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JORDAN K. NGUBANE

SOUTH AFRICA'S RACE CRISIS: A CONFLICT OF MINDS

I

Most white South Africans elect to regard their country's colour crisis as a racial clash. This has obvious, interlocking advantages. It emotionalizes discussions of a problem which, in the best of situations, does not readily lend itself to objective treatment. This in turn often creates deadlocks which surrender the initiative to influence events to the advocates of Apartheid. The emphasis on race projects Apartheid as the unique solution to a unique problem. In this setting the search for alternatives becomes largely an irrelevant exercise.

In the present contribution, the race crisis is viewed as a conflict of minds; as a clash between two irreconcilable outlooks which, in important essentials, belong more or less to the same stream of civilization. One current in this stream works for the continuous extension of the area of liberty for the person while the other seeks to narrow it. The dominant current in the African community is the subject of this discussion.

In the three centuries of contact with the white man, the black South African evolved a syncretic culture with its own ideal of fulfilment and norms of thought, behaviour, and action. It also had its own political traditions and institutions. Over the generations it acquired an identity of its own—to which we shall come later. Apartheid seeks to destroy this identity. This will to destroy, and the African's resistance to it, constitute the core of South Africa's race problem. While colour and economic and political injustice feature prominently in the resulting clash, they are largely the visible forms in which the conflict of minds expresses itself.

The African's cultural pattern has its roots partly in the history of South Africa during the last three hundred years and partly in the philosophy by which he understood life and reality.

Jan van Riebeeck landed at the Cape of Good Hope in 1652 to establish a victualling station for ships of the Dutch East India Company plying between Europe and the East. He brought along with him a group of settlers. Contrary to popular belief he did not find the Cape uninhabited. There lived around it an African people whom he christened the Hottentots from the way he understood them to speak. These Africans were cattle farmers and roamed the Cape flats grazing their herds. The arrival of the white man among them started a chain of reactions which continues to this day to influence the relations between black and white.

In the Europe from which the settlers came, the prevailing notions of citizenship, justice, and morality were very much unlike those of the Hottentot. Most Europeans of that era still seriously associated governmental power with absolutism. The blood of martyrs killed in the Inquisition had hardly dried in the market-places of some Western countries, and the tragedies resulting from this blot on Christian civilization were almost living experiences to some of the settlers. Predestination taught that certain people were created for particular destinies in life, and hence the fact that the white man had technological superiority or that the man of colour was a slave meant simply that the Christian God had created the white man for a higher destiny and the African for a lower one. Although this God was virtuous, he was also harsh, uncompromising, and jealous; to fear and emulate him was life's highest purpose.

In the Cape environment the settlers formed a minority group vulnerable to dangers initially from the Africans, which over time fostered an emphasis on the value of group consciousness as a guarantee of survival.

From the eighteenth century onwards, increasing numbers of settlers crossed the boundaries of the Company's area of jurisdiction and established themselves largely as farming groups. During the Napoleonic Wars some of these communities declared their independence from Holland and proclaimed their own short-lived republics. In the interior, the Afrikaners—who called themselves first the Trekboers and later the Boers—

developed a ruggedness and love of independence which are among their chief virtues. Yet this isolation from contact with the mainstream of civilization also had the effect of retarding spiritual development and stunting intellectual growth. They were cut off from the humanistic and other influences which liberalized attitudes in Europe, particularly with regard to coloured peoples. This closure is spectacularly revealed in the events following the emancipation of the slaves and the Great Trek from the Cape in 1837. In the newly established Afrikaner republics, the indigenous Africans were openly discriminated against and denied any recognition as citizens.

The factors listed above enhanced the value of the group at the expense of the individual; promoting a pattern of thought, belief, and behaviour which saw the truth, reality, men, and events from the perspective only of the survival of the group. Apartheid is the political expression of this *morality of survival*.

II

After the expiration of their contracts at the Cape, the majority of settlers did not return to Europe, but remained to establish themselves as farmers. Immigrants came in to swell their numbers, and this marked an important turning-point in the relations between black and white. The free farmers needed more land, and this forced them to push increasing numbers of Hottentots from their pastures. There were not enough labourers to work the farms; the slaves from the Far East were inadequate for the needs of an expanding economy; and hence they looked towards indigenous African labour. The Hottentots led a largely nomadic life as herdsmen, and partly as a result, their social and political institutions were less developed than those of Africans in the interior such as the Nguni and the Sotho. They could offer little resistance to the encroachment of the whites. At first they showed little enthusiasm for giving up their nomadic life to work in white homes or on the farms. But as their herds were reduced by wars with the white man, by trade, and by disease, impoverishment set in. By the end of the seventeenth century they had already started entering the white areas in search of jobs.

