard Blacks "as sub-humans, anthropological specimens whose existence and activities have contributed little or nothing to the historical process in South Africa",<sup>63</sup> will be overcome.

Irrespective of the conclusions that individual writers reach, a significant factor emerges about their perceptions of the pre-literate period, even though these depictions are at times sketchy. In the case of Molema, and other writers who subscribed to his views, it was to show that if pre-literate society was to progress then it required an external stimulus that a benevolent colonial power like Britain could provide. Thus it was important to Molema that he should have a basis of comparison, in order to demonstrate what the benefits of colonization could be, provided that the colonial power remained true to the stated motives of its colonial endeavours. By this he meant that Britain intended to penetrate the "hazy mists" of the "Dark Continent", through introducing Western civilization and Christianity. As will become apparent in the next two chapters Molema was not, however, completely uncritical of colonization and its representative power, Britain. Instead it might be said that he was calling on Britain to meet her perceived obligations as the colonial power.

Contemporary writers that concerned themselves with the pre-literate period followed the same basic structure as Molema but with entirely different objectives in mind. Their attempts at reconstructing the pre-literate past did not intend to show a society in need of external intervention. Rather they sought to reflect an evolving society, based on its own resources, that was to be corrupted and ultimately degenerate entirely under the impact of colonization and its attendant influences.

The lack of a clear articulation of this period does not appear to augur well for subsequent chapters. But the initial hesitancy is rapidly overcome as the writers move into more familiar periods, and come to

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<sup>63</sup> WM Tsotsi, From Chattel to Wage Slavery..., p. 5.



grips with questions that have a more immediate relevance to them. It is to the first of these questions, the advent of White settlers, to which attention will be given in the next chapter.



CHAPTER THREE

COLONIZATION, IMPERIALISM AND DISPOSSESSION

1652 - 1870

It is ironic that, contrary to the rejection of the concept that Black history only commenced after 1652, the articulation of an own Black perception of South Africa history only really becomes apparent when reference is made to the periods after 1652. That this should be so is understandable, because it is from here on that an awareness develops that there are variations in the interpretations of the past, for whatever reason.

The reasons for grouping the three concepts of colonization, imperialism and dispossession together within the time-span indicated are various. Firstly there is a certain degree of synonymity and interchangeability between the terms. Secondly the span over nearly two and a quarter centuries may appear to be generous. It must, however, be remembered that all of the writers referred to during this dissertation are far more concerned with their immediate situation, and therefore devote relatively little attention to what preceded except to add substance to their contentions. They are not concerned with providing a detailed insight into the past, except in as much as it is relevant to their arguments.

To attempt further chronological divisions would be to disrupt the continuity of perceptions, without implying that they are identical. It is clear from the sources that, despite differences in stance, there are certain underlying concepts that are common to all the authors. These refer to the fundamental changes that were brought about in indigenous society as a result of White settlement and intervention in the local social structures. The difference lies in how the nature and consequences of this intervention are perceived.

It should be pointed out that the periodization employed should not be taken to mean that these themes were considered to be relevant only to



the era under discussion. Nor should it imply that these forces ceased to exist after the end of the period indicated. The processes initiated by Diaz and Van Riebeeck in the Cape would still be operative for at least three decades after 1870 particularly in the northern regions of the country. Thus the intention is not to truncate the continuity of these forces, but to place them in a somewhat different context. This is necessary because the mineral discoveries between the late 1860s and 1880s sufficiently changed the matrix of developments in South Africa to necessitate creating another chronological division.

Nevertheless there is an indication of a periodization in the two and a quarter centuries under discussion in this chapter. Some distinction is made between the period of Dutch, British and later Afrikaner colonization. There is no doubt that the first phase referred to is marked by a general lack of commitment on the part of the Dutch to actively colonize the Cape as the British were to do. Secondly it can be said that the Dutch occupation of the Cape involved the development of a frontier zone without any direct or irreversible impact in the internal affairs of the indigenous peoples, with the notable exception of the San and the Khoikhoi. Although this does not suggest that there was no interaction between the Dutch colonists and the Southern Nguni even at this early stage. The impact of the interaction was nowhere near as vehement as that which would be experienced during the second phase of colonialism under the British. It is felt that although the activities of the Dutch settlers were, to quote Magubane, "cruel and destructive", they did not penetrate below the surface of society.<sup>1</sup> The second phase of colonialism is essentially that period after the British determined to take permanent occupation of the Cape in 1814, and their decision to take active steps to regulate Black-White relations, to be more effective in the exploitation of the new colony's human and natural resources.

A further exception must be made in regard to the timespan indicated in

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<sup>1</sup> BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p.56



the title of this chapter. The initial date of 1652 will have to be preceded by some attention being given to the earlier involvement of the Portuguese at the Cape. As this was basically a passing interest, although not without significance to subsequent developments, less attention will be given to the Portuguese era. A view is that the Portuguese, in the person of Diaz, came to South Africa with the aim of trading, and had no interest in the people of the region.<sup>2</sup> Even this endeavour was subsequently abandoned when Khoisan resistance in November 1497 persuaded Vasco da Gama that trade at the "Bay of Cows" was futile.<sup>3</sup>

In the light of the distinction that has been made between the two phases of colonialism, it can be expected that the perceptions of colonialism will also differ according to which phase reference is being made.

The rather bland definition of colonialism as the process of creating a "subject territory occupied by a settlement from the ruling state,"<sup>4</sup> does not indicate what has become over the years "a word of abuse."<sup>5</sup> The definition does not allude to the causes, impact or consequences of this process on the colonized. The term does not show that colonialism refers "to social structures created within the colonized society by imperialist relationships."<sup>6</sup> Nor does it indicate the differing perceptions of colonizer and colonized.

Like the Portuguese, the Dutch came here to establish a refreshment station and at no stage considered legislating to govern the indigenous people.<sup>7</sup> While there is in Molema's observations on this period a

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2 SVH Mdhluli, The Development of the African, pp. 11-12.

3 ANC, ANC of South Africa, p. 2.

4 P Hanks(ed), Collins Dictionary of the English Language, p.312.

5 M Perham, The Colonial Reckoning, p.9.

6 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p.3.

7 SM Molema, The Bantu Past and Present, p.238.



note of criticism of the failure to establish Dutch rule, he does not take the direction that is shown in Ncube's comment that the Dutch came to dispossess the indigenous people so that ultimately "two alien forms of oppression were entrenched: feudalism and slavery".<sup>8</sup> According to Molema the initial Dutch outpost had gradually evolved into a permanent settlement as the Dutch inhabitants realized the economic potential of the Cape and loosened their ties with Holland and the Dutch East India Company.<sup>9</sup> This view is contradicted by Pheko who sees the initial Dutch settlement of the Cape as profit orientated, and therefore tightened the bonds that linked the outpost and the mother country. This concurs with his standpoint that colonialism and monopoly capitalism are fellow travellers.<sup>10</sup>

At the beginning of this century Molema still believed that even if the British had come with altruistic motives, they eventually realized that the aborigines were not able to develop their lands independently, which happened to coincide with the realization that Britain was involved in a scramble for colonies.<sup>11</sup> He could not envisage of the arrival of a colonial power as Nzo does, namely as "the beginning of a most ruthless plunder of the land, and cattle" and "the most barbaric genocide" that "virtually exterminated" the Khoisan peoples.<sup>12</sup>

Early writers were not all that concerned with the motives for colonization. It appears that they were content to accept colonization as a fait accompli with which they would have to live. They create the impression that they conditionally welcomed the arrival of the colonizers

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8 DMJ Ncube, The Influence of Apartheid and Capitalism on the Development of Black Trade Unions in South Africa, p. 2.

9 SM Molema, The Bantu Past and Present, p. 238.

10 M Pheko, Apartheid..., pp. 26-27.

11 SM Molema, The Bantu Past and Present, p.343.

12 A Nzo, "Our Anti-Imperialist Commitment". An article by Alfred Nzo, Secretary-General of the ANC in Sechaba, February 1970, quoted in ANC Speaks..., p.75.



for a variety of reasons. They ascribed the arrival of the colonizing power to altruistic reasons, even though its camp followers were not always inspired by the same lofty ideals that fired the initial act of occupation. Molema accepts that the aim of the colonizer was to bring Christianity to the colonized. He warns that civilization is not synonymous with Christianity even though he concedes that civilization is a concomitant of Christianity.<sup>13</sup> The distinction that Molema makes is important to the arguments and criticisms that he has developed and is to develop elsewhere in this work. He is unreserved in his acceptance of Christianity, provided that this religion is unequivocal in its acceptance of all Christians, irrespective of race and class. Molema is critical of the argument that it is difficult to reconcile Christianity and dispossession, and that therefore Christianity must be rejected. And if Britain had remained true to her principles then she would have withdrawn once she had fulfilled her role as instructor and educator.<sup>14</sup>

Molema believes that the colonizer came to satisfy the Christian urge to evangelize and is thankful for the introduction of a creed that promises eternal salvation. Despite this gratitude, he still allows some room for criticism of those Christians who do not conform to his criteria for the religion. The blatant contradiction between Christian ethic and those who followed in the wake of the missionary, the traders, has been a source of much confusion to Blacks. Blacks could not understand how a people of the same origin can demonstrate such totally divergent principles as the missionaries and the traders did.<sup>15</sup>

No matter how instrumental Britain had been in introducing the new creed to the African, the final evaluation of her role in South Africa would depend on the integrity and humanity of her policies.<sup>16</sup> The

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13 SM Molema, The Bantu Past and Present, pp. 221-222.

14 SM Molema, The Bantu Past and Present, p. 343

15 SM Molema, The Bantu Past and Present, pp. 313-314.

16 SM Molema, The Bantu Past and Present, p. 345.



question of dispossession spurs Molema to a far more forthright criticism. He is aware of the perversion of morality to justify the alienation of land, and condemns as specious the argument that unless one power colonized the country then another would usurp the land. This sophistry is symptomatic of a mercenary morality that adapts itself to meet the demands of the selfish side of colonialism.<sup>17</sup>

What makes this comment poignant is that Britain had initially followed a policy of nonintervention towards the Xhosa, as they were recognized to have settled in the region before the Europeans. In time however the treaty system and the subsequent intrusion into and dispossession of Xhosa land evolved. The treaty system, Molema suggests, was entered into by Britain to prevent further frontier wars and possibly in answer to the Great Trek.<sup>18</sup> There is an element of irony in his argument. At one stage he attributes a cause of the Great Trek to Glenelg's reversal of the land acquisitions after the Sixth Frontier War.<sup>19</sup> Thus, by implication, Molema is saying that Britain, in order to safeguard African interests, applied measures that defeated this objective.

Despite his often implied and occasionally direct criticism of colonialism Molema does not raise the fundamental question posed by later writers. It does not occur to him to ask why the colonist should have come to Africa to spread love and joy when he had not been invited to come in the first place.<sup>20</sup> In many respects this question has a far more damning impact than any aspersions cast on the motives of the colonial power. By asking this question Ngubane is rejecting the legitimization of colonization by discussing its merits and demerits. The question is, however, largely rhetorical and left unanswered. Instead he recognizes that colonization did occur and that it had an impact on the colonized. It should also be noted that Ngubane sees a more benign influence intro-

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17 SM Molema, The Bantu Past and Present, p. 350.

18 SM Molema, The Bantu Past and Present, p. 239.

19 SM Molema, The Bantu Past and Present, p. 103.

20 JK Ngubane, Ushaba: The Hurtle to Blood River, p. 81.

duced by colonization, particularly the liberal era ushered in by Dr John Philip. This is apparent in his fulsome praise of the liberal tradition in an earlier work, An African Explains Apartheid.

From the preceding pages it is clear that, according to Molema, the motives for colonization can be grouped under three major categories. These are civilization, evangelization and economic. There is no attempt to place the arrival of Diaz in the romantic image of the voyages of discovery. And, as will subsequently become apparent, the integration of the process of colonization in South Africa into a global context only really developed as the perception grew that colonialism and imperialism were the products of capitalism's drive for a global monopoly.

This broadening of the perspective is to be expected as the commentators developed their perceptions with the aid of a far wider range of sources than had previously existed. These sources were themselves based on a wider spectrum of ideological and philosophical foundations. They also had a greater range of research materials on which to base their conclusions, aided by more sophisticated tools of physical and mental analysis. The writers under discussion developed in this milieu, thus one should expect that their works would reflect a more complex character and a greater awareness of the impact of the intrusion of colonialism and its adjuncts. It is clear from what has preceded and is to follow that the primary concern was to formulate a perception of what the impact of colonization had been. This concern was not merely to reflect the past for its own sake, but to show that in the logic of colonialism its impact had to be total. If this could be demonstrated then the efficacy and legitimacy of countermeasures could be justified.

It is often assumed that colonization entails the establishment of foreign control over indigenous people. This is partially correct, but only reflects a facet of colonization. It does not reflect how total the control would become to include every dimension of human existence, from questions of subsistence to those of cosmology.

The point has previously been made that Molema was fairly unequivocal

in his acceptance of colonization as beneficent. He also made it clear that enculturation was part and parcel of the changes that would evolve from European penetration. Enculturation would be an exercise in futility unless those absorbing the dominant culture integrated it into their entire being, instead of just imitating the external trappings of that culture.<sup>21</sup>

Molema demonstrates an awareness of the broad scope of the impact of colonization. Generally he is not all that condemnatory of this effect. His successors show an equal awareness of the magnitude of the effect of an alien intrusion into traditional society. Where Molema's heirs differ is in how they view these changes. Essentially Molema's attitude is that the changes were a necessary coincidence of Christian evangelization which he saw as the most significant product of colonization. Later writers invert the perception and tend to see that which Molema saw as the "by-products" of colonization as the means of subjugation and consequent dispossession. The thrust of later arguments is that without the "by-products" colonization and its attendant abuses would have failed.

Writers of the 1930s to the present have tended to be highly critical of the moral foundations of colonization. They could not accept that the colonist had come merely to spread the Christian gospel, and that they were innocent of any ulterior motive. The bearers of the Word, the missionaries, would be increasingly castigated for their role in paving the way for the dispossession of the Blacks. This group of writers initially chided the missionary for applying a double standard. In time, this somewhat gentle reprimand evolves into a strident condemnation. Missionaries and the faith they propagated were accused and found guilty of providing the "opiate of the masses" that would leave Blacks as passive bystanders in their own dispossession, subjugation and ultimate labour exploitation.

A recurrent theme is that Christianity is a source of division in a

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<sup>21</sup> SM Molema, The Bantu Past and Present, p. 308



time when a united front was needed to resist penetration. Social schisms developed between those who opted to follow the new faith and those who remained true to tradition. So acrimonious was the interne-cine strife that forbears were not remembered as individuals, but as those who had severed their ties with their peers in pursuit of their beliefs. These dissident groups became known as the "school people".<sup>22</sup> The social disruption caused by the rejection of polygamy is also a source of comment.<sup>23</sup>

Political divisions had a far greater impact on society. Molema did not concur with the critical view that conversion to Christianity would lead to the emasculation of the people and decreased martial tendencies.<sup>24</sup> If anything he would welcome a development such as this, as evidence of an evolutionary step in the development of Black civilization. While he concedes that Christianity was a source of division he did not allow that it was the cause of civil war among the Bamangwato, as Bessie Head states.<sup>25</sup>

The later and contemporary writers indict Christianity on two charges which confirm the two facets discerned by Molema's generation. But where Molema took these aspects as points of praise, subsequent writers accused Christianity of both encouraging colonization and facilitating its consolidation. The contention that the colonists came to spread the Gospel is rejected. In the three hundred years of occupation there had been every opportunity for the colonizers to proselytize, but they had, as yet, not availed themselves of the opportunity.<sup>26</sup> Instead the bearers of the new dominant civilization with its Christian foundations had distinguished themselves by hypocrisy and gloating over the misfortune

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22 N Jabavu, The Ochre People, p. 10

23 N Mokgatle, The Autobiography of an Unknown South African, pp. 58-59

24 SM Molema, The Bantu Past and Present, p. 43 and pp. 340-341.

25 B Head, A Bewitched Crossroad. An African Saga, pp. 51-54.

26 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., p. 119.

of others.<sup>27</sup>

The criticism aimed at Christianity is not so much directed at its role in promoting colonization as its part in facilitating the consolidation of colonial authority. This function was achieved in a variety of ways. Initially there is little suggestion that this was a deliberate ploy on the part of the Church. Today the expression of direct church involvement is far more explicit, if not a direct statement attributing the triumph of colonialism to the involvement of the Christian church.

The immediately obvious impact of Christianity on society has already been referred to, viz., the divisions in indigenous society between traditionalist and Christian. Not only was the convert obliged to renounce his fundamental beliefs, but also the society that had nurtured him. Just as there is linkage between Christian norms and social conduct so there is and was a reciprocal bond between traditional mores and society. Christianity was not, however, content to supplant one set of beliefs with another. It had to destroy the heroic symbols that provided security and also denigrate social institutions, language and culture. As a consequence, Leshoai alleges, Blacks became the enslaved imitators of a foreign culture.<sup>28</sup> Thus a people who felt insecure and sought assurance in their native past were denied this opportunity, which served to further undermine their confidence and increase their dependence on the new order.

Colonialism and Christianity launched a debilitating attack on tribal edifices. They did not supplant the old with a new creed of fraternal love and justice. Instead the new power taught that might was right. Ironically today, Themba claims, the ex-colonial masters are seen to be doing their utmost to deny this lesson that they had so convincingly

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27 HIE Dhlomo, "Cetshwayo", in N Visser and T Couzens (eds), H.I.E. Dhlomo. Collected Works, p. 127 and 128.

28 B Leshoai, "The Nature and Use of Oral Literature", in M Mutloa-tse (comp and ed), Reconstruction..., pp. 243-245.





taught, and hide it behind grandiloquent phrases.<sup>29</sup> Colonial history has taken Blacks "on an unpleasant journey through unmarked graveyards of our past".<sup>30</sup> The colonists nurtured the myth of the beneficence of empire-building that relentlessly proselytized the native in the arrogant belief that what was good for the colonizer was good for the colonized.<sup>31</sup>

It is difficult to determine which aspect of dispossession - cultural, material or spiritual - is considered to be the most significant. It appears to be an exercise in futility to establish an hierarchy or precedence in this regard. Therefore material dispossession will be dealt with first, because it is through man's interaction with his environment that the other aspects of his being evolve. The dispossession of the material bases of existence, and the cultural and spiritual spheres, will be discussed according to the following framework: Firstly the motives and agents of the particular form of dispossession will be discussed, and then the impact of these actions will be considered. At times these two categories of analysis show that little distinction can be made between the two. Therefore there will at times be a blurring of the distinctions between cause and effect. To attempt to separate the two would violate the intrinsic logic of the arguments underlying the perceptions, and therefore some overlapping will occur.

Each of the sources consulted sees land as the central theme. Where they differ is in the role that they assign to land and its dispossession and the aims and consequences of the loss. On the one hand Molema would argue that the colonists were justified in taking over aboriginal land, because the natives were incapable of fully exploiting the poten-

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29 C Themba, from "The House of Truth", "The Bottom of the Bottle", in E Patel (ed), The World of Can Themba..., p. 234.

30 Dikobe wa Mogale, "We Rose at Dawn", in D wa Mogale, Baptism of Fire, pp. 64-65.

31 L Nkosi, "Robinson Crusoe: Call Me Master", in L Nkosi (ed), Home and Exile and Other Selections, p. 154.

tial of the land.<sup>32</sup> Given Molema's generally negative and critical attitude towards the lack of "evolution" in his people's culture, it appears that he considers it right that the "fittest" should assume control of the land to properly utilize it. Molema did not, however, allow this contention to sanction the subsequent dispossession of Black lands to the point where they are enveloped in White-owned land.<sup>33</sup> Even the moderate Molema forever in search of objects of praise in colonization, saw that the loss of land was ultimately the foundation of a 'native policy' that destroyed every facet of Black life culminating in a condition akin to slavery.<sup>34</sup> However he never reached the tone of accusation and condemnation that is apparent in the title and content of Tso-tsi's work, From Chattel to Wage Slavery. A New Approach to South African History.

Once again Molema has indicated areas of concern without exploring the avenues further. Perhaps the grounds for this can be found in the following reasons: Molema was a child of his times, and owed a particular debt to his missionary mentors. He would renege on this obligation by directly or indirectly abusing those who had opened so many doors for him. An alternate answer could perhaps be sought in the limitations on perspective that have previously been discussed. It is also possible that some of the condemnation is evidence of Molema's inclination to Garveyism that Rich referred to previously.

Later writers do not display the same hesitancy in condemning the means and the motives of material and cultural alienation. Their interpretation of the agents of the loss operates at two levels: The first is that of force. The second is that of breaking the will of the people to resist in a variety of ways, other than by force of arms. Similarly the ascription of motives also varies.

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32 SM Molema, The Bantu Past and Present, p.343.

33 SM Molema, The Bantu Past and Present, p. 350.

34 SM Molema, The Bantu Past and Present, p. 240.



As the refreshment station at the Cape developed into a permanent settlement with an increased settler population, so the need for land, livestock, grain and slave labour increased. This need was, according to Dube, satisfied by means of extending the colonial frontiers through wars of aggression that disinherited the indigenous people.<sup>35</sup> Magubane feels that prior to the permanent British occupation of the Cape in 1814 the extension of the Cape frontier was basically aimed at obtaining extra pasturage.<sup>36</sup> From this viewpoint it can be concluded that this phase of expansion did not have the impact that subsequent events under British rule would have. It also implies that although the Trekboers intruded into alien land, an accommodation was reached that did not excessively impinge on the way of life of the interacting societies. It could be said that until the intervention of external government agencies, inter-group relations were in a state of flux, but without any really damaging or irreversible changes in the societies concerned. There is the suggestion that had it not been for British intervention then the early settlers and their descendants would have succumbed to pressure by the Blacks and been absorbed into the indigenous community.<sup>37</sup> This evolution was stopped by the growth of more stable colonial administrations that were more determined to establish and consolidate their authority. What the motives for this were, are seen differently by writers of different eras.

Molema's views on this question have already been outlined and need not be introduced again. His successors are far more concerned to divine vested interests, ideologies and even conflicting religious persuasions behind the move towards absolute control of the colonized. From Molema onwards the frontier wars would be seen as an integral part of the process of colonization and dispossession. It is interesting to note the

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35 D Dube, The Rise of Azania..., p. 35.

36 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. 43.

37 A Nzo, "Our Anti-Imperialist Commitment". An article by Alfred Nzo, Secretary-General of the ANC in Sechaba, February 1970", quoted in ANC, ANC Speaks..., p. 76.



shift in nomenclature that Molema applies to the Wars of Dispossession. He refers to the first three as the Dutch-Xhosa Wars and those after 1795 as the Euro-Xhosa Wars. The reason for adopting the second name is that the wars were still conducted by the Dutch, but under British rule.<sup>38</sup> Once again Molema is showing his sensitivity towards offending Britain, which he saw as the epitome of what should be striven after, and as his and his people's ultimate protector.

Molema sees all wars originating in conflicting "international ethics and interests" that in the end can only be resolved by the assertion of superiority through the use of force. In the South African context the inevitability of conflict was exacerbated and made more frequent by the diametrically opposed world-views represented here.<sup>39</sup> In the light of his views on Western civilization and the benefits that he believes were concomitant to it, it can be assumed that he was actually condoning the wars. Should the colonists, as the bearers of this civilization, gain victory, then they could proceed to propagate their ideas to the benefit of Blacks. He was, after all, a strong proponent for adopting pristine Western civilization and Christianity and if war was a means to this end, then it was a 'necessary evil'. Molema was prepared to turn a blind eye to the corrosive effects of colonization on traditional society because he could see little of benefit in that civilization which had earned Africa the epithet of the "Dark Continent".

Unlike Molema, Dhlomo takes a far less benign stance and condemns the creation of a people under yoke. They are not only burdened in the physical sense but also spiritually and intellectually.<sup>40</sup> To Dhlomo colonization and dispossession not only affected the material world, but in his view, most importantly, the cultural world. By adding this dimension a whole new vista of perceptions has been created that were to be

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38 SM Molema, The Bantu Past and Present, p. 90.

39 SM Molema, The Bantu Past and Present, p. 96.

40 HIE Dhlomo, "Malaria", in N Visser and T Couzens (eds), H.I.E. Dhlomo. Collected Works, p. 280.



expanded on by later and contemporary authors, commentators and critics. This latter development became increasingly prominent as the question arose as to why colonization succeeded and Black resistance failed. In many respects Dhlomo presaged diversification in interpretations through combining the concepts of the material and cultural worlds. Thus he argued that it was not surprising that Blacks were paid a high price for their cattle because man's soul does not come cheaply.<sup>41</sup> (This comment refers to a later era, but its sentiments are equally applicable to the earlier era.)

Dhlomo's primary concern was with acculturation and more specifically the degeneration of Black culture. Despite this concern he is more involved with the consequences of deculturation than in defining motives. The latter aspect featured prominently in the works of writers who emerged in the 1940s and later under the influence of the Africanists and their intellectual heirs, the advocates of Black Consciousness.

Tsotsi has no doubts about what brought the colonist to South Africa. The settler had come to confiscate the land and entrench White supremacy.<sup>42</sup> He does not widen his vision to include those aspects foreshadowed by Dhlomo. That both Ngubane and Noni Jabavu should refer to the era of the Wars of Dispossession as the "Hundred Years War",<sup>43</sup> has interesting connotations. Firstly it means that the wars were viewed as a continuum. Secondly it must be accepted that the population in its entirety is not going to emerge unscathed in all its dimensions. Thirdly the choice of name also appears to indicate that the wars were also fought over divergent beliefs, as they were in Europe. Fourthly it is perhaps indicative of an understanding of the past in terms of an analogy. Finally it also shows an appreciation of South African history in a wider context, albeit not that favoured by those who apply a

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41 HIE Dhlomo, "Drought", in N. Visser and T. Couzens (eds), H.I.E. Dhlomo. Collected Works, p. 432.

42 WM Tsotsi, From Chattel to Wage Slavery..., p. 112.

43 N. Jabavu, The Ochre People, p. 37 and JK Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, p. 176.





materialist interpretation.

The Black perceptions of the motives underlying the wars of dispossession are various: These range from ideological and ethical conflicts to struggle for pasturage and residential land, as well as to lay the foundations for labour coercion.<sup>44</sup> The last four wars up to 1879 were conducted in a particularly savage manner, and through their scorched-earth policy, Magubane alleges, the Whites avoided genocide but finally robbed the Xhosa of all independent means of existence,<sup>45</sup> "as a necessary prelude to the exploitation of their labour."<sup>46</sup> Even where the condemnation is not as explicit the intention behind the wars is clear. After each war the colonial frontier was extended to include both the vanquished and their land. The aim was to increase their dependence on the economy of the Whites.<sup>47</sup> In a similar vein Kekana asks why, if the wars were punitive or pre-emptive, as they were claimed to be, White settlers persisted in encroaching on the frontier. If the colonists felt so threatened then it would be logical to expect them to keep as much distance as possible between themselves and their belligerent neighbours. In the light of this apparent illogicality Kekana concludes that the causes of the frontier wars must be sought in the avarice of the colonists rather than any need for defence.<sup>48</sup>

The trauma of dispossession was exacerbated by a new concept of land ownership. The traditional communal basis of land ownership had given way to a new method of land alienation. Title to land could be obtained

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44 DJM Ncube, The Impact of Capitalism and Apartheid on the Development of Black Trade Unions in South Africa, p. 14.

45 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. 38.

46 WM Tsotsi, From Chattel to Wage Slavery..., p. 61.

47 A Ngubo, "The Development of African Political Protest in South Africa, 1882-1910: An Analytical Approach", p. 36 and p. 56.

48 NS Kekana, "A History of the Black People in South Africa to 1795...", p. 109.



through a cash transaction.<sup>49</sup> Thus those who had survived the initial onslaught and had the means to rehabilitate themselves in an alien environment, found that they had to operate under exotic norms of land tenure.

Ultimately the whole aim of colonization and dispossession was to obtain Black land and cattle and eradicate their freedom so that Black bondage should subsidize White opulence.<sup>50</sup> Even if it was an historical accident that Whites appeared as the invaders and victors, very few Whites concede this, and take great pride in the civilization that gave them victory. Similarly few Blacks are prepared to concede that it was merely incidental that their oppressors were White.<sup>51</sup> Nkosi makes a very germane observation when he states:-

We, the Black people, have come to understand the necessary connection between our historical background as enslaved colonial peoples and the lack of an aggressive technological thrust to give an edge to our humanistic cultures. It seems now only realistic to admit that our gods have failed us deeply in the only area where our survival as people was crucial.<sup>52</sup>

Even if he does continue to say that Blacks would be better employed in building their future, he does reflect a deep concern with how things went wrong. The answers lie chiefly in the cultural sphere, rather than in the material or political areas. Thus a confidence in the values of the past to build the future has to be restored. This has been an important facet of the Black Consciousness movement. Many of the writers referred to in this dissertation allude to this problem, even though

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49 J Sikakane, A Window on Soweto, p. 11.

50 N Mkele, "Trojan Horses of Apartheid", in M Mutloatse (comp and ed), Reconstruction..., pp. 269-270.

51 L Nkosi, "Black Power or Souls of Black Writers", in, L Nkosi (ed), Home and Exile and Other Selections, pp. 108-109.

52 L Nkosi, "Black Power or Souls of Black Writers", in L Nkosi (ed), Home and Exile and Other Selections, pp. 108-109.

Black Consciousness as an ideology or philosophy had not yet been conceptualized. Alternately they were the children of the Africanist age, but rejected the philosophy on either moral or ideological grounds. Despite this they were aware of the problem of the lack of a will to resist and sought the answer in the cultural arena, even if their analyses did not lead them to the same conclusion as those of the advocates of Black Consciousness. It should also be remembered that Garveyism, which presaged Africanism, had already made its presence felt in South Africa by the 1920s, and not exclusively amongst the educated elite.<sup>53</sup>

Whether dispossession was attained militarily or by more subtle means, such as the subversion of traditional values, Blacks no longer saw Whites as the benefactors that Molema perceived them to be. Whites might try to present themselves as the paragons of virtue, but Ngubane reckons they will be known for their rape, murder and pillage in the name of Christianity. The spoor of evil that they had left behind in Europe led into Africa, the Americas and Asia.<sup>54</sup> How had it come about that a Black writer, Ntantata, commenting on the Wars of Dispossession should see them as war between the forces of heathendom and Christianity, where Black defenders of their heritage were portrayed as the enemy and obstacle in the spreading of the Christian gospel?<sup>55</sup> In providing answers to the preceding questions the writers concerned wittingly and unwittingly, directly and indirectly adduced the blame to Christianity and its various agents such as the missionaries, education and colonial institutions.

The function of Christianity as the direct and indirect initiator of

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53 PB Rich, White Power and the Liberal Conscience..., p. 20; Editor's note in M Swanson (ed), The Views of Mahlathi..., p. 185 and W Beinart, "The Amafeladawonye [the Die-Hards], in W Beinart and C Bundy, Hidden Struggles in Rural South Africa..., p. 253.

54 JK Ngubane, Ushaba: The Hurtle to Blood River, p. 31

55 AC Jordan, "Towards an African Literature XI: The Harp of the Nation", in Africa South, Vol 4, # 2, January-March 1960, p. 111.



colonization has already been discussed. Therefore attention must be given to the impact of missionary intervention on aboriginal societies and the part that this played in facilitating colonization. The ambivalence of Black perceptions on the role of Christianity in colonization is a reflection of one of the most bitter dilemmas facing the African. For a long time Christianity expected an unequivocal orthodoxy that did not allow Blacks to accept Christianity conditionally. Acceptance of Christianity was only allowed on the terms of its propagators, even if it was known that while the convert closed his eyes in prayer the White man was plundering Black land and women.<sup>56</sup>

Christianity was not only condemned for this perfidy, but also for a more pernicious influence that divided households and tribes against each other; while all the time preaching a doctrine that further weakened the will to resist. To some commentators this consequence was an unfortunate adjunct of the advent of the new religion. To other critics it was a deliberate ploy by the evangelists to weaken their potential converts to the point where they sacrificed their existing beliefs to finally get physical and spiritual peace. A third group of writers chose to see the missionary as the handmaiden of colonialism and thus capitalism.<sup>57</sup>

The colonizer had found the moral basis for his presence on and usurpation of foreign soil by saying that he followed the missionary to give him protection in his work. Now it was time for the proselytizer to prove his credentials under the aegis of the secular colonial government. The missionary, with much of the threat of physical violence removed, was able to extend his field of activity into the subject peoples, rather than just act on the periphery of the colonial settlement. At the same time the missionaries became the formulators, executors and

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<sup>56</sup> A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., p. 118.

<sup>57</sup> WM Tsotsi, From Chattel to Wage Slavery..., p. 31 and BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. 59.



agents of government policy.<sup>58</sup> In fact they were aware that not all their actions were aimed at spreading their message.<sup>59</sup>

By gaining converts from traditional society Blacks were made to see that the Word was "about God and whiteness, the devil and blackness." This image was so successfully imprinted that "the tyranny of the symbolic, which introduced psycho-social dominance of the blacks by the whites" led to Black "culture developing negatively."<sup>60</sup> In other words Blacks were made to see themselves in terms of what they were not, which served to undermine their confidence in their own abilities, particularly to resist White penetration and domination. Colonization is "a history of violation that goes far beyond the juridical" but also "into that which is economic and social as well."<sup>61</sup>

Missionary teaching disrupted the natural order of things, starting with authority relationships within the family. By accepting the equality of the Holy Trinity the son, Jesus, became the equal of the father, God, which when transposed into the temporal sphere offended the Zulu sense of a proper relationship between father and son.<sup>62</sup> It is in the conflict between the Christian ideal and the temporal reality that Blacks found much disillusionment that added to their criticism of the impact of the early missionaries. They came to be seen as coming to set the "snare intended to rivet upon" Blacks "those chains" which have made them a "chattel placed in South Africa for the convenience of the colonist."<sup>63</sup> The paternalistic attitude of the missionary required him

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58 WM Tsotsi, From Chattel to Wage Slavery..., p. 122.

59 S Biko, "Black Consciousness and the Quest for a True Humanity", in A Stubbs (ed), Steve Biko..., p. 94.

60 NC Manganyi, "Culture and Identity: The Tyranny of the Symbolic", in NC Manganyi (ed), Looking Through the Keyhole..., p. 67 and B Modisane, Blame Me on History, p. 185.

61 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. xii.

62 A Vilakazi, Shembe..., pp. 74-76.

63 B Modisane, Blame Me on History, p. 181.



to annihilate the antithesis of Christian culture, to vindicate Western civilization.<sup>64</sup>

Christianity did not have to resort to violence to attain its ends and those of the colonizer. It achieved its aims through deceit and subterfuge and denigrating those who opposed it.<sup>65</sup> The assumed superiority that underlay the denigration was a necessary part of evangelization, even if traditional religions contained elements that corresponded with Christian dogma.<sup>66</sup> Missionaries not only set out to destroy the self-definition of Blacks. They also set themselves up as arbiters in the evolution of Black culture.<sup>67</sup> In this way Blacks were denied the confidence to reconstruct themselves culturally after the onslaught of colonialism, and their dependence on the Whites intensified. The tighter the bondage of dependence the less inclined Blacks were to repossess what had been theirs. Bound by the intransigent assumption of superiority of the missionary, Blacks succumbed to what has been termed "cultural imperialism."<sup>68</sup> So the missionary is seen as an integral factor in the whole process of colonization, but there is some debate as to whether the role is incidental or deliberate. There are also divisions in the perception of whether the missionary's function was benevolent or malevolent.

