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Reflections on
the Challenges
Confronting
Post-Apartheid
South Africa

by

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Reflections on the Challenges Confronting the Post Apartheid South Africa.

South Africa's salutary transformation is the regions most stirring event since post-colonial surge to independence thirty years ago. Not only has apartheid been revoked, but President Nelson Mandela has shown how to turn bitter adversaries into political allies, providing a model for African states polarized by ethnic rivalries. And if Pretoria really opens its own frontiers to freer trade, it could jump-start stalled economies else-where. (Editorial: *New York Times*, 07/03/1994).

By almost any standard, Mr. de Klerk has landed firmly on his feet. He is the best-paid member of the new Government; counting his pension as the former President, he earns \$245,000 to Mr. Mandela's \$218,000. He has state residences here and in Pretoria, when Parliament is not in session. Business leaders and foreign dignitaries still drop by, soliciting his views on how the Government is doing. (Bill Keller, *New York Times*, 07/03/1994).

These two quotations from a recent editorial in the *New York Times* welcoming the change in South Africa and discussing how it might help the African continent, now mired in despair and hopelessness; and the story by Keller on how de Klerk is enjoying the fruits of change whilst at the same time bidding his time and hoping to regain power in the next elections illustrate the paradox of recent changes in South Africa.

The years 1989 to 1991 experience some earth shaking events in the global geo-political power equation. The world witnessed the breaching of the Berlin Wall in November 1989. The Communist regimes in Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, East

Germany, Bulgaria, and Romania collapsed. Dubcek and Havel, former prisoners of the communist regime, were, together welcomed by huge crowds; whilst in Romania, the huddled bodies of the Ceaucescus lay in a snowy courtyard; in Tianamen Square screams and tracer bullets broke the night's silence. All these were symptoms of the extraordinary drama that welcomed the last decade of the millennium.

By contrast, the events that led to the collapse of apartheid in South Africa were disconcerting, even disappointing to some people. Apartheid, after bitter struggles, collapsed in a peculiarly quiet fashion. No grand, bold symbols of the old order marked its downfall. This makes it all the more easy for some people to underestimate what has happened (cf. Editorial *New Statesman & Society* 03/09/90). Who could have imagined in February 1990, that the release of Mr. Mandela from life imprisonment, heralded at the same time the beginning of the end of white domination, that its architects had vowed would last forever? Or that De Klerk, instead of being reduced to irrelevancy like Ian Smith in Zimbabwe, would emerge as one of the vice presidents in a 'new South Africa'? And that Buthelezi, whose movement has been embroiled in the savage carnage of the last ten years, would end up as a cabinet member of the Government of National Unity (GNU)? And, indeed, that the white chief of the army and the minister of Finance would retain their jobs? All this was part of the formula crafted under the power-sharing scheme as a five-year expedient to heal the bitter wounds of apartheid and reassure the whites that they have a future in a democratic South Africa.

It was a remarkable achievement when the ANC and the NP, bitter antagonists for decades, sought, and in the end found common ground whereby the white minority through power sharing found a face-saving way to negotiate its surrender of power. It is still possible for many people to think of what happened in South Africa on May 10 as a temporal and reversible change. In the tedious negotiations that seemed to go on endlessly South Africans defied the logic of their past, and broke all the rules of political theory, to forge a powerful spirit of unity from a shattered nation.

One cannot help but ponder history's ironies: of how we fight battles, and how, even if we win, things do not go the way we had hoped. That is, we do not get all that we fought for. We are, indeed, reminded once again of Marx's words who wrote in *The Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* that:

Men make their history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past (Marx, 1972: 120).

The crucial question now is: Will the current paradox become a major contradiction in the months and years ahead? Indeed, a question can be asked: What exactly happened on May 10, when Mr. Nelson Mandela assumed the Presidency of South Africa, following his release from twenty-seven years in prison in 1990? How long will it take for the change from white minority rule to a democratic society, to fulfil the hopes aroused among the popular masses? Does the fact that Mr. de Klerk, (whose minority regime was in power in South Africa for more than forty years, and perpetrated

the heinous crimes of apartheid), is now one of the Vice Presidents enjoying a lucrative retirement, mean that there has been no change? Does it mean as some have already concluded that the ANC which heads the Government of National Unity (GNU) has made compromises that are tantamount to a 'sell-out'? Even though Mr. Mandela has been in power just a hundred days (as I write this paper), it is natural that these questions be asked, and indeed are being asked.

The time separating the formal end of apartheid and the emergence of a democratic society in South Africa is simply too short for any judgement to be made. On April 9, 1863 Marx wrote a letter to Engels in which he said among other things that: "In such great developments twenty years are but as one day . . . and then may come days which are the concentrated essence of twenty years." May 10, 1994 did concentrate our minds!

Be that as it may, the transfer of power to the majority in South Africa was a major development in a century characterized by momentous developments. The change has raised many questions. In this paper no definitive judgement will be made about the achievements or lack thereof by the GNU headed by the African National Congress. What I plan to do is to look at the legacy the GNU inherited from almost a hundred years of white minority rule, to try to speculate - from the mess that white rule created - on the basis of programs embodied in the ANC's *Reconstruction and Development*

Program. I will attempt to see how the GNU is trying to extricate the country from the sad legacy of white minority rule dating back to 1910.

The Historical Context:

It is impossible to understand the changes South Africa is going through without some reference to the history of how white minority rule was established which has shaped present political structures and economic patterns. Any assessment of South Africa's predicament, and even more so any effort to define ways out of it, must acknowledge the weight of history. The last decade of the twentieth century in South Africa is a decade of many anniversaries. A brief resume of some of the key events and dates is warranted. It enables us to put in perspective the nature of the changes now taking place in South Africa.

The last quarter of the nineteenth century marked the climax of imperialism. It opened symbolically with the proclamation of Queen Victoria as the Empress of India (1876) and ended with the South African War. Indeed, the imperial drama was played out in Africa. In 1884 the continent was carved up and distributed among the European powers.

The major development in late nineteenth-century South Africa includes the discovery of gold in Transvaal in 1886. In October 1899, the Anglo-Boer War began and ended on May 31, 1902, when the Boers signed the final surrender terms at Vereeniging. In the meantime, on the 24th of March 1902, Cecil John Rhodes, who had

made a fortune from the mineral wealth of South Africa and had two countries of southern Africa named in his honor, died. In 1904, Paul Kruger, the erstwhile President of the Transvaal Republic, where gold had been found in 1886 and the ownership of which lay behind the Boer War, died in exile in Switzerland. In 1905, the *South African Native Affairs Commission (SANAC)* that had been appointed by Lord Milner in 1903, and whose recommendation most scholars today recognize as having laid the blue-print, not only for the policies of segregation from 1910 to 1948 but also for those of apartheid from 1948 to 1990, published its results. In 1905 the Bambatha Rebellion occurred; it marked the final phase of armed resistance by African chiefdoms and kingdoms. From now on the African people would constitute themselves into congresses to wage the political forms of struggles. In 1909, the South Africa Act was passed by the British Parliament without any amendments. The South Africa Act itself had been drafted by the National Convention, made up of white males from the four settler colonies without any African in-put. Westminster retained the fateful Article 8 that Lord Milner had inserted to the Vereeniging Treaty of 1903. The *after clause*, as Article 8 was called, simply said that 'There was to be no franchise to the natives until *after* the introduction of self-government to the two former Boer republics of the Orange Free State and the Transvaal' that, after the war, had become British colonies. When in 1906-1907 self-government was introduced to the OFS and the TV, because of Article 8 at Vereeniging the color-bar was entrenched into the constitutions of the former Dutch republics. When

the Union constitution was being negotiated in 1909, Article 8 would be cited to explain why Britain could not do anything to stop the color-bar from the Union constitution. Article 8, in the words of George Barnes, 'set the seal of racial inferiority upon the masses of the people of South Africa' (House of Commons debate, 19 Aug. 1909; c. 1555). It would also lead to one of the great myths in imperial historiography: that when the British Liberal government in 1906 granted self-government to the Transvaal, it was moved by genuine magnanimity towards the vanquished Boers.

The Union of South Africa was proclaimed an 'independent' White Dominion in the British Empire on 31 May 1910, the seventh anniversary of the signing of the *Treaty of Vereeniging*. The African people paid a high political price when Britain decided to make South Africa an exclusive 'white dominion'. The Union of South Africa as it was constituted in 1910, was described by Lord Olivier as a slave state. The formation of the ANC in 1912 was an African response to one of the most unconscionable political betrayals of a people by a colonial power that prided itself as a paragon of virtue and mother of parliamentary democracy.

It is important to recall these events because historical situations and conjunctions arise which seem similar to others that have gone before them. The lessons of 1909 were very much in the minds of those who met at what we may call the second South Africa Convention and drafted the second South Africa Act of 1994. They worked hard to avoid the mistakes of 1909. As I have already stated, because of the brief time in

which the GNU has been in power in South Africa, it would be unfair and highly presumptuous for me to make any assessment either about the historic compromise that was made to establish the GNU or to accuse the ANC of 'abandoning' its radical policies. Only time will tell.

