

THE AFRICANS SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES

Conquest shattered the nomarchy of all Black language-groups. The prescribed destiny gave them a new identity. They did not belong to their nomos because the White man's guns had wiped them out, and they did not belong to the White man's world because he rejected them. They became a nowhere people, hanging somewhere between heaven and earth and belonging nowhere.

In spite of these beginnings, the advocates of apartheid remain unshaken in their conviction that the African has his heart in the "tribe."

In an article in the *Star* (Johannesburg; international edition, July 8, 1978), Mr. Louis Nel, apartheid's member of parliament for Pretoria Central, made the following comments on the conference on South Africa which met in Freiberg, West Germany, in 1978:

The scientists (in the conference) sought to infer from empirical findings that ethnicity is not a relevant political concept among the Blacks in the cities any more. All the questions asked related to the social behaviour of the Blacks and no important conclusion of a political consequence should be drawn from that.

The fact that most Blacks in the cities see the cities as their home in the sense of a place where they prefer to work and live permanently does not in any way deny the existence of clearly definable Black nations in South Africa.

It is clear that the vociferous denial of the existence and importance of ethnicity is nothing more than a Black political strategy.

Let the Africans tell us in their own words how they have been feeling about ethnicity down the generations, how they translated their feelings into action, and what their goal is. The witnesses I shall call have left us a whole literature on all this. Their pronouncements have been collected into three volumes and edited by Thomas Karis and Gwendolyn Carter. The volumes bear the title *From Protest to Challenge; A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa, 1882-1964*, and are published by the Hoover Institution Press, Stanford University, Stanford, California. The quotations are from Volumes I, II and III.

In his introduction to Volume I Sheridan Johns, III, observes:

...a small group of Africans in the Transkei called on educated Africans in 1882 to form a political organization, *Imbumba Yama Afrika* [which was] expressly concerned with maintaining African unity so that African interests could be forcefully articulated.

In 1884, Africans in the eastern Cape Colony formed two additional organizations, the Native Education Association and the Native Electoral Association. Both groups were concerned with electoral politics and larger issues affecting the African population.

The Africans who formed *Imbumba Yama Afrika* were mainly the Xhosa-speaking. In spite of this, they formed, not *Imbumba Yama Xhosa* (the Xhosa Organisation), but *Imbumba Yama Afrika* (the African Peoples' Organisation).

In a statement on the task *Imbumba* had set itself, S.N. Mvambo, its leader, made these remarks:

Anyone looking at things as they are, could even go so far as to say it was a fatal *mistake* to bring so many church denominations to the Black people. For the Black man makes the fatal mistake of thinking that if he is an Anglican, he has nothing to do with anything suggested by a Wesleyan, and the Wesleyan also thinks so, and so does the Presbyterian. *Imbumba* must make sure that all these three are represented at the conference, for we must be united on political matters. In fighting for national rights, we must fight together.

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The educated and unschooled Africans gave a lot of thought to the vacuum in their thinking which conquest created. Their answer, as Mvambo demonstrates, was a nationalism that was larger than nomarchism; it was a synthesis of nomarchistic ideals of nationhood.

But the educated were not the only people who sought ways for filling the vacuum. In his book *The Story of the Zulus*, J.Y.T. Wilson tells us that by the 1870s Cetshwayo, king of the Zulu, was sending emissaries to the then-extant African states asking them to form a military alliance which would declare Southern Africa a Black collective security area and push the Whites into the sea. Wilson says a White missionary in the Lydenburg district of the Transvaal reported that Cetshwayo's emissaries had been in that district spreading the gospel of an African united front to deal with the threat from the White side.

Sir Bartle Frere, too, was worried about the goals of Cetshwayo's diplomacy. He received reports that Cetshwayo's envoys were secretly active among Africans in the Cape Province. His worries led eventually to the war of 1879.

By the 1880s virtually all the African language-groups had been brought under the authority of the White man. If this shattered the nomarchic experience, it deepened the vacuum and emphasised the urgency of a formula for co-existence by which to fill it.

Writing from among the Xhosa, Mvambo said the answer was the unification of the African language-groups in order to develop a Collective Will. Cetshwayo, in Kwa Zulu, said the answer was the establishment of a collective security area. Here we see the beginnings of a convergence of views which was to have profound effects on the relations between Black and White.