It is to be expected that, irrespective of the perception of the missionary, the concern with his role is not restricted to that immediately surrounding the colonist. Writers are also concerned with the role of the missionary once the colonial presence had been established in

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64 E Mphahlele, The African Image, p. 136.

65 HIE Dhlomo, "Cetshwayo", in N Visser and T Couzens (eds), H.I.E. Dhlomo. Collected Works, p. 127.

66 A Vilakazi, Shembe..., pp. 36-37.

67 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. 69.

68 A Vilakazi, Shembe..., pp. 36-37.





South Africa. The changes that were wrought in traditional society by the erosion of pre-colonial values have already been discussed. What still has to be discussed is how these changes were consolidated and entrenched, and what the aims and consequences of this were. All of the commentators ascribe an important function to formal academic education in this regard, even though they do not agree on what the results of this education were.

Once again the observations of Molema are taken as the benchmark, as he was undoubtedly the first to produce a work of the scope and depth that would serve as a routemarker for his successors. The consistency of Molema's views is also evident in his perceptions of the function and beneficence of education. Just as there is a consistency in his views, there is also a slight barb to his acceptance of the benefits of education. He argues for the furtherance of education according to Western norms in order to accelerate the process of "national emancipation."<sup>69</sup> Thus he also sees the whole process of colonization as one that led to subjugation. He is not, however, overly critical of this development because he tends to subscribe to the belief in a predestined evolution. This growth will lead his people away from a social system that is based in "utilitarianism" and the attainment of the common good rather than the advancement of the individual.<sup>70</sup> While he will not directly admit it, Molema also shows that the disillusionment among educated Blacks arising from the failure to be treated as the equals of Whites has led to an anger, that in turn has led to the growth of "generals, on the one side of South African political warfare."<sup>71</sup>

The "generals" had to play a dual role. On the one hand they would have to act as the inspiration to their not so educated brothers to obtain

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69 SM Molema, The Bantu Past and Present, p. 313.

70 SM Molema, The Bantu Past and Present, pp. 113-133 and pp. 177 - 237.

71 SM Molema, The Bantu Past and Present, p. 320 and p. 317.





a higher education. On the other hand they had to act as the spokespersons for their people with the ruling classes.<sup>72</sup> It is on the question of the evolution of an educated elite, which arrogated to itself or fell heir to a leadership, role that the most argument amongst Black commentators exists, though there is today consensus that formal education is a necessity. In regard to the latter there is still a great deal of debate as to what the form and content of this education should be.

For early commentators there is little doubt as to what the function of the educated elite should be, and therefore they found little to fault in the development of this class, nor in the motives that underlay its origins. H Selby Msimang felt it intolerable that the intellectual should be subjected to the electoral whims of uneducated chiefs and councillors.<sup>73</sup> If this was the view of the educated elite, were they able to wear the mantle of leadership that they had assumed for themselves successfully? Aside from the reservations mentioned by Molema there is no doubt that they believed they could. But, then, one could hardly expect otherwise, because the evaluation was basically a public self-evaluation and the analysts could not see the position into which they and their forbears had been manoeuvred.

The mission schools were chiefly responsible for education amongst the colonized. From the minority that attended these schools evolved a leadership that played a significant role in the development of the colonial relationship. The nascent leadership was taught, outside of the three elementary disciplines, another equally important one. They had the rationale of colonialism inculcated into them which emphasized "the value judgements attached to the antonyms black and white."<sup>74</sup> From

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72 SM Molema, The Bantu Past and Present, p. 317.

73 "Proceedings and Resolutions of the Governor-General's Native Conference", 1923, [Extracts], (Published in Native Affairs Commission [Union] Report for 1923), quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 1, p. 165.

74 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. 67.

Magubane's comment it is clear that he is criticizing an educational system that created and confirmed divisions, rather than seeking to establish a synonymity based on a common humanity. By implication, because of the cardinal position held by mission schools, the missionaries and the creed that they brought are also criticized. Previously Noni Jabavu and Naboth Mokgatle indicated that the conversion to Christianity had a divisive impact on traditional society. But they were not as explicit in stating the dilemma of those who took their conversion further and embarked on the path of formal education. They failed to see that education sent innocents abroad who were unable to cope with the "tough and crude" demands of the real world.<sup>75</sup>

These comments were directed more at the content of education than its intention. The latter is an aspect on which the modern critics are particularly eloquent. However there is a particular dilemma in this eloquence because they are using a medium and format of expression that emanates from the system that they are castigating. But they do not feel the horns of the dilemma as acutely as their predecessors, who were condemned for allowing themselves to be finessed into the position where they could not criticize those who had contributed to, if not created, their leadership positions.

The whole colonial educational system was seen by Nagubane as an "ideological subversion".<sup>76</sup> Prior to this view JT Jabavu believed it fit and proper that an elite should develop out of the educational system. A further irony arose from his statement in that this elite adopted English as the means of communication.<sup>77</sup> It is ironic in that the leadership would be distinguished by educational differences that alienated

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75 HIE Dhlomo, "Sweet Mango Tree", in N Visser and T Couzens (eds), H.I.E. Dhlomo. Collected Works, p. 345.

76 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. 67.

77 JT Jabavu, "Native Races in South Africa", in G Spiller (ed), Papers on Inter-Racial Problems. Communicated to the First Universal Races Congress Held at the University of London, July 26-29, 1911, p. 340.



it from the masses it was supposed to represent. Secondly by using English they had to communicate with their imagined constituencies in the language of their colonial masters. It is on these grounds that the modern critics asked whether their leadership role was to represent the views of their people to the colonial administration or to add a semblance of credibility to colonial edicts by acting as the conduit for the orders of the colonizer. To perform this function adequately a proper comprehension of English was a prerequisite.

Early educated elites did not see that they were part of an educational system that gave birth to the "outmoded ideas about race and our conservationist approach to culture and identity".<sup>78</sup> In any event the claimed respect for indigenous cultures is according to Franz Fanon, as has been previously stated, "tantamount to the most utter contempt, and to the most elaborate sadism."<sup>79</sup> The "contempt" and "sadism" was most vividly demonstrated in the status of the educated elite who emerged under the patronage of the colonial administration. They felt the pain of discrimination through exclusion from White social structures most acutely. They had attained the social norms which, theoretically, should have gained them access to colonial society. This access was denied them. When this situation became intolerable they found that their lines of retreat had been cut off. They could no longer identify with the heritage which their education had persuaded them to reject. Should they overcome this philosophical, moral and social problem they found that the system that they had abandoned had changed as a result of colonization. They were unable to function according to their understanding of traditional society and politics.<sup>80</sup> Thus the leadership of the time was denied access to what they considered the rewards of

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78 NC Manganyi, "Culture and identity: The Tyranny of the Symbolic", in NC Manganyi, Looking Through the Keyhole..., p. 71

79 F Fanon, Toward the African Revolution, p. 34 that is incorrectly cited in BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. 69.

80 A Ngubo, "The Development of African Political Protest in South Africa, 1882-1910: An Analytical Approach", p. 29 and pp. 51 - 52.



their endeavours. At the same time they were precluded from returning to their true constituencies. Consequently they found themselves in a social and political limbo. The final humiliation lay in their continued manipulation by the colonial administration which persisted in giving them a superficial leadership status and function. They were not allowed to escape the trap that they had been inveigled into.

While early writers may not have appreciated their precarious position a modern writer such as Mphahlele had no doubt about the intention of the mission based education. The education sponsored by the colonial administration sought to supplant and eradicate the continuity of Black life by implanting a continuity designed by the colonist,<sup>81</sup> to ensure continued White domination. What had to be avoided was that the African should revert to his traditional humanism,<sup>82</sup> with its communality which would have led to a solidarity immune to the pressures of the colonizer. An additional argument is proffered by Mathabane who claims to be reporting the words of a Black evangelist in Alexandra. According to this account the proselytizer chastised a woman for not accepting the word of God. She had to realize that the arrival of Whites and Christianity was part of the divine plan to alleviate the suffering of the children of Ham. In effect, by rejecting, Whites the woman is rejecting Christian redemption. Subsequent comment by Mathabane confirms this perception that Christianity was a means to persuading Blacks to accept their subjugation.<sup>83</sup>

Missionary education not only divided the leadership from its constituencies but also divided families internally. The Black child was brought up to believe that all that did not tally with Western norms was contemptible. Thus children turned against their parents as the em-

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81 E Mphahlele, Afrika My Music..., p. 178.

82 E Mphahlele in an interview with NC Manganyi, published under the title "Looking in: In Search of Ezekiel Mphahlele", in NC Manganyi, Looking Through the Keyhole..., pp. 9-10.

83 M Mathabane, Kaffir Boy..., pp. 58-62.

bodiment of rejected values.<sup>84</sup>

Thus the colonizer and his agents achieved their aim of subjugation through various means and not only through physical coercion. Blacks had their confidence in their social relationships, and the culture that reflected them, undermined. To add to this trauma the agents of this erosion further divided this society against itself so that no community of purpose could evolve. Gradually an image emerges of a society that has had its social, economic, cosmological and cultural fabric frayed by the persistent abrasion of external forces. At the same time the warp and the woof of the entire social fabric was being unravelled by elements introduced into the society by the same forces that were responsible for the external corrosion.

Much of this comment is aimed at developments in the Cape, and do not comment on a second wave of colonization initiated by what became known as the Great Trek. Nor does it reflect a contemporaneous event in the prelude to the emigration of the Voortrekkers, namely the Mfecane/Difaqane/Lifaqane.

As the Great Trek grew out of the experiences and needs of the colonist on the eastern frontier region of the Cape colony, it is essentially an extension of the processes that had been initiated there. Therefore it has been decided to include aspects of it in this chapter. The question of the Mfecane is a bit more problematic. There is no doubt that there is both a causal relationship between the "times of upheaval" and the Great Trek. The Mfecane also contributed to the success of the emigration of the frontier farmers from the eastern Cape.

It is in dealing with the Great Trek that a definite linkage between current conditions and the past is established. It must be remembered that for many Blacks of the interior, that is those parts of South Africa penetrated by the Voortrekkers, their meeting with the Boers was

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<sup>84</sup> S Biko, "Black Consciousness and the Quest for a True Humanity", in A Stubbs (ed), Steve Biko..., p. 94.



the first significant contact that they had with Whites. Not only was it the first but it also laid the foundations for future Black-White relations.

When looking to the causes of the Great Trek the relative significance attached to the causes is a reflection of the ideology to which the particular writer subscribes. Thus Molema finds the reasons for the Great Trek in Glenelg's reversal of the annexation of the Queen Adelaide Province. More importantly there was the refusal to recognize the liberty of others, which resulted in the vehement reaction to the abolition of slavery in 1834.<sup>85</sup> These views are entirely consistent with Molema's world- and life-view. The significant point is that the emigrants had to be shown to be fleeing from a government that threatened to give citizenship an equal status on either side of the colour line.<sup>86</sup> Even those writers who identify with and apply a more materialist ideology tend to ascribe to the idea that Boers fled the pending equality in the Cape.<sup>87</sup> What was important to all the writers was to demonstrate that the political lineage of the present-day Afrikaner was one that originated in the denial of rights of others.

Where the writers differ is in what the aims and consequences of this denial were. Some argued that the discriminatory policies of the Voortrekker states were symptomatic of this attitude, and that these became policies of state after 1910. The climax of these policies had been reached in the contemporary apartheid policies. The evolution of this perception has created certain problems for its originators, particularly the early ones. Their argument was that because the emigrants were fleeing from the antithesis of their beliefs, the British, then the British must represent the epitome of government and the principles of government. What was perceived to be the British capitulation to Boer

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85 SM Molema, The Bantu Past and Present, p. 103, pp. 242-243 and p. 272.

86 JK Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, pp. 33-34.

87 M Pheko, Apartheid..., p. 41.



demands at the time of Union caused a considerable dilemma. It is, however, not intended to expand on this theme at this stage as it will be dealt with in the next chapter.

The modern writer did not have to wrestle with this apparent contradiction. Magubane, A contemporary author, contradicted the views of earlier writers and argues that Britain allowed the Great Trek to create a new defensive zone to the north against African attacks.<sup>88</sup> Similarly it is argued by Tsotsi that the Boers only succeeded by virtue of British support and that, in fact, the Voortrekkers would have been annihilated without British aid. In effect the emigrants were the trailblazers of British colonization.<sup>89</sup>

Whatever the ultimate interpretation of and significance attached to the Great Trek all writers are agreed that the actual emigration and the four decades immediately succeeding it were a time of dislocation and dispossession, irrespective of what drove the Boers out of the Cape. Plaatje gives prominence to a speech by Dr Abdurahman in 1913 in which he likens the Voortrekkers to a "desolating pestilence" who callously laughed at the devastation they wrought.<sup>90</sup> The Trekkers' aim was to continue the practices which had been prohibited by the passage of Ordinance 50 of 1828 and the abolition of slavery between 1834 and 1838.<sup>91</sup> The emigrants had taken umbrage at the passage of Ordinance 50 and emancipation and left the Cape to practise slavery once again.<sup>92</sup> These views are also echoed by Abrahams who adds an additional grievance by claiming that the emigrants believed that the freed slaves would be given Boer land by the Cape government. Consequently

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88 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. 45.

89 WM Tsotsi, From Chattel to Wage Slavery..., p. 30 and p. 36.

90 ST Plaatje, Native Life in South Africa..., p. 156.

91 DMJ Ncube, The Influence of Apartheid and Capitalism on the Development of Black Trade Unions in South Africa, pp. 8-9.

92 B Head, A Bewitched Crossroad. An African Saga, p. 31.



there is regret that the frontier farmer had ever allowed the second British occupation in 1806.<sup>93</sup> The Retief Manifesto was a clear indication that "the trekker path in every part of South Africa was [to be] marked with bloodshed, land robbery, military and political suppression of the indigenous African people", which initiated the process of national dispossession.<sup>94</sup> More blandly put the Great Trek brought the Free State, Transvaal and Natal into being for Whites.<sup>95</sup> By creating an awareness of these territories the Trekkers were, in effect, opening up the territory to colonization.

In the British phase of colonization of the Cape an explanation for the facility of subjugation and dispossession had been sought and found in either the missionaries or military force. In the interior the same arguments would not hold because, after all, it was the Trekkers' stated intention to avoid contact with the indigenous peoples. Thus they were precluded from exerting those influences that the British sponsored missionary was able to do. What conditions pertained then that allowed the Boers to succeed without the ancillary forces that were available to the British? Generally it is held that internal divisions amongst the Blacks of the interior paved the way to their subjugation. The Mfecane and its attendant effects were seen as a major contributor in this regard.

To an extent Molema sees the Boer intervention in the interior as a necessity. He claims that the Mfecane heralded a period of stagnation that hindered any progress in social and intellectual advancement.<sup>96</sup> In the light of Molema's view on social evolution it can be assumed that the Great Trek and its aftermath were seen as an evolutionary necessity, even though he might have doubts about the agents of change.

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93 P Abrahams, Wild Conquest, pp. 29-33.

94 M Pheko, Apartheid..., p. 42 and p. 148.

95 SM Molema, The Bantu Past and Present, pp. 14-15.

96 SM Molema, The Bantu Past and Present, p. 120.



Less concerned with the necessity of change was Tsotsi. His contention is that without the depopulation in Natal, occasioned by Shaka during the Mfecane, the Voortrekkers would not have managed to settle there.<sup>97</sup> This view directly contradicts that of D Dube who contends that Shaka, through his consolidation of state and army was in fact girding his loins for the colonial onslaught. Perhaps his somewhat generous attribution of Shaka's motives can be found in Dube's desire to refute LM Thompson's insinuation that Shaka was a psychopathic expansionist.<sup>98</sup> In a similar vein the causes of the Mfecane are attributed by Matsetela to a response to the penetration of merchant capital at Delagoa Bay.<sup>99</sup> The materialist interpretation does not reflect the forces that were unleashed which made people jettison "human nobility" in a bitter struggle for survival.<sup>100</sup> There is no indication that some of those who survived would become known as the "people who had returned to meat-eating after the starvation of the (difaqane)".<sup>101</sup>

Shaka's armies and the flow of refugees they precipitated entered a land of plenty and left a trail of desolation amongst a people that had no inkling of what lay in store for them and were thus not prepared for the upheavals that were to befall them.<sup>102</sup> So total was the impact that people's time scales were changed. They no longer counted time in harvests reaped, but in wars fought.<sup>103</sup>

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97 WM Tsotsi, From Chattel to Wage Slavery..., p. 38.

98 D Dube, The Rise of Azania..., pp. 30-32.

99 T Matsetela, "Uprootal and its Effects", in M Mutloatse (ed), Umlaba Wethu..., pp. 28-29.

100 B Head, A Bewitched Crossroad. An African Saga, p. 22.

101 T Matsetela, "The Life Story of Nkgono Mma-Pooe: Aspects of Sharecropping in the Northern Orange Free State, 1890-1930", in S Marks and R Rathbone (eds), Industrialisation and Social Change in South Africa..., p. 215.

102 T Mofolo, Chaka, p. 136 and p. 4.

103 B Head, A Bewitched Crossroad. An African Saga, p. 22.

Even though there might be differences of opinion on the causes of the Mfecane there appears to be unanimity on the perception that the upheaval amongst Blacks at this time was considerable. The impression is further created that these upheavals created a battle weary people who grasped at any opportunity that offered a semblance of stability. Alternately it is argued that the people had become so physically exhausted in the struggle for survival that they had no will to resist when the next wave of subjugation, the Great Trek, swept over them.

In the introductory paragraphs of this chapter it was mentioned that Blacks were far more concerned with their immediate situation. Part of this concern is reflected in discussing those events that contributed to the present. It is to be expected that the more immediate past has a far greater vitality. Many of the writers lived through the eras that are to be discussed in succeeding chapters. Alternately they were or had been in close contact with the generations that had lived through the social, political, economic, religious and cultural changes in society that followed on the mineral discoveries after 1870.

Despite the greater concern with the events of the immediate past, the foundations for the contemporary perceptions had to be sought in the relatively distant past. The events and consequences emanating from colonization, imperialism and dispossession had to be shown as the cornerstone of the current condition. In effect it had to be demonstrated that these events were not isolated incidents but part of a continual process that found its final expression in the present. The significance of the particular themes discussed in this chapter lies in their relevance to the perceptions that the writers possess of their current situation. Because the writers were creatures of their time their perceptions were also a reflection of the spirit of their time. Thus one finds the sometimes conflicting viewpoints that have come to the fore during this chapter. This apparent conflict becomes more pronounced when one moves onto the era to be discussed in the next chapter, as this era is much closer to the realm of experience of the writers concerned.



CHAPTER 4

THE IMPACT OF THE MINERAL REVOLUTION, 1870-1936

In concluding chapter three the opinion was given that the development of a particular Black perception of South African history was directly linked to the writer's current situation. By their references to the early phases of colonization through to the Great Trek and its aftermath a foundation was laid for the next phase of Black history. It would be far-fetched to suggest that the events preceding the discovery of diamonds were deliberately planned in anticipation of the revelation of wealth that followed on the chance discovery of diamonds in 1867. It would, however, be correct to say, in the view of the works consulted, that with the development of the diamond and gold fields, a far more deliberate policy in regard to the indigenous peoples was followed. Irrespective of the ultimate views of the individual authors all sought significance in the motives, aims and consequences of the policies that flowed from the first mineral finds.

It might be expected that those writers who wrote at the time that the mineral revolution gained momentum, would be the most vociferous in the condemnation of the upheaval in their lives. And yet, as will become apparent, they were not. It was left to the post-World War II generation to vent their anger over their condition in particularly virulent terms. In part this can be ascribed to the fact that the contemporary writer was stating his views in the realization that this was virtually the only way of publicly expressing his opinion. They saw, with hindsight, what they regarded as the ultimate dehumanization of Blacks to be the result of the policies followed by White authorities after the discovery of minerals.

Unlike the early phases of colonization, the period which followed on the mineral discoveries is generally seen as a time when a "native policy" was implemented that had specific objectives in mind. These aims were not merely to regulate relations between colonized and colonist or





to satisfy the prejudices or needs of the latter. Increasingly the formulation and implementation of "native policy" was seen as being at the behest of vested interests, and then more specifically of the mining magnates.

In looking back on the mineral revolution a modern author perceives it to have changed every facet of South African society. And, in particular, to have made the intentions of British imperialism starkly apparent to both African and Afrikaner.<sup>1</sup> It is interesting that Magubane should bracket Black and Boer together in this context. Early writers generally tended to apportion much of the blame for the South African malaise to the Afrikaner and his antecedents. Magubane instead sees imperialism and the capitalist interests it represented as the motive force behind the post-mineral discovery developments. And he is, in this regard, representative of a mainstream in Black historiography. The evolution of this perception and its implications must now be considered.

A consistent feature of the spectrum of sources consulted is that all attribute a major significance to the initial discovery of diamonds in the Hopetown district and the development of the Kimberley diamond-fields. Even if early writers might be hesitant in discerning a motive behind the changes that were wrought by the discoveries they do resonate with their successors in that fundamental changes took place. These changes were reflected in the material, social, political, cultural and physical spheres of society. These changes were most acutely felt by the Blacks on whose land the minerals were discovered. In the context of this chapter "Blacks" has been used to denote the Griqua as well, as their territory, Griqualand West, was to become the focal point of the early disputes surrounding ore-bearing land. In addition the dispute and its handling were seen as the forebears of later disputes and their resolution.

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<sup>1</sup> BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, pp. 102-103.





An important outflow of the mineral discoveries was the evolution of migrant labour. That is why, as discussed in preceding chapters, so many writers laid such emphasis on the question of dispossession. The refinement of the argument linking dispossession and labour coercion becomes increasingly apparent over the decades. It is perhaps understandable that early writers should not be as concerned about the question of the mineral finds and their ramifications. They were after all not as adversely affected as their successors and did not feel the brunt of legislative measures used to confirm the situation created by the diamondfields, goldfields and industrialization. Nor could they see the relationship between the minerals and broader historical developments in South Africa, such as the South African War between 1899-1902 and the unification of South Africa in 1910.

Initially there is little to suggest that Blacks saw their role in the mineral discoveries as other than wage earners. The wage-earning potential of the diamondfields at Kimberley was welcomed as it gave the labourer the chance to earn enough to buy those goods that the traders introduced amongst the Blacks in the hinterland of the diamondfields. In the early stages of labour recruitment competition was strong enough to ensure fair wages. Thus to have been a worker at Kimberley was considered an elevation of social status measured in material terms, as the migrant earned enough to gain a measure of wealth.<sup>2</sup> It was not yet seen that the mineral finds quickened British interest in the interior leading to the expropriation of both Boer and Griqua.<sup>3</sup> Until the 1860s Britain had been content to contain the Afrikaners and pacify the African chiefdoms of the interior. After the diamond finds she had to open the way for finance capital.<sup>4</sup> Subsequently the capital gener-

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<sup>2</sup> N Mokgatle, The Autobiography of an Unknown South African, pp. 44-45 and p. 36.

<sup>3</sup> WM Tsotsi, From Chattel to Wage Slavery..., p. 36.

<sup>4</sup> WM Tsotsi, From Chattel to Wage Slavery..., p. 40.



ated by the diamond and later the gold mines provided, to quote Magubane, a "poisonous nourishment" that nurtured the South African economy into the "deformed monster that it is today."<sup>5</sup> This comment must be seen in the light of Magubane's view that society evolves from the economic relations at its base. If the economic system is distorted then it must follow that the social system and social relations are also malformed. Thus to him apartheid is not so much a socio-political order but an economic one that is modelled on the production relationships that developed on the mines.<sup>6</sup>

A similar materialist stance is taken by Modisane who is otherwise far more concerned with the human condition. Modisane can see the irony in Blacks "scratching into the bowels of the earth for gold which is the symbol of South Africa's white prosperity, and the fundamental greed that oppresses them."<sup>7</sup>

Many of the early writers realized that the mineral discoveries caused major socio-economic, political and cultural changes. These writers, however, did not always suggest that there was a correlation between the changes mentioned. A central issue is that of the evolution of migrant labour. Virtually all the writers are agreed that the evolution of this system was a major cause of change. Most writers are also agreed that coercive measures were applied to force the migrant into the labour market.

A most significant development in this regard was the Cape Colony's Glen Grey Act of 1894. Molema concedes that there was a coercive labour element in this Act. The clause requiring able-bodied young men to per-

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<sup>5</sup> BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. 103.

<sup>6</sup> BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. 117.

<sup>7</sup> B Modisane, Blame Me On History, p. 283.



form three months labour was a source of much resentment, but Molema also saw the Act as an outstanding example of British paternalism,<sup>8</sup> of which he was a devout admirer. He did not see, as Ngubo did, that by levering labour out of the reserves the Glen Grey Act was violating "the familial and community nature of the African economic system."<sup>9</sup> Nor did Molema concede, as Mbeki alleged, that the Act aimed at the destruction of the power of the Xhosa chiefs and the integration of their subjects into the mining and industrial economy.<sup>10</sup> By preventing access to land and restricting ownership a landless class developed which had to sell its labour in the industrial and agricultural centres.<sup>11</sup> Perhaps the need for labour coercion is in part to be explained by the self-justifying myth of the "lazy Kafir", even though it is abundantly clear that without Black labour the economy would have collapsed.<sup>12</sup> Excluding the variations in the final conclusions of the writers it is clear that minerals "gave a new complexion to almost every feature of South African life" and "brought into silent relief the intentions of British imperialism vis à vis the Afrikaner and the Africans."<sup>13</sup> A change in values and systems took place that left Blacks feeling that they were at the mercy of some amorphous and remorseless entity that totally dominated their lives.<sup>14</sup>

The question arises as to what the intentions of British imperialism

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<sup>8</sup> SM Molema, The Bantu Past and Present, p. 257 and p. 240.

<sup>9</sup> A Ngubo, "The Development of African Political Protest in South Africa, 1882-1910: An Analytical Approach", p. 44.

<sup>10</sup> G Mbeki, South Africa The Peasants' Revolt, p. 33.

<sup>11</sup> A Ngubo, "The Development of African Political Protest in South Africa, 1882-1910: An Analytical Approach", p. 45.

<sup>12</sup> SM Molema, The Bantu Past and Present, pp. 244-245.

<sup>13</sup> BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, pp. 102-103.

<sup>14</sup> E Mphahlele, Father Come Home, p. 58.



were? The most prominent manifestation of British imperialism was the South African War of 1899-1902. Over the decades the perceptions on what caused the war have changed. There is a correlation between the writer's political convictions and aims and the causes that he/she attributes to the South African War. Similarly there is a consistency between the political climate in which the writer functioned and the perceptions he/she formulates in regard to the war.

Initially it was believed that Britain had gone to war to protect the rights of British subjects in the Transvaal. By implication the South African War was also fought on behalf of Blacks because they were allowed to fight on the British side to redress suffering inflicted on them by the Boers.<sup>15</sup> Magubane, in contrast to the preceding views, questions British motives and contends that Britain refrained from using Blacks on her side.<sup>16</sup> Britain was indeed reluctant to see arms pass into Black hands. Early writers might have had some initial confidence in Britain's motives for launching a war against the Republics. But even Molema and Plaatje, who had a virtually blind belief in Britain and the principles of trusteeship, were ultimately to express some doubt about Britain's intentions for precipitating the war. Many Blacks had fondly believed that war had overtaken the country in their interests, but postwar developments showed that Britain had acted for self-protection.<sup>17</sup> A similar view is expressed by Matsetela when he argues that because of the potential wealth of the Republics they might achieve true independence. As independent states they might invite external intervention. Thus Britain had to act to prevent this development.<sup>18</sup>

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15 SM Molema, The Bantu Past and Present, pp. 242-243 and p. 290.

16 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. 51

17 SM Molema, The Bantu Past and Present, pp. 290-292.

18 T Matsetela, "Uprootal and its Effects", in M Mutloatse (ed), Umhlaba Wethu..., pp. 29-30.



Plaatje was even more outspoken. According to him Blacks had paid the ultimate price to see the banner of freedom unfurled, but all they had seen was the flag of Union waving in the winds of political change that swept over the subcontinent after peace was concluded.<sup>19</sup> Peace and unification left a bitter taste in the mouths of Black participants. Instead of enjoying the fruits of victory, they became serfs in their homeland, overseen by an imperial government that was deaf to their entreaties.<sup>20</sup>

Manipulation by vested capitalist interests is seen as the cause by modern writers. Some believed that the war broke out at the behest of Rhodes who wished to dispossess the Boers of what they had obtained through "fraud and subterfuge".<sup>21</sup> In addition the war was launched to replace a "feudalistic slavery" with a "more benefitting [sic] wage labour". The intention was to increase British settlement. While the new settlers would be "anti-fascist" they would be "pro-imperialist".<sup>22</sup> By extension the latter also implied pro-capitalist. In the same vein the Boer republics were seen as an obstacle to a national labour recruitment policy which finance capital needed to exploit the mineral resources.<sup>23</sup>

Even if there is divergence on the causes most writers devote some time to the role Blacks played in the war itself. They approach the war from two positions. Firstly there is the question of motives for Black participation. Secondly there is the question of whether the expectations

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19 ST Plaatje, Native Life in South Africa..., p. 125.

20 ST Plaatje, Native Life in South Africa..., p. 292.

21 A Nzo, "Our Anti-Imperialist Commitment". An article by Alfred Nzo, Secretary-General of the ANC, in Sechaba, February 1970, quoted in ANC, ANC Speaks..., p. 77.

22 D Dube, The Rise of Azania..., pp. 36-37.

23 WM Tsotsi, From Chattel to Wage Slavery..., p. 54.



of participation were met.

Some Blacks entered the war on the British side because they believed in the justness of the war. They believed that they could, in the aftermath of the engagement, confidently leave their cause in the hands of the imperial power "in its anxiety to do the best for all classes."<sup>24</sup> Participation, it was believed, had "its moral and material value".<sup>25</sup> In retrospect Msimang claimed that Blacks "were made to understand and sincerely believed that the war was being fought for their liberation from Boer domination" and many "lost their lives in the belief that they were making sacrifices for their liberation."<sup>26</sup>

Plaatje records a sermon held by Mr Lefenya during the siege of Mafeking. What Plaatje considers notable is that the preacher reminds the congregation that its God is also the God of the adversary. Therefore Britain has no exclusive right to call in divine aid or sanction. The moral grounds are to be found in that neither Britain nor her allies had raised a finger against the Republics, while the latter had been guilty of all manner of depredations against the Blacks and their stock. Subsequently he quotes an entire letter from Col Baden-Powell to General Snyman which, inter alia, states that Blacks are becoming increasingly incensed at the Boer attacks on their people and their herds.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless Blacks were confronted by the "uncanny white man's mode of reasoning" which argued that the war "was a white man's business". Nevertheless a chief, like Lentswe of the Bakgatla, would say that Blacks were part of the British empire, and were thus obliged

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24 "Questions Affecting the Natives and Coloured People Resident in British South Africa." Statement by the Executive of the South African Native Congress, 1903[?], quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 1, p. 18.

25 ST Plaatje, Native Life in South Africa..., p. 275.

26 HS Msimang, H Selby Msimang Looks Back, p. 4.

27 JL Comaroff (ed), The Boer War Diary of Sol T. Plaatje. An African at Mafeking, p. 11 and pp. 33-35.





to fight.<sup>28</sup>

The vast majority of Blacks remained loyal to Britain throughout the war although it is conceded that there were times when loyalty wavered. Black leaders travelled the country at their own expense to dissuade those who might seek to exploit the situation to regain their independence.<sup>29</sup>

On the other hand there was also the eminent and respected voice of JT Jabavu that cautioned against both the war and Black participation. Ngcongco ascribes this call to Jabavu's involvement with men like Sauer and Merriman with their Afrikaner Bond connections. But Jabavu also demurred from personal conviction. He was against military solutions to diplomatic problems in addition to being a pacifist at heart. Unlike his immediate successors he was able to discern a motive for the South African War that underlay the ostensible reasons. Ultimately Jabavu's newspaper Imvo Zabantsundu was silenced under martial law regulations. In conclusion Ngcongco says that Jabavu paid dearly in material and personal terms for what he perceived to be a principled stand.<sup>30</sup> Warwick comes very much to the same conclusion but adds that there was considerable fear amongst Whites that Blacks would seize the opportunity offered by the war to regain independence.<sup>31</sup>

Apart from the loyalist sentiment Black motives for participation were also practical. While Plaatje maintains that Lentswe was moved by a sense of imperial identity, Mohlamme feels that Lentswe was also moti-

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28 ST Plaatje, Native Life in South Africa..., p. 276.

29 ST Plaatje, Native Life in South Africa..., p. 245.

30 LD Ngcongco, "Jabavu and the Anglo-Boer War", in Kleio, Vol II, #2, October 1970, 6-18.

31 P Warwick, "Black People and the War", in P Warwick (ed), The South African War. The Anglo-Boer War, 1899-1902, pp. 190-191.



vated by revenge and the need to protect his people's herds.<sup>32</sup> Similarly Blacks in Natal hoped to get increased land allocations in Transvaal territory after a British victory.<sup>33</sup> Other Blacks were persuaded to join British ranks through financial inducements.<sup>34</sup>

The fact that a number of Blacks joined Britain's war effort does not imply that they totally avoided enlisting with the Boers. The enlistment was in some cases carried out under duress and was thus also counterproductive, as some chiefs reacted by allying themselves with Britain.<sup>35</sup> The invidious position of Blacks in the South African War is apparent in the development of schisms amongst the Basotho. The divisions arose over who the likely victor of the conflict would be.<sup>36</sup> It could therefore be concluded that Blacks' reasons for participation are also to be found in a concern over the postwar situation. When it came to evaluating their role in support of the victor they did not want to be found wanting. Therefore self-interest was also a consideration. An indication of what would befall those who opted for the wrong side was already evident during the war when Britain encouraged pro-British Blacks to attack pro-Boer elements.<sup>37</sup> Divisions amongst Blacks over the participation issue continued into the postwar period. Members of

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32 JS Mohlamme, "Black People in the Boer Republics During and in the Aftermath of the South African War of 1899-1902", p. 34

33 "Statement #32, Kumalo, John", in C de B Webb and JB Wright (eds and translators), The James Stuart Archive of Recorded Oral Evidence Relating to the History of the Zulu and Neighbouring Peoples, Volume 1, p. 259.

34 JS Mohlamme, "Black People in the Boer Republics During and in the Aftermath of the South African War of 1899-1902", p. 99.

35 JS Mohlamme, "Black People in the Boer Republics During and in the Aftermath of the South African War of 1899-1902", p. 99.

36 JS Mohlamme, "Black People in the Boer Republics During and in the Aftermath of the South African War of 1899-1902", pp. 70-72.