The study of history, at least of how the injustices of segregation and apartheid came into being, is imperative: it gives me the data that makes me appreciate some of the problems which face the GNU. Statesmanship, it has been said, is a practical science, the foundation of which is a knowledge of the problems to be dealt with, and history helps to give us a true comprehension of the tasks to be dealt with by the GNU. It reveals to us how the problems to be dealt with came about in the first place. By revealing the structures that have determined the problems the GNU is faced with, history may also provide clues of how to tackle them. There is wisdom in the expression: if you do not know where you are going, any path will take you there.

What are some of the problems that the GNU is faced with? And how were they caused? A study of the debates concerning the first South Africa Act is informative. There is no part of that Act which the Imperial Parliament debated and pondered about more deeply than the clauses relating to the franchise question. More words were spoken on the aspect of the Bill restricting the franchise to men of 'European descent' than on any other phrase. Keir Hardie warned British parliamentarians that they 'should not assent to the setting up of the doctrine that because of a man's misfortune in having

been born with a colored skin he is to be barred the possibility of ever rising to the position of trust' (House of Commons 19 Aug. 1905, 9, c. 1575).

The debate was long, legalistic, tedious and often rancorous. It remained for Lord Balfour in his intervention to state the true nature of the problem the British Parliamentarians faced in deciding the franchise question in South Africa. Therefore, what Balfour said deserves quotation at some length because it constitutes the foundation of South Africa's political problem that the second South Africa Convention had to solve. Balfour, inadvertently, also touched on the problems which have plagued the world since the voyages of so-called discovery launched by Christopher Columbus and Vasco da Gama some five hundred years ago.

Before I discuss what Balfour said, let me remind you of what Adam Smith said about the world created by Columbus and Da Gama. In his: *The Wealth of Nations*, first published in 1776, he said in: Bk. IV, Ch.VII, Pt. III; 141):

The discovery of America, and that of a passage to the East Indies by the Cape of Good Hope, are the two greatest and most important events recorded in the history of mankind. Their consequences have already been very great: but, in the short period of between two to three centuries which have elapsed since these discoveries were made, it is impossible that the whole extent of their consequences can have been seen. What benefits, or what misfortunes to mankind may hereafter result from those great events, no human wisdom can foresee. By uniting, in some measure, the most distant parts of the world, by enabling them to relieve one another's wants, to increase one another's enjoyments, and to encourage one another's industry, their general tendency would seem to be beneficial. *To the natives, however, both of the East and West Indies, all the commercial benefits which can have resulted from those events have been sunk and lost in the dreadful misfortunes which they have occasioned. . . At the*

particular time when these discoveries were made, the superiority of force happened to so great on the side of the Europeans, that they were enabled to commit with impunity every sort of injustice in those remote countries. Hereafter, perhaps, the natives of those countries may grow stronger, or those of Europe may grow weaker, and the inhabitants of all different quarters of the world may arrive at the equality of courage and force which, by inspiring mutual fear, can alone overawe the injustice of independent nations into some respect for the rights of one another (emphasis added).

In almost one hundred years South Africa has been a metaphor - a microcosm of the injustices of the last five hundred years. That is why the struggle against *apartheid* became an international symbol of human solidarity. According to Nixon (1994: 1); no other post-World War II struggle for decolonization was so fully globalized; no other magnetized so many people across such various national divides, or imbued them with such a resilient sense of common cause.

This was the abiding irony of apartheid; an ideology dedicated to the sundering of communities set in motion vast transnational processes of incorporation - the divestment campaign, and the boycotts of culture, sports, trade, oil, and military hardware. Shared opposition to apartheid played, moreover, an indispensable role in binding unstable international organizations like the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity, and the Non-Aligned Movement; at times it almost served as their only *raison d'etre*.

That is why the South Africa elections were watched by monitors from many countries. And when Mr. Nelson Mandela was inaugurated as the first President of a democratic South Africa, representatives from some eighty countries attended, including President Fidel Castro of Cuba and Yasir Arafat of the PLO. The ceremony itself was as symbolic as it was moving. Beneath the colonial structures that were designed by Sir

Herbert Baker, an architect that Rhodes had sent to study Greek monumental architecture in Athens, Paestum and Agrigento,¹ Nelson Mandela took the oath of office to the singing of the ANC anthem: *Nkosi sikeleli Africa* (God Bless Africa). It was an extraordinary sight. Helicopters flew overhead trailing the new flag, and fighter planes painted the sky in the flag's six colors. 'Never, never and never again,' declared President Mandela, 'shall it be that this beautiful land will again experience the oppression of one by the other'.

To put in perspective what Lord Balfour said, it is important for me to point out that from about 1870, those in the British Colonial Office who were charged with formulating 'native policy' in South Africa, shared certain fundamental ideas about those they described as 'natives'² and the 'white' branch of humanity. Because of the military superiority that Adam Smith referred to, they believed in the inherent superiority of the white races. Among those who were actively involved in shaping British policy to the

¹ Baker had also designed Government houses in Nairobi and had been joint architect with Lutyens of New Delhi. Much of his experience found exuberant expression in the design of Rhodes House at Oxford (cf. Symonds 1986: 172).

² Sartre (1955:214-5) has explained what it means to be called a 'native' in a colonial situation: "It is self evident that man, under these conditions is a supra-natural being; what we can call Nature is the sum-total of that which exists without having the right to do so./ For the sacrosanct, the oppressed are part of nature. They are not to command. In other societies perhaps, the fact of a slave's being born with the *demus* also conferred a sacred character upon him, that of being born to serve, that of being the man of divine duty in relation to a man of divine term 'native', used to designate the inhabitants of a colonized country./ The banker, the manufacturer, even the professor in the home country, are not natives of any country; they are not natives at all. The oppressed person, on the other hand, feels himself to be a native; each even in his life repeats to him that he has no right to exist . . . He will work in order to live, and to say that the ownership of the fruits of his labour are stolen from him is an understatement. Even the meaning of his work is stolen from him, since he does not have feelings of solidarity with the society of which he produces.

defeated Boers was a group of young men, mostly from Oxford, who were part of what is called Milner's Kindergarten.

The Kindergarten, mostly bachelors, and living in closely together in or around the 'Moot House' built for them by Herbert Baker, became a laboratory for the working out of the ideas they had absorbed at Oxford, and they held meetings modelled on those of New College Essay Society (Symonds 1986: 64).

From their books, articles and letters one learns a great deal about their prejudices. In 1903 John Buchan (1903: 290), who had arrived in South Africa as Lord Milner's Private Secretary, wrote an important book, *The African Colony; Studies In Reconstruction*. In the book one finds the outlines of what would be the future *native policy* of the Union. He talked about the grave difficulty 'which must attend the existence of subject races'. He also expressed his belief that:

Between the most ignorant white man and the black man there is fixed . . . an impassable gulf, not of color but of mind. The native is often quick of understanding, industrious, curiously logical, but he lives and moves in a mental world incredibly distant from ours. The medium of his thought, . . . is so unique that the results are out of all in relation to ourselves. Mentally he is as crude and naive as a child, with a child's curiosity and ingenuity, and a child's practical inconsequence. Morally he has none of the traditions of self-discipline and order, which are implicit, though often in a degraded form, in white people. In a word, he cannot be depended upon as an individual save under fairly rigid vigilant restraint; and in the mass he forms an unknown quantity, compared with which a Paris mob is a Quaker meeting. With all his merits, this instability of character and intellectual childishness make him politically far more impossible than even the lowest class of Europeans. *High property or educational qualifications for the franchise, or any other expedients of Europe, are logically out of place, though they were raised to the possession of a fortune and a university degree; for the mind is still there, unaltered, though it may be superficially ornamented. Give the native the full*

franchise, argues one class of observer, and he will in time show himself worthy of it, for in itself it is an education. On strictly logical view it would be as logical as reasonable to put a child on a steam-engine as a driver, trusting that the responsibility of his position would be in itself an education and would teach him the necessary art.

Another member of the Kindergarten is Lionel Curtis of New College Oxford; he had taken part in the Boer War, and later became Town Clerk of Johannesburg on the basis of a letter of introduction from the Chairman of the London County Council, with which he had briefly served. In a diary in 1901, Curtis noted that 'it would be a blessed thing if the negro, like the Red Indian, tended to die out before us'. And at a farewell reception given to him by the Johannesburg Municipal Council in 1906, he said that its most important department was that of Asiatic Affairs 'which would keep this a white man's country and save it from the fate of Mauritius and Jamaica'. John Dove in 1907 wrote that mixing the races was a deadly danger. 'The almost brutal contempt and dislike of most white men for the kaffir is said to be a healthy sign. It marks the determination of the white South African not to allow his race to become mongrel. It is at all better than the friendliness which you find in the Portuguese Territories' (quoted by Symonds 1986: 76).