Dr. Pixley ka Isaka Seme was one of the earliest Black thinkers to propose an ideological basis for the Collective Will. Writing in *The*

African Abroad (April 5, 1906) he propounded his Regeneration Theory in these terms:

I am an African and I set my pride in my race over against a hostile public opinion....

The African already recognizes his anomalous position and desires a change....

Yes, the regeneration of Africa belongs to this new and powerful period! By this term regeneration I wish to be understood to mean the entrance into a new life, embracing the diverse phases of a higher, complex existence. The basic factor which assures their regeneration resides in the awakened race-consciousness. This gives them [the Africans] a clear perception of their elemental needs and of their undeveloped power. It therefore must lead them to the attainment of that higher and advanced standard of life....

The African people, although not a strictly homogeneous race, possess a common fundamental sentiment which is everywhere manifest, crystallizing itself into one common controlling idea. Conflicts and strife are rapidly disappearing before the fusing force of this enlightened perception of the true intertribal relation, which relation subsists among a people with a common destiny. . . .

The ancestral greatness, the unimpaired genius, and the recuperative power of the race, its irrepressibility, which assures its greatness, constitute the African's greatest source of inspiration. . . .

The regeneration of Africa means that a new and unique civilization is soon to be added to the world. . . .

The most essential departure of this new civilization is that it shall be thoroughly spiritual and humanistic—indeed a regeneration moral and eternal!

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Seme made it clear that the alternative to the prescribed destiny was the creation of a "new and unique civilization" on the basis of "a common controlling idea." This idea was the Sudic evaluation of the person, which the "people with a common destiny" translated into experience in their different environments. No African should ever apologise for being a member of his language-group; none should ever be made to apologise for being the child of his or her particular parents, for to belong to a given language-group or nomarchy was a quality of being human; all were the faces of humanity's many-sided face; all were the faces of Africa's many-sided face. This "enlightened perception of the true intertribal relation" gave a unifying momentum to the cultures of the peoples of Africa; it made them a "people with a common destiny." The "perception" had "fusing force" because it defined the person in mature and positive terms.

The first essential element in building the new civilization was to unite the African peoples of Southern Africa into a new nation on the basis of

"the common controlling idea." Seme preferred the Sudic Ideal because all the Africans were what he called "the children of one household"; the Sudic Ideal made them such a unity.

To Seme, the word African had nothing to do with race; it denoted commitment to a given definition of the person, to a given "common controlling idea." Writing in *Imvo Zabansundu* (October 24, 1911), he stated his position in these terms:

The greatest success shall come when man shall have learned to co-operate, not only with his own kith and kin, but with all peoples and with all life. . . .

There is today among all races and men a general desire for progress, and for co-operation, because co-operation will facilitate and secure that progress.

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Seme took a strong and uncompromising stand against racialism and "tribalism." He regarded them as the mortal foes of progress and harmony between peoples:

The demon of racialism, the aberrations of the Xosa-Fingo feud, the animosity that exists between the Zulus and the Tongaas, between the Basutos and every other Native must be buried and forgotten; it has shed among us sufficient blood! We are one people. These divisions, these jealousies, are the cause of all our woes and of all our backwardness and ignorance today.

Doc. 21

Seme, like Mvambo, addressed himself to the dangers posed by the vacuum. He and his generation had to act and act quickly to control the social disintegration created by conquest. He sent out a clarion call to:

all the dark races of this sub-continent to come together once or twice a year in order to review the past and reject therein all those things which have retarded our progress, the things which poison the springs of our national life and virtue; to label and distinguish the sins of civilisation, and as members of one household to talk and think loudly on our home problems.

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The problem which Seme faced was not new in the Zulu experience. The Natal Nguni had had to fight the threat of social disintegration in the thousand years before Shaka, as titles appended to family names tell us. The court poet to Shaka's father had said that the answer to the threat was an ideal of fulfillment which evoked identical and co-ordinable responses to similar challenges. Shaka translated this ideal into action when he led the revolution (*Imfecane*) which produced the Zulu nation-state.

Revolutions are not pleasant events; they are cruel and violent. This is because they are moments of rebirth into a new destiny. Birth, as every mother will vouchsafe, is a painful and messy happening. Uglier things

were done in the Cromwellian, American, French and Russian revolutions than in the Shakan.