The Hottentot who left his people to sell his labour for a cash wage in the white areas started a cultural and economic revolution which is one of the main keys to the understanding of South Africa's race problem. He exposed himself to a new and different life. In the white man's world he acquired strange habits of thinking and living. The influence of European food, hygiene, clothes, speech, sex life, and general mode of behaviour all combined to transform him into a new type of African. He experienced a new sense of freedom and responsibility. He became aware of his potential for being better in a new direction. He appreciated his individuality in an altogether different way. He discovered that he could determine his personal destiny without the help of the tribal group. Life produced new challenges wherever he turned.

When he returned to his people, it was as a stranger. He found their customs and taboos narrow and limiting. They frustrated the free development of his newly awakened personality. He realized that he could not make the best possible use of his life within the fixed horizons of the tribe. For its part, the tribe often regarded him with suspicion. He was either the corrupting influence from the white side or the agent of the white man in its midst.

In time economic and social pressures combined to force him out of the tribe. He could not go and live among the white people or be swallowed up by them; he was a pagan, illiterate, with a different colour and language and culture. The whites feared that if they integrated him into their life he would in time dilute their blood, corrupt their culture, and finally destroy them as an ethnic group along with their achievements. Only a few Hottentots intermarried with the whites. Repudiated thus by his tribe on the one hand and the white people on the other, he gradually settled down in shanty-towns on the periphery of white towns and villages. There, he started creating for himself a new social world somewhere between the two racio-cultural blocs which always had the potential to crush him if they wanted to. Survival for him in this setting lay in a realistic and non-violent balancing of his relations with both sides.

To become an efficient worker he had to adopt at least some of the ways of the white man, and he blended these with what

he had brought along from the tribe. A syncretic culture emerged which was distinctly his. This pattern, crude and simple as it was, was the creation of his mind; the unique product of his environment and experience, and he could enlarge his personality freely within it. It was based on realistic adaptations to the demands of having to survive between the suspicion of the tribe and the contempt of the white man. The fact that it had its roots in the worlds of the tribe and the whites transformed him into a new person in history: the New African. For his culture to survive there had to be permanent contact with its sources of inspiration. The tribe could not be destroyed for he derived his physical being from it. Conversely, the white man had to belong permanently to South Africa if the shanty-towns were to survive and with them the new culture. If he pulled out, the tribe could descend on the shanty-towns, set them on fire, and kill their inhabitants. From this circumstance was to develop part of the New African's commitment to non-racialism.

For his part, the white man wanted the African at a convenient distance from his home or town. The black servants could enter the white areas by day to work, and return to the shanty-towns when the sun set. The two worlds would keep apart and develop along separate lines.

The whites did not have a very high opinion of the culture of the shanty-towns. The type of person it was producing, in the absence of schools and other organized civilizing agencies, was often a confused and sometimes dangerous mixture of unreconciled cultural ingredients. He was, however, better than the tribesman in that he did a better job when he worked. The whites referred contemptuously to the shanty-town communities as *die oorlamse volk*—the handy people. The Nguni lingual group (Zulu and Xhosa) Africanized the adjective into *ama-humusha*. This was the name by which the early urban workers came to be known by the tribe.

A culture born of economic necessity naturally saw in materialistic fulfilment life's highest purpose. To grow and enrich itself it had to borrow freely and blend whatever it procured. Eclecticism came to be another of its distinguishing features. In order to borrow successfully, the people from whom the borrowing was done could not be enemies; they had to be made to want to give wherever possible. Besides, they had the

guns. Rejection of the paramountcy of the group and emphasis on the importance of the individual characterized the new cultural pattern. Thus, from the very beginning of things, the imperatives of cultural, economic, and physical survival dictated that the earliest workers should be individualistic, materialistic, eclectic, and free of race consciousness.

At first the urban workers in every African community were always a minority while the majority belonged to the tribe. If they were not a numerical minority *vis-à-vis* the white man, they were certainly a military and economic one. This position of weakness between the two powerful blocs enjoined on them the need to develop a deep-rooted tradition of realism.

III

Movement into the interior brought the white man into contact with the Xhosa, Sotho, and Zulu sections of the African people. This produced results which, in important essentials, were similar to those noted among the Hottentots. There were first the wars, and then the peace and the economic pressures which produced the Nguni-Sotho version of the culture of the shanty-towns.

But before we get to this, let us follow a process which took place in the rural areas of the Western Cape and which complemented the urban revolution in the life of the Hottentots. Here, a ferment had begun from about the middle of the eighteenth century producing changes which corresponded to what was happening in the shanty-towns. Christianity had been introduced by the whites to the Hottentots. It taught that the individual's life could be modelled according to an objective ideal; that it could be perfected if that was desired. To do this successfully, the person's first loyalty had to be to Christ. The individual had an almost unlimited potential for being better, for achieving. These teachings awakened startling evaluations in the self-perception of the tribesman. If he was the breath of God and the shaper of his personal destiny, why did he have to suffer so much? If final fulfilment could be in perfection and eternal bliss, in something he could attain without the help of the tribe and its taboos, what need had he to bother about conforming to its dictates?