These racist articulations, let us remember, were not made, to use Howard Zinn's felicitous phrase, 'by feudal barons', but by some of the finest brains that Oxford had produced. To study what these learned scholars wrote and said is important; it provides us with an answer to one of the most baffling questions in the sociological theory; viz.

how the inferiority of the African was clearly more of a socially constructed phenomenon than a biological reality. It was not even a given human consciousness, but one that must be summoned and exploited for political and socio-economic purposes. Even more, they provide an essential background to Lord Balfour's intervention in the House of Commons debate on the franchise question. Balfour had not only read, but he echoed many sentiments of these learned scholars. And even worse, no one in the British Parliament stood up to challenge what he said. That in itself says a lot. The intervention itself is lengthy but must be given in full because it sums up all the views and sentiments of many writers from Britain who had visited South Africa, and had warned about the dangers of extending the franchise to the so-called *natives*, going back to the 1870's. If the South African colonies were to join the white commonwealth and become 'a white man's country' like Australia, Canada and New Zealand, Chamberlain, Lord Milner, J.A. Froude, Anthony Trollope and Lord Bryce, among others, were dead-set against extending the franchise to the 'natives'.

Thus for Balfour, in any discussion of the "native problem" in South Africa it was necessary, he said:

. . . to recall to the House the obvious facts that in our natural doubts and misgivings in regards to the native question we must not forget even the broad aspects of it as relating to the future policy of South Africa. . . It is true - it is painfully true - that the relations of the races of European descent and the dark races of Africa, whether the members of that race are found to be in their original home or whether they are found to be in the islands of the West Indies or in the Southern states of America, it is only too painfully true that the problem at present is one of the most

extraordinary difficulty and complexity, that it is entirely novel in history, that there is no parallel to it in the memory of mankind, and that, so far as my knowledge goes, none of those who have studied in any detached spirit the particular shape which that problem takes in the United States or in South Africa, or indeed in Africa generally, have arrived at any solution which we can look at as thoroughly conclusive and satisfactory or as likely to dominate the future development of this problem as time goes on.

It was in South Africa, he went on, that the problem of the status of indigenous peoples reached its difficulty and complexity. In other areas of the world where white races - races of European descent - have been "*brought into contact with races of a far lower stage of culture at other times*, with the Red Indians of North America, with the natives of Australia, and with the Maoris of New Zealand," the natives numerically constitute only a very small number. And echoing Pearson and other Social Darwinists he boasted:

The Red Indians are gradually dying out. The Australian Aborigines are even more clearly predestined to early extinction.³ *But with the black races of Africa and those same races transported to America, for the first time we have the problem of races as vigorous in constitution, as capable of increasing in number, in contact with white civilization.* For the first time, that problem has to be dealt with by peoples determinedly attached to all the constitutional traditions of liberty and freedom. That problem is

³ The same issue was raised by Benjamin Kidd, an arch imperialist. 'In any forecast of the future of our civilization', he said, 'one of the most important of the questions presenting themselves for consideration, is that of the future relationship of the European peoples to what are called the lower races'. It was a question that could not be ignored, because it was both inevitable and right that European nations should want to exploit Africa's resources. The cynical solution to the 'native question', according to Porter, was extinction, naturally rather than forcibly, in the face of superior civilization. To a great extent it had happened in Australia and North America, and Sir Charles Dilke regarded it as 'not only a law of nature, but a blessing to mankind'. But whatever the situation in America and the Pacific, for Africa this kind of 'final solution' was out of the question. African Negroes did not die off in the same way as Amerindians and aborigines; they were, said Mary Kingsley, 'a greatest world race - a race not passing off the stage of human affairs, but one that has an immense amount of history before it.' They would proliferate, and the white men would have to work with them and through them. The question was how? (Quoted in Porter 1968: 50).

new. It is coming before the brethren in the United States in a form which they, no doubt for solid reasons, made unnecessarily embarrassing, since the American Constitution started with a very crude *a priori* statement of the equality of mankind and a brutal application of the most rigid principles of slavery. From that unhappy contradiction, it has not so far been possible for the United States to extricate themselves. As soon as they abolished one-half of the contradiction, as soon as they got rid of slavery, they were face to face with the immutable principles of their Constitution, which laid down, in true eighteenth century language, that all men were equal. *I do not believe that any man can approach this question wisely who thinks that all men are equal in that sense. All men are, from some points of view, equal; but to suppose that the races of Africa are in any sense equals of men of European descent, so far as government, as society, as the higher interests of civilization are concerned, is really . . . an absurdity which every man who looks at this most difficult problem must put out of his mind if he is to solve the problem at all.*

Like a good liberal, Balfour then talked of the wrongs which the natives of South Africa have suffered at "our hands":

I am the last person to defend the injuries, and, in some cases, I fear, the atrocities which in many parts of the world the stronger race has inflicted upon the weaker. . . The injuries, indeed, have been great; but have the benefits been small? . . . If the races of Europe have really conquered, by centuries of difficulty and travail, great rights and privileges for themselves, they have given some of those rights and some of those privileges to men quite incapable, by themselves, of fighting for them at all, or obtaining them at all. This is the plain historic truth of the situation, which is perfect folly for us to attempt to forget. It is that very fact of the inequality of the races which makes the difficulty. If the races were equal the matter would be simple. Give them all the same rights, put them on precise political equality, but if you think, *as I am forced to think, that this is an inequality, not necessarily affecting every individual, but really affecting the two races, I will not say for historic reasons - they go back far beyond the dawn of history, into the very arcana of nature, in which these races were gradually differentiated - if anyone believes that difference is fundamental, you cannot give them equal rights without threatening the whole fabric of civilisation. If that is true, the problem comes up before us in this extraordinarily embarrassing shape: how is a*

race, determined to have for itself equal rights and Constitutional freedom, who thinks it ought to extend to every race justice, equity, kindness, forbearance, everything that education and equality of opportunity can give, to carry out that idea, if this is their idea, as I hope it is, within the framework of any Constitution? (H. of C. P. D. Aug. 9, 1909 to Aug. 27, 1909: 1001-1003, emphasis added).

Here Lord Balfour touches on important issues that have defined black/white relations from 1492 until the end of World War II, how Africans in diaspora and in Africa had refused to go the way of Native Americans. Thus, on May 10, 1994, when Mr. Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, stood on the platform in Pretoria and shouted the ANC salute '*i-Africa*' and the masses, one-hundred-thousand strong responded in one voice: '*Mayibuye*' [Let it come back]; for Africans everywhere it was an event that finally ended what Eric Hobsbawn (1989: 289) calls 'the influence of universal racism of the bourgeois world'. It was an event tantamount to a resurrection. As Nadine Gordimer (May 6, 1994: 27) put it:

To us, the election signifies a resurrection; this land rising from the tomb of the entire colonial past shared out in different centuries, decades and proportions, among the Dutch, the French, the British and their admixture of other Europeans; this indigenous people rising from the tomb of segregated housing, squatter camps, slum schools, job restrictions, forced removals from one part of the country to another; from the burial of all human aspirations and dignity under the humiliation of discrimination by race and skin; this people rising, for the first time in history, with the right to elect a government: to govern themselves. A sacred moment is represented in an act of putting a mark on a ballot paper.

On the 26th of April as it dawned all over South Africa, one saw extraordinary scenes. Across the landscape of that once god-forsaken country, men and women whom

Fanon described as the *wretched of the earth*, stood in lines waiting for days and hours so that they could cast their first vote. It was a moment that will remain vivid in my mind for the rest of my life. They came with their unarticulated dreams of what *freedom* would bring to their tortured lives. It was a moment which reminded me of the poem by Wordsworth, who in welcoming the French Revolution wrote:

**Glory it was to be alive.
To be young was very heaven!**

In 1930, the year I was born, a group of white liberals made up of politicians, businessmen and intellectuals, met to observe what they called *South Africa's coming of age*, i.e., the twenty-first anniversary of the white Union of 1910. They presented papers on a variety of topics. They had felt it necessary to take stock of what had happened in the twenty-one years of white minority rule. They were overcome by pessimism. In an introductory essay to the collected essays, Hofmeyer (1930: 10), one of South Africa's celebrated liberals, expressed their mood of gloom in these emotive words:

The native - the savage, cruel, wily foe of the past, whom he, the white man, has crushed into submission - will he not do him some evil yet? He has bruised the serpent's head, but will not the serpent perhaps bruise his heel? And what of the enmity between his seed and its seed? Fear, apprehension, doubts as to his children's future in this, their only homeland, the anxiety lest some 'little brown children, will play among the ruins of the Union buildings'. From the shadows that these things bring the South African in our day does not find easy to escape. There is fear that perhaps, after all Anthony Trollope may have been right when he wrote that 'South Africa was a black man's country'.