The disintegration caused by conquest brought all the Black language-groups to the crossroads. All were disarmed; all had been forced into the position where their conquerors prescribed destiny for them; they were not educated in the ways of their conquerors. Wherever they turned, disaster stared them in the face.

Some said destruction was not their fate. It could not be the destiny of a people committed to a positive evaluation of the person. He told them that they had to put their heads together to identify "the sins of civilisation." They had to do this because they were not a Graeco-Romano-Hebraic people; Graeco-Romano-Hebraic civilisation rejected them. For them to be integrated into it was an invitation to humiliation; they had to create a synthesis of outlooks which would address itself to the demands of their situation.

In this setting, the answer to the prescribed destiny was an ideal of fulfillment which evoked identical and co-ordinable responses to similar provocations. Christianity was not the answer; it was incapable of producing these responses because it was a determinant of behaviour on the enemy side. The protean, Sudic evaluation of the person, which each African language-group translated into experience in terms dictated by its environment, gave to all Africans the character of "children of one household" and made them "a people with a common destiny." When Graeco-Romano-Hebraic civilisation humiliated them and made it a crime for them to be the children of their particular parents, their destiny had to be to create "a new and unique civilization," on the basis of a different attitude to the person.

The Africans did not have much of a choice. They faced a fundamental problem which demanded a fundamental answer. All sorts of difficulties stood in their way. The tragedies and suspicions brought about by *Imfecane* created paralysing chasms. No community had experience in uniting and building a nation out of peoples with different ethnic backgrounds. Fragmentation forced them to define themselves in a multiplicity of conflicting terms. Christianity created disorder in their personalities while proletarianisation transformed them into creatures which were not much different from mobile cadavers.

This does not mean that there were no influences which aided unity. Race humiliation affected every African language-group; so did industrialisation and proletarianisation. Christianity played a unifying role in its denominations and schools. The net effect of all these interactions was to give added impact to the moulding of the new nation.

The vacuum confronted every language-group with an unavoidable challenge. The threat of shattered cultural anchors affected all the African language-groups; each community sooner or later realised that by itself it would not be able to solve the problems which stood in its way.

Each had tried to develop its own synthesis of anchors. If it went too far with this, the Whites hastened to play it against the other groups or to isolate it.

The answer was co-ordinated action in creating a larger synthesis of African traditions and borrowings from the White side. Initially each language-group used only its weapons and other vehicles to create its side of the synthesis; it could not do otherwise. These were all that were available to it. Let us see what the Zulus did. They fell back to *ukuqhatha* (conflict rationalisation) to develop the synthesis which they contributed to the synthesis of syntheses that Africans adopted as their cultural mode in the Bloemfontein Unity Conference.

Conflict rationalization has its roots in the Sudic Ideal's emphasis on the primacy of the person and in its recognition of the simultaneous legitimacy, validity and equality of the ways different peoples in different parts of the world define themselves.

The nature of the monolith is such that it creates and thrives on conflict; it generates tensions inside itself which it cannot in the long run resolve, while its bias for predation forces it constantly to clash with other monoliths. In the view of the Africans, who were committed to the principle of simultaneous legitimacy, the nature and functioning of monolithism called for a strategy which would enable them to give constructive purpose to conflict. This strategy would make it possible for the new nation to attack aggressively where it was strong and to conciliate where it was weak.

The unification of our people, the Evolving Revolt and the isolation of the Whites on the international plane were—like the formation of the Congress Youth League in 1944, the Defiance Campaign of the 1950s, the Pan-Africanist Congress's Anti-Pass Campaign of 1960 and the Soweto Rebellion—indications of strategic aggressiveness at work.

Where the African was weak he conciliated. The collaborationism advocated by the Jabavu family, African involvement in the long and futile dialogues with the government during the 1920s and the 1930s, the commitment to non-violence and moderatism were modes of tactical conciliation.

In South Africa's situation of conflicting monoliths, aggressiveness and conciliation were complements, just as the militancy of men like Steve Biko and the realism of people like Chief Gatsha Buthelezi are.

The rationalization of conflict is the technique developed in Sudic communities for using conflict in ways which serve the ends of reason. The Zulu understanding of the Sudic Ideal regards the person and his neighbour as mutually-fulfilling complements. Two people in love are complements; both need the other for the love-relationship to be real. In like manner, two persons quarrelling are complements; the situation of conflict would not exist without the quarrelling people; the healthy person cannot quarrel with himself.