The tribe as a whole frowned heavily on these revolutionary teachings, and some of the missionaries were compelled to establish reserves where the converts could lead Christian lives away from their pagan brothers. In these, as had happened in the urban areas, the Africans were not integrated in the life of the whites. The missionary was a teacher and not a social equal. The converts accepted the Word and the new life that came with it, but they could not, at the same time, abandon all of the cultural traditions they had brought along from the tribe. As had happened in the shanty-towns, they set about evolving a cultural pattern based on borrowings from both the tribal and white sides. This is dealt with at length below, in the examination of its evolution among the Nguni-Sotho Africans.

IV

The Nguni and Sotho Africans were cattle-breeders and tillers of the soil. They had established kingdoms and set up stable governments before the white man reached them. Their way of life was based on what we shall, for lack of a better description, call the *Sudic* evaluation of the human personality. The word 'Sudic' describes the black- or brown-skinned peoples with kinky hair of Sub-Sahara and embraces present or partial or past commitment to an ancient cultural pattern which seems to have thrived somewhere between the Niger and the Nile about a thousand or more years before Christ. Basil Davidson has said of the 'Sudic' people:

These were pioneering peoples. They tilled where none had tilled before. They mined where there was none to show them how. They discovered a valuable pharmacopoeia. They were skilful in terraced irrigation and the conservation of soil on steep hillsides. They built new and complex social systems. They transformed whatever they could borrow from other and technologically more advanced social systems to the north, added and adapted and experienced and invented until in the course of time they acquired a range of technique and mastery of art, a philosophy and attitude and temperament and religion that were unique to themselves, and make the 'negroness', the negritude, that they have today.

The word 'Sudic' is derived from *sudd*, the Arabic for the

vegetable matter which is said to have drifted from the marshlands where the Nile had some of its sources. The root-word has been chosen for its associations. The early 'Sudic' people seem to have emerged into history from somewhere in this region. Their Zulu-speaking descendants believed that creation began in the marshlands of the north. The first human being, then a spirit-form, was incarnated within a cleft reed in a prehistoric marshland and emerged from it in his present physical form. That part of Africa—Sub-Sahara—which is inhabited by the descendants of the ancient 'Sudics' will be referred to as the *Sudant*.

This nomenclature has obvious advantages. It is a convenient description of the dark-skinned peoples of Sub-Sahara taken broadly—and only broadly—as an entity. It distinguishes them from the Arab African. Their past, present, or partial commitment to the 'Sudic Ideal'—their philosophy and religion—developed in them feelings and responses which often suggest derivation from a common tradition. The 'Sudics' and their descendants evolved parallel or identical customs, laws, and social or political institutions which mark them out as people who, at some time in history, might have embraced a pattern of culture with many things in common. One might speak of 'the Sudant' in the same way as one speaks of the Orient and the Occident.

In time some of the 'Sudic' people or their descendants migrated from their homelands and scattered towards the west, the east, and the south of the continent. Many of them preserved, with varying degrees of success, some traditions or modifications of the philosophy which had given meaning to their ancestors' lives. This philosophy developed in the wanderers a dynamic of discovery and integration, a spirit of adventure and daring, an ability to synthesize experiences and ideas, and a will to survive which saw them through the diaspora, slavery, and colonial rule to the moment of rebirth into freedom.

We do not as yet know as much about these remarkable ancestors of the so-called 'Negro' as we should. But tradition, particularly in Southern Africa, suggests that the 'Sudic Ideal' was characterized largely by its evaluation of the individual. It regarded him as the incarnation of an immortal spirit-form; an ancestral spirit clothed in flesh and therefore sacred. The spirit-form was the individualization of a consciousness which

activated creation. The person was the equal of his neighbour because ultimately both were spirit-forms. The individual was the central figure in creation.

To the Zulu, whose understanding of the 'Sudic Ideal' has been followed in this discussion, evil did not have an extraneous source, such as the Satan of Christianity, from which it issued to corrupt the person. It was one of the qualities of being, a product of the individual mind. Fulfilment for the person was in making the best possible use of his life as a member of a corporate society: the community of the living and the 'dead'.

Since the consciousness lived, it was continually in motion, fulfilling itself in an infinity of ways through all its individualizations—from the tiniest grain of sand through the person to the galactic system. The countless movements of creation were but variations of the single cosmic motion, for an infinite consciousness which was a cosmic unity could have only one movement, even though it might appear to send its individualizations revolving in different directions. All the movements conformed to a single pattern of rhythm and produced what the Negro poet Aimé Césaire calls 'the harmony of creation'. When the trunk of a tree was shaken, the branches and leaves seemed to move in different directions. But these movements were responses by the individual parts of the tree to the same force. In this order of unity there could be no relationship of 'otherness' between the whole and its parts or between one individualization and another. Identification of the person with his neighbour was the highest virtue.