In 1948, there was a qualitative change in the politics of African exploitation and oppression as the policies of segregation were superseded by those of apartheid. The Nationalist Party assumed power breathing fascist arrogance and brimstone, and promised to entrench white minority rule to 'eternity' by every means at its disposal. Dr. Hendrick Verwoerd epitomized this determination. A university professor of psychology, he became the minister of what was called native affairs and ended up a prime minister. On 25, January 1963, he declared in parliament that:

Reduced to its simplest, the problem is nothing else than this: we want to keep South Africa white. Keeping it white can only mean one thing, namely, *white domination* (quoted the UNESCO Courier April, 1965: 21).

In 1990, looking back at the growing crisis of white minority rule I wrote:

The forty years of Nationalist Party rule will be noted above all else, for the forcible subjugation of all organizations opposing white minority rule and which favored a non-racial democracy - the Communist Party of South Africa, the African National Congress, the Pan African Congress, the labour movements, the Black Consciousness Movements, the United Democratic Front, the Congress of South African Trade Unions, etc. Indeed, the political, economic and social antagonisms of apartheid and capitalism reached a new peak under the Nationalist Party rule. As the administrative system and the repressive apparatus of apartheid was being perfected, the oppressed were engaged in ceaseless class struggles. Looking back at the last forty years, we remember the period as one of great cruelty and suffering with many leaders of the liberation movement languishing in jail, homes broken, families dispersed and a whole people condemned to exploitation and poverty even as the formal era of European colonialism came to an end in the rest of the continent. For the white minority and the rest of the capitalist world with a stake in white minority rule, the period was one of unprecedented prosperity.

It was in this atmosphere of triumphant apartheid that in 1961, Verwoerd withdrew South Africa from the Commonwealth and declared the country a republic. The demonstrations in 1966 celebrating the fifth anniversary of the republic held at the Voortrekker Monument near Pretoria, were a crowning moment, not just for white minority rule, but for Afrikanerdom as well. Verwoerd would declare to the whole world: "Although we are a young country, we are a nation to whom all belongs, and all of us can say this is our country" (quoted *ibid*).

Dr. Verwoerd liked to remind capitalists and liberal critics that apartheid and South Africa's economic progress 'dovetail very closely'. On numerous occasions he boasted that the Nationalist Party had created 'a stable government' which created industrial peace and conditions that foreign investors found attractive. In one speech he referred to South Africa as 'really a piece of Europe at the tip of Africa' (*Verwoerd Speaks*, 1966: 700). Three months after the great celebration at the Voortrekker Monument Verwoerd lay dead, having been stabbed on 6 September 1966 by a parliamentary messenger in the National Assembly where the apartheid laws were made. This event, in my calculation, marked the apogee of white supremacy and Nationalist Party ascendance. As Hepple (1967: 203-4) put it:

For Verwoerd to be destroyed by the impulse of a schizophrenic white man was a cruel anti-climax to a challenging career. There was bathos in his dying at the hands of an assassin who claimed no motive, who could only say a tapeworm made him do it. If the assassin had been a political antagonist, Verwoerd's supporters might have found some comfort in the thought that their leader had fallen to an enemy of the Christian-National

republic, an agent of savage black nationalism or of communist conspiracy. The apparent purposelessness of the deed made their grief all the more harder to bear.

The Socio-economic structure:

Let me now discuss the socio-economic structure that was inherited by the GNU - such a survey is a balance sheet of the more than ninety years of white minority rule. The discovery of gold in 1886 set in motion changes which had a profound and qualitative effect on the social structure of capitalist development in South Africa. The discoveries coincided with the transition of the world economy to a gold monetary system based on the gold standard. Thus, South Africa, a region comparatively marginal to the world economy now, became the major supplier of that economy's money commodity - gold. The relationship that developed between South Africa and Great Britain, which stood at the centre of the world economy dominated by the international gold standard, is unique. The Boer War highlighted the importance the British attached to controlling this area which supplied it with gold, which ensured Great Britain's economic standing in the world as it faced challenges from Germany and the United States. This fact determined the dynamics of South Africa's economic growth and the character of its social structure.

The emergence of a single world monetary system based on gold meant that the metal became a significant factor in the political relations between countries. For, as the basis of the international payments system, its importance inevitably transcended the domestic political economy. Marx explains, 'as soon as the precious metals become objects of commerce, the

universal equivalent of everything, they also become the measure of the power between nations'. Consequently the old mercantilist view that there was a direct correlation between the military strength of a country and the size of its gold reserves was carried over into the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This induced many countries to hoard gold specifically for war purposes. Britain alone of the major powers did not keep a war-chest, and later it will be seen how important her access to South Africa's gold was in neutralising whatever advantages her enemies might have had over her in this regard (Ally, 1991: 223-4).

From its very beginning, mining was made dependent on cheap black labor. By 1874 there were already 10,000 black migrant miners in Kimberley, some of them coming as far north as the 22nd parallel. After 1886, there were the gold-mines which required an even larger supply of cheap black labor. For purposes of recruiting this labor, two agencies were formed: The Witwatersrand Native Labor Association and the Transvaal Native Recruiting Association. From the earliest days of large-scale mining, the black migrant laborers were housed in closed compounds which subjected the workers for the duration of their contract to total regimentation. In this way the migrant workers could not organize trade unions, go on strike or desert if they found conditions onerous.

From this synopsis it is absolutely without doubt that the mining industry determined the entire future socio-economic structure of South Africa.

The pattern of discrimination and coercion was profoundly shaped by the needs of the mines, and the new phenomenon of migrant labour made great changes in African life-styles and organisation, turning states into rural reservoirs of labour. It not only divorced men from their families but hindered the acquisition by Africans of urban political skills. The recruiting of the labour market . . . provided the pattern for much of the

twentieth-century economy, a pattern dominated from the first by black unskilled labour, subject to the color-bar, and in weak bargaining position in industrial relations because the magnates had the support of the law to ensure adequate supplies - taxation pushed Africans into white employment, and land regulations pushed them off the land; and the magnates developed their own monopolistic recruiting system. . . . Rhodes, as the leading mining magnate of his day, played an especially dominant role in the evolution of a harsh racially-determined labour system (Hyam 1967: 297-8).

South Africa Inc.

If there is one individual in South Africa who represents the concentrated expression of capital and indeed in the entire world, it is Mr. Harry Oppenheimer, who at 80 years of age has dominated the South African economy for nearly half this century.⁴ His power derives from the control of Anglo-American and the De Beers which was the central core of South Africa capitalist development. Whether by majority or dominant share holding, or by formal control of day to day management, with a 'web of secret companies', the interwoven network of Anglo-American and De Beers is one of 'the three pillars' of the South African economy. The first is the State, through its ownership of utilities and some steel and coal; the second is Anglo; and the third

⁴ For the full story of Oppenheimer and De Beers see: *The Last Empire* by Stefan Kanfer and David Pallister, Sarah Stewart, and Ian Lepper, *South Africa Inc.: The Oppenheimer Empire*; who chronicle the nineteenth-century diamond rush that transformed Johannes De Beer's humble farmstead into an exotic Klondike. Kanfer describes the roots of racial exploitation and oppression, the misery of black miners and how the fortunes of white prospectors were made; the defeat of emperor Lobengula, and the rise of his legendary adversary, Cecil Rhodes, who would rule both the Cape Colony and De Beers. He also chronicles the story of how, in the twentieth century, the cartel came under the control of the Oppenheimers, a German-Jewish dynasty that builds De Beers and its gold-mining twin, the Anglo-American Corporation, into an empire of unmatched global reach, and creates a shadowy government more flexible and powerful than South Africa's official leadership. Kanfer documents Oppenheimers' dealings on and under the table: their condemnation of apartheid even as they cruelly exploit cheap black labor, their quiet takeover of Solomon Brothers, their monopoly on diamonds and their grip on gold maintained at all costs and by any means. He uncovers the inside story of the billionaire family whose empire he contends will not only survive to the twenty-first century but will have the capacity to destroy the ANC led government.

consists of all the other companies, trailing in the rear. Anglo's capital is key to other South African industries: steel, engineering, vehicles, retail, publishing, agriculture, and food, insurance, property, banking (when the sanctions movement forced Barclays out of South Africa, Anglo moved in). In the sector of chemicals and explosives which was behind South Africa's armament industry, Anglo's capital played an important role (cf. Hart, 1989: 10).