37 JS Mohlamme, "Black People in the Boer Republics During and in the Aftermath of the South African War of 1899-1902", p. 149.



the same tribe were given differentiated treatment in the settlement, depending on where their allegiance had lain.<sup>38</sup> Overall Mohlamme concludes that most Blacks had done enough to expect a better deal from the British after the war.<sup>39</sup>

It was only in the postwar period that the harsh reality of British intentions became apparent. The belief in a benevolent colonial power taking up the cudgels on their behalf, and thus meriting support, soon disintegrated. In retrospect the South African War was aimed at "African labour, African land, and the gold that had been found in the country's bowels."<sup>40</sup> It is understandable that Plaatje expressed dismay at the lack of appreciation shown by the Boers towards Blacks who had supported their families while they were on campaigns. Particularly when this support was given while the commandos were fighting to ensure that the status quo for Blacks was maintained.<sup>41</sup> Blacks suffered harshly at the hands of the Boers at the end of the war as a result of their support for the British.<sup>42</sup> Perhaps Matthews's views were shaped by what was seen as a deliberate policy on the part of the British to rehabilitate the Boers on their farms. Some of these farms had been successfully taken over by Blacks during the war. To evict these squatters, Warwick says, ex-commandos were re-armed and allowed to use force to evict the new inhabitants of the farms. The struggle for the control of the stock that had come into African hands during the course of the war for

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38 JS Mohlamme, "Black People in the Boer Republics During and in the Aftermath of the South African War of 1899-1902", p. 122.

39 JS Mohlamme, "Black People in the Boer Republics During and in the Aftermath of the South African War of 1899-1902", pp. 160-161.

40 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. 47-48.

41 ST Plaatje, Native Life in South Africa..., p. 147.

42 ZK Matthews, Freedom For My People..., p. 5.



a variety of reasons was also a source of much acrimony.<sup>43</sup>

The question arises as to how the vanquished came to flout the principles for which the victors allegedly went to war? How was it possible for the Boers (who had suffered such galling losses that they continued an "anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist struggle in South Africa"<sup>44</sup>) to achieve such power that they could still implement the policies that war was supposed to eliminate? It was soon apparent that the Republican "Grondwet" would be the basis for future legislation.<sup>45</sup>

To modern commentators this is no major conundrum. British imperialism had achieved its economic aims in victory and could now leave the country to the political stewardship of the Boers and other Whites. The new political masters of the country could be relied upon to act as the agents of "the most ruthless deprivation of the land of our people."<sup>46</sup> Thus it is not surprising that Britain should have neglected to exploit the opportunities for giving Blacks a new deal between 1902 and 1910. Instead Britain "rationalized human hatred and entrenched it in the constitution."<sup>47</sup> The war had been fought to unite Boer and Briton to ensure that Blacks received no say in government.<sup>48</sup>

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43 P Warwick, Black People and the South African War, pp. 164-166.

44 WM Tsotsi, From Chattel to Wage Slavery..., pp. 43-45.

45 AB Xuma, "Bridging the Gap Between White and Black in South Africa." Address by Dr AB Xuma at the Conference of European and Bantu Christian Student Associations at Fort Hare, June 27 - July 3, 1930, [Extracts], quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 1, p. 220.

46 A Nzo, "Our Anti-Imperialist Commitment". An article by Alfred Nzo, Secretary-General of the ANC, in Sechaba, February 1970, quoted in ANC, ANC Speaks..., p. 78 and JK Ngubane, Ushaba: The Hurtle to Blood River, p. 282.

47 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. 48.

48 AWG Champion, "Repetition and Indication of Years", in M Swanson (ed), The Views of Mahlathi..., pp. 67-68.



Similarly the Afrikaner was deluding himself if he believed that the conflagration was a war of national liberation, as it was a war of White integration.<sup>49</sup>

To an extent it might be argued that the views expressed in the preceding paragraph had the benefit of the perspective of time. The passage of time and developments during this period appear to give substance to their perceptions. But this is not to suggest the early writers did not also realize that there was a contradiction between stated aims and final result. Where they differ is, to some extent, in the reasons behind the gap between the ideal and reality.

Molema and Plaatje show the divergence between promise and realization. A consistent aim in Plaatje's work, Native Life in South Africa. Before and Since the Great War and the Boer Rebellion, is to demonstrate Black loyalty which he felt should be properly rewarded: A loyalty based on the love of the principles that Britain was believed to espouse. In contrast he shows the Boers to be perfidious, if not treacherous. Against this background he repeatedly expresses his consternation at Britain's continued connivance with Boer policy. Implicit in Plaatje's argument is that as soon as Britain realizes her betrayal of her loyal subjects, the Blacks, she will repeal the unjust legislation, such as the Natives' Land Act of 1913, a law that was passed in her name. As examples of Boer betrayal of British ideals he cites the Great Trek, the South African War and the 1914 Rebellion. All three examples he sees as part of a continuous pattern of betrayal, which is a point that he continually refers to in Native Life in South Africa.... It must be remembered that this book was written as part of a propaganda campaign of the South African Native National Congress against the Natives' Land Act and was published in London to appeal to the British public.

As early as 1903 there is an indication that Blacks had come to realize

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<sup>49</sup> WM Tsotsi, From Chattel to Wage Slavery..., p. 45.



that instead of the war supplanting Republican government with that of the British the reverse had happened.<sup>50</sup> It appears that the straws of discontent and disillusionment were already blowing in the wind at this stage. Confirmation of the deceit that Blacks were to experience in later years would account for the completely different perceptions expressed by modern writers. If the war had not satisfied Black expectations then the probability existed that it was fought for entirely different reasons. Thus one finds that, as indicated above, the modern writers argue that the war was conducted under the aegis of capitalist interests.

The disquiet expressed by the South African Native Congress would gain further momentum with the appointment of the Lagden Commission that produced the Native Affairs Commission Report of 1905. Plaatje was alarmed that the Report should have been ignored by successive legislatures, and believes that the Report was shelved because it advocated a franchise similar to that advocated for the Maoris in New Zealand.<sup>51</sup> Plaatje did not see the Lagden Report in the same light that Ngubo did in later years. The latter maintains that the recommendations aimed at maintaining White political supremacy and, as a result, colonialism.<sup>52</sup> Magubane also contradicts Plaatje in that he contends that the Lagden Report was used and became the basis for territorial segregation.<sup>53</sup> Thus the Lagden Commission Report was not the benign document that Plaatje believed it to be.

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50 "Questions affecting the Natives and Coloured People Resident in British South Africa," Statement by the Executive of the South African Native Congress, 1903 [?], quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 1, p. 21.

51 ST Plaatje, Native Life in South Africa..., p. 237.

52 A Ngubo, "The Development of African Political Protest in South Africa, 1882-1910: An Analytical Approach", pp. 53-54 and pp. 119-120.

53 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. 80.





If there was some doubt about British intentions in the seven years immediately after the war, then events from 1909 confirmed the hint of betrayal.

In some respects Molema presaged later perceptions in that he evaluates unification as surrendering to the Boer mentality that echoed the Middle Ages and "a feeling of some oblique "divine mission" to exploit the Bantu."<sup>54</sup> Unification was merely part of a relentless historical pattern that saw the triumph of a "gross, brute spirit."<sup>55</sup> The spirit that Plaatje refers to is the racial prejudice of the Boers. He feels embittered that the vanquished, who had supposedly suffered defeat because of their policies, should be presented with the gift of Union. This magnanimity not only allowed them to continue their much maligned racial policies, but also to extend them to the Cape and Natal.<sup>56</sup>

Union was seen as a fusion of White interests dedicated to "white supremacy which was to rest on the pillars of black serfdom."<sup>57</sup> Equally important was that Africans had come to see that Union meant that Whites had opted for permanent settlement based on the hegemony of political institutions.<sup>58</sup> Political debates amongst Whites made it clear to even the most superficial observer that the future of Blacks in the new dispensation was to be bleak.<sup>59</sup> The worst fears were confirmed when Britain abdicated her responsibilities towards and her protection of Blacks "by some unexplained contingency and ever-to-be-regretted mischance".<sup>60</sup> If Union had been the child of the chance confluence of

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54 SM Molema, The Bantu Past and Present, p. 247.

55 ST Plaatje, Native Life in South Africa..., p. xii.

56 ST Plaatje, Native Life in South Africa..., p. 391.

57 E Mphahlele, The African Image, pp. 202-203.

58 E Mphahlele, The African Image, p. 51.

59 SM Molema, The Bantu Past and Present, p. 244.

60 SM Molema, The Bantu Past and Present, p. 245.



circumstances then what were the consequences?

It appears that events after Union tend to favour the views of those writers who discerned a deliberate policy behind the South African War and its aftermath until 1910. This policy was not to let the benevolent sun of imperialism shine on all the inhabitants of the country. The war was seen as a necessary prelude to Union, which in turn was a prerequisite to the "proper" coordination of labour and legal confirmation of the practices and customs, including those of land distribution, that had developed since the beginning of the nineteenth century. By 1920 the Rev Mahabane stated that the exclusion was not providential. He cites a letter from Lord Kitchener to answer Boer concerns on the African franchise. Kitchener is quoted as saying that Africans would not be granted the vote in the new colonies until responsible government had been attained in them. And, more significantly in this context, the vote "will be so limited as to ensure the just predominance of the white race." This letter was written during the negotiations leading up to the signing of the Treaty of Vereeniging at the end of the South African War in 1902.<sup>61</sup>

Every writer who is concerned with the first few decades of the twentieth century not only reflects on the South African War and unification, but also on subsequent events. Even if the perceptions surrounding causes, objectives and consequences of the war and unification differ, some substantiation for these viewpoints has to be offered. Virtually all of the writers take the Natives Land Act of 1913 as the beginning point of the confirmation of their perception. Those writers who believed that Britain had gone to war for altruistic motives, and then betrayed her principles to allow unification, see this belief confirmed in British reaction to the Natives' Land Act. Those writers who perceived of the

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<sup>61</sup> "The Colour Bar", Presidential Address. Delivered by the Rev Z R Mahabane at the Cape Province Native Congress, Queenstown, May 1920, quoted in GM Carter and SW Johns III (eds), The Good Fight..., pp. 2-3.



South African War as being based on a "hidden agenda" to satisfy capitalist interests also point to the Land Act to justify their contention.

Previously Molema had found some qualified justification for dispossession, but on the issue of the Natives' Land Act he had no hesitation in condemning it. In this instance Molema does not only foreshadow later perceptions, but forms a viewpoint that pre-empts those of his successors. He considers three options for labour coercion: The first was press ganging which had been rejected by Britain because she would not countenance this practise in the Portuguese colonies. A second alternative was to levy such high taxes as to force Blacks to enter the labour market. In this way they would earn enough to meet their state-imposed obligations. This was rejected on the grounds of its being economic slavery. The last option was to limit the land available for African occupation, thus forcing Africans to enter into the labour market to earn a living. The Natives' Land Act met the last objective.<sup>62</sup> The only curious aspect of Molema's view is, that, while he considers the second option a form of economic slavery, he does not see the Natives' Land Act in this light. In the context of this reference he does not see the limitation on the means of subsistence, that is land, as a means of economically based labour coercion. At the same time he states that the migrant worker is reluctant to enter into a labour contract for longer than three to six months, as this will take them away from their pastoral and agricultural commitments in the rural areas.<sup>63</sup> However it should be remembered that the rural areas and the reserves were not yet exposed to the smothering pressures resulting from population growth and forced removals.

With the benefit of hindsight Msimang says that the Natives' Land Act originated from the South African War. He says that the success of

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<sup>62</sup> SM Molema, The Bantu Past and Present, pp. 256-257.

<sup>63</sup> SM Molema, The Bantu Past and Present, p. 256.



Black farmers on abandoned White farms was such as to cause alarm amongst White politicians, particularly in the light of the poor-White problem. Circumstances thus allowed Gen Hertzog to raise the spectre of the "Black Peril". So successful was Hertzog, who had been excluded from Botha's new cabinet in 1912, that he was able to panic Louis Botha into passing the Land Act. It is further claimed that the Minister of Native Affairs, JW Sauer, died as a result of his remorse over the Act. Nevertheless it was inexplicable to Msimang how a professedly Christian people could enact such an inhuman Act. In the final analysis Msimang believed that the Act "was conceived in fear and without thought of what repercussions it would have on the South African situation, morally, economically and even psychologically."<sup>64</sup>

No doubt the most voluble perceptions of the Natives' Land Act were expressed by ST Plaatje. His work Native Life in South Africa. Before and Since the Great War and the Boer Rebellion, which is one of many to his credit, was primarily aimed at persuading Britain to intervene in Union legislation and rescind the Natives' Land Act. The whole thrust of his work is that the Act was an abomination borne of the Boer mentality. That is why he was anxious to trace Boer history and show it to be steeped in racial prejudice. At the same time he had to demonstrate that the British were the antithesis of the Boers and their values. This contrast was essential if he was to persuade the British that they were surrendering their benevolent colonial principles by countenancing legislation such as the Natives' Land Act. It is against this background that he created his perceptions of the Land Act.

Early writers see a variety of motives for the passage of the Natives' Land Act. Plaatje appears bemused by the viewpoint of an Afrikaner policeman in the Orange Free State who states that Blacks were getting their just desserts for aiding Britain in the South African War. Said policeman did not answer Plaatje's query as to why, if his view was cor-

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64 HS Msimang, H Selby Msimang Looks Back, pp. 5-7.



rect, Blacks in the Cape and Natal should also suffer under the Act.<sup>65</sup> This report seems to confirm the comment of Matthews that was cited previously.<sup>66</sup>

The obligatory sale of crops forced the Black into selling his labour and reduced him to "serfdom" and a "veritable bondman."<sup>67</sup> The Act would also be seen as a means to limit African bargaining power in two important areas. The first in that Black participation in land allocation decisions was denied. The second which, significantly, is seen to arise from the first was to limit the ability of Blacks to sell their labour on a market determined by the natural forces of supply and demand. The forced eviction from the farms, and the need to obtain domicile on farms was seen as a distortion of market forces.<sup>68</sup> While stopping short of genocide, the Act aimed to enslave Blacks and committed them to perpetual bondage in the agricultural sector or to a "sunless life in the unwholesome mines".<sup>69</sup>

The coercion of agricultural labour was seen to function through the limitation of available land. Those tenant farmers who could no longer practise their livelihood and could not get land in the reserves were obliged to enter into an annual three month labour contract with the farmer on whose land they were domiciled.<sup>70</sup> Thus from the earliest

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65 ST Plaatje, Native Life in South Africa..., pp. 85-86.

66 See footnote #42 above.

67 SM Molema, The Bantu Past and Present, p. 249 and DDT Jabavu, "Native Unrest: its Cause and Cure", in DDT Jabavu, The Black Problem..., p. 5.

68 "Resolution against the Natives Land Act, 1913 and the Report of the Natives Land Commission", by the South African Native National Congress, October 2, 1916, quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 1, p. 87.

69 ST Plaatje, Native Life in South Africa..., p. 159.

70 "Petition to King George V, from the South African Native National Congress, July 20", 1914, [Published in The Cape Argus], quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 1, p. 129.



perceptions of the Act it is clear that the Act was widely interpreted as a measure of labour coercion. Nevertheless early writers were of the opinion that in essence the law was formulated and promulgated in response to Afrikaner political concerns and racial prejudice, which feared that Cape liberalism would be enforced in the northern provinces.<sup>71</sup>

Plaatje is at his most scathing when he highlights what he perceives to be Boer double standards. He finds it incomprehensible that a parliamentarian, Grobler, who was also a prime mover behind the Act, should quote the Bible to show that the Boers should not invade German South West Africa. Grobler refers to Deuteronomy 19:14, which he claims is a divine injunction on the Boers not to move the beacons of others. "But strange to say, the religious scruples of these pious objectors never revolted against removing the landmarks of their native neighbours and appropriating, not only their land and their labour, but even the persons of these neighbours."<sup>72</sup> In a similar vein the Dutch Reformed Church is warned that one day it would be called to account for its endorsement of the Act, by failing to object to it.<sup>73</sup> The DRC through its own discriminatory practises might be creating the impression amongst the Boers that the church sanctioned the application of the Act.<sup>74</sup> In Plaatje's view the Act was a heresy that penalized even the livestock of Blacks on account of their owners' pigmentation.<sup>75</sup> In keeping with Plaatje's contrasting themes of loyalty and disloyalty he comments that it must be a source of satisfaction to Grobler that,

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71 ST Plaatje, Native Life in South Africa..., p. 25.

72 ST Plaatje, Native Life in South Africa..., p. 390.

73 ST Plaatje, Native Life in South Africa..., p. 151.

74 ST Plaatje, Native Life in South Africa..., p. 148.

75 ST Plaatje, Native Life in South Africa..., pp. 95-96.





while he languished in jail for participating in the 1914 Rebellion, his loyal Black countrymen were being persecuted in terms of law that he had rebelled to maintain.<sup>76</sup>

A broader vision is that the Act merely legalized a situation that had pertained since the last war for African independence had been lost.<sup>77</sup> The latter perception does not make it clear who was behind the legislation, unlike Plaatje's view which is adamant that the parentage of the Act is to be found in the racial attitudes of the Boers.

In contrast to the previous perception of Plaatje Magubane supports the inclinations of A Lerumo (pseudonym of Michael Harmel, "member of the Central Committee of the South African Communist Party and first editor of The African Communist").<sup>78</sup> Lerumo contends that the Natives Land Act was a double-edged sword. On the one hand it halted class formation amongst the Afrikaner. On the other hand the deal that Smuts had struck with imperialism and capitalism led to the collapse of the "semi-patriarchal, self-contained economy of Boer agriculture." In this way the successful farmer gained the ascendancy which satisfied the needs of the developing mining and industrial centres.<sup>79</sup> It also protected the burgeoning White commercial farming sector from competition by Blacks and met the labour demands of the former.<sup>80</sup>

The coercion of labour to the urban areas through the Natives' Land Act did not go unnoticed even among the earlier writers. The Act was criti-

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76 ST Plaatje, Native Life in South Africa..., p. 393 and p. 433.

77 G Mbeki, South Africa The Peasants' Revolt, p. 68.

78 A Lerumo (M Harmel), Fifty Fighting Years. The Communist Party of South Africa, 1921-1971, p. vi.

79 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. 121.

80 ANC, Sechaba, October 1980, pp. 24-25.



cized for creating an unprotected class of labourers on White farms. The second generation under this legislation did not have the patience of the first generation, and fled to the urban areas.<sup>81</sup> The loss of land, stock and the poverty occasioned by the Land Act forced an urban migration.<sup>82</sup> In a variety of ways Blacks came to concur with the view that the Act had closed "all doors to freedom and independence" and forced them into "bondage".<sup>83</sup>

Ngubo argues that the disillusionment in White intentions in the aftermath of the South African War, Union and the Natives' Land Act gave rise to a "sustained Zionism".<sup>84</sup> This comment is significant for several reasons. Firstly it connects with the perception that the Act was the portent of worse to come.<sup>85</sup> Secondly it shows a close linkage between Christianity and politics, which is a recurrent theme amongst all of the authors and spokespersons. Frequently the portrayal of historical events attempts to show that the lot of Blacks is a violation of Christian principles. By extension the failure to rescind the legislation is in effect the sacrifice of the same Christian ethic. Thirdly the Zionist movements were also a rejection of missionary tutelage. On the one hand this rejection suggested a criticism of the established Christian churches for failing to comply with what the Zionists per-

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81 AWG Champion, et al, Evidence Given Before Penal and Prison Reform Commission, 6 July 1946, p. 3.

82 AB Xuma, "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, [Extracts], quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 1, p. 221.

83 SM Molema, The Bantu Past and Present, p. 249.

84 A Ngubo, "The Development of African Political Protest in South Africa, 1882-1910: An Analytical Approach", p. 60.

85 "Petition to King George V, from the South African Native National Congress, July 20", 1914, [Published in The Cape Argus], quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 1, p. 129.

ceived to be the tenets of Christian faith. On the other hand this declaration of independence also implied a move towards freedom in political action. At the time of the Land Act this assertion of independent political action was not yet part of the mainstream of Black politics, but the indications were already present. This latter remark must be tempered with the view of Beinart who contends that the millennial movements in fact had a very strong political content that, in effect, the re-application of Christianity was also an assertion of political independence. <sup>86</sup>

(It is not the intention to outline the evolution of Black political thought. Nevertheless it is relevant to briefly outline a development of this nature because of the influence it would have on the growth of Black historical perceptions.)

Increasingly events of the past would be brought into relationship with the present, to demonstrate that the present was consonant with the past, and not just an aberration. Instead the present was and is seen as confirmation of what had preceded. Equally important was to project the past and present into the future, based on the paradigm of the past. Through this projection a cataclysmic future was foreseen unless fundamental changes were brought about and heed given to Black demands for redress of their grievances.

The sense of grievance and betrayal that manifested itself over events culminating in the Natives Land Act of 1913 became even more pronounced subsequently. The feeling that the injustices of the past would recede gave way to the feeling that the current developments were to be expected in the light of what had preceded. Despite this change in and increasing unanimity of perceptions a major distinction remains between the reactions and prescriptions of early and modern writers based on

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<sup>86</sup> W Beinart, "Amafelandawonye [the Die-Hards]", in W Beinart and C Bundy (eds), Hidden Struggles in Rural South Africa..., pp. 253-254.



their perceptions.

Initially participation in World War I was argued to be consistent with the idea that, for instance in the case of the Basotho, they could not stand by while their king's, the British monarch's, house was ablaze.<sup>87</sup> This was an indication of the acceptance of British suzerainty. Implicit in this was that the monarchy also had an obligation to the people over which it held sway. At the same time those differences that existed between Black and White should be held in abeyance until the war was over. By easing the pressure on the British government over "reactionary legislation and unpopular one-sided laws", a total commitment was given to achieving the aims of the war. With peace settled, Britain should strive to apply the principles in the Union that she was believed to have fought to protect. In many respects the arguments surrounding participation in World War I paralleled those given in favour of support for Britain in the South African War. Britain's "love for the free institutions" should be applied to allow Blacks "a voice in the affairs of the country" and provide protection for the "aboriginal national institutions".<sup>88</sup> In contrast to these professions of loyalty and expectations it was held that the Afrikaners hoped for a German victory.

A German success would allow for the extension of German colonial rule to the Union. German rule would be akin to the Boer rule in the previously independent Orange Free State. Thus the Afrikaner would be allowed to rule without the threat of legal intervention.<sup>89</sup> And while Blacks had declared a moratorium on protests against laws such as the Natives' Land Act the government was selective in the suspension of its

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87 SM Molema, The Bantu Past and Present, p. 63.

88 "Petition to King George V, from the South African Native National Congress, December 16, 1918", quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 1, p. 141.

89 ST Plaatje, Native Life in South Africa..., p. 306.



activities. It suspended the investigations of the Beaumont Commission, which was to investigate land allocations for Blacks. This suspension was not matched by a halt in the application of the Natives' Land Act itself.<sup>90</sup>

Even though Blacks were prepared to give unstintingly of their services these were rejected. Blacks were relegated to a noncombatant status and this "prohibition surely carries the conviction that the native complaint against the South African constitution is something more than a mere sentimental grievance."<sup>91</sup> In other words Britain was nullifying the reasons for Black support. By accepting Black commitment to the war effort Britain would have had to accept satisfying Black expectations of support and the arguments that underlay them. Plaatje contends that the anomaly of Black taxpayers being denied the vote compared to tax-evading, noncombatant and rebellious Whites had been avoided by denying Blacks combatant status.<sup>92</sup> In some instances Blacks felt so aggrieved about being denied "the dignity of bearing arms" that they refused to enter non-combatant service.<sup>93</sup> Grundlingh explains the non-combatants' decision in another way. He believes that some chose not to enlist as an act of protest. Thus they were fighting their own war by not fighting. In dealing with those that enlisted Grundlingh shows that they were not always driven by ideological considerations. Some men who "took the shilling" were virtually press ganged into enlisting. Yet others saw service as a form of adventure, while there were those who saw enlistment as an escape hatch from the long arm of the law. By enrolling under pseudonyms the latter managed to hide their nominal identity and physical presence from the law. Some fled from financial

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90 ST Plaatje, Native Life in South Africa..., p. 246.

91 ST Plaatje, Native Life in South Africa..., p. 399

92 ST Plaatje, Native Life in South Africa..., p. 308.

93 ZK Matthews, Freedom For My People..., p. 60.



exigencies.<sup>94</sup>

The motives for participation or non-participation might have varied but a greater uniformity of perceptions on the impact on and the consequences of the war for the broader society emerges after the war. Britain was seen to abandon the principles that she was held to maintain in surrendering to "the Afrikander Party of Generals Botha and Smuts."<sup>95</sup>

The parting of the ways between Black and Briton and the hardening of condemnation of the Boer by Blacks that had shown itself between 1899 and 1913 became more pronounced after the war of 1914-1918. Blacks who returned from the campaigns overseas came back with a dedication to Black solidarity. Unfortunately this unity was founded on the unhealthy basis of "anti-white sentiment."<sup>96</sup> In addition Blacks who had served overseas came to realize that beyond the frontiers of South Africa racial discrimination did not exist.<sup>97</sup>

Until the Great War there appears to be a note of fatalism and resignation to their lot amongst Blacks. They had fought for and lost their heritage. They appeared to have become reconciled to their fate. Britain's ultimate success in the South African War over the Boers' attempts to retain their independence had been an adequate demonstration that armed resistance was futile. Therefore the only alternative was to offer their lives for their 'colonial protector', in the belief that Britain would reciprocate by redressing previous sacrifices. The desper-

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94 AM Grundlingh, Fighting Their Own War..., pp. 167-171 and pp. 57-79.

95 "To the Native Conference at Queenstown." Address by Meshach Pellem, President Bantu Union, February 26, 1919 [Extracts], quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 1, pp. 101-102.

96 DDT Jabavu, "Native Unrest: its Cause and Cure", in DDT Jabavu, The Black Problem..., p. 17.

97 ZK Matthews, Freedom For My People..., pp. 60-61.





ate cry of "Abatwana bam, Abatwana bam" ("Oh, my children, my children") of one going down on the "Mendi" gave Blacks "reason to believe that his cry was a testimony of hope that the man had fought a good fight for a good cause and better things awaited their children."<sup>98</sup>

While the voices of those who had served in the war was being rejected, "the appeals of the chattels who render service" to keep disgorging the wealth of the Witwatersrand gold mines that maintained "the credit of the Empire" were also falling on deaf ears.<sup>99</sup> A South African Native National Congress deputation that had gone to Paris to exploit the perceived sense of obligation that Britain was supposed to have, found General Hertzog at Versailles lobbying for the restoration of a Boer republic, while "Africans were looking for access to their homeland."<sup>100</sup> Black expectations of Wilson's programme for the self-determination for all nations flickered briefly. Blacks were, however, soon made to realize that they were not considered a nation, but a tribe, and thus precluded from the application of Wilson's Fourteen Points to them.<sup>101</sup> The world powers were deluding themselves if they believed that Blacks were content to submit to White tutelage in South Africa. Indeed it was a "few swashbucklers like our statesman soldier, Smuts", who remained under this delusion.<sup>102</sup>

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98 CMC Ndamse, "The New Day", in S Biko(ed), Black Viewpoint, pp. 39-40 and AB Xuma, "An Address at the Mendi Memorial Celebration, Bantu Sports Grounds, Johannesburg", February 23, 1941, quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 2, p. 163.

99 ST Plaatje, Native Life in South Africa..., p. 20.

100 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., p. 83.

101 ZK Matthews, Freedom For My People..., p. 62.

102 "To the Native Conference at Queenstown." Address by Meshach Pellem, President, Bantu Union, February 26, 1919. [Extracts], quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 1, p. 102.



Instead of Blacks receiving the kudos for commitment, Afrikaner 'loyalty' was rewarded by the passage of the Statute of Westminster through the British parliament in 1931. A significant aspect of the Statute was that it repealed the Colonial Laws Validity Act. The latter law allowed British intervention in a colony's legislative process should its laws be repugnant to British principles. Simultaneously the Statute denied the automatic applicability of British law in her colonies.<sup>103</sup> The implications of this perception were important because Blacks would now come to realize that there was no gain to be had from appeals to Britain to exercise her powers. Which, in turn, would have great implications for Black perceptions of South African history.

Many writers saw the government's policy and its implementation through legislative measures as confirmation of the trends that they had perceived developing since 1899.

By 1917 General Smuts had indicated what lay ahead for Blacks. Two aspects of Smuts's speech at the Savoy Hotel in London are highlighted as significant. According to Thaele, Smuts "made a speech devoid of all common sense and unbecoming of any Christian" when he said that "the early Christians made a mistake in putting into practice the principles of brotherhood."<sup>104</sup> Smuts's speech was criticized by Molema for its statement of regret that Whites had not yet made "Africa a white man's country".<sup>105</sup> This was taken to be particularly applicable to South Africa. DDT Jabavu saw this speech as representing an enigma to Blacks in South Africa.<sup>106</sup> Jabavu appears to have been the only one who viewed

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103 WM Tsotsi, From Chattel to Wage Slavery..., pp. 115-116.

104 JS Thaele, "Christianity, Basis of Native Policy?", in Workers' Herald, December 21, 1923, quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 1, p. 215.

105 SM Molema, The Bantu Past and Present, p. 353.

106 DDT Jabavu, "Native Unrest: its Cause and Cure", in DDT Jabavu, The Black Problem..., p. 7.



the speech as enigmatic, if one considers the earlier perceptions of Smuts's Savoy address and the previous references of Pelem.

The subsequent comment on further legislative measures by Smuts appears to confirm those already stated and suggest that if Smuts expressed regret about his failure to make the Union a "white man's country" then he was soon to act to remedy this omission. Blacks came to see Smuts's legislative programme as the first instalment of redressing previous failures. Making South Africa a White-dominated state was achieved through a number of legislative measures that legalized some of the philosophy underlying the Natives' Land Act. Passage of the latter Act had been achieved through minimal and token negotiation with Blacks. The tendency to discard Black opinion was confirmed by the Native Affairs Act No. 23 of 1920.

The passage of this Act legalized "political segregation...for the right honourable gentleman [Smuts] had said that he could not allow black men to sit in the white man's Parliament."<sup>107</sup> Even if Smuts were given the benefit of the doubt, and the native commissioners appointed in terms of this Act were competent men, what guarantees could be given by Smuts that his successors and their appointees would be equally able?<sup>108</sup> Here again Jabavu was out of step with his contemporaries, who rejected the Act because it was drawn up by a parliament that was exclusively White, and because it only allowed for the appointment of White commissioners.<sup>109</sup> By his own admission

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107 "Exclusion of the Bantu." Presidential Address by the Rev Z R Mahabane, to Cape Province Native Convention, May 1921, in GM Carter and SW Johns III (eds), The Good Fight..., p. 16.

108 DDT Jabavu, "The Native Affairs Act. Views of Natives", in DDT Jabavu, The Black Problem..., pp. 22-23.

109 "Testimony of JT Gumede Before the Select Committee on Native Affairs, June 15 and 18, 1917, [Extracts], Published in Minutes of Evidence, Select Committee on Native Affairs [4639]", quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 1, p. 98.



Smuts, during the second reading of the Native Affairs Bill, agreed that Blacks were losing confidence in Whites, and the proposed law was doing little to restore the lost trust.<sup>110</sup> A further breach of confidence was to follow with the Native Urban Areas Act of 1923. The perceptions with regard to the aims and consequences of colonization were starting to crystallize in the perceptions of the legislation that was passed after 1910. The Natives' Land Act introduced formal territorial segregation in the rural areas. The Native Affairs Act laid the foundations of formalized political exclusion. The Native Urban Areas Act would be seen as the extension of the Natives' Land Act to the urban areas.

The Urban Areas Act was seen as part of the "lunatic dilemma" of Whites. Whites wished to employ Black labour in the urban areas, but refused them domicile at the workplace.<sup>111</sup> The reference to the "lunatic dilemma" is made despite the belief that the law originated in the aftermath of the influenza epidemic of 1918, which prompted the need to create more sanitary conditions in the urban areas.<sup>112</sup> Significantly, contemporary terminology is applied to explain another notion of the Act. Mokgatle believes that the Urban Areas Act directly gave rise to municipal hostels and reception depots for single Black male workers, which "are instruments designed purely to put into operation the doctrine of Apartheid."<sup>113</sup>

With the passage of time the legislative process leading to the segregation and exclusion of Blacks from full participation in the economy and

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110 "Exclusion of the Bantu." Presidential Address by the Rev Z R Mahabane, to Cape Province Native Convention, May 1921, in GM Carter and SW Johns III (eds), The Good Fight..., p. 16.

111 ZK Matthews, Freedom For My People..., p. 61.

112 ZK Matthews, Freedom For My People..., p. 61.

113 N Mokgatle, The Autobiography of an Unknown South African, p. 174.



political activity was seen to gain momentum. Aside from the making of laws and their impact several major events after World War I attracted the comment of various writers. Two of these directly concerned Blacks. These were the labour riots in Port Elizabeth and Johannesburg and the Bulhoek massacre. Another event would elicit a response from Black commentators dealing with the period under discussion, even though there might not have been an activist Black involvement. This event was the Rand Revolt of 1922.

The Bulhoek massacre of 1921 was seen as the manifestation of the relationship between land legislation and labour, and thus between colonization and dispossession. While Luthuli ascribes no reasons for the events of 1921 when "163 people were wantonly massacred by the police at Bulhoek",<sup>114</sup> a more detailed comment is forthcoming from H Selby Msimang. Msimang sees the killings as part of an attempt to suppress a wider reaction to labour coercion resulting from the land laws. The deaths at Bulhoek, like those of the Port Elizabeth and Johannesburg riots that preceded Bulhoek, could have been avoided had the leader of the Israelites, Enoch Ngijima, persuaded his followers to indenture their labour to farmers of the surrounding districts. An equally effective measure would have been for the Israelites to donate their labour to employers. The irony of Msimang's comments becomes apparent when he says "[I]t is not for me to pass judgement against Ngijima's teachings, but I think it is within our right to condemn any system of Government which encourages lawlessness and defiance to constituted authority. Man is not bound to confess loyalty to a tyrant."<sup>115</sup> In later years Mandela argues that the only crime of the dead and the injured at Bulhoek was to live on a piece of land.<sup>116</sup>

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114 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., p. 83.

115 "Address by Selby Msimang, President, Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union of South Africa, July 23, 1921", (Published in The Cape Times), quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 1, p. 320.

116 N Mandela, "A Land Ruled By The Gun", in N Mandela, No Easy Walk to Freedom..., p. 122.



Forty two years separated the views expressed by Msimang and Mandela. There is however a consistency in the conclusions implied and stated in their arguments. Both maintain that through dispossession of land and the enforcement of legal measures to enable the alienation of land, violent resistance was inevitable, if not a necessity. In this case, then, the perception of the past is not only to explain the present but to justify action taken or planned. Such action might, in strictly legalistic terms, be interpreted as illegal. But in this context the impression is created that not to take action could be construed to be a gross dereliction of duty if not immoral.