In the old days, Zulu tradition held that situations of conflict could be created or managed in such a way as to give constructive purpose to forces in collision. Zulu education concentrated on teaching boys and girls the art of handling conflict, which was regarded as a force, like fire, heat, thunder or lightning. From quite an early age, the boy was initiated into the mysteries of *ukungweka* (sparring with fighting-sticks). The girl was trained in the control of her mind and feelings to enable her to give constructive purpose to the conflicts and tensions which were part and parcel of life in a polygamous family. The Zulus gave the name *ukuphatha umuzi* (the administration of family affairs) to this aspect of a girl's training.

Each Sudic community of Southern Africa developed its own techniques for giving constructive purpose to conflict. To ensure that the Zulu extorted maximum advantage from the rationalization of conflict, he or she was taught how to recognise complements in any given situation of conflict or how to create such a situation when necessary; how to select and align forces to produce the desired results and how to manage them as they moved to the desired goal or became dangerous.

To manage the complements successfully, a third force, more powerful than either of the complements, had to regulate their conduct and interaction. In *ukungweka*, the third force or regulant was *ingqwele*, the leader of the boys of a particular age-group.

The men and women who went to Bloemfontein in 1912 regarded the Afrikaners and the English, who had been at war at the turn of the century and had formed a united front of White monoliths in 1910, as complements. The Africans went to Bloemfontein to transform themselves into a third force, into the regulant that had the potential of being more powerful than either the Afrikaners or the English. The regulant they created was the new African nation.

Wherever this nation was strong, it went on the offensive; at the same time it conciliated where it was weak. Some of its topmost leaders were men and women who had had an overseas education or who had travelled in foreign lands. These attached importance to what was then known as the conscience of humanity. If they laid emphasis on the moral aspects of race humiliation, they believed they stood better chances of being heard. They accordingly sent a deputation to the Versailles Peace Conference to internationalise the quarrel on segregation.

The response to Seme's call was massive. Delegates from all the language-groups then resident in South Africa and the Protectorates gathered in Bloemfontein on January 8, 1912, to effect their rebirth into a new destiny. The delegates rejected the destiny prescribed for them by the Whites and saw fulfilment for themselves in uniting themselves formally into a new nation on the basis of the "common controlling idea." The destiny of this nation, as Seme had always said, was to create "a new and unique civilization."

At this gathering, the various language-groups created a vehicle to guide their march to the destiny they had freely chosen for themselves—the African National Congress. The aims of the Congress were stated in its constitution:

1. To unite, absorb, consolidate and preserve under its aegis existing political educational Associations, Vigilance Committees and other public and private bodies whose aims are the promotion and safeguarding of the interests of the aboriginal races.
2. To be the medium of expression of representative opinion and to formulate a standard policy on Native Affairs for the benefit and guidance of the Union Government and Parliament; . . .
5. To educate Bantu people on their rights, duties and obligations to the state and to themselves individually and collectively; and to promote mutual help, feeling of fellowship and a spirit of brotherhood among them;
6. To encourage mutual understanding and to bring together into common action as one political people all tribes and clans of various tribes of races and by means of combined effort and united political organisation to defend their freedom, rights and privileges;
7. To discourage and contend against racialism and tribal feuds or to secure the elimination of racialism and tribal feuds, jealousy and petty quarrels by economic combination, education, goodwill and by other means.

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If we follow carefully the thinking of the delegates, we shall see that they set out to give the new nation the form of a monolith in order to oppose successfully the united front of White monoliths. The Constitution of the ANC stated:

19. The National Congress shall be composed of
 - (a) The hereditary Kings, Princes and Chiefs;
 - (b) The Elected Representatives of the Territories and the Protectorates (Lesotho, Botswana and Swaziland);
 - (c) The Executive Committee;
 - (d) Official Delegates of the Provincial Congresses;
 - (e) Delegates representing certain bodies allied with and under the aegis of the Association.

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The monolith was composed of all the segments into which the various language-groups had been split by conquest, of all cultural self-definitions, of all social and economic classes, and of all interest-groups.