The Central Selling Organization (C.S.O.) located in Chatehouse Street in London is the purest example of Anglo's monopolistic powers. Nearly every major diamond-producing nation, including the former Soviet Union, is beholden to the C.S.O. Even though it is located in London, it is not a British company. It is South African in origin but with a far-flung business empire known as 'the octopus'. It is made up of some 600 corporations spread around six continents, and employing some 800,000 workers. Oppenheimer's diverse portfolio ranges from platinum to wood pulp, insurance to investment trust, gold to daily newspapers. By some estimates, Oppenheimer's collection of multinationals is bigger than ITT, Nissan, Unilever or Siemens. According to Peter Schmeiser (1989: 32);

The Structure of Oppenheimer's empire is dizzyingly complex and nearly impenetrable to outsiders. He wields his power indirectly, through pyramided holding companies, interlocking shareholdings and a myriad of cross-directorships. As a result of this strategy, few people are aware that in the last two decades scores of businesses in the United States, Europe and Australia have been founded or purchased with Oppenheimer capital and are managed by Oppenheimer loyalists while maintaining no legal ties to South Africa.

The power of the Oppenheimers' financial empire is a direct descendent of the arch-imperialist, Cecil John Rhodes. Even more, Anglo has never lacked in influential friends in the major capitals of the capitalist world. When the company was founded in 1917, Sir Ernest Oppenheimer could count on one of America's most important financiers - Herbert Hoover - who later became President of the United States of America. Even more:

British knights litter the board rooms of Oppenheimer's principal companies, and both British and French branches of the Rothschild family are represented on the board of De Beers. Oppenheimer's father, Ernest and his uncle, Bernhard were both knighted for the services to Empire in the first world war, and when Sir Ernest visited London for his seventy-seventh birthday there was lunch at Buckingham Palace. The British Royal family and the Oppenheimers, by chance, share the same stockbrokers, Rowe & Pitman. In 1984 Anglo added a special sheen to its tiara by taking a substantial stake in that firm before it merged into Mercury Securities in 1986, one of the big financial services groups gearing for the deregulation of the city of London (Pallister 1989:10).

Pallister describes, as well, the qualities of British life most admired in Oppenheimer in Anglo circles: they were those that built and sustained the Empire. 'They were replete with apparent contradictions: a certain arrogance tempered by a studied modesty; courtesy masking ruthless self-interest; a patronizing elitism disguised with conviviality. The ethos above all was that of the English public school' (ibid). Within South African society, or at least the white, English-speaking part of it, the Oppenheimers enjoy a status verging on the regal.

The Oppenheimer financial empire is not without ironic twist; because of its expansion overseas, according to *Africa Confidential* (May 6, 1994: 8):

U.S. business is generally hostile to South Africa's big four conglomerates, which are reckoned to control some 80 percent of equities on the Johannesburg exchange. A stream of U.S. merchant banks and corporate strategists has been advising the ANC on how to implement effective anti-trust legislation; one calculation is that it will make entry easier into South Africa's market. Regardless, Anglo directors privately wave the 'Big is beautiful' banner. Referring to the 1948 elections of the NP with a strong commitment to nationalization than the ANC, Anglo officials say confidently: 'This is not the first time we have taken on a hostile government and won'.

In 1987, Oppenheimer's affiliated companies totalled 98.8 billion rand, or about \$247 billion at current rates. The South African Government checked in at 98.1 billion rand, or about \$245 billion, for assets in state-run enterprises (ibid). From these figures, there is no doubt that Oppenheimer's financial empire dominates the South African economy as no other company or group of companies. And its world-wide connections represent a measure of the obstacles, of how much must be overcome if there is to be genuine change in South Africa. It is a financial empire that was built on African impoverishment.

Looking at Corner House, the center of Oppenheimer's power in South Africa, one experiences a sinking feeling. Here is a structure that was built on blood and sweat of migrant laborers who in South Africa are the poorest of the poor. What will it take to bring this empire under control? Oppenheimer and his financial empire represent a government within a government. For example: .

On the evening before Harold McMillan made his famous 'winds of change' speech, he dined with the Oppenheims at Brenthurst. But whenever the winds threatened to blow down the Cape, it was Harry Oppenheimer, more than anyone else, who came to the rescue of the South African state in its most beleaguered times. For without the state and its apartheid laws of migrant labour, the Oppenheimer empire would never have been (Pallister 1989: 10).

If the change in South Africa is genuine, can gold-mining, Oppenheimer's main economic base, and indeed agriculture and other industries, survive in their present form without cheap labor that disenfranchisement of the African guaranteed? If this is the case, then majority rule at the political level would have to be accompanied by continued *de facto* economic, and especially labor market apartheid, or by the complete restructuring of the economy along socialist lines, or by its collapse. An ANC-led government which retained *de facto* apartheid would lose its working class base which sacrificed so much to undermine apartheid. The collapse of the economy is unthinkable - it would lead to the worst anarchy. In September 1993, Mr. Mandela, addressing a special congress of COSATU, assured it that:

I fully believe that the ANC will never betray the cause of democracy, the cause of the workers. We have a track record in which we have worked closely with workers' movements. But your defence is not just the ANC, it is you, the workers yourselves. It is you who must take the defence of your rights, your aspirations in your own hands./How many times has the liberation movement worked together with workers, and at the moment of victory betrayed the workers? (Mandela 1993: 7).

Prospect for the Future:

After decades of struggle Mr. Mandela, on the eve of his inauguration as President of South Africa, told the assembled guests:

I stand before you filled with deep pride. You have shown a calm and patient determination to reclaim this country as your own. It is with joy that you can proclaim from the rooftops, 'Free at last'.

He raised his glass to toast the people of South Africa and expressed his belief that they would weld into a nation 'united in its diversity'. Millions of the oppressed have lived for this moment ever since the Union Of South Africa, which excluded them from citizenship, was formed in 1910. The 'new South Africa', a phrase I had over and over during my first visit to the country after almost twenty-six years exile, at last is a reality.

It is important for us to understand that the release of Mandela from prison, the negotiations and the subsequent election that the ANC won overwhelmingly (it gained 62.7% which earned it 252 of the 400 National Assembly seats, which put it well ahead of the incumbent National Party's 20.4% and Inkatha Freedom Party's 10.5%. The Pan African Congress got 1.3% of the vote, well behind the Democratic Party which got 1.7% and the white right wing gained 2.2%) was an acknowledgement by the African people that the ANC was the movement which for eighty-two years encapsulated their national aspirations. The result confirmed the ANC status as the only truly national organization. It won seven of the nine regions with majorities that run as high as 91.7%.

Even in the two regions that it lost, Natal/kwa Zulu and the Western Cape, it gained more than a third of the votes cast.

On August 18, the GNU that the ANC heads, observed the 100 days of its assumption of power. In a speech to Parliament Mr. Mandela declared:

At the end of the day, the yardstick that we shall all be judged by is one and only one, and that is: are we, through our endeavours here, creating the basis to better the lives of all South Africans? This is not because the people have some subjective expectations fanned during an election campaign. Neither is it because there is a magic wand that they see in the new government. Millions have suffered deprivation for decades and they have the right to seek redress. They fought and voted for change; and change the people of South Africa must have.

He went on to remind the House: "We have forged an enduring national consensus on the interim constitution and the broad objectives of reconstruction and development. This consensus is neither an imposition of one party over others, nor a honeymoon premised on fickle whims of a fleeting romance. What brings us together is the overriding commitment to a joint national effort to reconcile our nation and to improve its well being." He hoped that with the climate of national consensus having been created and the machinery of government in place, it would not be long before the benefits of democracy would begin to be realized.

In this section of the paper, I will deal first with the state of ethnic relations and conflict since the elections; then I will deal with prospects for economic development.

Mandela inherited a violent society where, according to some estimates, 15,000 people had died in politically motivated factional fighting. In the month leading to the

elections, more than 30 people were killed in the East Rand Townships of Thokoza and Voloorus, and in Natal over a hundred were reported dead. On March 28, violence came to downtown Johannesburg, brought by Inkatha followers who marched to Shell-House where the ANC has its headquarters. On Sunday, 24 April, a car bomb exploded in downtown Johannesburg, killing 11 people and destroying buildings in a two square mile area.

The election itself was a cliff-hanger, with the Inkatha Freedom Party joining the electoral process at the last minute. A week before the election, Eugene Terre'Blanche and his khaki-clad, gun-toting Swastika bedecked followers in the Afrikaner Resistance Movement (AWB) retreated to a farm that was once owned by Paul Kruger; there they vowed to prepare for war. "There is no force," Terre'Blanche told his goon-squads, "that can stop a people that have been deprived of their country." He raved, oblivious of the irony of his words.

The irony did not escape Sarah Baxter (1994: 35), who writes that what Terre'Blanche says and stands for today is what white South Africa, until recently, accepted from the NP:

The AWB are ridiculed now as part of South Africa's lunatic fringe, although Terre'Blanche's sentiments used to be nothing more than standard Afrikaner philosophy. 'My ancestors came to this country while it was vast and open and uncivilized,' he said. 'They brought the light of God to this smitten part of the earth. The white man will never allow himself to be crushed'. But the whites did allow themselves to be peacefully outvoted.