With reference to the Bulhoek massacre Ncube takes up the idea of Roux who states that the uprising was a manifestation of "the struggle for racial freedom in South Africa which has often taken a religious form."<sup>117</sup> Aside from this perception of the nature of the revolt Ncube also sees the police action as part of the ruthless eviction of Blacks from the land "to compel them to provide cheap labour for the mines."<sup>118</sup>

Ncube's comment on the religious element, particularly the Christian one, is significant. It is apparent throughout all the sources that all the writers, commentators, speakers and critics are in one way or another concerned with Christianity. The concern is expressed in a variety of ways. Some writers see Christianity as the source of their present condition, while others see Christianity as the solution. In the case of the latter the writers did not merely content themselves

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117 E Roux, Time Longer Than Rope. A History of the Black Man's Struggle for Freedom in South Africa, p. 135, quoted in DMJ Ncube, The Influence of Apartheid and Capitalism on the Development of Black Trade Unions in South Africa, p. 32.

118 DMJ Ncube, The Influence of Apartheid and Capitalism on the Development of Black Trade Unions in South Africa, pp. 31-32.





with entrusting their lot to divine intervention. Instead they would give Christianity a specific interpretation and establish certain criteria which would have to be met if Christianity was to be the means to resolving the situation of Blacks. This latter development is significant because Christianity was no longer seen as an absolute, but rather as subject to external criteria that conformed to Black aspirations. In many respects Christianity was meant to conform to the patterns that the Dutch Reformed Church had been condemned for and so become a civil religion.

The extent to which the ways of Black and White had separated became clear with the Rand Revolt of 1922. Under ordinary circumstances it would be expected that there would have been solidarity between workers, irrespective of race. But Blacks saw that although they played a pivotal role in the outbreak of the uprising they were unable to identify with the White workers who took up arms against the state. It was maintained that the strike was in reaction to the mine-owners' intention to allow Blacks advancement into more skilled levels of employment. On the one hand this would reduce labour costs but improve Black wages. For Blacks to side with White workers in the confrontation would have meant support to maintain the industrial colour bar. If, on the other hand, Blacks had sided with the Government against White labour it would have meant a tacit acceptance of Government policy. When viewed against their increasingly vociferous objections to the direction that government policy was taking, this was an untenable position. At best Blacks could adopt a policy of positive neutrality and maintain a low profile when the verbal and military shrapnel started to fly.

Mine owners had welcomed the opportunity to increase the Black labour complement at lower wages during World War I.<sup>119</sup> With the return of peace the mine owners were reluctant to increase White employment. White miners saw this as an infringement of the colour bar and thus

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119 WM Tsotsi, From Chattel to Wage Slavery..., p. 58.



came out on strike.<sup>120</sup> The White miners had come out to protect their privileged wage position. Their advantageous position in the labour market was seen to be due to the artificial scarcity of skilled labour created by the industrial colour bar. The dilemma of Black labour was seen in the position of the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union. By showing solidarity with the White miners they would be tacitly supporting the colour bar. This was clearly untenable. On the basis of the argument that "my enemy's enemy is my friend" the ICU supported Smuts. This in turn created an odd alliance, as Smuts had been responsible for the suppression of the Bulhoek and Bondelswarts rebellions. Smuts was also seen to be acting in collusion with the Chamber of Mines. It was therefore not surprising that the ICU should feel uneasy about an alliance with the obverse side of the coin of labour relations.<sup>121</sup>

The position of the individual Black was also invidious. Champion remarks that he was nearly shot by White strikers for aiding troops in Fordsburg. This incident taught him the importance of worker solidarity.<sup>122</sup> But subsequent events were to show him that this was a unilateral lesson, not to be reciprocated by most White workers. The Transvaal Native Mine Clerks Association saw another lesson to be learned from the Rand Revolt. The Association believed that Whites should learn that without proper communication channels for Blacks with their employers they would be open to virtually any form of agitation.<sup>123</sup> Indirectly the 1922 strike was seen as a warning to employers that they could expect similar action from Black workers

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120 WM Tsotsi, From Chattel to Wage Slavery..., p. 57.

121 DMJ Ncube, The Influence of Apartheid and Capitalism on the Development of Black Trade Unions in South Africa, p. 34.

122 UNISA, AWG Champion, typed reply by Champion to biographical questions, Acc. 1, Box 1 Autobiography/Biography, File AWG Champion - Section 2 Biography, set of papers numbered p. 2.2.2., np.

123 "Memorandum from the Native Mine Clerks Association to the Mining Industry Board, 1922", quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 1, p. 321.



unless their demands were heeded.

Champion had viewed the strike as a lesson for the need for solidarity. Opposed to this is the perception of Magubane who believed that the strike and its suppression were the beginning of the transformation of the White labour movement "into an emasculated adjunct of Afrikaner nationalism."<sup>124</sup> Given the general tenor of Magubane's perceptions of South African history as a gross manipulation by finance capital this is a somewhat aberrant comment. In this instance he is giving recognition to a political movement rather than an economic force. To an extent Ncube also echoes Magubane's viewpoint when he argues that through attacks by Whites on Blacks "the white workers changed the ideological focus from a white working class to that of white domination."<sup>125</sup>

The Rand Revolt was also seen to be a fillip for Afrikaner nationalism. The reaction from the White electorate was such that the Pact government with the aid of the Communist Party ousted Smuts.<sup>126</sup> The two apparently disparate elements of nationalism and socialism that made up the Pact government were cemented together in reaction to Smuts's handling of the strike.<sup>127</sup> A general sentiment about the opportunism of the Communist Party of South Africa is aired by Tsotsi who believed that the CPSA would not support the lifting of the colour bar. This refusal to support the abolition was based on the belief that only a few Blacks would benefit from such an action.<sup>128</sup> Despite this contention there does not appear to be any hint that the CPSA might hope to

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124 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. 282.

125 DMJ Ncube, The Influence of Apartheid and Capitalism on the Development of Black Trade Unions in South Africa, p. 33.

126 JK Ngubane, "African Political Movements", in Africa South, Vol 1, #1, October - December, 1956, p. 74.

127 WM Tsotsi, From Chattel to Wage Slavery..., p. 58.

128 WM Tsotsi, From Chattel to Wage Slavery..., p. 57.



achieve more by solidarity with the White worker. None of the sources appear to suggest that the CPSA might have followed this, with a far longer term objective, step to ensure solidarity in the Black proletariat.

Generally it appears that Blacks viewed the 1922 strike on the Rand as an internecine affair amongst Whites that served to confirm the perception that Whites would see to their own concerns first. If any attention was given to Blacks it was in terms of a "problem" that had to be removed by legislative measures, rather than resolved by a mutually agreed solution.

The next instalment in the formal exclusion of Blacks from a say in government was seen to be the Native Administration Act, No. 38 of 1927. On the one hand it was accepted that the Act agreed with the principle that no legislation affecting Blacks should be implemented without prior consultation with them. This may have been implied in the legislation but the Native Affairs Commission, established in terms of the Native Affairs Act of 1920, had not met for five years. Therefore there could be no talk of consultation based on the precedent of the Native Affairs Commission.<sup>129</sup> Instead the Act was seen as "tyranny invoked in the name of customary law."<sup>130</sup> The 1927 Act was the final step in the conquest of the Blacks and completed the political evisceration of the African people by making a White the "Supreme Chief" of the African.<sup>131</sup> In keeping with the evolving perception that the thrust

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129 "Urban Native Legislation." Memorandum to the Minister of Native Affairs from the Location Advisory Boards' Congress of South Africa, September 8, 1930. (Published in the Report of the Location Advisory Boards Congress of South Africa), quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 1, p. 342.

130 "Presidential Address", by Dr. A.B. Xuma, ANC Annual Conference of December 14-16, 1941, quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol. 2, p. 181.

131 "Congress Youth League Manifesto," issued by the Provisional Committee of the Congress Youth League, March 1944, quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 2, p. 303.



of colonization in South Africa was towards labour coercion Modisane contends that the law was designed to redistribute "surplus labour".<sup>132</sup>

The legislative measures previously discussed were not believed to have originated in a vacuum but were part of a deliberate programme. This programme sought to rehabilitate the poor-Whites. The "Afrikaner workers and poor whites saw in the petty-bourgeois program their only salvation from poverty and despair."<sup>133</sup> Simultaneously the solution to the poor-White problem fuelled national chauvinism.<sup>134</sup> Because the advancement of the poor-White was seen to encourage the interests of Afrikaner nationalism, it appeared that the programme to rehabilitate the poor-White was a unilateral solution to a universal problem.

The causes of poverty recognized no racial distinctions. The Xhosa, for example, had social structures to absorb the "refugees" from poverty, while the poor-Whites resorted to the "robbing of black Peter to pay white Paul."<sup>135</sup> The frontier struggle of the preceding centuries had become a struggle between a Black and White proletariat which was "euphemistically called the 'Poor White Problem'."<sup>136</sup> To ensure electoral support "the Afrikaner political class" had to wean the Afrikaner proletariat from a radical class consciousness. This weaning process was achieved by introducing legislation that ended the Afrikaner workers' "poverty and despair". At the same time a more

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132 B Modisane, Blame Me On History, pp. 305-306.

133 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. 168.

134 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. 246.

135 N Jabavu, The Ochre People, p. 115.

136 DMJ Ncube, The Influence of Apartheid and Capitalism on the Development of Black Trade Unions in South Africa, p. 37.





positive identification with the symbols of Afrikaner nationalism such as Afrikaner churches, commerce, cultural movements, literature and politics had to be striven after.<sup>137</sup>

The idea had to become entrenched that White security lay in White supremacy.<sup>138</sup> The answer to the poor-White problem was achieved at the expense of the poor-Blacks. The poor-White was encouraged to urbanize by industrialization, while the poor-Black was repatriated to the reserves from the industrial centres. This repatriation intensified the pressures on the already overcrowded reserves.<sup>139</sup> Industry could not, however, survive entirely on White labour and thus from the 1930s one saw the establishment of a "permanently urbanized semiskilled black proletariat". Thus, Tabata alleges, the solution of the poor-White problem held a certain irony in that the answer resulted from "racial-economic integration, not racial separation."<sup>140</sup> This interpretation is significant because in many respects Tsotsi has highlighted what, to many Blacks, is the inherent contradiction in the evolution of South African history. The contradiction lies in the increasing economic interdependence that is matched by an equal determination to counteract this integration by measures to segregate all others spheres of being.

Much of the comment and criticism of the preceding legislation was made against the background of an even more ominous legislative package that first appeared in the 1920s but would only be promulgated in the 1930s—the Hertzog "Native Bills".

The passage of the Hertzog Bills, the Natives Trust and Land Act and

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137 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. 167.

138 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. 170.

139 G Mbeki, South Africa The Peasants' Revolt, p. 71.

140 WM Tsotsi, From Chattel to Wage Slavery..., p. 60.





the Representation of Natives Act of 1936, confirmed a trend that many Blacks had discerned developing since 1652. The Acts "established once and for all that the conquered land could not be acquired by Africans either by commercial purchase or political means."<sup>141</sup> The token consultation that the government had undertaken with Blacks should not let it be thought that Blacks had acquiesced to the proposed legislation. The government had failed to realize that the "Black race has passed that stage where it can be made to swallow anything given by the legislators and enjoy it with gusto."<sup>142</sup> It was also unacceptable for the government to take 8-9 years to frame the legislation and then only allow Blacks three months to consult on the Bills. In addition, this consultation was via a select committee, the Young Commission, that had no Black members.<sup>143</sup>

Jabavu's comments at the end of the last paragraph are an indication of the hardening of Black attitudes. Until the tabling of the Hertzog Bills, Blacks had tenuously clung to the belief that there was some prospect of hope; that an equitable resolution of conflict was possible. This belief was held despite the increasing perception that the development of South Africa's past clearly showed that Whites had not come to the subcontinent with any altruistic motives. Jabavu's views are also a reflection of a new generation of Black writers, who did not feel themselves as constrained by their background. They increasingly expressed their views in terms that denied a debt to Whites.

The tone of the writers who came to the fore in the 1930s (and later) showed that age of the supplicant was gradually dying out. While Blacks still believed that they depended on the goodwill of Whites they could

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141 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. 85.

142 DDT Jabavu, The Findings of the All African Convention, p. 25.

143 DDT Jabavu, The Findings of the All African Convention, pp. 26-28.



not readily afford to portray the role of Whites in South African history as antagonistic to that of Blacks. But the circumstances surrounding the passage of the Hertzog Bills were such that this inhibiting factor was jettisoned. It appears in the criticism of the Hertzog Bills that, relatively speaking, Blacks had thrown political caution to the wind. In many respects the Hertzog Bills were envisaged as a crisis moment. Unless everything was thrown into the opposition against the Bills then all would be lost. Similarly if the struggle failed then nothing was to be lost anyway, and thus there was no point in explaining their opposition to the proposed legislation in polite terms.

There appears to have been a sense of relief at the publication of the Bills. By announcing his intentions Hertzog had at last brought the question of race-relations into the open.<sup>144</sup> Further gratitude to Hertzog is expressed by the feeling that the very nature of the Bills held the key to Black liberation.<sup>145</sup> Hertzog had broken pledges that dated back to unification and had committed "a breach of faith which can only result in the most serious menace to peace and security of this land."<sup>146</sup> Thus Blacks saw themselves as relieved of any explicit or implicit obligations to Whites.

The opprobrium attached to the Bills was not only directed at Hertzog but at Whites in general. A modern writer contended that the Bills allowed for Blacks to be excluded from the electoral process, while

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144 "Report on Proceedings and Resolutions of the Annual Conference of the African National Congress, January 4-5, 1926 [Extracts] (Published in The Friend), quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 1, p. 299.

145 "The Challenge" and "The Alternative". Extracts from pamphlet The Crisis by Selby Msimang, quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 2, p. 61.

146 "Resolutions of Demonstration Against the Prime Minister's Native Bills, 1926", quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 1, p. 326.



Whites could "feel moral about doing so at the time".<sup>147</sup> The unanimous support given by Whites to the "political emasculation" of Blacks in 1936 "showed how little they respected the solemn undertakings to which they had been party."<sup>148</sup> Government policy was stripped of the "sweet promises for the future" as Blacks at last realized that they had been dispossessed of their country. Blacks now realized that they could rely on no one but themselves.<sup>149</sup>

This declaration of political independence had important repercussions for Black historical perceptions. As has been stated previously there is a close linkage between the ideology of Black politics and historical perception. If independence of political thought and action had been declared then it was to be expected that the historical perceptions underlying these new directions in political thought had also changed. Blacks increasingly portrayed South African history in accordance with their political programme. In this sense the perception of the South African past as being one of unmitigated disaster for Blacks gains the ascendancy. The image of the past no longer had to pay obeisance to White sensitivities. There was no longer be the tendency to view the past as part of a shared experience. Increasingly Blacks argued that their past was unique, because only they had borne the brunt of White political machinations. Opposed to this Whites might have lived through this past, but could not claim to have experienced it as Blacks had done.<sup>150</sup>

Even those writers who, for a variety of reasons, declined to follow

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147 G Mbeki, South Africa The Peasants' Revolt, p. 28.

148 G Mbeki, South Africa The Peasants' Revolt, p. 29.

149 "Address by I.B. Tabata, AAC Conference, December 16, 1941", in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 2, p. 341.

150 Preface to 1920 edition contained in 1921 edition, in DDT Jabavu, The Black Problem..., p. x.



the preceding argument to its logical conclusion and dismiss White involvement in Black politics as irrelevant or as being a form of inverse racialism, expressed a more vehemently independent perception of the past. That they adopted this stance can probably be attributed to the need for Blacks to make it clear that their claims were not based on a fallacious interpretation of the past, but rather on a harsh appraisal of what had gone before.

The writers of this era and later generations, had the advantage of more concrete examples of the thesis that colonization, exploitation and dispossession were synonymous. Therefore it follows that they would seek to establish a far closer relationship between the final legislative measures of the era 1870 to 1936 and initial colonization.

It is against this background that the perceptions of the next period, 1936 to 1960, should be viewed.



CHAPTER 5

INTROSPECTION AND NEW DIRECTIONS, 1936-1960

Legislative measures and socioeconomic changes in the preceding period of 1870 to 1936 required a reappraisal by Blacks of the current situation. This was particularly important in regard to how they viewed the present in terms of the past. More specifically they would become increasingly concerned to determine their future in terms of a redefined past.

The change in tone and perception is not only a product of altered circumstances but also to a "changing of the guards" in terms of writers. The early generation was gradually falling prey to the passage of time. Nevertheless there are those like D D T Jabavu, H I E Dhlomo and to a lesser extent Molema, who do not lend themselves to chronological categorisation. Part of their writings and the era in which they were created preceded the one now under discussion.

The early generation of writers was dying out and it is not surprising that later and modern writers, commentators and critics should be more concerned with their immediate past. It was the evolution of their current situation that demanded their attention, rather than something in the far-distant past, although it should also be noted that they were not unmindful of that distant past. Their concern was not, however, in portraying the faraway past in detail. Instead they sought patterns in various stages of the past. This pattern served to justify the critique of the present. The final passage of the "Hertzog Bills" in 1936 signalled the crisis point of developments since 1902. The failure of resistance to legislative confirmation of dispossession and electoral segregation required a reappraisal. Two important perceptual developments arose from this reassessment. Firstly the question of whether earlier interpretations of the past had not lulled Blacks into a false confidence in the future. Secondly Blacks had to establish to what extent they themselves had contributed to their current position

by misreading the past and adopting the wrong ideological responses as a consequence. This self-evaluation was not only an individual or personal one. Instead it took the form of criticism of the stance adopted by others. Thus one finds the divergent perceptions apparent in the preceding three chapters. From a Black viewpoint this re-estimation had some negative consequences.

At a time when there should have been unity there was division. There was agreement about what should be aimed at in the sociopolitical arena, but there was a good deal of dissention about how this should be achieved. This division was reflected in criticism of individuals and organisations for adopting futile policies due to a misinterpretation of the past. From the beginning of the period under discussion these divisions and their causes were apparent.

On the eve of the enactment of the Representation of Natives and the Native Trust and Land Bills, attempts were made to coalesce Blacks into opposition to the legislation. Prof. D D T Jabavu convened the All African Convention (AAC) on December 15-18, 1935 in Bloemfontein.<sup>1</sup> The AAC evoked two types of comment: There were those who discerned something positive in its foundation. A second group rejected its inception as a retrogressive step and a source of schism in Black ranks at a time when unity was needed.

Some of the negative criticism can be attributed to the fact that the AAC pre-empted a call made in January 1930 by T D Mveli-Skota, secretary general of the ANC, for a pan-African congress to demonstrate opposition to both Smuts and Hertzog. Skota's vision was broader than that of Jabavu as the former sought to unite delegates from the Cape to Cairo.<sup>2</sup> At this stage already the need was being expressed for some

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<sup>1</sup> L Kuper, "African Nationalism in South Africa", in M Wilson and L M Thompson (eds), The Oxford History of South Africa, Volume II, South Africa 1870-1966, p. 450.

<sup>2</sup> Report of T. D. Mveli-Skota, Secretary-General of the African National Congress, January 1930 [?], quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 1, pp. 306-308.



high profile political action or the ANC would lose the initiative. This argument should be seen against the background of the inroads that the ICU had made into the ANC's claims to being the leading Black opposition group.

The December 1935 meeting was a response to the ANC's inability to offer effective opposition to the Hertzog Bills. Similarly the ICU had become moribund and was in no position to rally resistance to the proposed laws.<sup>3</sup> In a letter to Mandela, I B Tabata contends that African opposition had become "completely atomized". Consequently "without any premeditated theory the people spontaneously gave birth to a form of organisation which would knit together a whole people into a single compact unit, a fighting force."<sup>4</sup>

The inaugural convention was viewed as remarkable for the numbers involved "and, at that stage, its national character."<sup>5</sup> It was felt that its policy of non-collaboration and emphasis on principled struggle made an indelible impression on African opinion.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless the failure to apply a "premeditated theory" allowed it to degenerate into the "polemics of nihilistic perfection" through which it lost contact "with the realities of the race crisis" and became nothing more than "a highly articulate debating society." Its demise was not due to external agencies, "it merely 'withered' away from the front line."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> JK Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, p. 90.

<sup>4</sup> Letter ["On the Organisations of the African People"], from I. B. Tabata to Nelson, Mandela June 16, 1948, quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 2, p. 364.

<sup>5</sup> G Mbeki, South Africa The Peasants' Revolt, p. 29.

<sup>6</sup> JK Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, p. 91

<sup>7</sup> JK Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, p. 91.



On the other hand a youthful observer commented to Noni Jabavu that in fact the AAC did have a "premeditated theory", but did not realize that "all that 'gradualism and constitutional channels' business is dead".<sup>8</sup> Both the negative and positive critics of the AAC appear to have a common perception of the early leadership of the AAC. Mandela condemned the leadership for leaving a legacy of intellectual and social elitism that was still felt in the 1950s.<sup>9</sup> Tabata reckons that the early leadership stonewalled debates and "buried" unpalatable resolutions and did all that it could to prevent the Convention becoming a mass movement. The ultimate affront was when H Selby Msimang tried to place the AAC under the "tutelage of the N.R.C.".<sup>10</sup>

Tabata did not entirely apportion blame to the AAC leadership. He was equally critical of the ANC contribution to the decline of the Convention. According to him ANC members of a weak AAC leadership prevented the AAC from achieving its aims.<sup>11</sup> Through its connivance at the disintegration of the AAC the ANC committed an enormous crime against the whole people.<sup>12</sup> As if these divisive forces were not enough, the Communist Party of South Africa was believed to have had a part in undermining the organisation.<sup>13</sup> To add to the trials and tribulations of

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8 N Jabavu, The Ochre People, p. 212.

9 N Mandela, "Land Hunger", in N Mandela, No Easy Walk to Freedom..., p. 46.

10 "Address by I. B. Tabata, All African Convention Conference, December 16, 1941", quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 2, pp. 343-344.

11 "Address by I. B. Tabata, All African Convention Conference, December 16, 1941", quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 2, p. 341.

12 "Letter ["On the Organisations of the African People"], from I. B. Tabata to Nelson Mandela, June 16, 1948", quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 2, p. 363 and p. 366.

13 JK Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, p. 159.



the new body the government of the day also contributed its part. By propagating the AAC as a representative and, according to its lights, a responsible body, it managed to cast doubts on the integrity of the Convention.<sup>14</sup> Division was encouraged within the leadership by bestowing honours on men like John Dube, who was awarded an honorary doctorate and praised as a "great statesman, a moderate, a practical politician and in fact an epitome of all virtues."<sup>15</sup> Overall the AAC's leadership was condemned for "bringing about the acceptance of oppression, not the determination to overthrow it."<sup>16</sup>

In many respects the conflicting perceptions surrounding the AAC and the reciprocal criticisms that arose from them foreshadowed many of the comments that developed during this period.

While the AAC and the ANC were still jockeying for the leadership of Black politics new developments overtook both organisations. The first major bone of contention was the decision of the Union of South Africa to throw in its lot with the Allies in World War II. Here again a marked awareness of previous actions was apparent. The consciousness of what had happened in the previous global conflagration played an important role in how Blacks responded to the call to serve "king and country".

The frustrated expectations of participation in World War I did much to dampen enthusiasm for enlistment in World War II. Support of the war effort was made far more conditional. At the same time there was a far

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14 "Address by I. B. Tabata, All African Convention Conference, December 16, 1941", quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 2, p. 343.

15 "Letter ["On the Organisations of the African People"], from I.B. Tabata to Nelson Mandela, June 16, 1948", quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 2, pp. 364-365.

16 "Address by I. B. Tabata, All African Convention Conference, December 16, 1941", quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 2, p. 343.

more pronounced debate about the causes of the war and South Africa's position in it. All these shifts in tone can be attributed to how Blacks perceived their treatment during and after the first world war.

Support in World War I had been acknowledged by steadily deteriorating conditions for Blacks in post-bellum years, therefore they were reluctant to enlist unconditionally.<sup>17</sup> Enlistment would only be considered if the government halted prosecutions in terms of "technical" offences and allowed employment at living wage levels.<sup>18</sup> With the memories of the Great War lingering on the Congress Youth League felt it was ridiculous that Blacks should enter the war which would decide "which European power would have what sphere of influence."<sup>19</sup> And as for the call to combat the terror of Nazism it was debatable whether this terror could exceed that experienced by Blacks in South Africa.<sup>20</sup>

Political allegiances also caused conflict for potential participants. Members of the Communist Party felt themselves in conflict over obedience to Moscow's non-aggression and taking up arms against the perceived enemy, fascist Germany.<sup>21</sup>

The Communist Party was also seen to be behind the equivocation on the

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17 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., p. 69.

18 "An Address at the Mendi Memorial Celebration. Bantu Sports Grounds, Johannesburg," by Dr. A. B. Xuma, February 23, 1941, quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 2, p. 165.

19 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. 292.

20 "Address by I. B. Tabata, All African Convention Conference, December 16, 1941", quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 2, p. 342.

21 N Mokgatle, The Autobiography of an Unknown South African, p. 213.



part of the AAC on the question of support.<sup>22</sup> Outside of these considerations there were some who had the chagrin of being told they would be fighting for the "privilege of being oppressed". Thus children lost "the great fascination of the glory of war" and instead "privately cheered the military advances of the Third Reich: it was not so much of admiring Hitler, but an emotional alliance with the enemy of South Africa."<sup>23</sup>

In certain respects Modisane's viewpoint is significant: it appears that the image of the future in terms of the past and present looked so bleak that even a German victory looked attractive. The record to date appeared to indicate that a common future was unattainable. The heap of shattered hopes had left the feeling that Blacks could no longer rely on White benevolence.

Force of circumstances required the government to make verbal concessions to African demands, without rescinding legislation. Thus with the war over Blacks were made to understand that pre-war conditions once again applied.<sup>24</sup> In a bitter reverie Dhlomo has a veteran of the war think,

"Of a war I won to lose  
Of a peace I may not choose".<sup>25</sup>

Later Dhlomo wonders whether defeat might not have been a salutary exercise for Whites so that they too could "taste [their] own medicine of oppression and humiliation."<sup>26</sup>

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22 JK Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, p. 168.

23 B Modisane, Blame Me On History, p. 78.

24 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, pp. 232-233.

25 HIE Dhlomo, "Not For Me", in N Visser and T Couzens (eds), H.I.E. Dhlomo. Collected Works, p. 376.

26 HIE Dhlomo, "Farmer and Servant", in N Visser and T Couzens (eds), H.I.E. Dhlomo. Collected Works, p. 460.



While many expressed regret and self-recrimination at the end of the war for enlisting, another faction adopted a different stance while hostilities were still in progress. This faction saw the straws blowing in the wind with the declaration of war. It looked at what had transpired previously and decided to articulate its demands in regard to participation in the war and a future dispensation in unequivocal terms.

The opportunity for this development linked directly with the Atlantic Charter. The stated aims of the Atlantic Charter issued on August 14, 1941 were analysed and a response formulated in terms of the situation of Blacks in South Africa. What is apparent from the document that issued from this analysis, African Claims in South Africa. Including "The Atlantic Charter from the standpoint of Africans within the Union of South Africa" and "Bill of Rights", is that any future participation by Blacks in local and international affairs would be conditional. The conditions reflect the reaction of Blacks to the gradual erosion of their rights. The past had shown that Blacks had received nought in reciprocity for their support of common causes in the Union.

The demands contained in the document clearly reflect an increasing disillusionment with the status quo, based on a perceived betrayal in the past. An equally important characteristic of African Claims is the rejection of a double standard. African Claims made it clear that the ideals of the Atlantic Charter were no longer seen as applicable only in other parts of the world, without any relevance to the colonies and South Africa in particular. Because African Claims was considered such a radical departure in policy it was clearly stated in the document that it was purely of African origin and that the responsible committee had drafted its findings without external inputs.<sup>27</sup>

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27 "African Claims in South Africa. Including 'The Atlantic Charter from the standpoint of Africans within the Union of South Africa' and 'Bill of Rights'", quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 2, p. 210.





This statement on the approach adopted and the conclusions reached has two implications. It shows a sensitivity to suggestions that Blacks were unable to formulate their own aspirations and the means to achieve them. Simultaneously it suggests a rejection of White trusteeship and tutelage. The self-assertiveness that speaks from African Claims heralds the culmination of the realization that a dependence on the intervention of the "liberal" and "friend of the native" had borne no fruit. One Black academic argued that although African Claims contained the most direct statement of African demands it still did not "as yet talk of the destruction of the "White" social system."<sup>28</sup> Magubane encapsulates much of the criticism against the ANC in this era. This criticism suggests that the ANC still relied too heavily on its middle class leadership which more readily identified with the ideals of a White-dominated society than the aspirations of the Black masses. It appeared that this reliance on White goodwill had done little else but assuage the anger felt at the increasing discrimination against Blacks. This blunting of anger was to an increasing extent seen as diversionary, sidetracking Blacks from articulating and attaining their goals. A further facet of this new direction was that it was an indication of a self-evaluation. Blacks looked back on past policies and strategies and through African Claims showed that they had become dissatisfied with the status quo within the Black body politic.

It was one thing for the ANC to indicate new directions in policy, but it was another matter whether it had the leadership to both point to and lead the way. Once again Blacks were required to look inwards and assess their leadership. Strangely enough the body that was responsible for this reassessment, and in many respects became the leading critic of the existing ANC leadership, was initiated by its target, the then ANC leadership. The president of the ANC, Xuma, had launched a programme to revitalize the ANC. This programme included an appeal to a

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28 BM Magubane, "Sports and Politics in an Urban African Community. A Case Study of African Voluntary Organizations", p. 175.



relatively new constituency, the youth. Thus the Congress Youth League (CYL) was officially launched in March 1944.<sup>29</sup>

Founding members of the CYL argued that earlier ANC leadership had lacked militancy, and thus allowed the ANC to decline into a debating society without a programme of action.<sup>30</sup> The pandering to White whims was rejected and an overtly racial element was introduced. The argument for this was that White rule had emphasized individualism at the expense of African "communal contentment". At the same time, because White rule was based on the assumption of racial superiority, the only effective counter to this was to proclaim African sovereignty.<sup>31</sup>

There can be little doubt that the launch of the CYL was one of the most significant developments in Black politics. The League infused a new vitality and direction in Black politics. At the same time it created new tensions within Black ranks that prompted a vociferous and at times vindictive debate between Blacks. The discussion evolved around the question of what the solution to the present and the future situation of Blacks was. An integral part of the debate was a review of the past as justification for present policies. Frequently the vision was not explicit, but implied in the criticism of the policy adopted by the opposing faction.

The two ideological directions that emerged from the formation of the Youth League were the multiracial Congress Movement/Alliance and the proponents of Africanism. The labels attached to these directions only

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29 "Congress Youth League Manifesto", issued by the Provisional Committee of the Congress Youth League, March 1944, quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 2, p. 300.

30 N Mokgatle, The Autobiography of an Unknown South African, p. 305.

31 "Congress Youth League Manifesto", issued by the Provisional Committee of the Congress Youth League, March 1944, quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 2, p. 301.



gained currency in the 1950s, but the tone of their ideologies was already noticeable in the latter half of the 1940s. The foundation of the CYL was interpreted according to the ideological persuasion of the commentator.

Luthuli reckoned that the overall impact of the League "as a whole was considerable and beneficial."<sup>32</sup> An outspoken critic of the ANC, I B Tabata, argued that Congress's influence was so all-pervasive that the Youth League had to sacrifice its principles in order to remain within the Congress fold and retain legitimacy.<sup>33</sup> Therefore the CYL was not a regenerative force.

The CYL was also seen to have been created under stress, at a time when the ANC was under threat from rival political organisations such as the African Democratic Party. As a result it was felt that the League's initial manifesto had flaws that should be ironed out. The major flaw was believed to be that its original policy allowed divided political loyalties. This weakness was interpreted as a diversion from the struggle for "African Nationalism and National freedom", based on an African National Front.<sup>34</sup> The emphasis on African nationalism prompted one commentator to say that the CYL and the Africanists were an extension of the Ethiopian movement into the political arena.<sup>35</sup> The League was also an indication of dissatisfaction over the ANC's "defeatist and apologetic tactics",<sup>36</sup> that showed its weariness with "the pomp of consul-

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32 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., p. 91.

33 Letter ["On the organisations of the African people"], from I. B. Tabata to Nelson Mandela, June 16, 1948, quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 2, p. 362,

34 Letter on the Youth League, from A. P. Mda to G. M. Pitje, September 10, 1948, quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 2, p. 322.

35 M Motlhabi, The Theory and Practice of Black Resistance to Apartheid. A Social-Ethical Analysis, p. 69.

36 M Motlhabi, The Theory and Practice of Black Resistance to Apartheid. A Social-Ethical Analysis, p. 41



tations and the nobility of gentlemen's agreements". The latter tendency of the ANC paved the way for the breakaway of the Africanists or "national extremists" in 1958.<sup>38</sup>

Attempts by the ANC to negotiate and so blunt the thrust of confrontation launched by the League only served to emasculate the CYL at a time when it was already weakened by the death of its guiding intellect, Anton Lembede.<sup>39</sup> Fortunately for the League its early years were provided with a focus for its actions. The CYL had marshalled its forces and resources to do battle with Smuts. But as the engagement was about to commence White political developments altered the target when Malan led the National Party to power in 1948.<sup>40</sup>

The National Party victory resulted from the Afrikaner uniting over class and social differences into a single voting bloc that gave the Afrikaner the power to control a whole society in his own interests.<sup>41</sup> The electoral victory of 1948 did have its advantages. The National Party was to "demonstrate unambiguously to the African people what it is that the Congress movement is pledged to resist." The attitude of the National Party towards negotiation also showed the misplaced reliance placed on this method.<sup>42</sup>

It could also be said that the electoral victory of the NP in 1948 was

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37 B Modisane, Blame Me On History, p. 126.

38 M Motlhabi, The Theory and Practice of Black Resistance to Apartheid. A Social-Ethical Analysis, p. 69.

39 B Modisane, Blame Me On History, p. 127

40 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., p. 98.

41 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. 169.

42 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., p. 97 and p. 105.

a boon to Black politics in that it provided a focus for the rhetoric of opposition. By giving its racial policy a label, that of "apartheid", the NP offered an ideal target for those who were trying to coordinate Black opposition to South Africa's racial dispensation. Also, because apartheid placed such emphasis on race, the very vivid spectre of Nazism, as a racial policy culminating in genocide, was increasingly invoked. This is despite the attitude of some Blacks to Germany during World War II. It appears in the writing from this period on that Black authors, in various guises, were at last able to express themselves in what they believed to be universally comprehensible terms.

Apartheid was perceived as an answer to the need for Whites to remain master, and as "the point of final fulfilment for the descendants of the Trekkers."<sup>43</sup> In this respect the concern of the liberal school of writers becomes apparent, whether they belong to the early or modern ages, they all endeavoured to show that the situation that they commented on was the product of a long tradition of racial prejudice. In this case the belief was held that the concept of racial supremacy that had spawned the Great Trek was alive and well and living in the hearts and minds of the heirs to the Voortrekkers. For Ngubane the "chain of continuity has never been broken", so that apartheid was giving effect to the "temper of the slave owner".<sup>44</sup>

The overt and covert racial discrimination of earlier decades was seen to be masquerading behind different masks under the apartheid dispensation. In many respects past policies were perceived to have been given new dimensions and emphases through apartheid. Thus the stress on cultural differentiation was argued to be "for the purpose of using it as an instrument to maintain our people in backwardness and ignorance."<sup>45</sup> This would be achieved by underlining "the temporary

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43 JK Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, p. 37.