The Zulu lawgivers down the ages believed that the person and the family had creative potentials which were unique to them. The person produced the idea by which he changed his environment, and the family produced him. These reformers concentrated on making the family a strong, well-organized, and efficient microcosm whose primary functions were to produce the individual, to equip him for the task of making the best possible use of his life, and to protect him and help him move towards his moment of fulfilment.

In this person-centred order, the government was recognized as an organic and dynamic tool evolved to serve the ends of the community, the family, and the person. It derived its value from the security of the citizen, the efficacy of the family, and

the strength of the state. It grew or stagnated in response to the demands and capabilities of the person and the family.

Unlike the person and the family, the government did not have a soul. Political power could not be concentrated in it. It lay in families and flowed from these peripheral sources to the centre. This is the rock on which communism has bruised its nose in many parts of Africa. An ancient principle of government stated: *Inkosi yinkosi ngabantu*. Legally and literally this meant, 'The king rules by the will of the people.' No matter how benevolent the government, it was not an end in itself. If it imposed its oppressive rule over the citizen his right to revolt was recognized. Zulu history has a whole galaxy of gifted rebels. But as tyrants, ancient and modern, have never regarded tolerance as a political virtue, some Zulu rebels were murdered and others forced to flee their country. When the great Shaka arrogated absolute power to himself and attempted to set himself up as master of all the Zulus, they murdered him.

A synthesis of ideas took place when the missionaries preached among the Nguni-Sotho Africans which altered the relationship between the West and black South Africa. From a situation of tutor and taught, with time the two became somewhat uneasy co-partners in a deepening appreciation of the worth of the individual. The pagan humanism of the 'Sudic Ideal' combined with humanistic influences in Christianity to produce an enlargement of the personality and a depth of tolerance in the African community which worked for the continuous extension of the area of freedom for the person. The marriage of the two humanisms aligned the African's syncretic culture with that tradition in the West which regarded the individual as a sacred end in himself and which sought to widen the area of liberty for him. It was not a coincidence that the syncretic culture assumed the character of a liberating influence or that it identified itself with Western humanistic influences.

Defeat on the battlefield weakened the African's commitment to the 'Sudic Ideal'. He became aware of a greater power than the ancestral spirit, which did not want him to sacrifice beasts to it. In any case a refugee could not have had many of them. It merely wanted his soul reformed. The white missionaries called it God. Some Africans liked it.

Where the tribe was already battling for survival against the

armed might and initiative of the white man, emphasis on freedom for the individual, on his unconditional loyalty to God and not to his king and country, and on the uselessness of the earthly group for purposes of salvation, all threatened the discipline and the unity of the community. The tribe knew of only one corrective for treason. Numbers of early Christians were murdered to stem the tide of 'cultural treachery'. Very many others fled—as the Inanda community did in the land of the Zulus—from their ancestral homes to settle in mission stations or reserves where, as in the shanty-towns, they began creating for themselves the world after their design and evolved a syncretic culture based, like the urban pattern, on borrowings from both sides of the colour line.

Among the Nguni-Sotho Africans the mission culture always differed from its shanty-town counterpart in two major respects. Content was given to it by a set of clearly defined moral and theological ideals and not economic urges. Secondly, the tribe had never really taken up arms against *amahumusha*. At worst it had despised and dismissed them as the degenerates who crawled on their bellies, as the saying went, to lick the spittle of the white man. On the other hand, it had actually killed numbers of converts and had forced many of them to turn their backs permanently on it. This repudiation was final and irrevocable. The break between the tribe and the converts was complete.

The religious refugees had been forced to throw themselves into the hands of the white man—the missionary—for protection. In that situation race had had to lose all its meaning for them. Like *amahumusha* the converts realized that non-racialism was one of their guarantees of survival.

The tribe was disturbed by these splits. The emergence of *amahumusha* and the converts was a revolt in its ranks. Both the townward trend and the acceptance of Christianity constituted a challenge which weakened it. It replied by giving the rebels distinguishing labels which would make them readily identifiable as enemies. It had already called the townsmen *amahumusha* and had evolved patterns of behaviour which put them in their place. It referred to the converts as *amakholwa* (the believers) and reserved to itself the title of *abantu basemakhaya* (the people who belong to where the homes are).

Contact with the white man thus split the African people into three groups, each one of which had outlooks and attitudes which distinguished it from the others. The tribesman, working against the background of defeat and no cultural benefits from the white side, preferred an heroic stance and hoped, to a greater or lesser degree, for an ultimate appointment on the battlefield which would push the white man into the sea and restore to the Africans their land and freedom. History has in some ways modified the angularity of this approach. The modern heroicist insists on asserting African initiatives as the dominant influence in South African national life.