The Whites had rejected the Africans. By forming themselves into a new nation, the Africans made it known that they rejected teleguidance; that they were not members of the Graeco-Romano-Hebraic world; that they no longer wanted to belong to it; and that they were going to carve out a destiny for themselves which they had freely chosen. In all this, they

told those with ears to hear that they would allow nobody, anywhere, to prescribe destiny for them.

By uniting themselves into a new nation, they buried nomarchism and set in motion an Evolving Revolt—a struggle for self-determination which gave itself a unifying momentum and which adapted its strategy and tactics to the demands of a changing situation.

Monolithical Functionalism and Conflict Rationalisation were the principles on which the strategy of the new nation was founded. We shall discuss these when we consider the five main responses to conquest.

Seme was a Zulu. It should be noted that when he sent out his clarion call, he did not address himself to the Zulus; he called on "all the Black races of the sub-continent" to unite. Monolithical Functionalism and Conflict Rationalisation were not nomarchic techniques; they were syntheses of experiences developed by the Collective Will which produced the Bloemfontein Ideal of Nationhood.

This Collective Will complemented the Evolving Revolt with an external offensive to internationalise the race quarrel and isolate the White supremacists on the international plane. With this in mind, the new nation sent a delegation to the Versailles Peace Conference in 1919 to alert the outside world to the explosion developing in South Africa.

The geopolitical expression of monolithism could not be anything other than a federal structure. "Children of one household" were unchanging equals with the same right to fulfilment in the light of their different temperaments; their cultural self-definitions were simultaneously legitimate. The form of state within which they could thrive was a federal union of culturally autonomous communities. We shall come to these when we discuss the five moods of African Nationalism.

For the present, let us trace the evolution of the African people's commitment to nationhood. Our witnesses will be leaders from all language-groups, representing African opinion from the Left to the Right.

The newly formed nation had hardly adapted to the demands of union when the White government plunged it in a major crisis. Parliament proceeded to pass the Natives Land Act of 1913 which made it illegal for Africans to buy land in so-called White areas. The ANC protested against the measure on behalf of all the language groups:

... this Congress, representing all the tribes of the Bantu Races within the Union, earnestly prays that Parliament unhesitatingly reject the Report of the Natives Land Commission and instantly withdraw the Natives Land Act of 1913. Vol. I, Doc. 26

This was in 1916. In his May 6, 1919 presidential address to the Congress, Mr. S.M. Makgatho, who came from the Northern Sotho language-group warned:

At a time like this, when we are face to face with some of the worst upheavals that ever overtook our people, it is imperative that we should stand together. . . .

This is the land of our fathers, and, in it, we wish to be treated at least as well as foreigners and with the same consideration extended to foreigners, including foreigners of enemy origin. Vol. I, Doc. 32

John Tengo Jabavu, the great Xhosa liberal, gave evidence before the Select Committee on Native Affairs on June 15, 1920. The White members of the Committee defined the new African in "tribal" terms. The Chairman asked Jabavu:

You are not afraid that the appointment of one or two natives on the Commission would have the effect of rousing jealousy among the various native tribes of South Africa?

[Jabavu:] I do not know that in practice it would mean much—it is only sentiment.

Would a Zulu member of a Commission carry any weight with natives of the Transkei?

Yes, if he was a generally recognised man, if the people knew who he was, that he was capable, suitable in regard to character and also in regard to ability. Vol. I, Doc. 33a

Tengo's attitude is important because he had serious reservations on the Bloemfontein Unity Conference and its decisions.

Meshack Pelem, another Xhosa, was president of the Bantu Union. At the Queenstown Conference of the Union on February 26, 1919, he declared:

... the time has come when all the races of the earth must be freed from the tyranny of the few and be granted equal rights and liberties in all things without distinction of race, colour, or previous condition. . . .
... there is nothing more honourable than that a man or woman should lose even life itself for the love of country, the honour of their people, and the graves where the ashes of their forefathers rest.

... British Ministers have been found or forced to become traitors to the ancient constitution of England, and have sold the Bantu under a fraudulent Union...as long as the foundations are based upon oppression and injustice, they shall never unify, but on the contrary, evil and division shall reign. . . . Vol. I, Doc. 29

Pelem stood somewhere between Seme and Jabavu and, like the latter, spoke Xhosa. Jabavu's son, Don Davidson Tengo, became an African liberal luminary and played a key role in the development of Medialism.