44 JK Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, p. 37 and p. 64.

45 ANC, ANC Speaks..., p. 19.



sectarian interests of various national, ethnic, tribal and social groups"<sup>46</sup> emulating the divide-and-rule tactics so popular in the Roman and British empires. In this way an effective counter to burgeoning African nationalism was intended. White supremacy could only survive if Black nationalism was diverted into manageable channels. By so doing African nationalism that had gradually been evolving could be fragmented.<sup>47</sup> Aside from the ethnic divisions within the broader Black community social stratification was also encouraged within ethnic units.

A "ruling aristocracy of hireling chiefs" was created to hold sway over remnants of peasant farmers who were in the final throes of being dispossessed of their means of subsistence. Further class antagonism was created by the encouragement of a middle class of professionals and traders.<sup>48</sup> The chiefs were co-opted into the system by financial inducements and persuaded to fob off their subjects with the argument that "half a loaf is better than no loaf".<sup>49</sup> Chiefly avarice was apparent in resolutions of the Transkei Territorial Authority which showed that chiefs could not be bought off by promises of gain. Instead they demanded that substance be given to governmental pledges.<sup>50</sup> The chiefs who collaborated within the system had to replace the old native commissioner of the days of direct rule. The native commissioner had become "too visible and accessible a target for anti-government action." Thus without a direct acknowledgment of the debt to Lord Lugard,

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46 ANC National Executive Committee, "Forward to Armed Seizure of Power", in ANC, ANC Speaks..., p. 142.

47 G Mbeki, South Africa The Peasants' Revolt, p. 22 and p. 47.

48 G Mbeki, South Africa The Peasants' Revolt, pp. 73-74.

49 ANC National Executive Committee, "Forward to Armed Seizure of Power", in ANC, ANC Speaks..., p. 144.

50 G Mbeki, South Africa The Peasants' Revolt, pp. 74-75.





a system of indirect rule was adopted.<sup>51</sup> Most of the comments thus far have a bearing on the homelands and the political function that they were to perform.

Magubane, however, broadens his vision to include the urban environment as well. He argues that apartheid was a response to increasing class consciousness and solidarity amongst Blacks in the industrial centres of South Africa. This development had to be choked off before class action could threaten the industrial centres of South Africa and thus its economy.<sup>52</sup> Therefore, from Magubane's viewpoint, apartheid is the ideological expression of the demands of capitalism. This viewpoint is entirely consistent with Magubane's overall perception of the motive forces in South African history. But Magubane was not the only one to apply this logic. Ndebele contends that apartheid "is no longer a pseudo ideology; it has become an economic principle."<sup>53</sup> Similarly the South African economy was kept in motion by the never ending supply of migrant labourers whose procurement was a major function of apartheid.<sup>54</sup>

If these were the broader concepts attached to the policy of apartheid how did Blacks view their lives under the system? A constant thread that runs through all the perceptions is that of an all pervasive intrusion into the lives and dignity of the individual. Apart from the "obvious crudeness of the practical application of separate development there lies a very sophisticated and subtle tiger - psychic manipulation."<sup>55</sup> This "psychic manipulation" can be ascribed to the feeling

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51 G Mbeki, South Africa The Peasants' Revolt, pp. 37-38.

52 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, pp. 153-156.

53 N Ndebele, "Black Development", in S Biko(ed), Black Viewpoint, p. 20.

54 G Mbeki, South Africa The Peasants' Revolt, p. 86.

55 NC Manganyi, Being-Black-in-the World, p. 27.



that Blacks are being meshed into a system designed by an architect over whom they have no control, and who is, in addition, impervious to pressures.<sup>56</sup> It is a self-perpetuating system that feeds on fear. It is a delusion to think that economic forces will destroy apartheid, because it has originated in,

racial hatred, the fear of miscegenation and extinction as a group, the fear of self-discovery, the fear of being liberated from one's own superstitions, have come to stay: that the laws of the country which buttress these emotions and are in turn supported by them, are the laws of the Medes and the Persians.<sup>57</sup>

Apartheid was the single word that changed the political face of South Africa. It was "charged with the emotional intensity which suited the general temper of White South Africa." It made Dr Malan while it destroyed General Smuts. White opposition politicians made trite jokes about the term while Blacks were "put in their place". The word generated passages of purple prose at the United Nations. All the while as the "pigeon-hole-philosophy of apartheid" was being implemented Blacks were being "dehumanised and defaced".<sup>58</sup> Modisane felt himself obliged to "come to terms with its reality and arrange myself under the will of its authority. I have to be sane, calculating and ruthless to survive."<sup>59</sup> It is clear that the impact of apartheid was also seen to extend far beyond physical deprivation and deep into the psyche of the individual.

The ideals of youth were shattered. Luthuli and Matthews, while they were at Adams College, believed that the only limitation on their futures was themselves. But their estimation did not take the implementa-

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<sup>56</sup> E Mphahlele, Afrika My Music..., p. 175.

<sup>57</sup> E Mphahlele, The African Image, p. 195.

<sup>58</sup> B Modisane, Blame Me On History, pp. 122-123.

<sup>59</sup> B Modisane, Blame Me On History, p. 56.



tion of apartheid into account.<sup>60</sup> Thus apartheid was seen by Luthuli as an artificial restraint on human development that thwarted the individual's attainment of his potential. This view is echoed by Noni Jabavu who comments on the frustrated career ideals of youthful acquaintances. But it is not only the young who had to experience this aimlessness. Their mothers experienced the anguish of being unable to nurture hope in the future in the minds and hearts of their offspring.<sup>61</sup> The obvious and frequent escape route was to sink into despair, or to become a domestic in one "of those incredible 'kitchen-boy suits'." That this option should be considered or taken was a victory for the system.<sup>62</sup>

Ngubane reckons that the influence of apartheid is so corrosive that it is futile to expect objectivity from a writer on the topic "when his very being is attacked as a matter of policy: where human resources are callously wasted in order to uphold an ideological preference."<sup>63</sup> These human resources are wasted in a variety of ways, apart from the disincentive of futility. The futility gives rise to destructive social aberrations. Thus from "what Colonel Visser says it is clear that Mr. Average Soweto Sojourner is not born a murderer, he is moulded by the repressive and exploitative system into a drunken and stupefied killer."<sup>64</sup>

Beneath the frenetic life style that seeks to obliterate the White presence is a sombre note of violence and despair.<sup>65</sup> Life under apartheid

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60 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., p. 42.

61 N Jabavu, The Ochre People, pp. 57-58.

62 N Nakasa, "Oh, To be an Anonymous Houseboy", in E Patel (ed), The World of Nat Nakasa, pp. 154-155.

63 JK Ngubane, An African explains Apartheid, p. vi.

64 J Sikakane, A Window on Soweto, p. 28.

65 B Modisane, Blame Me on History, pp. 117-118.

also produces anomalies in urban society. Urbanized Blacks still cling to traditional practices to provide an anchor in an insecure environment.<sup>66</sup> The alienation between parent and child is seen in the formation of street gangs bent on wreaking "their revenge on the society that confronts them with only the dead-end alley of crime and poverty."<sup>67</sup>

In addition to the conflict between generations, urban society is also plagued by ethnic conflict. Ethnic divisions had existed prior to the advent of apartheid. The Basotho gangs known as the "Russians" had always been viewed with trepidation in the Johannesburg locations. However with the rigid ethnic divisions implemented and encouraged by apartheid, action against criminal elements such as the "Russians" took on an overtly tribal tone. Vigilante groups were formed along ethnic lines, which tended to accentuate schisms in society according to tribal criteria. This also tended to draw those who were not directly involved in the conflict into the fray by virtue of their ethnic affiliation.<sup>68</sup>

The preceding indicates some of the perceptions of apartheid as a policy and its impact on the individual and society. Naturally this is not the full picture as apartheid itself underwent mutations over the years. Simultaneously perceptions of the policy and its impact changed. This became particularly apparent in the era of "grand apartheid", when greater emphasis was placed on the creation of the bantustans. But first one must turn to the immediate responses to the events of 1948. In some respects it can be said that the foundations for a response were laid in the years 1943 and 1944.

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66 E Mphahlele, The African Image, p. 171.

67 OR Tambo, "Introduction", in N Mandela, No easy Walk to Freedom..., p. x.

68 C Themba, "Terror in the Trains", in E Patel (ed)., The World of Can Themba Selected Writings of the Late Can Themba, pp. 111-115.



Modisane believes that the introduction of apartheid brought about a fundamental change of direction in Black politics. He argues that by closing the door on consultation with moderate Black leadership, which set the tone and pace for Black politics at the time, apartheid brought a new leadership to the fore. By applying an overall policy, that allowed for no class distinctions between Blacks, the old guard found itself having to turn to the rank-and-file rabble as a constituency. However when the middle-class leadership sought to establish its role it found that the "young Turks" had ousted them. Men like Lembede, Mda, Sisulu and Mandela aided and abetted by Sobukwe and Leballo, had successfully challenged "the respectable politics of the old guard." The new guard was essentially based in the Congress Youth League. Equally important was that the new generation had broadened its platform to include and be part of the African continent.<sup>69</sup>

It should be remembered that though these changes in policy appeared to be viewed with a measure of equanimity they were to become the basis of bitter and acrimonious dissent. The bone of contention was the extent to which these changes were a deviation from ANC principles. Another point of controversy was whether these changes were not in fact a betrayal of Black aspirations to other vested and inimical interests. The debate around these issues became crucial after the formation of the Pan-Africanist Congress and therefore will be discussed at a later stage. But the points raised in this paragraph should be borne in mind when looking at the divergent appraisals of various actions taken in reaction to apartheid.

The blueprint for future action in dealing with the White dominated government was contained in the Programme of Action ratified in 1949. This was considered to be one of the "first sorties from a politics in conformity and persuasion to a politics of confrontation. For the first

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<sup>69</sup> B Modisane, Blame Me on History, p. 124.



time ANC turned consciously to the masses to stimulate political action and to arouse their fighting spirit."<sup>70</sup>

The Programme was an attempt to provide the method to give practical expression to African Claims in South Africa. It contained elements of "bootstrap economics" to funding of Congress actions, providing propaganda material and mobilizing union activity. Nevertheless it did not envisage revolutionary change, but rather "a more rapid evolutionary advance towards a democratization of government."<sup>71</sup> This "milestone in Congress history...represents a fundamental change of policy and method" that indicated that Blacks were no longer satisfied with crumbs from the White man's table.<sup>72</sup> Mandela argued in his defence in the Treason Trial that the Programme of Action had been the result of disillusionment in the efficacy of constitutionality.<sup>73</sup> Luthuli maintained that it was aimed at the franchise question. Once this had been resolved all other issues such as land, discrimination and poverty could be settled.<sup>74</sup> On the other hand Dube perceived the Programme to be an Africanist manifesto that outlined how Africans would regain their land.<sup>75</sup>

Significance is also attached to the Programme because it was indicative of new developments in the broader spectrum of Black politics. As early as 1946 formal recognition had been given to the need for coopera-

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70 BM Magubane, The political Economy of race and class in South Africa, p. 298.

71 BM Magubane, "Sports and Politics in an Urban African Community, A Case study of African Voluntary Organizations", p. 180 and p. 219.

72 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., p. 98.

73 N Mandela, "A Charge of Treason", in N Mandela, No Easy walk to Freedom..., pp. 82-83.

74 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., pp. 98-99.

75 D Dube, The Rise of Azania..., p. 46.





tion between African and Indian on matters of common concern through the Xuma-Dadoo-Naicker Pact. This Pact became the forerunner of the Congress Alliance.<sup>76</sup> The Congress Alliance was in later years the source of much recrimination. But already in 1950 voices of dissent were heard over the multiracial character that the ANC was assuming. Thus Selope-Thema and his "ANC National Minded Bloc" was concerned over the ANC being reduced to "paid agents of the Indian merchants."<sup>77</sup>

The Programme outlined the aims of Black politics but how were they to be achieved? The first steps to attempt to realize the aims were taken with the Defiance Campaign. With due regard to symbolism the Campaign was officially announced on April 6, 1952, the tercentenary of Van Riebeeck's landing at the Cape. It would actually commence on June 26, in itself a date that features prominently in the time charts of Black history. April 6 was chosen because it commemorated a day that was viewed as either a day of divine beneficence or Black dispossession.<sup>78</sup>

The Campaign entailed Union-wide civil disobedience aimed at specific discriminatory laws, with the intention of bringing the plight of Blacks to the attention of Whites.<sup>79</sup> But it appears that some observers discerned a reluctance on the part of the ANC to enter into the Campaign. Thus it required the Congress Youth League to engineer Luthuli's ousting of Moroka as President of the Congress before the League could obtain the ANC's commitment to the Campaign.<sup>80</sup> Ironically Luthuli was nearly precluded from participation in the action. The

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76 BM Magubane, "Sports and Politics in an Urban African Community. A Case Study of African Voluntary Organizations", p. 179.

77 D Nokwe, "Congress and the Africanists: (2) Congress Replies", in Africa South, Volume 4, #3, April-June 1960, pp. 34-35.

78 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., p. 104.

79 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., p. 105.

80 N Mokgatle, The Autobiography of an Unknown South African, p. 310.



Natal leader of the ANC at the time, A W G Champion, had been opposed to the Campaign. As a result the ANC Natal was delayed in committing itself to the Programme and Luthuli himself accused of cowardice for not declaring himself in favour of the Campaign.<sup>81</sup>

Evaluation of the Campaign is divided. Even those who were optimistic in their viewpoint tended to qualify their appraisal. Those who condemned the Campaign were not unanimous in their reasons for doing so. It appears that these differences can be attributed to the ideological perspective from which the individual observer saw the event. In addition those who believed that something positive had developed from the Campaign were generally directly involved and could therefore not be overtly condemnatory of their creation.

It is apparent that both the detractors and supporters of the Campaign viewed it as a programme of passive resistance. It was intended to place such strains on the country's law enforcement and judicial agencies that they would collapse. Thus the laws that concerned separate amenities and passes would be forcefully expunged from the statute books. As the Defiance Campaign was to be a manifestation of overt action on a multiracial front other targets were also defined to provide a target for other racial groups. To meet the needs of "Coloureds", the Separate Representation of Voters Act was targeted; action by Whites had to aim at the Suppression of Communism Act; Indians had to set their sights on the Group Areas Act; Africans had to add the cattle culling programme to their list of objectives.<sup>82</sup>

A declared proponent of the Campaign had reservations over its potential for violence, which would have negated its passive nature and thus violated ANC policy. Luthuli's reservations were not so much based on doubts about the correctness of the Campaign as that it appeared to be

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81 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., p. 101 and p. 106.

82 B Modisane, Blame Me On History, p. 136.



precipitate and required more planning.<sup>83</sup> Opposed to this Mokgatle criticizes the action as a lost opportunity. He believes the people were ready for mass action but they had not been properly mobilized so that "an onslaught was never launched against the police and fascist state headed by Dr Malan." It was also naive to believe that attacking unjust laws would resolve the issue of an unjust state. Similarly sending out volunteers to be arrested achieved nought but suffering without recompense.<sup>84</sup> On an organizational level the Defiance Campaign was criticized for failing to provide a "point-by point blueprint".<sup>85</sup>

Doubts were also expressed about the targets of the Campaign with the exception of the pass laws. Modisane believed, like Mokgatle, that the civil disobedience did little else but provide heroic moments as the people resisted the symptoms of apartheid rather than the causes. Nevertheless he believed that if the pass laws could be brought to collapse then the economy would be destroyed. In a somewhat contradictory comment Modisane says that he doubts that jails crammed with pass offenders would deter the government of the day. Rather the supporters of the National Party in the agricultural sector would welcome this relief to their labour problems.<sup>86</sup> Ngubane on the other hand felt that an imminent collapse of the economy was a misplaced belief. He reckoned that "the economy was so organized that Whites could easily join forces and frustrate African efforts."<sup>87</sup> The Non-European Unity Movement saw the Campaign as a betrayal by "African Quislings" of the African cause to the vested interests of Indian merchants. Luthuli answered that it was all very well for the NEUM leadership to snipe at the ANC leader-

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83 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., p. 102.

84 N Mokgatle, The Autobiography of an Unknown South African, p. 308 and p. 306.

85 M Motlhabi, The Theory and Practice of Black Resistance to Apartheid. A Social-Ethical Analysis, p. 76.

86 B Modisane, Blame Me On History, pp. 136-137.

87 JK Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, pp. 81-82.



ship for seeking "freedom from responsibility in gaol", but the Unity Movement failed to offer alternatives.<sup>88</sup>

The earlier expressed fears over violence were realized in October 1952 when rioting in New Brighton was sparked off by police action not related to the Defiance Campaign. Eleven people died. Violence and deaths followed in Johannesburg, Kimberley and East London. It appears however that regret over violence was not at the bloodletting but that the police could now take the initiative. Luthuli was of the opinion that the riots in Kimberley and Port Elizabeth were instigated by agents provocateurs who incited the youth of the districts to violence.<sup>89</sup> The police had long been waiting to commence their crackdown by provoking riots.<sup>90</sup> Luthuli, however, concedes that the police showed great restraint, although "these were not yet the days when South Africa bristled from end to end with heavily armed police and troops."<sup>91</sup> Tsotsi was not surprised at the repression that took place because, in his view, the police made no distinction between law and justice where Blacks were concerned.<sup>92</sup>

Although there was a degree of unanimity about the way in which the Defiance Campaign was broken there was still the post mortem to be held over the initial cause of death and the overall significance of this first attempt at mass action. It is in these aspects that the emerging ideological conflict in Black politics becomes most noticeable.

Whether obliquely or directly, the multiracial character that the ANC

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88 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., p. 113 and pp. 115-116.

89 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., pp. 115-116.

90 M Motlhabi, The Theory and Practice of Black Resistance to Apartheid. A Social-Ethical Analysis, p. 62.

91 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., p. 107.

92 WM Tsotsi, From Chattel to Wage Slavery..., p. 95.



had taken on since 1946 became a matter of major concern. Mokgatlé's judgement on the lack of mass mobilisation has already been cited. More significantly, the membership recruitment drive launched by the ANC to coincide with the Defiance Campaign exposed the ANC to police infiltration. During Moroka's trial it transpired that a member of the national headquarters was in the service of the security police.<sup>93</sup>

There was a lack of solidarity in the ranks of the leaders, which became clear when Moroka broke ranks with his co-accused.<sup>94</sup> There appears to have been a lack of commitment over the efficacy of passive resistance. The old-guard leadership did not consider passive resistance part of the African political machinery. Opposed to them were the "Young Turks" of the Congress Youth League, who have since "gone respectable" and believed that the Defiance Campaign was in keeping with the Programme of Action. They did not conceive of the Campaign as an object in itself, but merely as a prelude to future action. Also the instigators of the Campaign were naive to believe that the present government would react like the British government had to Gandhi's agitation in India.<sup>95</sup> Thus both leadership factions failed to manifest a total commitment to what was perceived by some to be a critical moment in Black history.

In the case of Natal it was reckoned that in addition to the late agreement to join the Campaign the necessary motivation was inhibited by the involvement of the South African Indian Congress. But Luthuli felt that this issue was merely a red herring. The commitment to collaboration had already been made in 1946 with the Xuma-Dadoo-Naicker Pact.<sup>96</sup> The preceding comments are largely the result of retrospection, but there

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<sup>93</sup> N Mandela, "No Easy Walk to Freedom", in N Mandela, No Easy Walk to Freedom..., p. 29.

<sup>94</sup> A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., p. 116.

<sup>95</sup> B Modisane, Blame Me On History, p. 137-138.

<sup>96</sup> A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., pp. 102-103.



were also factors that indicated that facets outside the ANC and its allies contributed to the collapse of the Campaign.

The White press did little to advance the cause of Blacks. The Afrikaans press reacted hysterically, while the English press did little but provide pictorial and statistical coverage.<sup>97</sup> Even though the Campaign had brought churches out of their inertia, the direction that they took was not always that wished by the campaigners. The DRC was seen, by Luthuli, as the most obstructionist. It not only condemned the Defiance Campaign but also stated that civil disobedience was equal to disobedience to God. The Presbyterians were not only noted for their sympathy with the sentiments that underlay the Campaign but also for their condemnation of the Programme itself.<sup>98</sup> Ngubane assigns a far more subtle role to the churches in the failure of the Campaign. He believes that the White hierarchy of the established churches played an active part in people accepting the power of constituted authority and thus diluting militancy.<sup>99</sup>

Very much on the line of "The Campaign is dead, long live the Campaign" supporters and detractors of the Campaign were not expected to walk away from the graveside of their actions and forget about them. Instead it was viewed posthumously as a source of inspiration or caution for future activities.

Liberal Whites were believed to have taken the Campaign as an indication of the need for solidarity with Blacks.<sup>100</sup> An assessment of the Campaign brought Mandela to the realization that the winged word did not mobilize the masses. Instead emotive speeches would do more harm

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97 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., p. 106.

98 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., pp. 122-123.

99 JK Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, pp. 81-82.

100 JK Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, p. 81-82.





than good to the organisations and the struggles that they purported to serve. He realized that far greater emphasis had to be placed on mobilizing rank and file for any future action.<sup>101</sup> The phraseology of correspondence with the government prior to the Campaign indicated that the action was still predicated on constitutionality. This had clearly failed and thus this avenue was now closed.<sup>102</sup> Oliver Tambo was more inclined to consider the Campaign as one of "aggressive pressure" because he saw passive resistance as a self-pitying resignation to oppression.<sup>103</sup> Mandela evaluated the Campaign as an important step in radicalizing and mobilizing the Black community.<sup>104</sup>

Opinions were divided over the final significance of the Campaign. Pheko maintains that the Campaign caused the ANC to adopt a multiracial policy that abandoned the Youth League's policy based on the Programme of Action and nation-building.<sup>105</sup> Pheko's evaluation should be seen against the background of the ideological split that was developing between Blacks. This rift centred around who had remained loyal to the credo of the Congress Youth League and thus the ANC, and could therefore claim to be truly representative of Black aspirations. In today's ideological context this difference in ideology is expressed in the so-called "progressive" and "Black Consciousness" movements. The evolution of this argument will become apparent in later pages. Opposed to Pheko one has the interpretation given by Ncube to the Defiance Campaign: de-

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101 N Mandela, "No Easy Walk to Freedom", in N Mandela, No Easy Walk to Freedom..., p. 23.

102 B Modisane, Blame Me On History, pp. 136-137.

103 O Tambo, "Passive Resistance in South Africa", in JA Davis and JK Baker (eds), Southern Africa in Transition, (First edition, Frederick Praeger, New York, 1966), p. 217 as cited in M Motlhabi, The Theory and Practice of Black Resistance to Apartheid. A Social Ethical Analysis, p. 59-60.

104 N Mandela, "No Easy Walk to Freedom", in N Mandela, No Easy Walk to Freedom..., p. 22.

105 M Pheko, Apartheid..., p. 82.

spite its failure "it fostered the co-operation and unity amongst liberation organizations, specifically the ANC and the SAIC."<sup>106</sup> Luthuli believes that the Campaign triggered the revolts in areas such as Zeerust, Natal and Sekhukhuneland, but is adamant that the ANC neither sanctioned nor was actively involved in these uprisings.<sup>107</sup>

Implicit and explicit in the perceptions and evaluations of the Campaign was that it represented, in the final analysis, a step towards the attainment of Black ideals. But, there were also doubts expressed over organisational, leadership, and methodological aspects of the Programme of Action. What then was the next step, and would it be taken with the questions raised by the Defiance Campaign answered? There is no doubt that the next most significant step was perceived to be the Freedom Charter. Just as in the case of the Defiance Campaign, the Charter had its supporters and detractors who saw in the latter document confirmation of the trends that they had praised or criticized in the Programme of Action.

With a few exceptions, comment on the Freedom Charter is limited to evaluation, critique and perception of the significance of the document rather than dealing with the specifics of content. The content was only considered to illustrate why the Charter was seen by many critics as the cause for the final schisms in Black politics, and they had to justify their stance in regard to the document.

In summarising the views of the Africanist, Motlhabi comes to the conclusion that he saw the Charter as "a 'sell-out' of the African's birth-right - his prerogative in his land."<sup>108</sup> Ultimately the dilution of

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106 DMJ Ncube, The Influence of Apartheid and Capitalism on the Development of Black Trade Unions in South Africa, p. 94.

107 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., p. 122.

108 M Motlhabi, The Theory and Practice of Black Resistance to Apartheid. A Social-Ethical Analysis, p. 47.



principles was viewed in such a serious light that opponents of the Charter were willing to sacrifice unity. Thus the Africanists in the Congress Youth League broke away to form the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) on April 6, 1959.<sup>109</sup> What was it that the Africanists found so objectionable that they were willing to give up the unity that was so urgently required? It appears that a fundamental issue was that the acceptance of the Charter as a policy document of the ANC indicated the end of the organisation's initiative. From comments it appears that the ANC was the last of the major Black political organisations to subscribe to the Charter.

Matthews maintains that the concept of a congress of the people was mooted at the March 1954 meeting of the National Executive of the ANC in Natal. As the proposer of this motion he was directed to draw up a memorandum that should serve as the basis for discussion between interested parties.<sup>110</sup> In addition, according to the evidence of some participants in gathering the views of people on the proposed congress, the input from the broad mass was extensive. These information gatherers were recruited from the ranks of the Freedom Volunteers who had offered themselves for arrest during the Defiance Campaign. The Volunteers were carefully instructed on how to canvass, record and report opinions on demands to be contained in any proposed charter of the people.<sup>111</sup> Viewed from this perspective then, it seems that the initiative for the Charter originated with the ANC and that it received widespread support and reaction. Therefore it appears remarkable that the ANC should only adopt the Charter as an official platform in March 1956.<sup>112</sup>

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109 D Dube, The Rise of Azania..., p. 86.

110 ZK Matthews, Freedom For My People..., p. 175.

111 R Suttner and J Cronin et al., 30 Years of the Freedom Charter, pp. 6-30.

112 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., p. 142.

Luthuli finds nothing remarkable in this. Instead he argues that the delay was procedurally correct. The ANC could not commit itself to a policy without ratification by its members. Luthuli himself had misgivings about an unequivocal acceptance of the document. He was particularly concerned about the question of nationalisation which, he felt, should have been properly debated. Debate was, however, stifled by reactionary elements personified by Robert Sobukwe.<sup>113</sup> By implication the critics of the Charter were blamed for the imperfections of the document and the policy it outlined.

Matthews argues that the delay had been intentional. It had been agreed at the Kliptown Congress that the sponsoring organisations should get an endorsement from their rank-and-file. The delay in the ANC obtaining this mandate was attributed to internal political tensions within the ANC. Thus the first opportunity which presented itself for ratification of the Charter in December 1955 was lost. The Annual General Meeting of the ANC held in Bloemfontein that December was dominated by the election of office bearers. Ratification had to wait until March 1956.<sup>114</sup> It is clear that Luthuli did not subscribe to the views of Mandela on the issue of nationalisation. The latter argued that monopoly capital and agriculture had to pay, by being nationalised, for their centuries of exploitative plunder if the Freedom Charter was to succeed.<sup>115</sup>

A disincentive to debate might also have originated with the perception amongst many Blacks that the Charter's lack of clarity indicated that "the ANC was at best vague and at worst ambivalent in its policy."<sup>116</sup>

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113 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., p. 142.

114 M Motlhabi, The Theory and Practice of Black Resistance to Apartheid. A Social-Ethical Analysis, p. 182.

115 N Mandela, "Freedom in Our Lifetime", in N Mandela, No Easy Walk to Freedom..., p. 57.

116 M Motlhabi, The Theory and Practice of Black Resistance to Apartheid. A Social-Ethical Analysis, pp. 45-46.

Were these delays merely the result of reactionary obstructionism, internal political rivalry and a lack of enthusiasm?

To judge from the views of Luthuli and Matthews the answer is, yes. But from the comments of other observers it becomes clear that the Freedom Charter was the source of much tension. Ngubane detects the hand of the Congress Movement and thus the South African Communist Party behind the Charter.<sup>117</sup> Pheko states quite unequivocally that the Charter was the progeny of the South African Communist Party "intended to sabotage and confuse the Azanian revolution."<sup>118</sup> It is further contended that Luthuli had very little to do with the final contents of the Charter, due to ill-health and the banning orders imposed on him.<sup>119</sup> Luthuli himself concedes this point and also points an accusatory finger at organisational weaknesses.

Local structures were tardy in making submissions. Therefore their suggestions could not be included in the draft. The final document was a reflection of this weakness as it was uneven in expression. At times it lost meaning through a plethora of detail and at other times it was so loosely worded that it became obtuse.<sup>120</sup> From the preceding it seems that opponents of the Charter saw it as hiding a hidden agenda. On the other hand a proponent like Luthuli had misgivings about the possibility of ambiguities.

Luthuli might have phrased his doubts over the Freedom Charter in delicate terms but opponents did not share his sensibilities. One object of criticism was that although the Charter contained a set of principles on which a future society should be established, it did not set out how

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117 JK Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, pp. 183-184.

118 M Pheko, Apartheid..., p. 134.

119 D Dube, The Rise of Azania..., p. 86.

120 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., p. 141.



these principles should be realised.<sup>121</sup> Dube dismisses the document as "the most notorious...fraudulent document" that denies that there has been dispossession and that there has to be Black self-determination.<sup>122</sup> Through the principle of multi-racialism Black self-determination is denied. In fact the Charter, through advocating multi-racialism, is sanctifying the present political geography in South Africa. It is seen as being tantamount to endorsing the racial ideologies of the present regime.

It was a logical contradiction to wed private ownership and nationalisation. In addition the Charter did not answer the question on the status of the protectorates.<sup>123</sup> In a similar vein Modisane berates the Charter on the grounds of its multi-racialism. Modisane criticises the emphasis on the protection of group rights and the encouragement of cultural identity. He continues to make a statement which, when read in conjunction with the immediately preceding views of Dube, indicates the new directions that were emerging in Black politics:

It was a criminal affront that any man should be organised to pledge himself to the foundation of a society which history has proved dangerous, not only in South Africa, but everywhere in the world where man has erected barriers which prevent a free exchange of ideas, culture and human relationships."<sup>124</sup>

Opposed to these viewpoints is that of Magubane who endorses the Charter for being the only viable foundation for "the social climate in which a new state could be made to develop a truly South African society embracing all its peoples."<sup>125</sup> Others were not content to sub-

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121 E Mphahlele, The African Image, p. 53.

122 D Dube, The Rise of Azania..., p. 84.

123 D Dube, The Rise of Azania..., p. 47.

124 B Modisane, Blame Me On History, pp. 237-238.

125 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. xii.





scribe to a "colossal fraud" that originated with the White South African middle class while the "white reformist Communist Party of South Africa had done all the planning."<sup>126</sup>

Those who remained loyal to the precepts of the Freedom Charter endowed it with certain characteristics that justified both their situation and the document. Sensitive to the accusations that ANC had sold out African primacy in the struggle against "apartheid, segregation or White domination" by adopting the Freedom Charter, Sisulu claims that it was the only set of principles acceptable to Africans. Nevertheless Africans were prepared to work in conjunction with anyone who opposed manifestations of apartheid and oppression.<sup>127</sup> Magubane also believes that the Charter was significant for other reasons as well. He took the Charter to signal the end of a reactive process in Black politics. This reaction manifested itself in the despatch of deputations to the government in response to its actions, in the hope that concessions could be negotiated. By adopting the Charter the ANC had, according to Magubane, committed itself to taking the initiative and dictating the pattern of future developments.<sup>128</sup> It is clear that diametrically opposed standpoints were emerging that were becoming increasingly irreconcilable. Ngubane claims that Luthuli in fact was willing to see the ANC split in order to have the Charter accepted as policy.<sup>129</sup>

Tensions continued to mount between those who believed that the Black man's struggle in South Africa was essentially the Black man's and should therefore be based on an ethic of African origins. This group reviewed the past and believed that the failure of Blacks to attain

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126 M Pheko, Apartheid..., p. 83.

127 WM Sisulu, "South Africa's Struggle for Democracy", in Africa South, Vol 1, #2, January-March 1957, p. 30.

128 BM Magubane, "Sports and Politics in an Urban African Community. A Case Study of African Voluntary Organizations", p. 183.

129 JK Ngubane, Ushaba: The Hurtle to Blood River, p. 190.



their goal had been due to allowing their struggle to be subverted by non-African groups. Initially the role of subverter had been played by White "friends of the natives". With the formation of the Congress Alliance, that had originated with the Xuma-Dadoo-Naicker Pact, it was held that the diversionary role of the early liberals had been taken over by Indians, "Coloureds" and the White Congress of Democrats. The basis of the argument was that the South African dispensation was the product and current manifestation of a colonial situation. Thus alien elements had to adapt to an African-dominated system of government and values purged of all vestiges of colonialism. In effect the South African situation was viewed as a colonial one.

Opposed to the Africanists one had the Congress Alliance, supporters of the Freedom Charter, whose premise was that the South African situation reflected distortions imposed by racial prejudice and capitalist exploitation. By removing these disruptions, the development of an ideal society, based on freedom and justice for all, could be assured. In this way the exodus of White colonists, that had marked so many processes of decolonisation, could be avoided.

Many Blacks did not conceive of the Congress Alliance in these terms. At best solidarity was restricted to the intellectual level as Blacks still saw themselves as a separate entity, segregated from their "Coloured" and Indian counterparts by the impositions of territorial segregation.<sup>130</sup> The Congress Alliance forced Africans into an "ungodly sacrifice" of their material interests. "It was an alliance of master and servant - the exploiter and the exploited".<sup>131</sup> The battle lines had been drawn and now it was up to the protagonists of the divergent ideological assumptions to entrench and advance their

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<sup>130</sup> E Mphahlele in an interview with NC Manganyi, published under the title "Looking in: In Search of Ezekiel Mphahlele", in NC Manganyi, Looking Through the Keyhole..., pp. 42-43.

<sup>131</sup> M Motlhabi, The Theory and Practice of Black Resistance to Apartheid. A Social-Ethical Analysis, p. 76.

positions. As is to be expected much of this activity would revolve around highlighting the failure of their opponents in the past.