The last hope of the AWB are some disaffected sections of the white police force. "I am glad the South Africa police are here today," he said. "One of these days, they will have to decide whether to be part of the will of Satan and let the white man be driven out of South Africa like penniless refugees." He said this to a group that was keeping an eye on his rally. Following the bombing at the airport on the eve of the election, the police had made a quick arrest of thirty-two suspects, and their conduct during the elections suggest that they, too, want to be part of the 'new South Africa'. Thus far the ANC's handling of the right has been skilful. By holding negotiations with General Viljoen, Mandela successfully flattered and detached him from his jack-booted allies. The main hope of Terre'Blanche and his followers was that a civil war would break between IFP and the ANC followers. "The Zulus" he declared, "will never be ruled by the Xhosas as the government of this country," he said. Prior to the election, the IFP was violently opposed to the election and had resorted to various forms of intimidation, including violence and prohibitions. Ten days before the vote, seven teenagers distributing ANC leaflets explaining the election process, were tortured and executed; a few days later, two ANC canvassers were shot dead at Ulundi, the capital of Kwa Zulu.

The strategy of brinkmanship and the threat of violence, many observers agree, dissuaded the ANC from asking for a commission of inquiry to investigate the fraud that was so obvious to many international observers in Kwa Zulu/Natal. The strategy of

persuading Mr. Buthelezi, the irascible Inkatha leader, to take part in the election and not contesting the obvious election frauds seem to be paying dividends. The feared ethnic violence has subsided considerably. And even more there has been a growing rift between the Zulu King and Mr. Buthelezi which is threatening the political gains made by the IFP after its 'electoral victory' in KwaZulu/Natal. According to *Africa Confidential* (1994, vol. 35, no.12: 8):

Zwelithini's efforts to establish himself as a politically neutral monarch, financially and ideologically independent of Inkatha and its leader Buthelezi, are eroding the movement's claims to be the protector of the Zulu identity. The two men are also vying for control of the traditional Zulu hierarchy of *indunas*, chiefs who have played a key role in recruiting military and political support for Inkatha.

Before the elections Buthelezi controlled the king's funds and, in the shape of hand-picked KwaZulu policemen, the king's personal security. Now the South African army is providing him with armed guards, and his funds come directly from the central government. Thus the concessions that seemed to entrench the Zulustan and the claim by Buthelezi that he was the standard-bearer of nationalism is no longer true. According to John Carlin of the *Independent* (06/19/1994):

Five years ago, before Nelson Mandela was released from prison, the chief seriously thought he would be South Africa's first black president. He was bolstered in his belief by the support from Western leaders, such as Margaret Thatcher, by the backing of Pretoria and the sinister supporters in Military Intelligence and the Security Police. Now all these pillars have crumbled. What remained to him to the run up to the elections was the KwaZulu Police (and its hit squads) and King Goodwill, whom he trotted out at public functions in order to portray himself as the standard bearer of Zulu nationalism. 'All along, Buthelezi has been using the King for his

political ends - using him as his stick and shield. Now Buthelezi is angry because the King is no longer dancing to his drumbeat', said one of the princes who is in hiding.⁵

Although Inkatha 'won' the provincial elections in KwaZulu-Natal, Buthelezi is now Home Affairs Minister in the GNU, he now faces a greater problem - he only has a fraction of the power he once held as the Chief Minister of KwaZulu, and now has no possibility of ever gaining the power he once aspired to. By joining the GNU, Buthelezi backed away from the Jonas Savimbi-Angolan option. This might save the people of South Africa the agony of Angola.

The only other province that the ANC lost is the Western Cape. This was a setback for the democratic movement, especially because the so-called Coloureds had played such an important role alongside Africans in the United Democratic Front. The National Party targeted the colored voters in one of the most racist campaigns. Their campaign was summed up in one poster: 'STOP THE COMRADES!' Playing on their old and tried tactic of 'black danger', the NP managed to saw a temporary rift between 'Africans' and 'coloureds' that I do not believe will be hard to overcome. Unfortunately, in the midst of the election campaign, Africa squatters occupied homes in the Mitchell

⁵ On September 20 the Zulu King broke off relations with Chief Mangosuthu G. Buthezi. The King, who feared for his life, severed his ties with Buthelezi after rock-throwing followers of Buthelezi stormed the royal palace and disrupted a visit by President Mandela. The announcement was a humiliation for Buthelezi, who had used the Zulu monarchy and the vote-mustering power of chiefs. This had enabled the Inkatha Freedom Party to win a narrow majority in the provincial legislature. Since the elections, as the King distanced himself from Buthelezi and moved closer to Mr. Mandela, Mr. Buthelezi has responded with innuendo, veiled threats and revelations about the King's high living, and assertions that the King was being duped by turn-coats in the royal family. Since King Goodwill ascended the throne in 1971, Mr. Buthelezi used his power as leader of the KwaZulu apartheid homeland to put the young King in his place, whilst at the same time using the King's statue to build IFP and himself as the embodiment of Zulu nationalism.

Plains that had been built for coloureds. The media and the NP jumped on the incident and milked it for all it was worth. As one writer put it: "Never mind that some of the squatters were also colored; the local newspapers got maximum anti-African coverage out of it all, and left it to the ANC's local branches to defuse the situation" (McDonald, 1994: 11).

The class position of the Coloureds in South Africa is a very insecure one, as befits the petty bourgeoisie, and the insecurity makes them vulnerable to manipulation. Lying between the fundamental classes that compose the South African society, compared to the Africa majority, they enjoyed small privileges which they feel they are going to lose under an African dominated government. The influx laws made the Western Cape a coloured preferential area. All skilled and semi-skilled jobs that whites did not want went to the coloureds, so also did the lion's share of social programs. In voting for the NP, the:

Coloureds voted to protect this relative privilege. The National party was seen to be willing enough and strong enough to be the protector. Racism was more a manifestation of this fear than a cause. It is not racism of the crude, European vintage that sees itself as inherently superior but rather the reaction of a people who see themselves as being caught in the middle of a tug-of-war. By focusing on unwarranted anxieties and taking the spotlight off the real issues, the NP effectively *depoliticized* the majority of coloured voters and stripped them of the most basic democratic skills: inquisitiveness (McDonald 1994: 12).

Crude manipulation of the racial-ethnic card explains why the coloureds put their faith in the 'known devil', the NP, than the ANC which to most coloureds is an unknown

quantity. The same situation applies for instance to the Indians in Natal, who in certain constituencies seem to have voted for the NP. The policies of segregation and apartheid were very effective at keeping the victims of white oppression and exploitation from knowing each other. For the Indians what had happened in Uganda under Idi Amin was a frightening prospect that haunted many as they went to the polls.

Despite the setbacks in Natal and the Western Cape, the GNU headed by the ANC can take heart from the fact that even after forty years of apartheid, the type of ethnics politics seen elsewhere on the continent have not taken root in urban South Africa. Rather than ethnicity, it is bread and butter issues, such as education, housing, jobs, etc., that matter most to most people. The elections bore this out: the ANC could not be characterized as an ethnic or regional party. It won support from all the regions of the country and, indeed, from among all ethnic groupings. This it did in spite of forty years of apartheid and in the face of an attempt by some politicians to exploit the ethnic sentiment. If nothing else the elections have shown the limits of their success. It remains for the ANC-led GNU to put in place programs that will make it possible for a pluralized society to grow and become a reality, a society which will not deny the rights of opponents and which will respect the rights of minorities. For President Mandela:

The calm and tolerant atmosphere that prevailed during the elections depicts the type of South Africa we can build. It set the tone for the future. We might have our differences, but we are one people with a common destiny in our rich variety of culture, race and traditions . . .

People have voted for the party of their choice and we respect that. This is democracy.

Structural Constraints:

President Mandela enjoys symbolic power unequalled by any other political figure in South Africa today. He has added to his stature as a statesman by his insistence that, at least for the next five years, the government must be drawn from the widest possible range of ethnic and ideological range. His history and that of the ANC make him uniquely equipped to head the power-sharing arrangement. Yet in the transitional arrangements of a multi-party government of national unity, the country faces many structural constraints. The state that British imperialism created in 1910, which pursued the policies of segregation to 1948 and was succeeded from then on by NP and its apartheid policies, was structured on racism and repression enforced by a militarized and well financed security establishment. It will not be easy to transform the police and instill in its high echelons the civic spirit.

The same applies to the civil service. In its upper echelons it is overwhelmingly Afrikaner and male, often corrupt and grossly overpaid. In the forty years of apartheid a system of patronage had developed, and those who manned the top heavy bureaucratic institutions enriched themselves in and around the public sector. There was a widespread tendency to use politics and the bureaucracy to draw further advantages from the system. To change this culture of nepotism will not be easy. South African agriculture has many of the characteristics of what Leo Marquard described as a gigantic

system of out door relief. Besides its repressive functions, the apartheid state was essentially a well-developed welfare pork-barrel for whites in general and Afrikaners in particular.