Richard Victor Selope-Thema was one of the distinguished journalists of the new nation who wrote during the early years of the new nation and continued to do this into the 1950s. He wrote an article which *The Guardian* published in September, 1922:

. . . the [race] problem cannot be solved until both races have learned to co-operate in finding its solution. . . .

It is well known that the European has really no objection against Africans so long as they remain a race of servants. . . .

He [the White man] wants to dominate and to be master of the destinies of other races. . . .

. . . each race of mankind has the right to work out its own destiny and live its own life without let or hindrance. This right can only be limited by the equal right of others. . . .

I do not see how the Africans can develop along their own lines when they are kept under European hegemony. To develop along their own lines and evolve their own civilisation, they must not only have a place in the sun, but must have freedom of thought and action. . . .

The policy of "White South Africa" has naturally given rise on this side of the colour line to a cry of "Africa for the Africans."

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Clements Kadalie had originally come from Malawi and had settled in Cape Town where he attained fame as a trade union leader. He was a founder of the ICU (Industrial and Commercial Workers Union) and was one of the leaders of radical Medialism in the Cape Town area. In his "Open Letter to Blackpool," which *The New Leader* published on September 30, 1927, he warned:

Denied all legitimate expression for his grievances and aspirations, who can blame the African if he takes what will seem to him the only possible path to freedom, if he comes to hate the White man as his oppressor, and if the attainment of justice and liberty comes for him to be a thing synonymous with the crushing of the civilisation the White man has built up?

None knows better than we do how fatal is the narrow spirit of nationalism; but, if the present ungenerous and shortsighted policy is continued by the Union Government, what other path will there be for us to take, and who among us will be able to show the African worker, maddened and humiliated by the White man's injustice and oppression, that White civilisation can yet be a fine and beautiful thing, that many of its constructive ideals are sane and desirable, and that its destruction in Africa will be immeasurably to the hurt of the African?

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The united front of White monoliths was deaf to the voice of reason from the new nation. The Africans began to speak in strident tones. The Reverend Z.R. Mahabane, a distinguished theologian who played an active role in African politics and spent a large part of his life laying foundations for the reconciliation of Medialism and Monolithism, issued a statement which the *Bantu World* published on May 18, 1935:

The proposals embodied in the Report and the Draft Bills [abolishing the Cape Vote] constitute a direct challenge to the African community

of the Union. How long shall the African people who form the integral and inseparable part and parcel of the population of the Union be contented with a position of political inferiority and political helotry and of exclusion from the civil organism of this land of their birth? . . .

The Africans should gather together on this occasion, take stock of their position as a race of people in the country, consider the whole Native policy that has been inaugurated since Union. . . .

—Vol. II, Document 1

The united front of White monoliths was at the height of its power; it could afford to ignore the wishes of the African people. It had the guns and the guns guaranteed everything; they guaranteed security. Mahabane had been a moderate all his life; he had been a courageous moderate. When the Whites finally took away the Cape African Vote, he changed his tone. At the December 16-17, 1948, joint conference of the ANC and the AAC, he stood up and told the delegates:

It is time we said to the Europeans of this country: "Thus far, and no farther." A state of emergency exists. Urgent measures must be adopted. The call is "To Arms," not by taking weapons but by coming together and speak with one voice and act as one man.

—Vol. II, Document 69

The African people had reached their moment of decision when the Union of South Africa was established in 1910. They had chosen to form themselves into a new and larger nation. The choice moved the Whites to their moment of decision. They reached this moment in 1929, when Afrikaner nationalism rose to power virtually on its own steam. The Afrikaner chose to reject the African; to reject the Black man's right to share power with the Whites. The Afrikaner monolith, supported by the English monolith, declared political war on the African nation and set out systematically to pulverise the Collective Will. The lines of conflict were drawn.

Mahabane's words were harsh and angry; they were the words the person utters when his humanity is outraged; they were the words of a people convinced that the White man was incapable of leading a mixed nation. Mahabane, however, was a Christian; he prayed hard while tyranny took bolder steps to crush the Collective Will.