The first pronounced crack in the edifice of Black politics showed itself in 1958. Africanists in the Transvaal had opposed two major campaigns, the bus boycott and the pound-a-day actions. Finally two Africanists were expelled from the ANC. But this did not quell the incipient revolt. The National Executive had to take over the functions of the Transvaal Provincial Executive, apparently on the grounds of mismanagement. A meeting called to resolve the conflict broke down when the Africanists walked out in November 1958, which ended their small but debilitating influence within the ANC.<sup>132</sup> From Luthuli's perspective it appears that the PAC walkout was the result of obduracy on the part of the Africanists. He does not mention, as does Ngubane, that their walkout resulted from a purge of non-communists in the Congress Movement. In doing this the Africanists left the communists unopposed in the Congress Alliance.<sup>133</sup> Motlhabi attributes similar causes to the walkout but says that an additional factor was influences arising from the Congress Movement.<sup>134</sup>

At the root of the differences was the perception that by adopting the Freedom Charter the ANC had in effect abandoned the Programme of Action. Luthuli allows this point and says that in purely doctrinaire terms the Programme of Action dealt with conditions that applied specifically to Africans at the time, but developments of the 1950s had changed conditions considerably.<sup>135</sup> By implication Luthuli is saying that the struggle could no longer be conceived of as a purely African one. Not everyone subscribed to Luthuli's interpretation. The criticism

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132 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., pp. 165-166.

133 JK Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, p. 167.

134 M Motlhabi, The Theory and Practice of Black Resistance to Apartheid. A Social-Ethical Analysis, pp. 74-75.

135 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., p. 165.



by the Africanist wing of the Congress Youth League, of the Congress Movement's policy of multiracialism was vindicated when the status of the ANC within the Congress Alliance was analysed.

Due to the constitution of the Alliance, according to Ngubane, the ANC, with by far the biggest constituency, was subordinated to the whims of the Congress of Democrats, South African Coloured Peoples Organisation, South African Indian Congress and the South African Congress of Trade Unions by a majority vote.<sup>136</sup> Thus the conclusion was reached that the Congress Movement "was a device concocted by the whites and Indians for ganging up against the Africans."<sup>137</sup> Dissent was not caused by racialism, but by reneging on the Programme of Action which had established African paramountcy. Continued commitment to the Programme of Action was essential as the past had "already taught the African people white leadership militated against their genuine interests."<sup>138</sup> Through its subservience to White politics African politics was reactionary.<sup>139</sup> In a bid to establish their legitimacy as true heirs to Black political leadership, the PAC further claimed that it had no ideological differences with the ANC other than that the latter had deviated from its original policy. Therefore the PAC had been formed to become the "caretakers, guardians and trustees" of the principles and politics of self-determination.<sup>140</sup>

Luthuli could not accept arguments that the PAC was non-racial. He was

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136 JK Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, p. 100-101.

137 JK Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, p. 181.

138 M Pheko, Apartheid..., p. 117.

139 PAC of Azania, "Kurze Zusammenfassung der Politik und des Programms des PAC von Azania", quoted in RM Sobukwe, Hört die Stimme Afrikas, p. 95.

140 PAC of Azania, "Kurze Zusammenfassung der Politik und des Programms des PAC von Azania", quoted in RM Sobukwe, Hört die Stimme Afrikas, p. 94 and p. 96.



convinced that the PAC was overtly racist, and one could not fight racism with racism. It was also immoral to set such an example to future generations apart from the complicating post-liberation reconstruction.<sup>141</sup> While the PAC was in a relatively impotent position it could afford to theorise, albeit imperfectly, but once it came to grips with reality it would realise that it would have to work step by step. Similarly it was one thing to express solidarity with African states to the north of the Union on the grounds of their perceived rejection of Whites. But it was a misinterpretation of the situation in emancipating Africa to read rejection of colonial "partnership" with Whites as perpetual "senior partner", as a rejection of Whites. In effect such a policy led to accusations of Black supremacy, which was a grave disservice to the African cause.<sup>142</sup> The identification with broader African ideals was not accidental as the PAC had committed itself to a "giant monolithic People's Socialist State of Africa."<sup>143</sup>

Although Ngubane held no brief for the ANC he was also antagonistic towards the perceived racial domination of the PAC, but for different reasons. He saw the racial exclusivity of the PAC as an ideal gateway for communist infiltration. Communists would be able to manipulate racial tensions to divert Africans from their struggle.<sup>144</sup> On the other hand Ngubane found it laudable that the PAC made "direct participation in government a matter of practical politics." It also stated its ideals for a future society unequivocally, which was more than any other political grouping had done before.<sup>145</sup> In opposition to this Magubane slated the PAC for presenting a confused policy. On the one hand it had "relatively progressive and anti-imperial slogans of the Pan-Af-

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141 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., pp. 165-166.

142 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., p. 167.

143 D Dube, The Rise of Azania..., p. 54.

144 JK Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, pp. 144-145.

145 JK Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, p. 102.



rican movement", But these "were interwoven in a bizarre fashion with reactionary nationalists concepts."<sup>146</sup> On the other Magubane continues with the Marxist paradigm and criticizes the Africanists advocacy of African nationalism. Magubane believed that the doctrine of African nationalism with its implied homogeneity ignored class formations within African society. The pursuit of nationalistic ideals was little else than the inflation of nationalism beyond its true relevance merely to boost the egos of a few individuals.<sup>147</sup>

Even though the PAC was subject to stringent criticism some commentators appreciated that the South African situation was one that called for decolonisation. This was in direct contrast to the perception created by the ANC that South Africa's problems were of an internal nature that could be resolved by reforms.<sup>148</sup>

The dissent aside, the break between the ANC and the PAC required more than posturing. It also required a postulation of the theoretical foundations for future actions. The setting out of policy brought two forms of criticism to the fore. The first aimed at castigating the opposition for past failures as a result of the incorrect definition of principles. The second critique was directed at showing the weaknesses of each other's policies due to a misinterpretation of the past and thus the present.

Through its commitment to "multiracial liberalism" the Charterist Congress denies the claims of "any movement that shows signs of being genuinely nationalist, socialist or democratic." The ANC exists merely

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146 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. 310.

147 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. 310-311.

148 M Motlhabi, The Theory and Practice of Black Resistance to Apartheid. A Social-Ethical Analysis, pp. 78-79.





"to resist the transfer of political power to the African people."<sup>149</sup> The Congress Alliance also drew the ANC into issues that were considered to be beyond its ambit, so that it implicitly expressed support for the United Party in the 1958 general election. This came about by the ANC supporting South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) and the National Workers' Conference in its strike action in 1958.<sup>150</sup> By aligning itself with the Freedom Charter, or as the Africanists preferred to call it, "the Kliptown Charter", the ANC had abandoned the principles of the Programme of Action. In so doing it had to falsify history and virtually ignore the Programme because its preamble contained phrases such as "national freedom", 'independence' and 'white domination' all of which are taboo in Charterist circles." It is therefore not surprising that the ANC is unwilling to cite it.<sup>151</sup>

In this context the term "Charterist" is imbued with a sense of betrayal.

While not directly answering Raboroko's criticism, Magubane sees a logical dishonesty in the PAC's claimed position. He argues that since the PAC says that it has remained loyal to the precepts of the old South African Native National Congress (SANNC) that ultimately found expression in African Claims in South Africa and the Programme of Action then they must acknowledge the roots of African Claims. The provenance of African Claims was to be found in the Atlantic Charter. The latter is explicitly anti-racist. Therefore it is dishonest to claim support of African Claims while advocating a racist ideology. The loyalty of the PAC to the Programme of Action, as sequel to African Claims, was to be

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149 PK Raboroko, "Congress and the Africanists: (1) The Africanist Case", in Africa South, Vol 4, #3, April-June 1960, p. 26.

150 PK Raboroko, "Congress and the Africanists: (1) The Africanist Case", in Africa South, Vol 4, #3, April-June 1960, p. 31 and WM Sisulu, "South Africa's Struggle for Democracy", in Africa South, Vol 1, #2, January-March 1957, p. 32-33.

151 PK Raboroko, "Congress and the Africanists: (1) The Africanist Case", in Africa South, Vol 4, #3, April-June 1960, p. 28.



rejected on the same grounds.<sup>152</sup>

It is clear from these reciprocated criticisms that the ANC it believed that the past impact of racism had been to the detriment of the country and its people. Therefore a new and more explicit form of racial nationalism was an unwelcome and destructive addition to the South African political spectrum. The PAC's answer to this was to argue that it was by the recognition of race that non-African interests were allowed to manipulate developments to their advantage. Therefore Africans had not achieved the original ideals of the SANNC.

It was one thing to claim and justify legitimacy as heir to Black aspirations but some more concrete proof of acceptability was needed. In the last few years of the decade of the 1950s there was a marked increase in political activism culminating in the shootings at Sharpeville and banning of the two major Black political organisations, the ANC and PAC.

It is not intended to discuss these events in themselves, but rather what the perception of their significance was. In addition the counter-accusations that followed on these events will also be brought to the fore.

A supporter of the ANC, Magubane, minimizes the overall significance of Sharpeville on the grounds that it merely provided the PAC with a legend that saved it from sinking into oblivion.<sup>153</sup> Magubane's dismissal of the event is not surprising given his political affiliations. In the scramble to claim ascendancy in the Black political arena the PAC and ANC competed to launch a campaign substantiating their claims to dominance. In the intensity of their competition actions were launched not

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152 BM Magubane, "Sports and Politics in an Urban African Community. A Case Study of African Voluntary Organizations", p. 219.

153 BM Magubane, "Sports and Politics in an Urban African Community. A Case Study of African Voluntary Organizations", p. 223.



so much aimed at targets but at pre-empting the efforts of their political opponents. Consequently campaigns were announced that had greater political value than organisational or tactical sense. This was the case in Sharpeville - when the PAC called on its supporters to destroy their passes at police stations and present themselves for arrest. Sobukwe was criticised for hustling the PAC into a badly-organised campaign, instead of following the example of the ANC which always laid sound foundations before launching a campaign.<sup>154</sup>

To an extent Sharpeville epitomises the fundamental philosophy underlying Ngubane's work An African Explains Apartheid. He argues that apartheid and its predecessors had created such a total void between Black and White that violation of the no-man's land between them would result in bloodshed. Blacks, under the aegis of the PAC had entered the "no-go" area and paid the price on March 21, 1960.<sup>155</sup>

What had prompted the protesters to present themselves at the Sharpeville police station? Was it a demonstration of unity rooted in anger over the current situation and determination to end it, as Kunene suggests?<sup>156</sup> Motlhabi believes that not all the crowd at Sharpeville had a commitment to particular cause but were there without knowing why.<sup>157</sup> Similar doubts about the commitment to PAC policy are raised by Magubane who believes that some of those at the Sharpeville police station might have been driven there by more personal reasons. He sees no reason to doubt that a number of victims of the shooting might have marched there due to their anger at the loss of relations in the Coal-

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154 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., p. 198.

155 JK Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, p. v.

156 DP Kunene, "The Pit of Hell", in DP Kunene, From the Pit of Hell to the Spring of Life, p. 2 and p. 9.

157 M Motlhabi, The Theory and Practice of Black Resistance to Apartheid. A Social-Ethical Analysis, p. 94.



brook mine disaster that occurred a few weeks previously.<sup>158</sup>

A leader of the "Positive Decisive Action against the Pass Laws" in the Cape motivated his call for support by saying that, in the final analysis, the struggle was not against any individual or group of individuals but against

imperialism, colonialism and domination...and a myth...We are fighting against the Calvinist doctrine that a certain nation was specially chosen by God to lead, guide and protect other nations. That is our fight.

More significantly he promised potential participants a liberated and United States of Africa by 1963.<sup>159</sup>

Opponents of the PAC's pass campaign were as agile in exploiting the aftermath of the shootings as they were in condemning it. The deaths would have been left relatively unheralded had it not been for the ANC mobilising its internal and international propaganda machinery and keeping the world's attention focused on South Africa, according to Magubane.<sup>160</sup> From Magubane's perspective Sharpeville owes its significance to the ANC, because it placed Sharpeville on the internal and international agenda when an issue was needed to focus attention in and on South Africa.

Despite his generally dismissive tone Magubane does concede that Sharpeville did trigger an upheaval that was felt in virtually every major town in South Africa, even though "there was no revolutionary core body" to give impetus to the events that had been set in motion by

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158 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. 311.

159 Appendix B, Launching Speech, Sunday March 20, 1960, by Philip Ata Kgosana, in PA Kgosana, Lest We Forget. An Autobiography, pp. 103-104.

160 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. 313.



Sharpeville.<sup>161</sup> Another observer saw the event as unique because it was the first countrywide uprising aimed at seizing power.<sup>162</sup> Dube accords significance to the event for initiating armed resistance and finally drawing the battle lines that "ended all equivocation and vacillation as to self-determination and Black majority rule in Azania."<sup>163</sup> All of the preceding sentiments involve the question of violence and force. With the suggestion that violence was the only feasible policy option had now been demonstrated by the PAC. Ngubane agrees with this but adds that as significant was the decision as to what form this violent resistance should take. He believes that the PAC then decided on guerilla action while the ANC opted for sabotage.<sup>164</sup>

This chapter commenced with the idea that the introspection that had resulted from the failure to successfully oppose the Hertzog Bills had called for new directions to be followed. Therefore it is ironic that these new directions should culminate in events that would once again call for a realignment in Black thinking and thus also Black perception of their position in the past. The reassessment was not merely to re-tread the paths of the past. The review of the past would be undertaken in the knowledge that "The old book has closed and a new one begun"<sup>165</sup>, as Biko said in using the words of Paul Sauer

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- 161 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. 315 and 316.
- 162 M Pheko, Apartheid..., p. 98.
- 163 D Dube, The Rise of Azania..., p. 92.
- 164 JK Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, pp. 136-137.
- 165 S Biko, "We Blacks", in A Stubbs (ed), Steve Biko - I Write What I Like. A Selection of His Writings, p. 35.



CHAPTER 6

DIVERGENCE AND CONVERGENCE, 1960 - 1984

The book had been closed and an era had ended, but certain events would not let themselves be bound in this way. They appeared far more prominently in the table of contents of the book that was about to be written. Three apparently glaring omissions from the preceding chapters are particularly relevant in this regard. These lacunae are those of education, the homelands and labour. This does not suggest that they were not matters of concern in preceding eras, but the context in which they were perceived make them extremely significant to the era about to be discussed.

The gist of the arguments and perceptions that had been developed and set out in chapters two to five could be concluded to form the basis of the justification of current attitudes. Therefore although the present chapter appears to deal solely with contemporary issues, the views given are rooted in particular interpretations of the past.

Sharpeville had left an impression. The new directions adopted in the preceding era appeared to have led to the deaths and repression that followed on the events of March 21, 1960. Therefore further self-analysis was needed to answer two fundamental questions. These in turn led to further queries that required answers as well. The first question related to the ideological directions that had crystallized by 1960, and which were the most viable in the light of past successes or failures. Equally important was to provide the historical logic to justify the direction taken. The second question related to how supporters for a particular ideology could be recruited. A particular stance had to be justified through a particular interpretation of the past. The divergence of perceptions in the foregoing chapters must be seen in this context. The perceptions that now come to the fore are a continuation of this trend. Thus the introduction of the book-in-making required a preface that rejected earlier premises as the framework of perceptions to be





reflected in subsequent chapters. A marked characteristic of the perception that was to emerge in the current period was it increasingly became an expression of a personal experience of the past, and that in the light of this perception a particular attitude was adopted. The present confirmed what was perceived to have gone before.

Naturally the point of departure would be the Sharpeville shootings and governmental action against the organisations it held responsible for these events. The comments on this tended to become more generalized to the question of repression as a whole and not a particular incident. A crucial question that had to be answered was what form the future resistance to current conditions should be. The central issue was that of violence, and more specifically whether violence should be a matter of principle or strategy. To justify arguments a review of the past was essential to show whether the violence in whatever form or for whichever reason was validated or not.

Whatever the reasons for adopting violence Ngubane held that opting for violence would play into the hands of the communists, which, in the eyes of Ngubane, would belie the real power of the South African Communist Party. He believed that legislative restrictions since 1929 had effectively denied the SACP the chance to claim leadership of the liberation struggle.<sup>1</sup> This viewpoint concurs with Ngubane's particular political standpoint, which was consistently anti-communist.

Modisane saw a pattern in police action against Blacks. Blacks were goaded to the point of retaliation, to allow the police to act on the grounds of self-defence. When blame had been apportioned, "and the more charitable have blamed it on history", the police claimed that they had acted in the interests of "protecting the Africans against tsotsis."<sup>2</sup> Modisane's comments, and the thoughts of those who follow his

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<sup>1</sup> JK Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, p. 139 and pp. 182-183.

<sup>2</sup> B Modisane, Blame Me On History, p. 143 and p. 147.



reasoning, point towards a significant development in Black perceptions of the past. With the passage of time the distinction between Whites on the basis of political affiliations was becoming blurred. So was the distinction between police, government and state. The blunt assertions of Modisane are refined somewhat by Ngubane who still assigns an ulterior motive to repressive measures and actions. Ngubane outlines two motives for repression. Firstly to confirm in the minds of Blacks that they are permanently inferior and to force them to fight for their cause on a terrain and on terms determined by Whites. Secondly, by portraying the situation as one of "us (Whites) and them", a racial solidarity is forged that discourages breaking of ranks.<sup>3</sup>

Mokgatle argues that repression had reached the point that Blacks were no longer prepared to stand up for human rights and a share in the administration of the country.<sup>4</sup> Mphahlele does not concur that Blacks had been cowed into acquiescence. Instead he believes that repression had caused a throwback to the "freedom wars our ancestors of two centuries ago waged against the whites."<sup>5</sup> There were those, however, particularly in the wake of Sharpeville, who took the "often soul-mutilating road to exile",<sup>6</sup> rather than face the dilemma of taking up arms.

The children of the Sharpeville era became "the generation which was to write the Soweto Rebellion into South African history." This generation neutralized the aims behind the banning of the ANC and PAC which sought to create a leadership vacuum to be filled by compliant chiefs "who would accept the prescribed destiny on behalf of their people."<sup>7</sup> The

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3 JK Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, p. 94.

4 N Mokgatle, The Autobiography of an Unknown South African, p. 349.

5 E Mphahlele, The African Image, p. 53.

6 E Mphahlele, Afrika My Music..., p. 177.

7 JK Ngubane, Conflict of Minds..., p. 139.



arrests of Mandela, Sobukwe and others were seen as ample evidence that the current government would not countenance a non-racial society.<sup>8</sup> What options were open to Blacks to achieve their ends?

Modisane saw no percentage in dying a martyr. There was nothing heroic in facing loaded guns.<sup>9</sup> Similarly there seemed little to be gained in a fatalistic resignation that said that they had antagonized the ancestral spirits and now had to atone. There was no relief in complying to a "Messianic myth" that held the prospect of redemption in acts of Christian contrition.<sup>10</sup> Speaking for himself Modisane states that "Africans have for far too long been at the business end of the sjambok, I wanted to feel the handle of the whip."<sup>11</sup> But then he warns violence will destroy mankind itself. Thus violence, while a tempting prospect, will not bring a solution to the South African situation.<sup>12</sup> The dilemma is clear, even if the solution is not.

Violence, as a method of resistance, had to be carefully motivated in order to justify it. For instance it is suggested that the only reason that the ANC and PAC followed this option was that they did not adequately comprehend non-violent methods. In addition these two organisations had concluded "that the problem was not a rational one but a psychological one...years and years of domination and exploitation which made it difficult for Whites to let go of their unjust system."<sup>13</sup> The psychological trauma of violence was needed to jolt Whites out of their inertia and refusal to accommodate Blacks.

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<sup>8</sup> E Mphahlele, The African Image, p. 53.

<sup>9</sup> B Modisane, Blame Me On History, p. 140.

<sup>10</sup> B Modisane, Blame Me On History, p. 165.

<sup>11</sup> B Modisane, Blame Me On History, pp. 125-126.

<sup>12</sup> B Modisane, Blame Me On History, pp. 231-232.

<sup>13</sup> M Motlhabi, The Theory and Practice of Black Resistance to Apartheid. A Social-Ethical Analysis, p. 194.



Underlying all the sentiments expressed in regard to this crucial phase of Black protest was the feeling that Blacks would no longer collaborate in their own oppression.<sup>14</sup> After the failure of the Defiance Campaign of 1952 and the Anti-Pass Campaign of 1960 other options had to be considered. Violence appeared to be the only way to indict Whites for their position in a society based on "arrogance, larceny, lying and hatred for the African."<sup>15</sup> Naturally such a charge sheet had to include a review of the past to substantiate the indictment. While the prospect of bringing Whites to book was an incentive for force, it should not be forgotten that "the cult of the gun" could also be counterproductive and lead to the same excesses it sought to eradicate. Physical conflict was useless unless based on considered principles.<sup>16</sup> These preconditions were not of such immediate concern to Mandela who argued that it was evident from South Africa's military alliances with the Portuguese and the Central African Federation that the government only understood violence.<sup>17</sup>

With due regard to symbolism, the first act of sabotage was committed on December 16, 1961. "On that day we spoke to the White oppressor in a new way", claimed the ANC.<sup>18</sup> This act was conducted by the armed wing of the ANC, Umkhonto we Sizwe. The founding of Umkhonto and a policy of

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14 "The Voice of the All African Convention Vigilance Committee", Newsletter, July 1961, quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 3, pp. 702-703.

15 JK Ngubane, Ushaba: The Hurtle to Blood River, p. 10.

16 L Nkosi, "Literature and Liberation", in L Nkosi (ed), Home and Exile and other Selections, p. 161.

17 N Mandela, "A Land Ruled by the Gun", in N Mandela, No Easy Walk to Freedom..., pp. 118-120.

18 OR Tambo, "Mobilise Our Black Power. Statement by O.R. Tambo on the 10th Anniversary of Umkhonto we Sizwe, 16 December 1971", quoted in ANC, ANC Speaks..., p. 132.



sabotage had been decided on in June 1961,<sup>19</sup> although the exiled ANC leadership only openly recognized its relationship with the armed wing in 1963.<sup>20</sup> In retrospect the ANC stated that the road to force had already been entered onto in 1952 with the Defiance Campaign. The name of the Campaign indicated a new militancy and an increasing realization that violence was inevitable given the government's own tendency towards violence.<sup>21</sup>

The quandary that confronted the ANC over the issue of violent action was not as great for the PAC. The then leader of the PAC, Robert Sobukwe, stated that Blacks had no doubt about the course that the organisation had set itself. The battle lines had been drawn between oppressed and oppressor.<sup>22</sup> Sobukwe conceived of violence as a form of civil war that obviated the need to resort to terrorism and militarism. Later the PAC claimed that the first definitive step towards armed struggle was taken in 1972 when the PAC proposed a joint ideology for all liberation movements. The proposal for a joint ideology caused a furore in Black resistance movements.<sup>23</sup>

In view of subsequent developments, John Nyati Pokela, who had become president of the PAC after his release from Robben Island in February 1981, advised the Organisation of African Unity in 1982 that terrorism aimed at individuals was the only answer to White intransigence.<sup>24</sup> It

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19 N Mandela, "The Rivonia Trial", in N Mandela, No Easy Walk to Freedom..., p. 168-170.

20 M Motlhabi, The Theory and Practice of Black Resistance to Apartheid. A Social-Ethical Analysis, p. 67.

21 "The Role of the Indian People in the South African Revolution. Interview with Dr Yusuf Dadoo", in ANC, ANC Speaks..., p. 66.

22 R Sobukwe, "Unterdrückte gegen Unterdrücker", in RM Sobukwe, Hört ie Stimme Afrikas, p. 47.

23 "Kurze Zusammenfassung der Politik und des Programms des PAC von Azania", quoted in RM Sobukwe, Hört die Stimme Afrikas, p. 100.

24 M Pheko, Apartheid..., pp. 178-179.



was also suggested that history had shown that even non-violent protest had drawn vehement police action. Therefore PAC activists might as well be attacked for more concrete deeds.<sup>25</sup> Modisane concurs with this conclusion but adds one of his own: Whites could not be party to the use of force, it was illogical to expect to connive at their own destruction.<sup>26</sup> By implication they had become targets.

A somewhat more equivocal stance was taken by Motlhabi who concedes that while the PAC had logically accepted violence, it had not considered the moral implications of its actions.<sup>27</sup> Can Themba also believed that the issue was not as simple as a rejection or acceptance of violence. He says that the use of force did not only imply a rejection of either Christianity or democracy. Blacks who subscribed to Africanism did not reject these systems per se. These doctrines had been rejected because their chief proponents, the Whites, had not personified these value systems. Christianity, as experienced, was weak and ineffective. Democracy was applied selectively. Whites had failed to respond to the demands made by these ethical guidelines, and had only listened to calls for redress underlined by force.<sup>28</sup> The significance of these pronouncements is that they appear to be based on a reading of the past that indicated to the protagonists of violence that the earlier reliance on non-violence had borne no fruit.

Whatever the motive for adopting violence as a strategy or principle it is clear that the first few years of the 1960s were seen as crisis years. In this time new directions were adopted in response to a reap-

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25 JK Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, p. 103.

26 B Modisane, Blame Me On History, pp. 245-248.

27 M Motlhabi, The Theory and Practice of Black Resistance to Apartheid. A Social-Ethical Analysis, p. 99, p. 104 and p. 198.

28 C Themba, "Requiem for Sophiatown", in E Patel (ed), The World of Can Themba..., pp. 241-243.





praisal of what had gone before. Nevertheless not much occurred in Black political circles that excited much comment. Perhaps the reasons for this can be attributed to two causes. Firstly there was the need to consolidate ideological directions and establish covert internal organisational structures. Secondly an overt and high-profile external infrastructure had to be established. This had become necessary after the ban was placed on the dominant political organisations. Governmental action was facilitated by the fact that Black resistance had, until the bans, been overt which allowed the state to pick off its targets with relative ease. Thus state intervention also limited Black actions that would have been considered worthy of note. Despite these constraints, commentators still found some developments remarkable.

When the Union of South Africa left the British Commonwealth on May 31, 1961 to become a Republic, Blacks did not devote much comment to this development. This was due to the view that the creation of the republic was essentially of concern to Whites.<sup>29</sup> Those Blacks who still believed in the supposed British liberal values were alarmed at South Africa's exit from the Commonwealth. On the one hand it was argued that the withdrawal from the Commonwealth was an adroit move to weaken "the British for the purpose of forcing them to identify themselves with the Afrikaner."<sup>30</sup> Ngubane's viewpoint is in keeping with the increasing dominance of the perception of "us and them" which made no distinction between Whites on the basis of political or moral criteria. On the other hand Ngubane also sees a positive result in South Africa having cut its constitutional ties with Britain. Verwoerd had believed that his anti-communist stance was sufficient to keep South Africa within the Commonwealth. But African opposition had been so vehement that it was clear that given the right stimulus Africans could "confront apartheid with the reality of disaster. This is the real power in the hands of

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<sup>29</sup> M Pheko, Apartheid..., p. 101.

<sup>30</sup> JK Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, p. 54.



Africans."<sup>31</sup>

It was a delusion to think that an anti-republican alliance between Black and White signified a sense of a common destiny. The English-speakers who opposed the republic and enlisted Black support were "unscrupulously using the African people in an issue that had nothing to do with their aspirations."<sup>32</sup> The perception of the new republic was that its name might be new but its nature not.

The constitutional foundations of the Republic of South Africa were "a monument to racialism and despotism that until 1983 made the legislative process a White monopoly."<sup>33</sup> It was not surprising that the new state had been conceived without consulting the majority of the people to determine the "socio-political structure of a proper African state."<sup>34</sup> Past developments ensured that the new state was made up of a people bound together in such a way that no form of homogeneity could be claimed to exist. According to Magubane the bourgeois concept of a pluralistic society was a misleading premise, because society was defined by secondary characteristics which hid its real character. In terms of this conception society was split into empirical entities which were differentiated from each other by cultural differences. This conceptual framework was absurd and merely designed to create confusion.<sup>35</sup>

The birth of the new state did not go entirely unopposed. The ANC called for a stay-at-home on May 29-31, 1961 through the All-In African

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<sup>31</sup> JK Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, pp. 120-121.

<sup>32</sup> M Pheko, Apartheid..., p. 101.

<sup>33</sup> ANC, ANC Speaks..., p. 18.

<sup>34</sup> O Tambo, "The Building of a Nation", in ANC, ANC Speaks..., p. 50.

<sup>35</sup> BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. 152-153.



National Action Council.<sup>36</sup> The aim of the general strike was to protest over the creation of a state "based completely on White domination over a non-White majority". The strike was also seen as a last ditch bid to force the government to heed the legitimate claims of Blacks; to call a national convention; and to draw up a mutually acceptable constitution. In this way "a period of increasing bitterness and hostility and discord" could be avoided.<sup>37</sup>

The proposed mass action was not an unmitigated success. Numerical support was lower than expected even if those involved displayed a "magnificent courage". The demonstration at least had an educational function. Mistakes were made and "weaknesses and shortcomings were discovered." This brought home the realization that adjustments had to be made to methods and style of work to counter unforeseen contingencies.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore Mandela claimed that despite government propaganda the stay-at-home was a success. The government had to create the impression of a failed campaign, or concede that the majority of the people opposed a republic.<sup>39</sup>

Aside from purely strategic considerations, Mandela also appeared sensitive to accusations that the anti-republic strike had not been unanimously agreed to by the National Action Council. The National Action Council had been convened in March 1961 as a result of decisions taken by the ad hoc Continuation Committee, formed in December 1960, to de-

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36 N Mandela, "General Strike" and editor's note, in N Mandela, No Easy Walk to Freedom..., p. 94.

37 N Mandela, "Black Man in a White Court", and N Mandela, "General Strike", in N Mandela, No Easy Walk to Freedom..., p. 146 and p. 90 respectively.

38 N Mandela, "General Strike", in N Mandela, No Easy Walk to Freedom..., p. 104.

39 N Mandela, "Black Man in a White Court", in N Mandela, No Easy Walk to Freedom..., p. 154.



wise strategies in response to the banning of the ANC and PAC.<sup>40</sup> The brief unity between the rival organisations foundered at the first meeting of the National Action Council when the PAC withdrew from the deliberations of the Council without prior consultation. The PAC's action came as no surprise to Mandela who saw this move as symptomatic of the political bankruptcy of the PAC. To compound the perfidy of the PAC it was accused of conniving with the South African Police in breaking the strike.<sup>41</sup> Again according to Mandela, the PAC's pre-emptive call for a strike on March 21, 1961 was an abysmal failure that amply demonstrated that the PAC was a spent force and had become totally irrelevant.<sup>42</sup>

Clearly Mandela was trying to put the PAC in a bad light, but not only on political or propagandist grounds. Mandela's position in the National Action Council had been criticized at the time, and subsequently, from various quarters. Much of the criticism and the responses to it contribute to the enigma that surrounds Mandela. Mphahlele believed that Mandela viewed non-violence and collaboration with other races as a tactic. Mphahlele further claimed that Mandela saw no benefit in cooperation with the South African Communist Party. Mandela was also claimed to have assured Whites that they had nothing to fear from Black enfranchisement.<sup>43</sup>

Opposed to Mphahlele, Ngubane criticizes Mandela on two points in regard to the National Action Council. Firstly Mandela's dramatic and unexpected entrance at the Pietermaritzburg conference when he called for a stay-away to be held on May 29-31, 1961 forewarned and thus fore-

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40 Editor's note, in N Mandela, No Easy Walk to Freedom..., p. 89.

41 N Mandela, "General Strike", in N Mandela, No Easy Walk to Freedom..., pp. 99-100.

42 N Mandela, "General Strike", in N Mandela, No Easy Walk to Freedom..., p. 100.

43 E Mphahlele, The African Image, pp. 54-55.



armed the government. Consequently the strike was doomed to failure. Secondly, as reprehensible as the precipitate call for a strike was, Mandela's actions had a more damaging political effect on the ANC. By making the entrance and demands as Mandela did, Luthuli's status within the ANC was effectively undermined. By contributing to Luthuli's decline Mandela not only enhanced his own position, but also played into the hands of the communists.<sup>44</sup> In addition Ngubane maintained that Mandela had become an unequivocal advocate of violence by 1960, which marked "one of the critical turning points in the history of South Africa."<sup>45</sup>

To rebut this type of accusation, Mandela said that Luthuli had sent a popularly acclaimed address to the Pietermaritzburg conference and therefore had implicitly sanctioned the proceedings. In reply to suggestions that he had hijacked the National Action Council by his actions, Mandela contended that this was the result of the need for other leaders to keep a low profile.<sup>46</sup> In a further attempt to rationalize the relative failure of the stay-at-home, Mandela condemned the press. The press had initially, and correctly, reported that the strike would be a resounding success. But a week before the action the press, under pressure from the government, produced a different evaluation giving prominence to opponents of the demonstration.<sup>47</sup>

It is clear that as much as opposition to government policies was increasing so was division in the ranks of Black opposition. Each faction would try to justify its position by giving a particular interpretation to the present. Depending on what interpretation was given to South

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44 JK Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, pp. 172-173.

45 JK Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, p. 138.

46 N Mandela, "General Strike", in N Mandela, No Easy Walk to Freedom..., pp. 104-105.

47 N Mandela, "General Strike", in N Mandela, No Easy Walk to Freedom..., pp. 94-96.



African autonomy this realignment affected either strategy or principle. Another important need was for reorganization and consolidation. And it is in this area that the three omissions that were mentioned in the introduction to this chapter were of great importance. The three omissions mentioned in the introduction were those of labour, the homelands and education. What makes these three facets important is that in many respects they represented a major shift in Black politics and thus also on how the past was perceived.

Past attempts to achieve mass mobilisation had had little success. Probably this failure can be attributed to a legacy of the past. Political leadership of the past appeared to have been more concerned with its own particular interests than with the more fundamental issues that affected the common man. The era that had been ushered in by Sharpeville saw a shift to the demands of the rank-and-file. It is however difficult to determine whether this shift was initiated by the leadership or the masses. Some of the earlier generation of leaders survived the transition and emerged as even more prominent in the political hierarchy. Some of the latter were able to exploit conditions advantageously. Others had the ability to articulate the demands of their constituencies, because they understood the plight of those they came to represent. Still others were able to provide the philosophical foundations and terminology that allowed the masses to express their own demands, which in turn would encourage action in support of them. This last development not only had implications for the nature of Black resistance to White rule, but also for Black attitudes towards "accepted" interpretations of the past. It is in this respect that the philosophies of the Black Consciousness and Charterist movements became important.

It is perhaps as well to start with the homelands because of the close perceptual link established between the reserves, bantustans, homelands, self-governing and independent states on the one hand and labour procurement and exploitation and political manipulation on the other. To an extent these two areas of concern were viewed as an entity. Similarly education and more specifically "Bantu education" came to be





seen as an integral part of the "success" of the other two components of this trilogy of perceptions.

There has been a tendency in contemporary writing to impute parentage of the homelands to the present governing party. But the concept is seen by a number of commentators to have originated in the last century, and then more particularly during the Shepstonian era in Natal from the 1850s onwards. Motlhabi credits the origins of this policy to Shepstone, although he does qualify this statement: Shepstone "merely gave explicit utterance to what was already being carried out in practice wherever a 'native problem' was already perceived to exist in the country."<sup>48</sup> The ANC, in a document prepared for submission to the penal reform commission of 1946, cited Shepstone's location policy as one of the major sources of crime amongst Blacks. The gist of the document was that the antisocial behaviour of Blacks was the result of the decline of Black autonomy and social structures, which in turn was the result of the location system implemented in Natal. The significance of Shepstone's policy lay therein that the "process of dismemberment of African hegemony was sealed for all time when ... Shepstone came down upon it with a heavy hammer and annihilated its foundations to smithereens."<sup>49</sup> Through moral pressures and the legislated enculturation Shepstone sought "basically to bolster up white supremacy."<sup>50</sup> Essentially Mbeki and Tsotsi agree with this submission when both claim that Shepstone manipulated traditional social and power relationships to create "a crouching, humiliated people."<sup>51</sup> What makes these comments interesting is that they are a clear indication

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48 M Motlhabi, The Theory and Practice of Black Resistance to Apartheid. A Social-Ethical Analysis, p. 6.