The mission African laboured for a society made up of like-minded and like-spirited equals in a state where race was no longer a factor of political significance. He had a passionate hatred for violence and relied heavily on peaceful methods, diplomacy, and appeals to morality and reason in his campaigns to reform South African society.

The segment descended from the early urban workers was concerned with the colour bar not so much as a moral evil, as the mission people were, than as the factor behind the Pass Laws, low wages, and poor working and living conditions for the black man. Its preference for realism in a community with a schistose mind made its behaviour-patterns curiously unpredictable. In the days when the idealistic moderates from the mission stations dominated African politics, the urban proletariat was all for non-violence, constitutional methods, and collaboration across the colour line. When the idealists changed their tune and plumped for passive resistance, the urban locations distinguished themselves and sent thousands of volunteers to jail, in addition to supporting their families. In the early 1960s the heroic Pan-Africanists called for 'positive action' against race oppression. Sharpeville occurred, to be avenged by the emergence of Poqo (the terroristic offshoot of the Pan-Africanists), which was murderously anti-white. Poqo made its most spectacular demonstration of strength in the urban area of Paarl, in the Cape.

A warning must be given against reading too much into the unpredictability. The urban African is exposed to the harshest operations of the race laws. As a result he is more sensitive to challenges against them. If the idealists promise relief, he rallies

to their banner. If they fail and the heroicists offer something better, he chooses to go with them.

The unpredictability of the urban mind sometimes produced ugly situations. In January 1949 the predominantly Zulu-speaking Africans of Durban suddenly and without warning rose against the Indian community in the city and murdered men, women, and children and burned down hundreds of their homes. There certainly was a lot of ill-feeling between the African workers and traders on the one hand and their Indian opposites. The African workers did not like Indian competition for jobs. The African traders said the Indian traders used unfair means in driving the African out of business. An unplanned incident in the centre of the city caused what should, in normal circumstances, have been a free-for-all fight and not much more. The heroic tribesmen, employed in large numbers as stevedores at the Point, heard of the clash between the Africans and the Indians and decided their hour to strike had come. They sallied by night into Indian suburbs and left behind death and destruction. The initial reaction of the townsmen ranged from active support to indifference. My house at Inanda was nearly burned down by angry Africans when I protested against what was being done to the Indian minority.

The differences in cultural backgrounds constituted a threat and a challenge to the New African. If allowed to find their own forms of political expression they would generate conflicts and tensions which would permanently incapacitate the community for a successful revolt against white supremacy.

In summary, the developments traced above and the problems and dangers faced produced norms of thinking and behaviour in the New African which we shall call the *morality of fulfilment*.

South Africa's race problem may be seen also as a conflict between two moralities: that of fulfilment, which is historically committed to freedom, and that of survival, which upholds the supremacy of the white skin. The group-consciousness and intolerance of the latter morality single it out as belonging primarily to that side in the West which attached maximum importance to the group and sought to narrow down the area of freedom for the person.

The policy of Apartheid, promoted by this morality, is trying

to reverse the historical processes set in motion by the coming of the European to South Africa. Inherent in this process are the awakening of the Africans into a new economic destiny, the rise of the Coloured or mixed community produced from the purely physical encounter between black and white, and the emergence of a syncretic culture which, while African in origin, is Western in orientation. These changes cannot be reversed without grave danger to the polity as a whole, but the morality underlying Apartheid is too concerned with considerations of Afrikaner survival and dominance for the real implications of this fact to be grasped. Until very recently the Afrikaner experience did not have a real tradition of liberal thinking on the race question. For a long time it gave the impression that it thrived on punishing a person for being the child of his parents. It used the noun 'humanist' as a swearword and on the specific issue of race relations between black and white it worked for limiting the African's freedom and for reducing, wherever possible, his potential to be a better person.

V

Industrialization became the epochal magnet which drew large numbers of people into the towns in search of employment. Coming from widely different backgrounds *amahumusha*, *amakholwa*, and *abantu basemakhaya* did not find it easy to live together in the urban shanty-towns—Nancefield and Sophiatown in Johannesburg and Korsten in Port Elizabeth were some of the most famous. The townsman already knew the ways of the white people, but neither the converts nor the tribesmen liked him, although for different reasons. The former hated his materialistic outlook while the latter thought him a cheat who had sold his soul to the uglier side of the whites.

Economic factors, the race laws, the location system, and the police made no distinction between one cultural or lingual group and the other. The people involved were all black and were treated alike. This turned out to be a blessing in disguise. It worked against each group seeking its own forms of political expression and in that way adding to the differences which already split the African community.