The Economic Inequalities:

In his victory speech President Mandela said:

Tomorrow the entire ANC leadership and I will be back at our desks. We are rolling our sleeves to begin tackling the problems our country faces. We ask you all to join us, go back to your jobs in the morning. Lets get South Africa working . . . This means creating jobs, building houses, providing education and bringing peace and security to all. This is going to be the acid test of the government of national unity. We have emerged as the majority party on the basis of the program which is contained in the reconstruction and development program. There we have outlined the steps that we are going to take in order to ensure a better life for all South Africans.

Apartheid did not just mean political exclusion, it was also an economic system of extreme economic exploitation. As a consequence South Africa faces institutionalized inequalities that are deeply rooted. Africans are among the poorest people in the world compared to the white population of the country. The catalogue of economic inequalities is inexhaustible. Pdraig O'Malley (1994: 69), a senior associate at the John W. McCornack Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Massachusetts writes that:

South Africa has one of the most unequal distributions of income in the world. Three quarters of the people receive only 30 percent of the income. Average white incomes are 13 times those of the black labor force; 60 percent of blacks live below the poverty level; 50 percent of the black labor force cannot find jobs in the formal sector of the economy. Inequality between urban and rural blacks is also very great, with up to 4 to 1 differences in income levels./Inequality in the distribution of income

are reinforced by inequalities in the distribution of social spending. State spending per capita is five times as much for whites as it is for blacks. White pensions are twice as much as those of blacks, etc.

Then there is the land question, which lies at the heart of all South Africa's problems. The 1913 Land Act gave 13.7 percent of the land to Africans who constitute more than 75 percent of the population. Much of the land in the reserves where Africans are confined, has become degraded through overgrazing and erosion. White farmers, meanwhile, enjoy subsidies, in the form of both credit and tax breaks. Worse still, many white farmers have over-borrowed. In 1993, the Development Bank of Southern Africa put the number of hopelessly indebted farmers at around 3,000, responsible for farming about 4m hectares (10m acres) (cf. *The Economist* 08/29/94).

The case for radical economic restructuring is undeniable if the process of political transition is to be successful. Speaking at Clark Atlanta University in 1993, President Mandela underlined the fact of African impoverishment:

While providing the rights associated with democracy, our constitution should also create the basis for an expanding floor of entitlements so as to accord every citizen that measure of dignity intrinsic to being human. A democratic constitution must address the issues of poverty, inequality, deprivation and want in accordance with the internationally recognized standards of the indivisibility of human rights. A vote without food, shelter, and health care would be to create the appearance of equality while actual inequality is entrenched. We do not want freedom without bread, nor do we want bread without freedom.⁶

⁶ I owe this quote to Prexy Nesbitt's unpublished manuscript: "South Africa: The Elections and the Path Ahead". Mr. Nesbitt is Senior Program Officer: John D. and Catherine T. McArthur Foundation.

The question is: can a humane society be built on the basis of capitalism? An examination of the political economy of South African capitalism reveals how it was built on the foundations of racial exploitation and oppression. The fact that racism is deeply implicated with class exploitation in the South African political economy raises the ultimate question: can racism be overcome without transcending the structural constraints of capitalism as a system?

The vision of a 'new South Africa' is spelled-out in the *Reconstruction and Development Program*, a grand blueprint to transform South African society, to re-invent government and to re-define patterns of ownership, influence and power. In his inaugural address, President Mandela said one of the conditions for participating in the multi-party GNU was the acceptance of the RPD.

The goals of the RPD go beyond mere socio-economic development: building 1m new homes, redistributing 30 percent of the agricultural land within five years, providing clean water for 12m people without access to it at the present moment, and adequate sanitation for 21m people; supplying electricity to 19,000 black schools, (86 percent of the total), and some 4,000 clinics presently without electricity, as well as two-thirds of the country's homes; redressing the imbalance in access to telephone lines - one line for 100 black people compared with 60 lines for 100 whites; and a social safety net for the vulnerable (Hawkins 1994: vi).

The broader goal of the RDP is to re-invent the South African society in its entirety: 'a brave new non-racial world must be created where the main institutions of society - the civil service, the security forces, the business community, the universities, the media, the stock exchange, the banks - are no longer dominated by whites' (Waldmeir and Holman 1994: 1).

The sobering thought is that the RDP is now a 'new terrain' of struggle. Therefore there is need to pause and take stock of the many challenges and opportunities - both internal and external - that will facilitate or hinder the implementation of the RDP. By the standards of most Third World countries, South Africa is rich in mineral resources and in agricultural lands. It has an advanced economy with a demonstrated capacity to produce not only advanced weapons but also nuclear weapons. On 24 August Wald Stumpf, Atomic Energy Corporation (AEC) chief executive officer, told parliament about a 'big question mark' over the future of Denel's satellite programme. Denel had made an offer to a Middle Eastern country to sell it a satellite system. However Americans, he said, came into the picture, saying to the prospective customer: "You don't buy South African satellites - if you do, you won't get fighter aircraft from us." This was behind the possibility of Denel closing its Hotec satellite programme, which would also have an impact on the AEC business. He also revealed that the AEC was testing a sophisticated laser-based uranium enrichment process and could soon close a deal with a Western country to build a pilot plant to produce nuclear fuel for export.

'This process is to add value to SA uranium exports and enhance uranium production' (see *The Star*, August 25, 1994).

This is a small example which illustrates that South Africa has the potential for cutting-edge technological development that bodes well for its RDP. These positive signs do not mean fewer political battles but rather a new terrain for them, as I have said. In 1986, Ali Mazrui made this prophecy:

When that struggle finally succeeds, one major change will be the status of Black South Africans. In the twentieth century these have been the most humiliated Blacks of them all. But in the twenty-first century Black South Africans are likely to be the most privileged and powerful Blacks of the world. The immense wealth that the country has, the industrial base which whites and blacks have all helped to construct, the courage hardened by struggle, the sophistication drawn from being part of a global drama, will all contribute towards making South African Blacks a potentially enlightened aristocracy in the world of Blacks, and certainly a major force for Black power in the world economy (1986: 310).

The International Context:

In March 1990, Mr. James A. Baker 3rd, then United States Secretary of State, visited South Africa to meet with Mr. Mandela who had just been released from prison. Thomas L. Friedman of *The New Times* (03/18/90), quoting State Department sources said Mr. Baker 'will encourage Nelson Mandela to continue his Campaign against apartheid and will also urge the black leader to abandon socialist economic principles'. Mr. Baker, the story goes on, 'is planning to tell Mandela that he should abandon ideas of nationalizing the South African mines and major industries, socialist concepts that the Bush Administration views as outdated'. This was a blunt warning. And we all know

what happened to the left of centre Unity Government of Dr. Allende in Chile. As we look around the world we are struck by the toll the heedless logic of capitalism is exacting on the most vulnerable communities. The built-in inequalities of capitalism are, of course, not limited to the impoverished peripheries of the world market. In the United States, the European Community and elsewhere, the free-market has marginalized large sectors of its working class and made the situation of the minority communities intolerable.

Baker's warning not only ignores the scale and complexity of South Africa's problem, but how these problems came about in the first place. How, in light of the history of South Africa in the past hundred years, are Africans going to be compensated for their exploitation? The so-called 'free market' will not provide health care for the poorest of the poor, nor will it be able to build housing and school. The RDP will remain a piece of good intentions without state intervention. Addressing the joint sitting of parliament on the anniversary of his hundred days in office the President said:

At the end of the day, the yard stick that we shall all be judged by is one, and only one; and that is: are we, through our endeavours here, creating the basis to better the lives of all South Africans. Millions have suffered deprivation for decades and they have the right to seek redress. They fought and voted for change; and change the people of South Africa must have. (Emphasis added).

Mr. Keller of *The New York Times* D2 (08/03/94), in a story headlined 'In Mandela's South Africa, Foreign Investors Are Few', writes that last year foreign investors courting South Africa brought 'an alluring message: make peace and take the

free market pledge, and a thousand projects will bloom.' But 10 months later after Mandela formerly invited foreign investors to come and three months after 'the elections that secured this reborn capitalist the presidency', South Africa has yet to see the surge in investments needed to fuel growth and jobs. South Africa, Keller quotes Mr. Irwin:

[I]s neither fish nor fowl; it does not fit the profile of other emerging economies, but neither does it have the skills and industrial technology base to compete with developed countries. South Korea and Taiwan . . . built their muscular economies by exporting cheap clothing and working up to more sophisticated goods, route that China is now taking./But that route starts with cheap labor. In South Africa, the manufacturing work force is heavily unionized, costing employers almost \$5 an hour in total remuneration, double the cost in Mexico and Brazil and eight times the cost in China. Productivity is comparatively low.

It is still an open question whether South Africa will ever get the kind of investment the country needs, the kind that produces exports, growth and jobs. The foreign capital inflow so far has consisted of 'bargain seekers buying shares in long established companies listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange'.