49 AWG Champion, et al, Evidence Given Before Penal and Prison Reform Commission, 6 July 1946, p. 2.

50 AWG Champion, et al, Evidence Given Before Penal and Prison Reform Commission, 6 July 1946, np.

51 G Mbeki, South Africa The Peasants' Revolt, p. 32 and WM Tsotsi, From Chattel to Wage Slavery..., p. 123.



that the origin of contemporary problems is sought in developments of nearly a century earlier.

In a retrospective fictional recreation of reaction to Shepstone's policy, Dhlomo has a member of Shepstone's staff criticize his policy for implementing a system, that if followed to its logical conclusion of allowing Blacks to advance on the ladder of civilization, would create a fear of "swamping" amongst Whites. The policy bore the seeds of its own destruction. White fears would result in more repressive measures. Whites were able to limit Black progress "under the guise and pretext of being benevolent guardians of the Natives."<sup>52</sup> Thus Dhlomo was indirectly criticizing Shepstone's paternalism and suggesting that Shepstone must have been aware of, but chose to ignore, the implications of his policy. Superficially Dhlomo was criticizing Shepstone but obliquely he was targeting present policies as well.

In his comments on the origins of the reserves and their successors, Magubane brings two aspects to the fore that were of critical importance to the arguments that he had and was to develop. At the same time they were an indication of the changes in ideology that had taken place. He states:

By negating their history through conquest, the white settlers were able to usurp the operation of the Africans' pre-colonial social formations. The reserves were deliberately designed so that the people who reside in them have no choice but to seek work.<sup>53</sup>

By expressing these sentiments here and elsewhere, Magubane resonates strongly with Plaatje when the latter criticizes the land allocations proposed by the Beaumont commission. Plaatje refers to the reserves as "human incubators" for the procreation of labour and hospices for spent

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52 HIE Dhlomo, "Cetshwayo", in N Visser and T Couzens (eds), H.I.E. Dhlomo. Collected Works, p. 144-145.

53 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. 87. (My emphasis)



labour. Furthermore they are a refinement of the "slave-pens" of the American south. The American slave owner at least had to accept some responsibility for the moral and physical well-being of his chattels. In South Africa the farmer only had to come to the gate of the breeding ground and whistle for labour. Meanwhile the selfsame labour would have to maintain itself at its own cost.<sup>54</sup>

One wonders how much of an intellectual debt Tsotsi owes to Plaatje when the former uses virtually identical sentiments and at times terminology to that of Plaatje to describe the homelands?<sup>55</sup> Against this perceptual background it is not surprising that the ANC described reserves as "glorified concentration camps",<sup>56</sup> a particularly striking image in the wake of World War II and the concentration camp issue in the context of the South African War of 1899-1902. Magubane suggested that the reserves and their nominal successors should be "conceptualized as internal colonialism."<sup>57</sup> In the case of the latter Magubane's perception of the origin, nature and function of colonialism must be borne in mind.

There is a consistency in Magubane's viewpoint when he describes the aims of the Glen Grey Act of 1894. He saw the introduction of individual land tenure and the creation of local councils, in terms of the Act, not as a progression but a regression. Social relationships based on access to land were dislocated. And the chiefs were made agents of the colonial power.<sup>58</sup> Similar viewpoints are manifested by Ngubo who also

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54 ST Plaatje, "Report of the Lands Commission: An Analysis", in ST Plaatje, Native Life in South Africa..., p. 413-417.

55 WM Tsotsi, From Chattel to Wage Slavery..., p. 51.

56 A Nzo, "For the Release of All Political Prisoners in South Africa!", quoted in ANC, ANC Speaks..., p. 87.

57 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. 87.

58 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. 78.

enlarges on the question of the erosion of social relationships. He perceives the impact of the Glen Grey Act as a move towards "the individualization of labour and the break up of the family as an economic unit." This transition resulted from the limited accessibility of land which in turn led to the "emergence of a landless class whose economic subsistence depended" on their entering the agricultural and industrial labour markets.<sup>59</sup> Ngubo's study is limited to the period 1882-1910 but he is viewing it from the perspective of the 1970s.

Clearly neither of the two preceding authors view this development as an example of well-intentioned British paternalism as Molema did fifty years previously.<sup>60</sup> Molema did note that the obligatory three-month labour clause in the Glen Grey Act was greatly resented although he was uncertain "[h]ow far the reason is sentimental and how far practical".<sup>61</sup> Presumably his reference to "sentimental" alludes to the passing of an era, and "practical" to the inconvenience and disruption of the three-month absence from home and the "individualization of labour" which Ngubo highlighted. In the same context Molema commented that the scale of resentment came nowhere near to that experienced in Natal. It must, however, be remembered that Molema could not have envisaged the developments of the next half century. But his contrasting viewpoint does serve to illustrate the point that perceptions of the past are influenced by the period in which the particular writer or commentator writes. Even here one should bear in mind Plaatje's comments on "slave-pens" which in many respects foreshadow the views of today's writers.

The next steps in the evolution of "internal colonialism", the home-

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59 A Ngubo, "The Development of African Political Protest in South Africa, 1882-1910: An Analytical Approach", p. 45.

60 SM Molema, The Bantu Past and Present, p. 240.

61 SM Molema, The Bantu Past and Present, p. 257.

lands, were the Natives' Land Acts of 1913 and 1936 and various influx-control measures. As these have already been discussed in preceding chapters it is not intended to review them again. Instead the perceptions of the homelands in their various guises since 1960 will be looked at.

At various times in this dissertation reference has been made to a rationale being sought in the past for a critique of the present. This is nowhere more apparent than in the perceptions that are formed with regard to the homelands. Four major threads are woven into these notions. These are that the homelands are devices for the economic, social and political control of Blacks in order to satisfy the demands of various pressure groups in White society. Lastly a persistent theme that runs through the first three is how this control was possible. It is clear that if the conditions were as abhorrent as they were made out to be, then it could be assumed that there would be a vehement rejection of the system that no measure of physical coercion would be able to contain. The problem that then arises is why this resistance to "grand apartheid" and its predecessors failed. Frequently the answer to this conundrum was that Blacks contributed to their own situation, and consequently only they could extricate themselves. But before one can proceed to discuss this issue, one has to look at how the homelands were perceived.

The homelands have been ascribed to "the result of European conquest and land robbery."<sup>62</sup> The homelands are dismissed as a fraud by the ANC. This conclusion is based on the contention that to take shelter from the winds-of-change that were coursing through Africa from the late 1950s, South Africa had to create a semblance of independence for the indigenous people.<sup>63</sup> At the same time it was held that Black

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62 WM Tsotsi, From Chattel to Wage Slavery..., p. 75.

63 A Luthuli, "Chief Luthuli: On False Leaders and 'Separate Development'", quoted in ANC, ANC Speaks..., p. 162.



pressure also forced the government to follow this policy.<sup>64</sup> Mandela gives another perspective to Tsotsi's statement by saying that the pressure for homeland government was the result of desperation. Blacks had met such intransigence to the demands of their earlier agenda that they pleaded for "any little corner where [they] may be free to run [their] own affairs." Such an opportunistic option was rejected by the ANC.<sup>65</sup> Tsotsi believed that the homelands were an attempt to thwart the process of proletarianization by denying Blacks permanent urbanization. On the one hand (by implication) revolution was being thwarted. On the other hand a ceaseless supply of labour was ensured that would not endanger its already precarious position through strikes and other industrial action.<sup>66</sup>

Broadly speaking the theory of the bantustans postulates that Blacks should satisfy their socio-political and economic aspirations within defined geographical areas. But criticism of the realization of this theory indicates that, as far as these critics were concerned, the ideal had not and would not be attained. Whether this failure was due to maladministration, malfeasance or deliberate policy is a point of considerable debate. In many respects the perceptions that applied to the promulgation of the Natives' Land Act of 1913 apply in this context. Particularly in respect of those who favoured a form of segregation but expressed misgivings about the inequitable distribution of land.

Luthuli linked the shortage of land and labour as follows. He claimed that while people in the bantustans were being forced off the land by the Land Husbandry Act others were being forced out of the cities by influx-control measures. Economic and administrative pressures were

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64 WM Tsotsi, From Chattel to Wage Slavery..., p. 76.

65 N Mandela, "Verwoerd's Tribalism", in N Mandela, No Easy Walk to Freedom..., p. 77.

66 WM Tsotsi, From Chattel to Wage Slavery..., p. 68.





creating "the vast circular tour of the people with empty bellies."<sup>67</sup> Similar sentiments had been expressed by DDT Jabavu fifty years earlier. He argued that the migrant was part of a "vicious circle" of debt creation, debt payment and debt creation.<sup>68</sup>

Subsequently these interpretations of Luthuli and Jabavu were developed by Luli Callinicos under the heading of "The circle of poverty in the reserves" which discusses the evolution of migrant labour in the period 1886-1924.<sup>69</sup> Poverty in the homelands, caused by overpopulation, was used to create a ready supply of labour that was also used to counter industrial action for higher wages in the urban areas. The threat of the availability of abundant alternate labour was used to dampen any claims for increased wages.<sup>70</sup>

The "circular tour" was not a recent phenomenon, according to the ANC, but had already been evident in the 1920s when the reserves were "rural slums, where agrarian degradation" had become so acute that they were beyond redemption.<sup>71</sup> Although the terminology may differ it can be concluded that, from an economic point of view, the reserves, locations and their derivatives were interpreted as being a means to meet the labour requirements of mining, agriculture and industry. Whether this labour was created as a result of legal demands or to escape increasing impoverishment is not that relevant. The salient point is that the bantustans were viewed as labour reservoirs that could be tapped at the whim of employers. And because labour was readily available, employers could

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67 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., p. 180.

68 DDT Jabavu, "Natives and Agriculture", (Address to the Rand Native Welfare Association, University College, Johannesburg, 17th December, 1919), in DDT Jabavu, The Black Problem..., p. 98.

69 L Callinicos, A People's History of South Africa. Volume 1, Gold and Workers, 1886-1924, p. 30.

70 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., p. 181.

71 ANC, Sechaba, October 1980, p. 26.



pay wages which ensured that the "circular tour" remained in perpetual motion.

It was stated that the women in the homelands, who had been deprived of their men's labour, found scant relief in the return of these workers to the reserves. The workers returning home were a spent force because "the world of grinding machines has no use for men whose lungs are riddled with T.B. and Miner's Phthisis."<sup>72</sup> Even if the "widows of the reserves" were able to eke out an existence on the land they would not know whether they had security of tenure or not. They only had usufruct of the land and could be put off it at the discretion of the chief. The men of the family based economic unit experienced an equal insecurity at their workplaces as "only their labour [was] wanted - themselves not".<sup>73</sup>

Had Blacks become so directionless that they had become submissive, albeit unwilling, participants in a White ordained system? The answer to this question is in part yes, but equally relevant was the perceived function assigned to leadership in the homelands, the success of government propaganda and a sense of resignation amongst Blacks. By 1976 the government had been so successful in "myth-making" and had

done a lot of engineering of human values, views and ideas - and found many people who wittingly or unwittingly (mainly wittingly, I believe) have found refuge in the 'comforts of unreason' which the government created for them. As a result many of us nowadays talk in the government's own terms without even being aware of doing so.<sup>74</sup>

When children are subjected to the "engineering of human values" and

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<sup>72</sup> P Ntantala, "The Widows of the Reserves", in Africa South, Vol 2, #3, April-June 1958, p. 9.

<sup>73</sup> P Ntantala, "African Tragedy", in Africa South, Vol 1, #3, April-June 1957, pp. 66-67.

<sup>74</sup> N Mkele, "Trojan Horses of Apartheid", in M Mutloatse (comp and ed), Reconstruction..., pp. 271-272.



are inculcated with the benefits of the homelands and the claims that they have been created in compliance with the ethics of Calvinism they would do well to remember how their grandmothers were toiling on their lands in the sun.<sup>75</sup>

An important component of the "many" that have succumbed to "engineering in human values" that Mkele refers to are the chiefs. It is in the evaluation of their role that previously discerned perceptions of the corruption of traditional society through the impact of colonization, Christianity, capitalism and western civilization are brought into play. Magubane avers that while the form of chieftainship had been retained and ruling dynasties maintained, the content of the system had changed as the "traditional ruling chief gave way to the administrative chiefdom."<sup>76</sup> Chiefs were either seen as having been subtly co-opted into collaboration or motivated by personal greed. Alternately they, erroneously, believed that they could fight the system from within.

Mphahlele sees the title "chief" as "pejorative ... appropriate to their supervisory role: mere shadows of a great past, mere policemen of the government."<sup>77</sup> Chiefs had been finessed into the position where they had to manipulate their subjects in order to retain their own privilege.<sup>78</sup> They had become "the paid manipulators of the channeling taps" that regulated the flow of migrant labour. The chief had thus had a dual personality thrust upon him that simultaneously made him "the most obsequious servant of his white master and the most extortionate ruler of his black subjects ... eminently suited to the role of trai-

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75 M D Tuwani, "Learn to Read and Write Only", in S Ndaba (ed), One Day in June..., p. 74.

76 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. 101.

77 E Mphahlele, Afrika My Music..., p. 28.

78 G Mbeki, South Africa The Peasants' Revolt, p. 75.



tor."<sup>79</sup> From this perspective the claimed function of the homelands as an outlet for Black political aspirations does not appear viable. Those leaders who had adopted the "homeland option" as a means to obtain redress were believed to have succumbed to a delusion. Even a leader who worked from within said at one stage "not even those who state complete belief in separate development are good enough to make concrete suggestions that are taken seriously."<sup>80</sup> The past and present indicated that a negotiated resolution of the dispensation was impossible.

Motlhabi considers those who had chosen to operate from within apartheid structures as having denied themselves an "alternate strategy towards change", as "[c]hange has to be negotiated - not imposed by the guilty party."<sup>81</sup> Dube believed it a contradiction in terms to negotiate for the end of oppression from a platform of oppression, as he conceived of the homeland political structures.<sup>82</sup> Homeland elections were merely a sop as their results were manipulated by "gerry-mandering and terror". Potentially inimical voices within the homeland parliaments were neutralized by loading the assemblies with nominees of the central government.<sup>83</sup> In the final analysis homeland leaders were "government-approved and enjoy a certain measure of freedom of expression, thus making of protest and criticism fringe benefits which bantustan leaders enjoy for making apartheid seem respectable."<sup>84</sup> Ultimately Mkele says that most discussion on

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79 WM Tsotsi, From Chattel to Wage Slavery..., p. 76 and p. 127.

80 GM Buthelezi, White and Black Nationalism, Ethnicity and the Future of the Homelands..., p. 7

81 M Motlhabi, The Theory and Practice of Black Resistance to Apartheid. A Social-Ethical Analysis, p. 239.

82 D Dube, The Rise of Azania..., p. 49.

83 National Executive Committee, "Forward to Armed Seizure of Power", quoted in ANC, ANC Speaks..., p. 137.

84 N Mkele, "Trojan Horses of Apartheid", in, M Mutloatse (comp and ed), Reconstruction..., p. 279.

worker-related questions were seen as part of the broader spectrum of society. This development should be seen within the framework of attempts to create a mass solidarity that transcended group interests amongst the oppressed.

Ncube blames the decline of the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union of Africa in the 1920s on its inability to distinguish "legitimate trade union activities and general political rhetoric".<sup>87</sup> This comment applied to the situation in the 1920s but the post-1960 period required a different interpretation. This need resulted from shifts in ideology as the linkage between economy and society became more pronounced and race became a secondary, albeit important, issue. The realization set in that changes in society had to be brought about by changing the relationships of production.

It was also realized that the best lever to obtain social change was through economic leverage in the struggle for this change. Thus the modern critic was to show that Black workers and non-workers were part of the same system, and that there was a community of interest between these two components of the same class, the oppressed. Distinctions within this class had to be blurred and finally erased. Motives for the withholding of labour for the benefit of all the oppressed had to be provided.

In the light of the above modern writers tended to see the evolution of modern society in global terms. Global in the sense that it was futile to make distinctions between the impact of colonization and all that issued from it. The only perceived benefit of colonization and its successors was that it helped to create a united front against domination and exploitation by Whites. This was necessary despite a discernible "class amalgamation" between poor Whites and Blacks from

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87 DMJ Ncube, The Influence of Apartheid and Capitalism on the Development of Black Trade Unions in South Africa, p. 53.



different societies in the first decade of the twentieth century.<sup>88</sup> The class amalgamation had anyway been lost by the 1920s.

It has previously been stated that class considerations began to supercede those of race. So it could be assumed that the character of labour organisation took on a non-racial character and became a demonstration of class solidarity. But when one looks at the membership and leadership of the contemporary trades union then it appears that they still have a strongly racial inclination. From the comments on the development of Black-oriented trades union this development is not in conflict with their professed aims. Historical precedent had forced them into this direction.<sup>89</sup>

Until 1948 trades union that accepted Blacks excluded them from leadership for a variety of reasons.<sup>90</sup> Alternately White trades union developed links with Black counterparts and so formed parallel unions.<sup>91</sup> The implication of this was that the Black unionists and their membership were considered, for whatever reason, incapable of either leadership of a mixed union or independent stewardship of their own unions. Therefore links between White and Black at the union level were not evidence of class solidarity. But even if these links were not ideal they were still considered a danger to the Afrikaner by the National Party. After 1948 the National Party made it policy to segregate unions in order "to save Afrikaner workers from foreign influences which were labelled as 'communistic', 'unnational', 'un-Christian', and

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88 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. 121.

89 BM Magubane, "Sports and Politics in an Urban African Community. A Case Study in African Voluntary Organisations", p. 132.

90 DMJ Ncube, The Influence of Apartheid and Capitalism on the Development of Black Trade Unions in South Africa, pp. 56-57.

91 DMJ Ncube, The Influence of Apartheid and Capitalism on the Development of Black Trade Unions in South Africa, p. 85.





'un-Afrikaans'."<sup>92</sup>

Mere organisational segregation was not enough, according to Modisane. Union power also had to be broken through legal measures such as the Natives Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act No. 48 of 1953. The prohibition on African strike action was seen to be a measure to ensure cheap labour.<sup>93</sup> Ncube, however, does not entirely agree with this interpretation of the restrictions imposed on Black unions. The limitations assuaged the fears expressed by Mr Ben Schoeman who reckoned that legitimate unionization amongst Blacks would ultimately result in a mass political movement. At the same time the strictures did allow for a degree of collective bargaining on a wage determination, and thus pre-empted a motive for unionization.<sup>94</sup> Labour legislation affecting Blacks was formulated in terms of the Botha Commission report of 1951.<sup>95</sup> This Commission was likened to Dr Ley's coordination of trades union in Germany in the Hitler era.<sup>96</sup>

Against this background and that of the formation of the ideological directions of the ANC and PAC it was to be expected that two formulations of a union policy amongst Blacks would develop. On the one hand there was that which ascribed to a multiracial class alliance that was led by workers. This tendency was represented by the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU). On the other hand there was that faction, known as the Congress of South African Unions (CUSA), that

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92 DMJ Ncube, The Influence of Apartheid and Capitalism on the Development of Black Trade Unions in South Africa, p. 81.

93 B Modisane, Blame Me On History, p. 307, and WM Tsotsi, From Chat-tel to Wage Slavery..., p. 93.

94 DMJ Ncube, The Influence of Apartheid and Capitalism on the Development of Black Trade Unions in South Africa, pp. 83-84.

95 DMJ Ncube, The Influence of Apartheid and Capitalism on the Development of Black Trade Unions in South Africa, p. 72.

96 N Mokgatle, The Autobiography of an Unknown South African, p. 277.



believed that White workers were reactionary and incapable of mobilisation for meaningful change in South Africa. Thus worker leadership would effectively mean Black worker leadership.<sup>97</sup>

Ironically the foundation of FOSATU and CUSA was enabled by governmental action, namely the Wiehahn Commission appointed in 1977 and which reported in 1979.<sup>98</sup> The irony lies therein that the Wiehahn Commission was seen, together with the European Economic Community Code of Conduct and the Sullivan Code, as the means to "provide a climate of capitalist investment, enforced through the callous and brutal repression of the democratic unions throughout the world."<sup>99</sup> Ncube links the Wiehahn Report and the resultant enabling legislation for non-racial unions as proof of reform.<sup>100</sup> Opposed to this the ANC took the viewpoint that these reforms were merely a form of window-dressing to appease international condemnation of South African policies.<sup>101</sup>

It appears that there were very real fears that an important component of Black solidarity would be lost if Black workers were allowed to believe that they had an effective means to have their demands, needs and aspirations met. Therefore it was important to let the worker recognize that his struggle was not complete until that of his brethren was finished. Therefore many perceptions of the past were formulated to ensure that the Black worker recognized that he was part of the same system that oppressed the non-worker. The worker had to place superficially political issues on the agenda as well, in solidarity

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97 M Seloane, "Workers Will Always Regroup", in M Mutloatse (ed), Umhlaba Wethu..., p. 133.

98 M Seloane, "Workers Will Always Regroup", in M Mutloatse (ed), Umhlaba Wethu..., p. 133.

99 ANC, Sechaba, November 1980, p. 8.

100 DMJ Ncube, The Influence of Apartheid and Capitalism on the Development of Black Trade Unions in South Africa, p. 117.

101 ANC, Sechaba, November 1980, pp. 7-8.



with other Blacks. Black workers had to realize that apartheid on whatever terrain was seeking "to frustrate the inevitable consequences of the contest between labour and capital."<sup>102</sup> Rewarding signs of solidarity were believed to have manifested themselves during the strikes in Durban in 1973, which brought into focus again the important role of the African working class.<sup>103</sup> FOSATU felt that the 1973 strikes meant the rebirth of non-racial unionism that over the next ten years "built a base to advance the struggle for justice and equality for all".<sup>104</sup> Motlhabi says that the 1973 strikes were spontaneous. And as one of their results the Black Consciousness Movement felt it had to become involved with worker issues.<sup>105</sup> Manganyi considers the strikes as important because they were an "indication of the burgeoning tension-creating potential of blacks."<sup>106</sup> Ncube however reckons that solidarity was not immediate as the lack of "viable political institutions" resulted in "the birth and multiplicity of independent and legitimate unions."<sup>107</sup> To an extent this problem was overcome with the founding of FOSATU in April 1979 under the aegis of the Trade Union Advisory Co-ordinating Council, the Industrial Aid Society and the Black Consultative Committee. But this was not a sign of politicization as FOSATU initially refused to align with either of the two major political organisations that were to emerge in the 1980s, the

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- 102 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. 238.
- 103 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. 156.
- 104 DMJ Ncube, The Influence of Apartheid and Capitalism on the Development of Black Trade Unions in South Africa, p. 121.
- 105 M Motlhabi, The Theory and Practise of Black Resistance to Apartheid. A Social-Ethical Analysis, p. 125.
- 106 NC Manganyi, Being-Black-in-the World, p. 67.
- 107 DMJ Ncube, The Influence of Apartheid and Capitalism on the Development of Black Trade Unions in South Africa, p. 143.



United Democratic Front (UDF) and the National Forum(NF).<sup>108</sup>

The dangers of political affiliations became apparent with the formation of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). Tentative unity talks were held in 1981, but the unions that aligned with the Black Consciousness ideology were excluded. The formation of the NF and the UDF in June and August 1983 respectively, heightened tensions between unions. Ultimately the tensions reached the point where the Black-Consciousness-supporting unions walked out to form the Azanian Congress of Trade Unions, and left those who would ultimately form COSATU to do so in November 1985. Subsequently AZACTU and CUSA formed the National Congress of Trade Unions (NACTU).<sup>109</sup> Thus a truly united front to oppression still remained an ideal.

The error of past divisions and the historical logic for unity had been shown but this was clearly not enough to mobilize the masses. What was still needed was the psychological conviction and determination to bring about the changes that were deemed necessary for a just society. It was felt by most modern writers that there was a distinct correlation between the lack of inner motivation and education based on Western norms. In this regard one must remember the comments that were made with reference to mission-based education and the teachings of Christianity in chapter 3. At the same time it must be remembered that irrespective of the criticism that was levelled at colonization and its attendant problems there was the underlying recognition that the arrival of Whites had initiated an irreversible process of change. Africa and South Africa had been drawn into an international complex of relationships from which they could not withdraw.

Molema and his generation had generally been very disdainful of tradi-

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108 DMJ Ncube, The Influence of Apartheid and Capitalism on the Development of Black Trade Unions in South Africa, p. 111 and p. 129.

109 M Seloane, "Workers Will Always Regroup", in M Mutloatse (ed), Umlaba Wethu..., pp. 134-135.

tional pre-literate society for being stagnant and incapable of evolution. The modern writers disagree with the concept of a static society. Instead they argued that the development of traditional society had been disrupted by colonial penetration. Therefore new content had to be given to education to facilitate adaptation to new conditions. But this education had to have a content that was compatible with the changed conditions, and did not serve to reinforce and legitimate the status quo.

The perceptions of Magubane, Mbeki and Jabavu previously referred to are significant in this context. "By negating their history through conquest" Blacks had been reduced to a "crouching, humiliated people" who lived a life of "tranquility-in-sterility". The perceptions of these three are an indication of a view that transcends the interpretation that colonization and its aftermath was just physical deprivation. From this view colonization was also seen as psychological manipulation as Manganyi previously suggested. Past actions were thus also seen as having broken the will to resist. A more explicit expression of this sentiment is given by Luthuli who said, "The length of the term of slavery depends largely on the oppressed themselves and not on the oppressor."<sup>110</sup>

Bantu education, introduced in 1955, as it was officially designated was seen as the medium through which Whites hoped to prolong the "term of slavery" indefinitely by creating minds that were voided of any thought of resistance. In addition this education should serve to inculcate the subordinate status in and docility of Blacks. Several other objectives were adduced to Bantu education as will become clear in the discussion that follows.

It should not, however, be assumed that the philosophy underlying Bantu

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<sup>110</sup> A Luthuli, quotation from presidential address to the 45th annual congress of the ANC, Johannesburg, December 1957, in African National Congress Handbook, np.





education was an invention of the National Party. Luthuli contends that the fundamental tenets belonged to a much earlier era, that of C T Loram. Dr Loram was Natal's first Chief Inspector of Native Education, "a vigorous product of the craze for 'practical' education...His driving intention seems to have been, in all good faith, to equip African children for the lives white South Africa decreed that they would have to live."<sup>111</sup> A more explicit interpretation was given by Ntantala who described the new educational format as "education for slavery", which she said was how the system was generally perceived amongst Blacks.<sup>112</sup>

Modisane, in a literary allusion pregnant with meaning, perceived of the Bantu education as "education for Caliban". Despite parental objections based on this perception government continued unmoved.<sup>113</sup> Mandela had no doubt about Verwoerd's intentions when he introduced the Bantu Education Bill: they were overtly political. Verwoerd was said to have meant that it was inconsistent with state policy that Blacks should acquire an education that gave them aspirations above their officially-ordained station in life. It was equally subversive of official policy that Blacks should be part of an educational system premised on a belief in racial equality as the mission schools were. Should parents seek to provide their children with an education outside of the system, either in the home or at a private school, this was made illegal. Modisane reckoned that if the parents wanted to introduce home-based education the law placed such restrictions on private tuition that it would be illegal. Possession of a chalkboard, chalk, pencil and paper as teaching aids would be interpreted as the conduct of a private school and thus grounds for prosecution.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., p. 33.

<sup>112</sup> P Ntantala, "The Abyss of Bantu Education", in Africa South, Vol 4, #2, January-March 1960, p. 42.

<sup>113</sup> B Modisane, Blame Me On History, p. 309.

<sup>114</sup> B Modisane, Blame Me On History, p. 309.





Parental input in the formulation of policy and governing of schools existed in theory. But Luthuli maintained that parental participation on the school boards was purely nominal. The criterion for election was not expertise in or relevance to education and the school but approval by the security police and the ability to intimidate teachers into compliance with the new system.<sup>115</sup>

What were Blacks to do about this system that Mphahlele claimed had been "reduced to a level that naturally corresponds to the low mentality of its Boer architects"?<sup>116</sup> Initially it appeared that a boycott was the only effective means of protest against the educational dispensation imposed by the Nationalist government. Calls were made to boycott those "agencies designed to poison the minds of children." But this was perceived as counterproductive and only of benefit to the government. A boycott would serve to swell the ranks of unskilled labour and thus add to the success of the perceived aims of apartheid. The boycott call was not answered for this reason and also because parents did not know what would become of their children while they were at work.<sup>117</sup> In addition Mphahlele believed that the issues at stake were far too complex and philosophical for most parents to comprehend, let alone protest against by taking their children out of the schools.<sup>118</sup> Tsotsi refers to the attempt by the Glen Grey district Parents' Association to organize a meeting to discuss the proposed educational system as another example of obstacles placed in the way of parents wishing to air their views on the Bantu Education Bill. He claims that permission for a meeting had to be obtained from the local

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115 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., p. 44.

116 E Mphahlele, The African Image, p. 197.

117 ZK Matthews, Freedom For My People..., p. 179-180.

118 E Mphahlele in an interview with NC Manganyi, published under the title "Looking In: In Search of Ezekiel Mphahlele", in NC Manganyi, Looking Through the Keyhole..., p. 20.



magistrate. Permits were granted in terms of the Suppression of Communism Act, which required that an agenda be submitted with the application. The magistrate deemed the inclusion of discussion on the education bill as political and ordered that it be deleted as this was in contravention of the Act.<sup>119</sup>

Thus the parents were caught in the horns of a dilemma which only offered one solution - acquiescence. However there were those pupils who boycotted classes, teachers who resigned and night schools that developed in protest against the new schooling system.<sup>120</sup> And there were also some, like the Nazarites, who in fact welcomed the innovation of an ethnic-oriented education. The Nazarites had had strong reservations about the mission-sponsored education which had been used to "sabotage traditional cultures and traditional loyalties". But not even the ethno-centricity of Bantu education was viewed as entirely secure because Shembeite children were treated as religious deviants by their religious instruction teachers.<sup>121</sup>

With their children thus locked into the system the perceived secondary aspects of Bantu education could be brought into play. Bantu education was said to have been introduced to counter a broad African nationalism by creating ethnic nationalism. The new educational process was

meant to realign the process of training the African child and focus his thinking on the things that really endure - the totems that give meaning to tribal life.<sup>122</sup>

Thus Bantu education was geared to enforce apartheid, and was being peddled by white politicians as just the kind of system

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119 WM Tsotsi, From Chattel to Wage Slavery..., p. 98.

120 DMJ Ncube, The Influence of Apartheid and Capitalism on the Development of Black Trade Unions in South Africa, p. 94.

121 A Vilakazi, Shembe..., p. 116 and pp. 118-120.

122 JK Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, p. 59.



that would help to restore our tribal cultures. They knew that nationalism had cut across our ethnic boundaries. This had to be destroyed and with it the unity it had forged among the African peoples.<sup>123</sup>

It appeared that Mphahlele realized that the missionary education was severely limited, and did corrupt traditional values. But at least it taught critical thinking that could be applied creatively once the pupil had left the confines of the mission establishment.<sup>124</sup>

Despite the attempts to mobilize resistance and the anger that was felt over policy developments like Bantu education and stricter implementation of apartheid, it appeared that Black activism in the 1960s had gone into decline. There was little to indicate any new directions. But by the 1970s this situation was to change.

The relative calm of the 1960s can probably be ascribed to a variety of reasons. The logic and energy that had taken events to March 21, 1960 were spent. State repression had effectively disjointed Black political, social, cultural and labour organisations and discouraged protest activities. The tightening of the apartheid screws encouraged fragmentation, particularly as there were some prominent leaders who chose to operate within the system. Finally it appeared that the maligned Bantu education was having the effect that its critics claimed it intended to have. Blacks seemed to have become a "crouching, humiliated people" who had lost the will to take an active part in deciding their destiny. It is ironic therefore that what had been seen as the final humiliation, Bantu education, should also be the seedbed of a Black renaissance.

It was at the level of tertiary education that the products of primary and secondary level Bantu education began to turn apartheid on its head and use the system against itself. It was the first generation after

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123 E Mphahlele, Afrika My Music..., pp. 178-179.

124 E Mphahlele, Afrika My Music..., pp. 178-179.



the introduction of Bantu education that turned the logic of apartheid against itself. The movement that generated this change was that known as Black Consciousness. Black Consciousness was born of the "generation of oppressed youth which had been nurtured on apartheid from the moment their eyes opened on the world."<sup>125</sup>

Dissatisfaction amongst Black students over representation in national student bodies, and the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) in particular, had been evident since 1961 and 1962. The argument was that although NUSAS was a national multiracial student body its power bases lay on the "White" campuses of the universities of Cape Town, Natal, Grahamstown and the Witwatersrand. Consequently Blacks at the ethnic-based university colleges were virtually excluded from the leadership of NUSAS. It was felt that White students could not presume to speak for Blacks because they had not experienced being Black.

The first positive steps taken to remedy this perceived incongruity were taken with the formation of the University Christian Movement in 1967, which acted as a forum for Black students to meet. In a series of meetings between July 1968 and July 1969 the South African Students Organisation (SASO) was officially launched at the University of the North.<sup>126</sup> Motlhabi put the case for the birth of SASO very succinctly when he said that it had its origins in the "dichotomy between principle and practise which was so apparent among many members of NUSAS."<sup>127</sup>

Part of the motivation for launching SASO smacked of the PAC's rejection of the participation of non-Africans in the Congress of the

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<sup>125</sup> J Sikakane, A Window on Soweto, p. 77.

<sup>126</sup> Editor's note, in S Biko, "South African Students' Organisation - Its Role, Its Significance and Its Future", in A Stubbs (ed), Steve Biko..., pp. 3-4.

<sup>127</sup> M Motlhabi, The Theory and Practice of Black Resistance to Apartheid. A Social-Ethical Analysis, p. 109.



People. In his argument Biko claims that SASO was neither a Black NUSAS nor anti-NUSAS, but because of the peculiar situation of Blacks they had to form an independent organisation that understood the situation of Blacks and thus could best articulate their demands.<sup>128</sup> A similar interpretation is given by Pheko who states that NUSAS had played a significant role in expressing Black oppression. Nevertheless NUSAS also had an allegiance "to the liberal Congress Alliance led by the Communist Party",<sup>129</sup> and therefore could not be said to truly identify with Black aspirations. Motlhabi suggests that any similarity between the PAC and SASO was due to the same circumstances pertaining at the time of the inception of both organisations.<sup>130</sup> Magubane believed that SASO remained loyal to the Congress Alliance slogan of "Unity of all the oppressed classes, unity first."<sup>131</sup> If, however, one looks at the early formulation of SASO policy and the underlying philosophy of Black Consciousness then Magubane's interpretation appears to be fanciful. The particular slant that he gave it was probably due to his belief that an analysis of South African society should be based on class. Another motivation was that because of the inroads that Black Consciousness made on Black political allegiances it had to be rehabilitated into what the ANC perceived to be the mainstream of Black politics in South Africa, the progressive movement. Mashabela also contradicts Magubane when he says SASO held that "the whiteman was in fact part of the problem, not the solution."<sup>132</sup> As will become apparent in the next few paragraphs this was a complete about face for the ANC.