Police pressure, economic exploitation, and the race laws created the need for meaningful political unity. This was during the second half of the last century. At the time the African did not have a force in his community which would be strong enough to override the lingual and cultural differences and move all sides towards political co-operation. The Church entered this situation and moved events towards cultural unity. It invited the converts from all lingual and cultural groups to worship together. It pioneered in the establishment of schools and admitted into them children with all sorts of backgrounds, broke down their prejudices, and gave them a uniform outlook on life. The end-product was a citizen who was no longer handicapped by lingual or tribal loyalties and prejudices. Fulfilment for him came to be, first, in identifying himself with those Africans outside his own lingual group who had evolved their equivalents of his new cultural pattern and, secondly, in achieving according to norms and criteria which had universal acceptance. He was made to feel that he was heir not only to his own people's attainments but also to a richly variegated past which was made up of the achievements of the various African peoples taken as an historical unity because of their experience of contact with the white man. His people's history became a part of the history of a larger African family. The link with the Hottentot was woven into the historical experience of the Xhosas, Zulus, and Basotho. The chain of continuity from 1652 was preserved by the similar challenges faced and identical responses. In short, the product of the schools in the towns ceased to be narrowly Zulu, Xhosa, or Sotho; he was proud to know himself as the African.

The resulting widening of horizons sharpened the desire for a more satisfying form of political collaboration. The need for coordinated political responses had been stimulated by fears that some of the whites were thinking of a united front against the African. The suspicion of white intentions had been so great, particularly when the white-led churches became a unifying influence, that some of the nationally-minded Africans broke away from them to form what is today known as the Separatist Movement; that is, churches not led by the whites.

The generation which emerged from the mission and town schools grew up with a new sense of nationhood. This brought

amahumusha and *amakholwa* together. They gradually merged their cultural experiences to produce a synthesis which blended the traditions of the shanty-towns and the mission stations. New borrowings were made from the white side and, to a larger extent, the tribal. The final pattern which emerged had almost no parallel in English-speaking 'Sudic' Africa. Characteristically, the tribe called it *isidolobha*, the culture of the towns (from Dutch: *dorp* = town).

The new cultural pattern was unique in a number of ways, but one aspect deserves special attention here: while the cultures of the tribe, the shanty-towns, and the mission stations each produced a mind orientated in a single direction, the urban synthesis gave the African a composite or schistose mind which would, in one mood, think on the heroic plane and, in others, on the idealistic or realistic. If need arose, it could combine all three approaches.

Today, one does not need to have come from the tribe to be heroic in outlook or to hail from the mission station or the urban areas to be idealistic or realistic respectively. *Isidolobha's* schistose nature enables one to see events from one perspective or the other. Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe, the once jailed leader of the Pan-Africanist Congress, comes from a largely proletarian and peasant background but is the principal spokesman of contemporary heroicism.

The schistose mind has its strong and weak points. It militates against collective group reaction, almost in any crisis. That forced Poqo to kill probably more Africans than it did whites. The murdered Africans were unyielding opponents of terrorism or racism or violence. The new mind can be said to have a built-in objectivity which is one of the glimmers of hope in a situation of deepening tragedy.

At the same time the schistose mind is a distinct handicap in a crisis involving moral, ethnic, and political issues. It does not move swiftly enough to the point of agreement and co-ordinated action. Some of the defeats the morality of fulfilment has suffered can be explained on this score. But then, the African is not in bad company in this regard. Democracy thrashes issues out before a decision.

VI

One of the most important turning-points in the history of the African's syncretic culture was the decision by the whites, during the first decade of the present century, to establish the Union of South Africa. The leaders of the New African saw in this a challenge to *isidolobha*, the morality of fulfilment, and African unity. They viewed Union as an attempt by the whites to gang up against the man of colour. They feared that the whites would establish a closed ethnic state in which the white skin would be the key to opportunity. In such a society the white man would be the permanent master and the African the slave for ever, and an irremovable ceiling would be established beyond which the African would not be allowed to make better use of his life. The leaders regarded this as reflecting the moral and spiritual retardation from the days of isolation and slavery; they put their heads together and called a conference of representative Africans—including the tribal chiefs.

This gathering met in Bloemfontein in 1912 and occupies a place of its own in the annals of the New African. It was an attempt on the part of the leaders of the New African to reconcile the three moods of their people for the purpose of translating cultural unity into co-ordinated political action. The New African asserted his initiatives successfully in the conference and established himself as the unquestioned leader of the community. The conference, which was dominated by the townsmen and mission personalities, avoided a racial reaction to the race provocation behind Union. They elected to regard the colour conflict as a clash of irreconcilable values.

The delegates frowned heavily on violence and chose to use diplomatic and other peaceful pressures to appeal to the conscience of the whites or to split them. They sought to align progressive humanity with their side against the white supremacists. Above all, they defined the type of society which would accord best with the morality of fulfilment. They wanted South Africa to be an open, non-racial state in which the person would be free and able to make the best possible use of his life regardless of race or colour. As was to be expected, the delegates preferred peaceful methods to buy the time they needed to consolidate political unity and awaken the world to the dangers

of racism. The African National Congress was established at this conference.