American and British investment houses set up funds to buy bonds, and at the turn of the year net purchases jumped to 1.094 billion rand, or \$299.6 million at current exchange rates, more than double the 440 million rand, or \$120.5 million, in December, but since April more foreign money has flowed out than in, a trend that brokers attribute partly to a worldwide anxiety about stocks, but partly to cold feet about South Africa (ibid).

In contrast to the bleak message of Keller, the *Economist Intelligence Unit* has just issued its assessment of the South African economy and the prospects for the future. The report entitled *SA: Business Prospects and the Corporate Strategies* by Tony

Hawkins, says that despite the turbulence and trauma which lies ahead, SA "is too big a player, too important a market and has far too much potential to be allowed to slip into economic and political chaos". The next six years will show whether "economic upside triumphs over the political downside". In its assessments the intelligence report sees "the balance of probabilities" favoring the emergence of a strong economy that "will become an engine of growth for sub-Saharan Africa". EIU study acknowledges that like other newly industrializing economies, SA has to cope with socio-political and restructuring problems as well as global competition.

In the short term, SA's battle to deal with social demands are geared more than elsewhere, although "observers of Eastern Europe, Mexico, Brazil or the Korean peninsula know that political risk is not peculiar to Africa". On the political front the EIU report finds the ANC's aims are 'unrealistic' because "no serious effort was made to quantify the cost" of the reconstruction programme. Full employment will push the budget into substantial deficit - well over the 6% of gross domestic product agreed with the IMF - and create the long-term risk of dragging SA into a debt trap.

And while there is a general agreement on the need to reduce inequalities in SA, the redistribution has to be done in a way which will not endanger the 'first world economy' or frighten off investments, worsening the capital flight and producing the exodus of domestic skills. At the same time SA cannot afford the luxury of gradual change. The EIU warns of a "turbulent and difficult period" ahead as the country

manages a "multi-faceted transformation". Its markets will be open to new competition and technologies while at the same time more broadly diversified exports "must take off if a medium term balance of payments crisis is avoided".

In tandem government will force the pace of change in industrial relations, affirmative action, social investment and anti-trust legislation. Corporate structures, culture and strategies have to be re-engineered to deal with the political and economic challenges. "These . . . must be achieved within two to three years".⁷ From this sober assessment of the challenges facing South Africa, it is obvious that in pursuing its objectives, the ANC must have fortitude and the skills to manage internal and external problems. It will not be easy.

Conclusions

Christopher Cocker addressing the *African Institute* in Pretoria in 1990 asked: "What will Southern Africa mean to the world once apartheid is over and region is no longer a moral issue in world politics?" The question can be extended to the whole world; i.e., what does it mean to world economy that apartheid has ceased to be a disruptive issue? At the beginning of this essay I argued that the problems that South Africa has faced had to do with the world that was created by Columbus and Vasco da Gama. I would not be far wrong if I say that the end of apartheid brings to an end the

⁷ I owe this summary to *Business Day* August 25, 1994, p. 4.

500 years of the Old World order. This is the World Order, according to Chinweizu in which:

America's pets - cats and dogs - . . . consume \$2 billion worth of resources annually, and eat much better than most of humanity, dining elegantly on shrimp cocktails and liver pate at such places as the Animal Gourmet restaurant in New York City. Thus, in its most dramatic and obscene form, the question is whether the labor and resources of the Third World nations should continue to contribute more to the opulence of America's dogs and cats than to the elementary good health of Third World humans (Chinweizu 1975: xiii).

Just as after the abolition of slavery, today there is a great deal of goodwill towards Mr. Mandela in particular, and towards those who had suffered from the ravages of apartheid. The question still remains: how long will that goodwill last if Mr. Mandela takes radical steps to redress the injustices of the past?

Already the ANC is being warned against raising expectations of the popular masses too high. Consider this warning from Bill Keller of *The New York Times* (08/19/94) written on Mr. Mandela's hundredth day in office: "Can he deliver enough houses, schools, clinics and jobs to appease the poor without bankrupting the Government?"

The end of formal apartheid is, first and foremost, a message to the world. It is a message that some people have not fully grasped, let alone comprehended. In its deepest sense, the formal collapse of the white supremacist state in South Africa, has brought an end to a major era in human history. It has brought an end to the era of

western Europe's dominance of the *rest of us*. This was an era in which black, brown, and yellow skin meant inferiority to a white skin. For James Baldwin (1985: ix):

The reality, depth, and the persistence of the delusion of white supremacy . . . causes any real concept of education to be as remote, and as much feared, as change itself.

White folks all over the world, with the exception of very few embraced, adopted and, at times, murderously acted to defend their skins privileges. The tragedy was not only that the Christian faith blessed slavery on racist assumptions, but that western science and/or pseudo-science, at critical junctures supported racism. White supremacist beliefs did not just undermine the doctrines of *Enlightenment* but also the *vision* of a common *humanity*.

More important than the struggle to provide Africans with the basic human needs, there is an even more profound experiment that is being performed in South Africa today. The ANC wants to re-establish reciprocity between black and white as species of a common humanity. The breaking of the bond of humanity between black and white in South Africa was absolute. It was consciously fostered by British imperialism when it gave unlimited power to the white settler in 1910. In the years of segregation and apartheid, whites of all classes began to identify their economic, social, and psychological interests with the exploitation and oppression of Africans whom they considered 'subject races'. The struggle to build a truly human society in South Africa

will not be easy. It will go on for years. There will be, as Lerone Bennett Jr. (1965:

6) writes:

[M]ountains to climb and rivers to cross and enemies on all sides-and within. Individuals rise from the masses; a group breaks here and there, but the people flow on like a great, slow-moving river. Like a mass of sluggish hot lava, like a flock of sheep or a thundering herd of cattle, the people advance and retreat, advance and retreat, break through and are thrown back. Dark nights follow dark nights and valley of the mind, where all great battles are fought, reverberates with the screams and the groans of the dying and the defeated.

In crafting its declaration of principles for constitutional talks, the ANC held that:

Provision will be made for discrimination to be eliminated in substance as well as in form. At all levels of government the state will be empowered to pursue policies of affirmative action . . . in order to redress social, economic and educational imbalances . . . with special regard to the maldistribution of land and the need for housing.

And Albi Sachs, the ANC constitutional expert, has written that:

Without a constitutionally structured programme of deep and extensive affirmative action, a Bill of Rights in South Africa is meaningless. In the historical conditions of South Africa, affirmative action is not merely the corrector of certain perceived structural injustices. It becomes the major instrument in the transitional period after a democratic government has been installed, for converting a racist oppressive society into a democratic and just one.⁸

There has been an attempt to compare affirmative action in South Africa with the similar program in the United States. There are, of course, important differences. In the United States, affirmative action means the promotion of those called minorities and

⁸ I owe these two quotations to David Roediger's, *Legal Remedies for Racial Oppression*, *New Politics*, Summer 1994.

women into positions from which *all* but whites were excluded, i.e. in industry, into managerial posts. It is about individual blacks, Hispanics, women, etc., 'getting a piece of the pie', the capitalist pie, that is. In the context of South Africa, affirmative action should be seen as the empowerment of the hitherto dispossessed masses. It is about national liberation. Whether Sachs is right that constitutional guarantees can ensure that affirmative action will fundamentally reshape South African society in an orderly way is a wide and open question.

What is certain is that ANC views, though echoing in places the language of U.S. law, so far surpass in optimism even the most sanguine dreams of American advocates of largely constitutional path to racial justice as to be scarcely comparable (Roediger 1994: 172).

What is at issue in South Africa, and indeed all over the world today, is not just the struggle against racial oppression, but even more against class exploitation. When the South Africa Act of 1909 disenfranchised the black population that constitute the bulk of the labor force, that was affirmative action for the capitalist class. Affirmative action from the class perspective understands that overcoming the legacy of class, gender, national and racial exploitation and oppression will take more than formal constitutional guarantees of equality. Nor will it be ended by the simple act of promoting Africans into executive positions of Anglo and other giant corporations. If state intervention during the white minority regime was able to create optimum operating conditions for capital accumulation, the affirmative action policy - if it is to overcome

the legacy of exploitation and oppression - can just as rigorously intervene in pursuit of democratic goals to overcome the legacy of exploitation and oppression.

The struggle for a decent future for the people of South Africa in general and for the oppressed in particular is in the last analysis a struggle to understand the lessons of history. And on the basis of those lessons, organizations with a clear perspective must be fostered and developed. This history does not shrink from recording unpleasant facts. The unpleasant reality is that on May 10, the great struggle of the people of South Africa gained only a fraction of what was possible and that the classes who caused all the misery and suffering remain in control of the South African society today. The black working class is potentially the most powerful force in South African society. Around a programme of social emancipation and genuine democratic rights enormous possibilities open up. That is where the liberation movement has brought South Africa. History suggests that it is the black working class that will most effectively utilize the new possibilities for the creation of a just and equitable South Africa.

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