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- 128 S Biko, "South African Students' Organisation - Its Role, Its Significance and Its Future", in A Stubbs (ed), Steve Biko..., pp. 5-6.
- 129 M Pheko, Apartheid..., p. 160.
- 130 M Motlhabi, The Theory and Practice of Black Resistance to Apartheid. A Social-Ethical Analysis, p. 116.
- 131 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. 320.
- 132 H Mashabela, People on the Boil..., p. 10.





Given the ANC's commitment to the Freedom Charter and thus multi-racialism at the time of the inception of SASO and its philosophy, it is not surprising that the ANC should have looked at the brash young upstart askance. The philosophy of SASO was based on the perception of the position that historical developments had bestowed on Blacks in modern society. Biko justified the position of SASO on the grounds that "as long as blacks are suffering from an inferiority complex - a result of 300 years of deliberate oppression, denigration and division - they will be useless as co-architects of a normal society where man is nothing else but man for his sake."<sup>133</sup> An historical awareness was essential to make the Black realize his "complicity in the crime of allowing himself to be misused and therefore letting evil reign supreme in the country of his birth."<sup>134</sup> For this particular aspect of his exposition Biko is drawing on the work of Fanon.<sup>135</sup> An ineradicable lesson from the past, in the view of Black Consciousness, was that Blacks would have to establish pride and confidence in themselves without reference to White norms or reliance on White support. The exclusion of White influences meant a reliance on own institutions. Mphahlele foresaw a problem in this as it pointed towards "'independent homelands'".<sup>136</sup> The earlier comment about turning apartheid against itself is clarified by Motlhabi, when he says that the government favoured the foundation of SASO because it believed that this was a move towards "tribal consciousness". Black Consciousness "was praised [by the government] as the most positive step to come from the Black world for a long time." The government "saw the movement, initially, as some sort of endorsement of the 'holiness'

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133 S Biko, "Black Souls in White Skins", in A Stubbs (ed), Steve Biko..., p. 21.

134 S Biko, "We Blacks" and "White Racism and Black Consciousness", in A Stubbs (ed), Steve Biko..., p. 29 and p. 69.

135 F Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth, pp. 166-199.

136 E Mphahlele, Afrika My Music..., p. 157.





and validity of the separate development thesis simply because it rejected ties with white liberals." <sup>137</sup> Only subsequently did the government realize its error but then acted cautiously.<sup>138</sup> But by this time SASO had been able to consolidate with relatively little government interference, and give content to its policy of community involvement to demonstrate that Blacks could become self-reliant.<sup>139</sup>

The ANC was so alarmed at these apparently overt racial tendencies that Tambo expelled Pascal Ngakane and AM Makwane for questioning the role of Whites such as Slovo and Carneson within the upper echelons of the ANC.<sup>140</sup> But this was no surprise to Dube as men like Tambo still subscribed to the myth of the empty land, while claiming to be grandfathers of the revolution that had started in Sharpeville and continued with the Soweto revolt of June 1976. However these were events that the ANC could not claim to have initiated.<sup>141</sup>

Biko rejected collaboration with current institutions on the grounds that this implied reform and thus a tacit acceptance "of the major points around which the system evolves."<sup>142</sup> Thus the culmination of the policy of Black Consciousness was confrontation, which Motlhabi believed was like that of the PAC, a rejection of the ANC's negotiation tactics.<sup>143</sup> This consideration aside, Motlhabi argued that Black Con-

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137 H Mashabela, People on the Boil..., p. 11.

138 M Motlhabi, The Theory and Practice of Black Resistance to Apartheid. A Social-Ethical Analysis, p. 107 and p.147.

139 H Mashabela, People on the Boil..., p. 11.

140 M Pheko, Apartheid..., pp. 174-175.

141 D Dube, The Rise of Azania..., pp. 9-10.

142 S Biko, "The Definition of Black Consciousness", in A Stubbs (ed), Steve Biko..., p. 49.

143 M Motlhabi, The Theory and Practice of Black Resistance to Apartheid. A Social-Ethical Analysis, p. 183.



sciousness remained innocent of the ideology of either the PAC or ANC thanks to censorship, and was thus a unique philosophy and ideology.<sup>144</sup>

Its definition of Blacks was broader and yet narrower than that of the Africanists. Black Consciousness included all those who were subject to some form of oppression or discrimination,<sup>145</sup> which in the South African context excluded all Whites. The PAC on the other hand included among Africans those who identified with Africa, thus theoretically Whites could be part of the PAC.<sup>146</sup>

What is clear from the tenets of Black Consciousness is that it was very introspective and therefore an enigma to those not involved with its philosophy, particularly Whites.<sup>147</sup> This introspection and near obsession with the past was seen as a potential pitfall and source of regressive atavism, with the result that many Blacks Africanised by "collecting jazz and dashikis for boasts", while avoiding commitment to any political struggle and contenting themselves with the sentiment of an "African personality".<sup>148</sup> Motlhabi criticized Black Consciousness for not defining the status of its ideology "as an operative tool" and concludes by saying that Black Consciousness was "better understood as a means than as an end." Furthermore an element of naivete was present in the movement's leadership. It was not all that cognizant of realities if it believed that the government of the day would be swayed by confrontation or that foreign pressure would be exerted while there

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144 M Motlhabi, The Theory and Practice of Black Resistance to Apartheid, p. 116.

145 M Pheko, Apartheid..., p. 170.

146 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. 309.

147 S Biko, "White Racism and Black Consciousness", in A Stubbs (ed), Steve Biko..., pp. 68-69.

148 M Gwala, "Steve Bantu Biko", in S Ndaba (ed), One Day in June..., pp. 60-61.



were still profits to be made.<sup>149</sup>

Gwala, in the aftermath of the Soweto Riots of June 16, 1976, criticized Black Consciousness for not defining the path to a national consciousness, and for remaining a "static cultural thing" failing to embrace "the more pressing issues". Nevertheless he does credit Black Consciousness with creating the climate that showed that "the youth refuse to remain any longer in the nest of containment and repression". The student riots at last showed that resistance was not the exclusive preserve of any group but that of all Blacks. The Soweto uprising had set South Africa on a course when the will of national consciousness could no longer be turned from its course.<sup>150</sup>

Mphahlele to an extent confirms this perception. Despite post facto claims by competing organisations the Soweto revolt had been endogenous. It was a reaction to the conditions that pertained in Soweto and elsewhere. The Afrikaans language issue was the symbol of rejection of authoritarian rule and discrimination in all spheres of life that led to a sense of futility.<sup>151</sup> Similarly official claims of a communist conspiracy were rejected. And exiled leaders living on "international time and money" would surely not wish to claim credit for sending children armed with stones against guns? Following on these arguments Mphahlele concludes "[t]hat the students did it all on their own, driven by the demons of hurt and humiliation, by their own esteem for themselves." But as much as it was a challenge to state authority it was also a challenge to the parents of the students for having accepted the status that they and their children held.<sup>152</sup> It appears therefore

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149 M Motlhabi, The Theory and Practice of Black Resistance to Apartheid. A Social-Ethical Analysis, p. 153.

150 M Gwala, "Steve Bantu Biko", in S Ndaba (ed), One Day in June..., p. 61 and pp. 63-64.

151 H Mashabela, A People on the Boil..., pp. 16-17.

152 E Mphahlele, Afrika My Music..., p. 173, p. 178 and p. 180.



that Mphahlele sees echoes of Black Consciousness in the Soweto rising. Magubane did not share this view on the causes. Instead he saw the uprising as a flexing of proletarian muscle that was "demanding its rightful place in the political economy."<sup>153</sup>

Although Mphahlele and Magubane differ on the causes of the Soweto riots they do have a point in common. This is that they saw in June 16, 1976 the culmination of trends that had been developing in the South African past. Organisational and ideological credit for the revolt was given to Zeph Mothapeng of the PAC and Steve Biko of the Black Consciousness Movement,<sup>154</sup> which explains why Dube was previously so sarcastic about the ANC's claims. Dube was probably angered by the ANC's claimed blow for liberty paid for with "pathos and conscious sacrifice."<sup>155</sup> The organisation further commented that this was "the price that they were paying for fighting a racist, oppressive and exploitative regime".<sup>156</sup> Magubane also claimed that the refugees from Soweto were flocking to ANC training bases to learn the skill for armed resistance.<sup>157</sup>

Not even the shock of Soweto appeared to be able to persuade the opposing factions in Blacks politics to bury their differences. Instead they could be said to be going along with the government's new response of divide-and-rule.<sup>158</sup>

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153 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. 149.

154 M Pheko, Apartheid..., p. 178 and p. 169.

155 OR Tambo, "The Victory of Our Cause is Assured", quoted in ANC, ANC Speaks..., p. 199

156 ANC, South Africa is Coming Back. Our Children, p. 9.

157 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, pp. 324-325.

158 WM Tsotsi, From Chattel to Wage Slavery..., p. 108.



In a bid to reconcile the conflicting parties, which were willing to underline their opposing claims to leadership with violence as recent years have shown, Mokoena published a document that tried to heal the rift. In this document he claimed that Biko had always endorsed the progressive movement and had had nothing but the highest respect for Mandela. By implication, respect for Mandela was taken to mean an endorsement of the progressive movement. But this is not the issue according to Mashabela. Biko's critics claimed that he was a racist. The critics "conveniently" forgot that Biko wanted Blacks to restore confidence in themselves.<sup>159</sup> And this they could not do with the aid of non-Blacks. Consequently reactionary forces of contemporary Black Consciousness movements like the Black Community Programmes and its successors evolved.<sup>160</sup> This assertion is summarily rejected by Dube. He finds it curious that prior to his death Biko should have been condemned as a lackey of British liberalism and American imperialism, but after his death the ANC claimed him as one of their own.<sup>161</sup> It appears that the opposing factions were trying to enhance their status by claiming leadership in events that clearly had had an important bearing on subsequent developments in South Africa.

Irrespective of the divergence that was clear over issues like the status of Biko within a particular organisation, it was also clear that the opposing factions were looking for unity, albeit based on adherence to the principles that they represented. To emphasize the claim to leadership it was important to show that their present position was the logical outcome of their interpretation of the past that had led them to adopt the policies that they had. It is doubtful whether this debate will ever be completed until this ideological conflict is something of the past. Therefore it is doubtful that the conflicting views of the past will become reconciled. Nevertheless the challenge in the histori-

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159 H Mashabela, People on the Boil..., p. 101.

160 A Mokoena, "Black Consciousness in Perspective", pp. 1-5

161 D Dube, The Rise of Azania..., p. 172.



cal perceptions that were based in the present had taken on a new dimension. These perceptions were not only a challenge to standard, White-oriented interpretations. They also challenged the interpretations given by those Blacks opposed to their ideological standpoint.





## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION: THE SHADES OF REALITY

The title of this chapter is a deliberately chosen play on meaning. The word "shades" is used in two senses. On the one hand it is used to denote nuances in colouring, in the sense that events are coloured by a particular interpretation to highlight specific aspects that are considered significant to the interpreter of these events. On the other hand "shades" is employed in the sense of benevolent or malevolent deities - Gods or demons that have been created alongside the road from the past to the present, that through their benign or malign influence have affected travellers along this route, and, perhaps more importantly, have directed the destination of the road to the present. Depending on whether these "shades" are for good or evil the observance or avoidance of their teachings is practised.

Throughout the course of this dissertation and the sources that have been utilized this double meaning of "shades" has been apparent. Firstly the "conventional wisdom" that created specific images of the past in the different ages and schools of South African history writing has been questioned and, if found wanting, rejected. Similarly the normative forces in society, the deities, have been subjected to scrutiny. And if they have been found to have led to aberrations then they were rejected. Thus it was found, for example, that the relatively explicit faith in a liberal ethic was gradually replaced by an outright rejection of it. Liberalism was rejected because it was held that far from providing a solution to the present it was part of "the problem". Similarly economic systems, educational standards, Christian values, Western civilization, the origins of racialism, nationalism and enculturation were placed under the microscope. Frequently the ideas that held these forces together were perceived of in an entirely different context to those in which the "conventional wisdom" had placed them.

It can be argued that the sources consulted do not constitute "scientific history". Therefore they cannot be considered to be history writing, but rather the highly subjective and personalized interpretations of the past by a number of individuals - Individuals whose interpretation was informed by any number of subjective influences. As far as possible writers, commentators, critics and politicians were chosen from the broad spectrum of Black life to represent the nuances in interpretation. Equally important was to have writers of different eras dealing with the same themes. This was done to show that interpretations varied according to the ideological responses to contemporary conditions and the time in which they were written . Because the different generations of writers represented different constituencies it can be said that they reflected the changing Black perceptions of the past.

It is freely admitted that these were highly subjective perceptions, but this did not make them any the less significant. For the writers to have advanced the views that they did meant that they believed that they were speaking for a specific constituency, and that they were articulating the views of those they claimed to represent. To them the primary concern was not to satisfy any empirical criteria. It was important to mirror the perceived past to motivate and justify current ideological directions.

While one can agree with Smith's objections to the concept of a "Black school" of history writing because of the ideological implications of such a development, one would be foolish to ignore what has become apparent during the course of this dissertation. That is that much has been written about Blacks in South African history, but little has emerged on how Blacks themselves experience and perceive that past. It is one thing to broaden one's scope of enquiry to include Blacks or even make them the focus of the investigation as has been the trend in recent historiography, but it is another thing entirely to give expression to how Blacks perceived this history for themselves.



The stated perception of the past has made it clear that there is a need to include the viewpoint of Blacks in any comprehensive exposition of the South African past. If it is argued that the recognition of a "Black school" would add another "pigeonhole" to the "pigeonhole philosophy" that dominates South African thinking then it would be as well to consider the obverse of the coin. By ignoring Black perceptions one is justifying further distantiation between Black and White history writing. Blacks could, with justification, say that "mainstream" history writing does not allow for Black perspectives and therefore they will have to write their own history to correct this imbalance. If these are the broader conclusions that have been reached what of the more detailed results that have become apparent in this dissertation?

Several facets became apparent during the course of this research which will now be dealt with in some detail. Firstly there is that of chronology. It should be mentioned that the chronological divisions employed for chapters two to six could be further subdivided, although the broad categorization would still apply. Nor would the logic that led to the chronology adopted be invalidated. For the purposes of this review, however, the broad divisions will be retained. It was also clear that while the perceptions found in the sources justified the chronological divisions this did not mean that the various periods were seen as being divorced from one another. Instead it was apparent that there was a strong sense of continuity of developments, and it seemed that this continuity was a deliberate construction to underline the ideology that the writers embodied. In the light of this some attention can be given to the individual periods that were discussed.

The pre-literate period, that is prior to 1652, is fairly self explanatory and coincides with that found in most South African historiography.

The second era, that of 1652 to 1870, deviates fairly markedly from that found in White South African historiography. Black writers tended to make little distinction between the various periods of administra-



tion. Instead they saw Van Riebeeck's arrival as the beginning of a period of change of traditional society that terminated with the discovery of minerals. It was only the early writers, such as Molema and Plaatje, who attempted to distinguish between the Dutch and British administrations. And then it was not so much to distinguish between administrations, but the colonists that came with these governments and the values they represented.

The third period of 1870 to 1936 in many respects was adopted for the same reasons as the preceding one. Generally little regard was taken of White political, constitutional, social and economic developments per se. Instead far more importance was attached to those facets that had a direct bearing on Black life. Furthermore there is no doubt that the legislative confirmation of their dispossession was of paramount importance. For this reason the enactment of the "Hertzog Bills" in 1936 was most often taken as the terminal phase of this era.

The fourth period from 1936 to 1960 appeared to be very short in relation to the preceding three. But it was also one of the most critical in terms of Black historical perceptions. It became clear that it was one thing to condemn the past, but without a well-considered alternative to the present based on past developments, no progress would be possible. Gradually this led to the realization that a far greater self-reliance was needed. The emergence of this realization also encouraged the idea that the perception of the past was not necessarily shared with Whites. Therefore the responses to the past and present had to take on new directions that increasingly reflected Black aspirations, rather than those of a broader community. An understanding of the past also showed that supplication made little impression on those in the position to change the status quo. It was felt that a more confrontational approach was needed. The climax of the first period of confrontation was reached with the Sharpeville shootings of March 21, 1960.



The final era, that of post-1960, had two major characteristics that distinguished it from the immediately preceding era. Firstly the violence of 1960 did not deter the advocates of confrontation. Instead those who had previously opted for constitutional and non-confrontational methods found the bases of their standpoints eroded. Secondly the schisms amongst Blacks became more and more pronounced. Essentially the factions divided into those who advocated a multiracial alliance to bring about their conception of an ideal society, and those who argued that only a national (Black) struggle could achieve the desired results. The latter concept was already clearly evident in the last decade of the foregoing age, and prior to that (in a more muted tone) in the 1930s, particularly in the writings of HIE Dhlomo. However its motivation through a reevaluation of the past became most apparent in the current era. Similarly those who advocated a multiracial front also delved into the past to show the folly of a racially-oriented approach to South African problems. It was only when it was realized that these divisions were diversionary and at times the cause of violence between Blacks that attempts were made to reinterpret the past to show that both the multiracial and nationalist interpretations were justified.

These then were the considerations that prompted the chronology used. What one must now look at is which themes were prominent during the eras that were studied. Although there was not always a direct criticism of current historiography present, it was frequently implied. Indeed as far as can be ascertained Kekana's work is the only one by a Black South African which specifically sets out to criticize a specific genre of South African historiography. The implied and occasionally explicit criticisms that were apparent in the various sources consulted will be brought to light in these concluding remarks.

The pre-literate period showed fairly divergent perceptions of the themes that directly related to the era in which they were written. Thus the attempts by Molema and others of his age to portray African societies as static and backward were increasingly rejected by modern





writers. Modern writers sought to portray a society that not only had its own dynamics but was also symbolic of solidarity amongst Blacks. This was necessary to counter the concept that until the advent of colonization Blacks were in danger of stagnating or even retrogressing into oblivion. Similarly the suggestion that the aborigines would have obliterated themselves through internecine wars unless Whites had fortuitously intervened is rejected. The need to demonstrate an early solidarity was needed to counter the interpretation of history in accordance with apartheid. The apartheid interpretation maintains that tribal animosities were and are so acute that the only way to avert genocidal conflict was and is to segregate ethnic groups from each other. Today most contemporary history writing concedes that the depiction of pre-literate society as one doomed to failure or extinction is invalid. Nevertheless there is a warning that the re-interpretation of pre-literate history should not be allowed to once again become a validation for ethnic divisions. Nor should it reflect "bitter contempt" and the "utmost sadism" for those who are being studied.

What was also apparent from rehabilitating the pre-literate past was that Blacks were no longer prepared to wear their "national dress" with shame. They wanted rather to look at the bygone age with pride. Thus they would be able to deal with the present and future with confidence, and have no doubts about their ability to use the rights which they demanded for themselves. Today's writers are, however, careful not to suggest that this is a reversion to tribalism. Promotion of a tribal identity is seen as liable to abuse by apartheid ideology. Modern writers sought values that were universally applicable irrespective of race or ethnic affiliations. Thus the icons created from the pre-literate past were treated with some circumspection.

Very prominent in the period 1652 to 1870 were the concepts of colonization, imperialism and dispossession. Early writers were content to describe the arrival of colonial powers as a positive development that served to correct the ills that the colonists claimed beset pre-literate society. Colonization was seen as being the result of





Christianity that was bound to bring light to the "Dark Continent". When discussing the early loss of land some justification could be found in what was believed to be the innate inability to Blacks to properly husband their resources. British expansionism was also initially justified on the grounds that Britain sought to establish a sound government based on high ethical standards to advance and protect Blacks from the deprecations of the deviants from western norms, the Boers. Modern writers also saw colonization as the establishment of alien rule. Where they differ from their antecedents is that they discerned entirely different motives. Britain was driven into imperial expansion by manufacturing capital. She was obliged to assert her sovereignty to secure raw materials and provide markets for her burgeoning industries. Traditional society and that which had developed during the Dutch era were considered inimical to British economic interests. Thus extant structures had to be eradicated to make way for British-based capital.

By switching the emphasis away from the Boers a notable shift in perceptions had taken place. On the one hand those who believed that race was still a dominant force in history showed that racial oppression and exploitation were not the exclusive preserve of the Afrikaner but, with some exceptions, that of most Whites. An alternative viewpoint was that race was not the driving force at all, but the competition for control of resources was the prime determinant in the shaping of social relations in society. Thus in the first case the "shade" of race had been intensified. In the second case "race" had been relegated to virtual insignificance, to be replaced by material considerations.

Overall all writers were agreed that ultimately the major impact of colonialism and imperialism was that Blacks were dispossessed of their land, but this dispossession was given a far wider interpretation by the more recent writers who contend that by removing the economic basis of society its culture was also destroyed. Many writers might have welcomed this loss of identity but they also saw a deeper implication in this development. They argued that a people without an identity lost the will to regain their birthright, their land. Thus they saw



Christianity and education based on western norms as necessary adjuncts to dispossession. This argument was extended into the present to criticize contemporary policies such as Bantu education.

Here again there was a warning to those who interpreted the colonial era on the basis that it was a "necessary evil" on the road of the evolution of African society. In terms of the perceptions of colonialism and all that went with it, it had to be recognized as a corruptive force for which no excuses could be found. In terms of contemporary history writing this criticism does not appear to have much validity. But if one places the comment in the context of establishing independent norms for society then it regains some status. Implicit in the rejection of the values imposed by colonization is that Blacks must not evaluate themselves and their past in terms of alien values. Similarly goals for the future must be based on values that do not pander to the sensibilities of those who imposed exotic values in the first place the Whites. This holds considerable implications for those who attempt to evaluate the past in terms of what they believe to be universally applicable and immutable western oriented norms, because it questions the basic assumptions that underlie criteria used in Western civilization. Nevertheless it should also be remembered that Nkosi warned that the replacement of one set of values with another was not always advantageous, particularly if the new standards had not been well considered. New values could be just as defective as those that they were supposed to replace.

The third era from 1870-1936 showed a considerable hardening of attitudes amongst all writers. Even among those who initially saw a philanthropic motive behind British intervention and expansion in the subcontinent. Those who had found mitigating factors in the earlier phases of colonization took a more jaundiced look at developments after 1870. If they found something laudable in the earlier phase, why had they changed their stance on the later era? It appears that they particularly emphasized that which they found praiseworthy in the preceding era to provide a contrasting backdrop for the scene(s) that evolved after



1870. In effect they were calling for a return to the values that they perceived to exist before 1870. The writers who condemned colonization from the outset merely saw justification for their interpretation in developments after 1870. They saw the processes of dispossession initiated by colonization confirmed by military subjugation. Early writers were still prepared to accept that the South African War was fought to establish British principles in the interior, although they were at a loss to understand why, if this was the motive for the war, Britain failed to implement its objectives.

Modern writers did not experience this quandary. They saw the war as a natural progression of earlier developments that aimed at the most effective exploitation of human and natural resources. In the light of this perception the Peace of Vereeniging, Union and subsequent discriminatory legislation that totally ignored claimed British objectives came as no surprise. Britain, at the behest of monopoly capitalism, could do nothing else but tacitly allow the legalization of dispossession to continue.

It was interesting to note that the notion of the relationship between access to land and labour coercion was not a "discovery" of the modern writers. Contemporary criticism of the land acts of 1913 and 1936 clearly showed an understanding of the causal link between land expropriation and labour coercion. This evaluation held true even for those writers who subscribed to a segregationist solution to South African problems. There is no doubt that the Natives' Land Act of 1913 was considered by all writers as a turning point in South African history. Together with the Natives' Land and Trust Act of 1936 it became the pivot around which subsequent developments evolved. A frequent allusion is made to what Tsotsi eventually came to describe as "wage slavery". The impact of the land acts was seen to effect every facet of Black life. Therefore it is clear that the frequently passing reference to these acts in South African historiography is being criticized. The criticism is aimed at the failure to realize the true significance of the acts.



The heading "Introspection and New Directions" was applied to the period 1936-1960. This title was chosen because 1936 had signalled a climactic failure. Blacks had failed in their appeals to moral principles that supposedly existed in the White community - principles that Blacks had sought to meet in order to gain acceptance in the white-dominated power structures of the land. The legislative and administrative processes that had culminated in the Hertzog Bills of 1936 had shown that the era of supplication had come to an end. But with this realization came an even more difficult awareness. If the values that had determined Black aspirations previously had proved void what was to replace them? To reject existing principles could leave them open to insinuations that they were reverting to the "barbaric" standards of pre-literate society. Alternately they could turn to some ungodly ideology like communism.

What was also noticeable was that the writers after 1936 also started to turn to leaders of the past and particularly those who had led resistance to White domination. Again there can be little doubt that this was prompted by the need to recreate a past that could be reflected on with pride - a past peopled with leaders who had had the wisdom to see that resistance to subjugation was the only alternative to dispossession. Similarly the nation-builders, like Shaka, were stripped of the opprobrium attached to them by many histories. Instead they were portrayed as people who had achieved much that could be emulated. From this, three conclusions can be drawn. Firstly armed resistance was increasingly being considered and the historical precedent for it had been established. Secondly the assumption of ethnic divisions was being rejected by showing that unity was possible as it had been attained previously. Lastly the creation of heroes was seen as necessary to a people who had been presented with an image of the past that denied them heroes. The denial of heroes was not accidental but deliberate, to reinforce the impression that Blacks were a defeated and humiliated people. While Blacks lived under this misapprehension they would not experience regret at their loss of independence. Equally little would they be inclined to emulate earlier leaders if they were led to believe that they were failures, and that therefore any attempts at resistance would be automatically doomed to failure.



Modern writers perceived this dilemma of their predecessors and thus argued that the success of colonialism depended on the ability of Christianity and western education to supplant traditional mores and values. By accepting these value-oriented systems and their bearers, the colonists, Blacks were finessed into accepting a subordinate situation. It is for this reason that many writers of the current age, particularly those concerned with "being-Black-in-the-world", argued in favour of "decolonising the mind". A mind untrammelled by externally imposed perceptions would far more readily realize the solutions to the present conditions.

Although the call to decolonise the mind has several significant implications for the writing of history, there is one in particular that should be mentioned. Frequently South African history, inasmuch as it concerns itself with Blacks, creates the picture of an amorphous and virtually mindless proletariat subject to inanimate forces. Very little attention is paid to how Blacks experienced or responded to these forces, whether individually or collectively. Equally little attention is paid to what can be termed "intellectual imperialism" and the reaction to it. There is little attempt to show human beings with human reactions to their condition and how these reactions influenced their perceptions of the past.

The last period, after 1960, was in many respects a continuation and crystallization of trends that had developed in the foregoing era. Again there was a concern with the immediate, although this was seen as part of a continuing pattern of developments. What made this era particularly significant was that two definite ideological and theoretical directions emerged. These two directions could be classified under what are today known as the "progressive" and "black consciousness" movements. While it can be argued that their vision of the past is coloured by their ideology, their perspectives did make it clear that Black perceptions of the South African past are not uniform. There were definitely varying emphases noticeable as well as differing areas of concern, which in turn have implications for how the "shades" are viewed and represented.





Due to these divergencies one can agree with Smith that there should be no "Black school" of history. Implicit in the refusal to allow for such a "Black school" is that South African history writing can be based on universal philosophical and theoretical foundations to form a single "school". Until South African history writing recognises that there is such a thing as the "Black experience", and accommodates it, this will not happen. Many of the writers made it abundantly clear that being-Black gave a particular complexion to the past. In addition they argue that this experience is not expressed in most South African history. Perhaps, then, one could say that South African history, to be truly reflective of the entirety of the South African past, must include all perspectives. But if this is taken to mean that a complete history of South Africa should merely be a compilation of perspectives informed by different theoretical foundations then one would again be looking at South Africa through lenses formulated according to a "pigeonhole philosophy". Instead one hopes that the time will come when South African history writing will be approached synergistically, in the knowledge that the themes of this history will have a number of facets that refract the vision(s) into them in different ways, but nevertheless are still part of a greater whole.

On the question of sources for this type of study it is hoped that an adequate case has been made for the inclusion of many of the works used, particularly the creative writing. One feels that although these works have not been based on empirically verifiable facts, they are a strong indication of the "historical baggage" that Blacks have brought with them into today's world. This sense of the past undoubtedly does much to influence responses to the present. Therefore it was felt important to include this category of works because they add an important dimension to a more comprehensive understanding of the past, as an experienced past. As previously said, humans and their reactions to given situations form an integral part of history writing.

This dissertation set out to show that Blacks had an own perception of South African history that contradicted many conventional interpretations. It also aimed to show that these perceptions changed according





to the time in which they were conceived. A further aim was to show that the understanding of Black perceptions of South African history through sources other than "scientific history" was not only possible but also necessary. In fact one could go so far as to say that the literary expression of the perceived past was at times more vivid and insightful than many of the attempts at a "factual", albeit ideologically-biased, rendition of the past.

The scope of an historical work is determined by the nature and extent of the questions that are asked of the past, which in turn are largely determined by the theoretical and philosophical framework within which the questioner operates. With the conflicting and often contradictory perceptions that have become apparent in this dissertation it appears that the questions thus far phrased by historians were open to criticism on two points. Firstly some of the questions that should have been asked were not asked. Secondly the way the questions were phrased distorted the answers to meet subjective criteria. While none of the writers consulted specifically set out criteria for the wording of these questions or the direction they should take, it is clear that many of the comments made suggest avenues to be taken. In many instances the comments could be rephrased as questions that would broaden and deepen historical insight. South African history writing will have to ask itself whether it has given a proper account of the nuances the shades of the South African historical reality. It is hoped that this dissertation has contributed towards the search for answers to the latter query.





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SUMMARY

South African history writing is influenced by the racial, class and ideological complexities of South African society. These complexities lead to two basic assumptions in the study of South African history writing. Firstly that Blacks have produced no history of their own or secondly that race is not a criterion to define a school of history. The first assumption arises amongst historiographers who only study history written according to "scientific" criteria. Technically this argument is correct, but limits the scope of enquiry for the historian as he will not enquire into those viewpoints raised in the sources consulted for this dissertation.

The second assumption argues that to define a "Black school" heightens racial divisions in South Africa. The idea of a "Black school" is also dismissed because it detracts from a proper understanding South African society based on a class analysis. Doctrinaire adherence to a class analysis has deprived South African historiography of the insights of Blacks who perceive the past in terms of their being-Black.

To answer these objections sources that were studied would not normally have been considered, namely literary works and those that dealt with the status of Blacks within in society. Political documents were studied, not for what they said, but for how and why they said it.

There was a distinct correlation noticeable between the articulation of a perception and the era in which it developed. Certain themes that were noticeable in all the eras that were considered, as well as amongst all the generations of writers that were studied. Preeminent was the question of land dispossession. The question of landownership was intertwined with a number of other themes, but remained the most prominent theme. Other identifiable themes were those that related to different kinds of dispossession. The latter concepts dealt with the loss of a cultural, ethical, philosophical, economic, political and social heritage. It was here that the most marked contrast was notice-





able between the early and modern writers. Early writers were conditionally optimistic about the changes wrought in society by colonization.

Modern writers addressed the same questions but were vociferous in their condemnation of what had happened in the past. Their perceptions developed at a time when the alienation between Black and White had intensified. Modern writers discerned a deliberate pattern in historical developments intended to relegate Blacks to the position of an exploitable mass irrespective of whether this was by economic or other methods. There was a noticeable correlation between perception and ideology.

Irrespective of the era in which the perception developed all writers showed that they were not concerned with the past for its own sake, but indicated that they were trying to understand the present in terms of the past. Thus the historian attempting to interpret the South African past should remember that Blacks also have a number of questions to put to the past that might give different answers to those expected.



### OPSOMMING

Suid-Afrikaanse geskiedskrywing word beïnvloed deur die rasse, klasse en ideologiese kompleksiteite van die Suid-Afrikaanse samelewing. Hierdie kompleksiteite het twee basiese aannames tot gevolg by die studie van Suid-Afrikaanse geskiedskrywing. Eerstens het Swartes tot nou toe geen geskiedenis geskep nie, tweedens dat ras nie 'n kriterium is waarvolgens 'n geskiedenis skool gedefinieer kan word nie. Die eerste aanname ontstaan onder historiograwe wat slegs geskiedenis bestudeer wat volgens "wetenskaplike" kriteria geskryf word. Streng gesproke is hierdie argument korrek, maar dit beperk die terrein van ondersoek vir die historikus want hy sal nie vanselfsprekend let op die gesigspunte wat na vore gekom het gedurende die verloop van hierdie verhandeling.

Die tweede aanname lui dat die aanvaarding van 'n "Swart skool" van geskiedskrywing sou bydra tot rasse-spanninge in Suid-Afrika. Die begrip "Swart skool" word ook verwerp omdat dit afbreuk sou doen aan 'n volledige begrip van die Suid-Afrikaanse samelewing gebaseer op 'n klasse analise. Die doktrinêre navolging van 'n klasse analise het die Suid-Afrikaanse geskiedskrywing ontnem van die insigte van Swartes wat die verlede sien op grond van "Swart-wees".

Daar was 'n duidelike wisselwerking tussen die daarstel van 'n persepsie van die verlede en die era waarbinne dit ontwikkel het. Sekere temas was bespeurbaar in al die tydperke wat aandag geniet het, asook onder opeen volgende geslagte Swart skrywers. Die onteiening van grond het voorrang geniet. Die grondbesit vraagstuk is vervleg met ander temas, maar bly primêr. Ander identifiseerbare temas het ook saamgehang met onteiening of verlies van 'n kulturele, etiese, filosofiese, ekonomiese, politieke en sosiale erfenis. Dit is by hierdie aspekte dat die onderskeid tussen vroeë en moderne skrywers merkbaar was. Vroeë skrywers was tot 'n mate optimisties oor die veranderings in die samelewing wat kolonisasie te weë gebring het.



Moderne skrywers het dieselfde vrae aangespreek maar was uitgesproke in hulle veroordeeling van wat in die verlede gebeur het. Hulle persepsie het ontwikkel in 'n tyd waar die vervreemding tussen Swart en Wit verskerp het. Moderne skrywers het 'n opsetlike patroon in die historiese ontwikkeling gesien wat daarop gemik was om Swartes in die posisie van uitbuitbare massa te plaas, ongeag of hierdie posisie deur ekonomiese of ander metodes bereik is. Daar was 'n duidelike samehang tussen persepsie en ideologie.

Ongeag die era waarin die persepsie ontwikkel het, het alle skrywers getoon dat hulle nie in die verlede op sigself belang gestel het nie, maar hulle het getoon dat hulle poog om die hede in terme van die verlede te verstaan. Dus moet die historikus wat poog om die Suid-Afrikaanse verlede te vertolk in gedagte hou dat Swartes ook 'n aantal vrae aan die verlede het wat ander antwoorde sal oplewer as wat tans verstrek word.