The decision to buy time is of particular significance. In the first fifty years after Union it did not affect the relations between black and white very deeply. But by the early 1960s it had scored some victories. It had enabled the African community to internationalize the colour crisis, brought about the diplomatic isolation of the Apartheid regime, and, internally, divided the white community on the race issue. These gains are poor consolation against Apartheid's excesses of violence in Sharpeville and elsewhere, the hanging of political prisoners, the people exiled or thrown into jail or who lost their freedom in other ways, and the Draconian laws which have since made South Africa a typical police state in everything but name—in so far as the African is concerned.

If the developments just referred to represent a catastrophic defeat at present for the morality of fulfilment, indications are not lacking which point to future situations of conflict. One of the common factors in the nationalism of the African and the Afrikaner today is the ground both have covered in moving towards the extreme right. Oppressive legislation provokes increasingly militant reactions from the African and makes heroic policies more attractive. This has forced both sides into a disturbingly vicious circle in which the intransigence of the one goads the other into taking up positions of corresponding extremism. The present lull is but a phase in a process which moves in predictable cycles.

The African's immediate reaction to Sharpeville has been to retreat from the political fight for the present in order to lick his wounds in his locations and reserves. The Government has seized on his defeat to execute some of its programmes of re-tribalization. Some people fear that one day the African will decide to come to terms with the inevitable and accept Apartheid. His repudiation of the whites, which would follow, would isolate the few liberal-minded whites and leave the race problem defined purely in terms of black and white. In that setting the white liberal is likely to find himself forced to fight with the Apartheid side to defend himself, his family, and the white skin. This is precisely one of the goals of the Apartheid regime.

While the prospect of a straightforward colour clash must not

be ruled out, a distinction should always be made between adjusting to political realities and a cultural revolution. Re-tribalization seems probable. If it comes, the re-tribalized African might develop an exaggerated loyalty to his language group and possibly narrow his political horizons. If he does that, dangerous tensions and conflicts will develop in his own community. But this is not the point aimed at. Whether he liked it or not, he would move to fulfilment in the Bantustans within the framework of *isidolobha*. There is now no such thing as tribal culture in South Africa. Whatever passes for it represents the last remains of a way of life which lost its meaning under the impacts of conquest, education, and industrialization. The last three factors, incidentally, produced *isidolobha*. Their growth and strength reinforce it. There seems no possibility that the advocates of Apartheid might one day decide to do without them.

For the morality of survival to persuade the re-tribalized African to abandon *isidolobha*, it would have to bring about a cultural revolution; to offer him something more attractive and tangible than the semi-freedom the Transkei enjoys. Unfortunately for it, it lacks the moral and spiritual resources which would embolden it to give real freedom and economic independence to the Bantustans.

Real freedom would, among other things, produce sovereign independent African states with direct access to the sea. The possible transportation of arms over the territory of these maritime countries would threaten to alter the present balance of racial forces in South Africa. One finds it extremely difficult to imagine how any advocate of Apartheid would, in all his senses, encourage this sort of thing.

One's doubts here are reinforced by Apartheid's performance. In the twenty years that it has been in power, not one sovereign independent Bantustan has been established. The much-publicized Transkei is not much more than a South African colony with limited powers of local government. Its capital, Umtata, has separate residential areas for black and white. Pretoria controls the police and the courts of the land.

Britain and France have, during the last twenty years, freed millions of Africans, very many of whom admit that they were less advanced educationally and economically than the black

South African when they got their independence. Pretoria itself boasts that the Africans of the Republic are more advanced, as a group, than all 'Sudic' communities on the continent. In spite of this the Government cannot trust them with independence. All this reduces Apartheid's promises on the Bantustans to a gigantic and tragic bluff.

The point being emphasized is that while re-tribalization might succeed, the attempt to deculturate the New African in independent Bantustans might produce unexpected results. Apartheid's inability to give the African a satisfying form of fulfilment will continue to force him to recognize Free Africa and that section of mankind which opposes racism as together constituting the world to which he belongs and within which he can feel wanted. This and Apartheid's attitude to the man of colour seem certain to produce a new synthesis of political experiences in the 'independent' Bantustans. Just as cultural unity led to political unity last century, so is *isidolobha* almost certain to produce some form of political collaboration among the free peoples of the former High Commission Territories (which are now Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland) and the 'independent' citizens of the Transkei and other possible Bantustans. The main stimulus which will move events in this direction is, of course, the fact that Apartheid constitutes a standing affront to every person of African descent. Already, there is talk in some of the former High Commission Territories of a confederation of the independent black states of South Africa. Such a union would not be the sort of thing Pretoria would like on the Republic's borders.

One must guard against being too optimistic about the capacity of the African states to alter the course of events in South Africa. The former High Commission Territories are too badly placed geographically and economically to want a collision with South Africa in conditions where she could destroy them as viable states. Some of the Bantustans are in a better position here. They would have access to the sea and direct communication with the rest of the world. For some time to come, however, not even these will be ready for a show-down with Apartheid.

