



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.¹ 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."² Modisane's comments, and the thoughts of those who follow his

¹ JK Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, p. 139 and pp. 182-183.

² 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.³

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.⁴ 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."⁵ There were those, however, particularly in the wake of Sharpeville, who took the "often soul-mutilating road to exile",⁶ 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."⁷ The

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.⁸ 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.⁹ 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.¹⁰ 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."¹¹ 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.¹² 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."¹³ The psychological trauma of violence was needed to jolt Whites out of their inertia and refusal to accommodate Blacks.

⁸ E Mphahlele, The African Image, p. 53.

⁹ B Modisane, Blame Me On History, p. 140.

¹⁰ B Modisane, Blame Me On History, p. 165.

¹¹ B Modisane, Blame Me On History, pp. 125-126.

¹² B Modisane, Blame Me On History, pp. 231-232.

¹³ 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.¹⁴ 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."¹⁵ 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.¹⁶ 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.¹⁷

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.¹⁸ This act was conducted by the armed wing of the ANC, Umkhonto we Sizwe. The founding of Umkhonto and a policy of

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 1961,¹⁹ although the exiled ANC leadership only openly recognized its relationship with the armed wing in 1963.²⁰ 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.²¹

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.²² 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.²³

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.²⁴ It

-
- 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.²⁵ 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.²⁶ 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.²⁷ 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.²⁸ 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-

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.²⁹ 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."³⁰ 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

²⁹ M Pheko, Apartheid..., p. 101.

³⁰ JK Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, p. 54.



Africans."³¹

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."³² 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."³³ 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."³⁴ 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.³⁵

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

³¹ JK Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, pp. 120-121.

³² M Pheko, Apartheid..., p. 101.

³³ ANC, ANC Speaks..., p. 18.

³⁴ O Tambo, "The Building of a Nation", in ANC, ANC Speaks..., p. 50.

³⁵ BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. 152-153.



National Action Council.³⁶ 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.³⁷

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.³⁸ 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.³⁹

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-

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.⁴⁰ 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.⁴¹ 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.⁴²

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.⁴³

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-

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.⁴⁴ 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."⁴⁵

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.⁴⁶ 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.⁴⁷

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

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."⁴⁸ 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."⁴⁹ Through moral pressures and the legislated enculturation Shepstone sought "basically to bolster up white supremacy."⁵⁰ 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."⁵¹ What makes these comments interesting is that they are a clear indication

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."⁵² 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.⁵³

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

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.⁵⁴

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?⁵⁵ Against this perceptual background it is not surprising that the ANC described reserves as "glorified concentration camps",⁵⁶ 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."⁵⁷ 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.⁵⁸ Similar viewpoints are manifested by Ngubo who also

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.⁵⁹ 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.⁶⁰ 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".⁶¹ 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-

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."⁶² 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.⁶³ At the same time it was held that Black

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.⁶⁴ 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.⁶⁵ 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.⁶⁶

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

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."⁶⁷ 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.⁶⁸

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 1886-1924.⁶⁹ 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.⁷⁰

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.⁷¹ 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

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."⁷² 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".⁷³

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.⁷⁴

When children are subjected to the "engineering of human values" and

⁷² P Ntantala, "The Widows of the Reserves", in Africa South, Vol 2, #3, April-June 1958, p. 9.

⁷³ P Ntantala, "African Tragedy", in Africa South, Vol 1, #3, April-June 1957, pp. 66-67.

⁷⁴ 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.⁷⁵

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."⁷⁶ 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."⁷⁷ Chiefs had been finessed into the position where they had to manipulate their subjects in order to retain their own privilege.⁷⁸ 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-

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."⁷⁹ 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."⁸⁰ 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."⁸¹ 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.⁸² 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.⁸³ 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."⁸⁴ Ultimately Mkele says that most discussion on

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".⁸⁷ 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

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.⁸⁸ 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.⁸⁹

Until 1948 trades union that accepted Blacks excluded them from leadership for a variety of reasons.⁹⁰ Alternately White trades union developed links with Black counterparts and so formed parallel unions.⁹¹ 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

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'."⁹²

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.⁹³ 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.⁹⁴ Labour legislation affecting Blacks was formulated in terms of the Botha Commission report of 1951.⁹⁵ This Commission was likened to Dr Ley's coordination of trades union in Germany in the Hitler era.⁹⁶

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

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.⁹⁷

Ironically the foundation of FOSATU and CUSA was enabled by governmental action, namely the Wiehahn Commission appointed in 1977 and which reported in 1979.⁹⁸ 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."⁹⁹ Ncube links the Wiehahn Report and the resultant enabling legislation for non-racial unions as proof of reform.¹⁰⁰ 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.¹⁰¹

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

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."¹⁰² 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.¹⁰³ 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".¹⁰⁴ 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.¹⁰⁵ Manganyi considers the strikes as important because they were an "indication of the burgeoning tension-creating potential of blacks."¹⁰⁶ 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."¹⁰⁷ 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

-
- 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).¹⁰⁸

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).¹⁰⁹ 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-

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."¹¹⁰

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

¹¹⁰ 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."¹¹¹ 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.¹¹²

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.¹¹³ 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.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., p. 33.

¹¹² P Ntantala, "The Abyss of Bantu Education", in Africa South, Vol 4, #2, January-March 1960, p. 42.

¹¹³ B Modisane, Blame Me On History, p. 309.

¹¹⁴ 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.¹¹⁵

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"?¹¹⁶ 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.¹¹⁷ 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.¹¹⁸ 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

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.¹¹⁹

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.¹²⁰ 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.¹²¹

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.¹²²

Thus Bantu education was geared to enforce apartheid, and was being peddled by white politicians as just the kind of system

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.¹²³

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.¹²⁴

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

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."¹²⁵

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.¹²⁶ 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."¹²⁷

Part of the motivation for launching SASO smacked of the PAC's rejection of the participation of non-Africans in the Congress of the

¹²⁵ J Sikakane, A Window on Soweto, p. 77.

¹²⁶ 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.

¹²⁷ 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.¹²⁸ 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",¹²⁹ 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.¹³⁰ Magubane believed that SASO remained loyal to the Congress Alliance slogan of "Unity of all the oppressed classes, unity first."¹³¹ 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."¹³² As will become apparent in the next few paragraphs this was a complete about face for the ANC.

-
- 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."¹³³ 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."¹³⁴ For this particular aspect of his exposition Biko is drawing on the work of Fanon.¹³⁵ 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'".¹³⁶ 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'

-
- 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." ¹³⁷ Only subsequently did the government realize its error but then acted cautiously.¹³⁸ 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.¹³⁹

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.¹⁴⁰ 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.¹⁴¹

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."¹⁴² 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.¹⁴³ This consideration aside, Motlhabi argued that Black Con-

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.¹⁴⁴

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,¹⁴⁵ 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.¹⁴⁶

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.¹⁴⁷ 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".¹⁴⁸ 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

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.¹⁴⁹

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.¹⁵⁰

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.¹⁵¹ 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.¹⁵² It appears therefore

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."¹⁵³

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,¹⁵⁴ 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."¹⁵⁵ The organisation further commented that this was "the price that they were paying for fighting a racist, oppressive and exploitative regime".¹⁵⁶ Magubane also claimed that the refugees from Soweto were flocking to ANC training bases to learn the skill for armed resistance.¹⁵⁷

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.¹⁵⁸

-
- 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.¹⁵⁹ 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.¹⁶⁰ 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.¹⁶¹ 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-

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.