The point made is that new situations of conflict are developing and that these might be dangerous if Maoist China does not

abandon her dreams of leading the non-white peoples of the world. There is no real external reason why she should be in a hurry to give up her aspirations on this plane. The newly freed non-white peoples of the world are largely underdeveloped and poor. In their haste to lead better lives they will encounter inevitable frustrations. They will then resist with difficulty, unless the United Nations is reformed to make it an effective force for peace, the temptation to allow race to be one of the main issues dividing mankind towards the end of the century. Apartheid's humiliation of the African would then be a valuable weapon in Maoist China's hands for dividing the West and the Sudant.

VII

If the situation described so far leaves the reader pessimistic about the possibility of changing the course of events in South Africa it is to be hoped, at least, that it emphasizes the complexity of that country's race question. The deadlock in the United Nations on the Apartheid issue underlines the same difficulty. Strange as it may sound, some members of the South African Government are beginning to show signs of being frustrated by their inability to honour their pledged word on the Bantustans, for example. The present Prime Minister's so-called outward-looking policy and his expressed enthusiasm for meeting African heads of state are carefully calculated expressions of this frustration. They certainly do not represent an attempt to re-examine the foundations on which the morality of survival is based. The Apartheid regime would not survive if it did that in the atmosphere which exists in South Africa. Their significance lies in the challenge to Free World and Free African statesmanship which they constitute. Black and white in South Africa need to be pushed towards an arrangement which will enable them to cool their tempers and in that way pave the road to a purposeful and constructive dialogue which could in the end produce agreement across the colour line on final goals.

With the dialogue as the starting-point, certain possibilities open up for an altogether new approach to Apartheid. But the scope of the present contribution precludes the discussion of

these possibilities. Let it suffice to mention two obvious advantages of the dialogue. The final goal of a negotiated political settlement could encourage the Western powers to renew their support for efforts to solve the race problem and make South Africa, because of her skill and achievements, an influence working for interstate collaboration, peace, and stability on the continent.

The other point to consider is the motivating urge which gives form and direction to the African's agitations for reform. In Southern Africa, the 'Sudic' African is working ultimately towards a new synthesis of experiences; towards something which will ensure that no person is punished for being the child of his parents: a social order in which the individual will be free and able to make the best possible use of his life. The white contribution to the synthesis would be as valuable as his. He wants to merge these for the purpose of creating an order of society to which black and white will feel they belong and within which they will feel wanted and secure.

There is evidence of history to establish his bona fides. Over the last hundred and fifty years or so he has been consciously welding into a unity the historical and cultural experiences of his various lingual groups. An aspect of this achievement of which he is proudest is that he produced *isidolobha* without any African group losing its language or other cultural attainments.

On this plane he regards his skill and experience as richer than anything the Afrikaner can produce. In a more or less similar position of weakness, the latter insisted on the Afrikanerization of the German, the French, etc. The New African does not wish to swallow up the white community and destroy its identity. This identity gives it virility and enhances its ability to achieve. A non-racial, virile, and achieving South Africa could, in the foreseeable future, fill on the continent the role played by America in the western hemisphere.

Even if there was no historical evidence to prove the African's earnestness of purpose, the white man is in too strong an economic, political, and cultural position to lose much by merely talking to the New African on how best they might live together as equal citizens in the land of their birth.

Sceptics might argue that it was easy for the New African to unite his people. There was their land and freedom to regain;

there was, also, race humiliation. Granted. But in the era of turbulence which stretched from the middle of the eighteenth century to the first half of the nineteenth, the 'Sudic' Africans fought each other with savage brutality and, in the process, generated hatreds which were deeper than the attitudes which prevail between black and white at the moment. The poverty of the African and the white man's skill in creating wealth provide limitless scope for collaboration across the colour line. This is why all over Free Africa white men find themselves wanted. But, by insisting on a closed ethnic state, citizenship in which is determined by race, Apartheid reverses this process; it polarizes attitudes in racial directions, isolates the whites in a predominantly black continent, and gives the African a vested interest in the expulsion of the white man from Southern Africa. China's development of portable nuclear weapons would ultimately transform this into a conflict very much like the war in South Vietnam. Already there are Africans who are thinking of an agreement with China on the manufacture of portable nuclear arms which would establish a balance of terror in Southern Africa as the first prerequisite for the expulsion of the whites. Awareness of this prospect, among other dangers, must have prompted President Kaunda to lead an anti-Apartheid mission to Western capitals in October 1970. If past failures are any guide, diplomatic pressures alone are unlikely to produce the desired results. There is need not only for clarity on final goals but also for a philosophy and technique for deracialization.

Let it be said in conclusion that, complicated as the race question is, it remains a human problem. Its complexity suggests that continued efforts to bring the two sides to the conference table hold out some hope of a solution—perhaps the only hope.