A new generation of leaders came to the fore. They were not interested in prayer; they were not interested in dialogues; they were not interested in the White "friends" of the African. They spoke a new language; they concerned themselves with the African's destiny. The generation of their fathers had created the African monolith but hesitated to face squarely the inexorable logic of monolithism. The young men and women who formed themselves into the Congress Youth League grew up in a climate of systematic deprivation and dispossession. The African was losing his

right to own land in the urban areas of his country; he was being denied the right to be on the common roll of voters in the country; he was being driven out of jobs so that Hertzog's "civilised labour policy" could secure the position of the poor Whites, who were mainly Afrikaners, at the expense of the African.

The answer to these humiliations was to face the harsh logic of being a monolith. The mainly Nominalist Old Guard in the leadership of the ANC had to be eased out of their positions. Eased out is the operative phrase. The League was committed to the Bloemfontein Ideal of Nationhood on one hand and, on the other, did not want to do anything which the surrogates of Moscow could seize upon to split the ANC as they had done when they used J.T. Gumede to divide the ANC and C. Doyle Modiakgotla to polarise the ICU during the second half of the 1920s.

The harsh logic required that we should deepen the vacuum that the Bloemfontein Ideal of Nationhood had created among the Whites, fill it with our concept of nationhood, give leadership which would enable us to overthrow White rule, and establish a society in which it would never again be a crime for the person to be the child of his particular parents.

This was the goal to which the Collective Will, developed in 1912, moved events in our community. For the surrogates of Moscow to talk of class conflict when race humiliation was the reality history required us to address ourselves to, when our land had been taken away, our honour trampled in the mud and our freedom crushed in the name of White supremacy, was to play the White man's game of diverting us from the fundamentals of conflict for the purpose of slowing down our march to freedom and majority rule.

For me in particular, the most important of these fundamentals was that the race factor was used to translate an attitude to the person which created catastrophic disharmonies in the human being committed to the Buntu philosophy; these disharmonies would move us, as they did the Caucasians, through cycles of conflict to final destruction.

It was not an accident that the attitude we needed to reject had hurled the world into two global wars in my own lifetime. I had been born toward the end of the first while the second broke out when I was an adult. My generation feared that the third might break out before we had died.

I saw no reason why we should hang on to the coattails of the Whites as the Caucasians would lead us to destruction with them. Like the Black authors and writers who met in Stockholm and Rome in the 1950s I sought to attain clarity on the ideal of fulfilment which would preserve the equilibrium of the Sudic world, unite the peoples of African descent everywhere and enable them to give a meaning to freedom which would lead the human race along safer routes to a better future.

My generation believed that Africa's destiny was to lead the human race after the Graeco-Romano-Hebraic attitude to the human being as a dominant factor in world thinking collapsed. The African would not be responsible for its fall; the fact that it was incapable of having a similarly valid and satisfying meaning in Black and White communities doomed it.

The generation of our fathers was caught in the contradictions of Nominalism and early Medialism and was reluctant to face the inevitable implication of apartheid, which was known as segregation at the time; They did not want to deal with the logic of transforming the various African language-groups into a monolith. These men were not cowards; they would not have gone to Bloemfontein if they were; they were realists who were aware that the balance between the reserves of power they controlled and those held by the White community was not in their favour.

The Youth League came into being to move events toward majority rule as the first step in the campaign to unify Sudic Africa for the purpose of freeing her from White domination and placing her in the position of leading the world to a safer future.

Anton Mziwakhe Lembede and Ashby Peter Mda were the principal spokesmen of the League. These two worked with the present author and others to organise the Congress Youth League. Lembede was elected first president of the League. Lembede's and the Youth League's attitudes were stated in an article in a weekly I edited, *Inkundla yaBantu*, (May, 1946):

1. *Africa is a blackman's country.* Africans are the natives of Africa and they have inhabited Africa, their Motherland, from times immemorial; Africa belongs to them.
2. *Africans are one.* Out of the heterogeneous tribes, there must emerge a homogeneous nation. The basis of national unity is the nationalistic feeling of the Africans, the feeling of being Africans irrespective of tribal connection, social status, educational attainment or economic class. This nationalistic feeling can only be realised in and interpreted by [a] national movement of which all Africans must be members.
3. *The Leader of the Africans will come out of their own loins.* No foreigner can ever be a true and genuine leader of the African people because no foreigner can ever truly and genuinely interpret the African spirit which is unique and peculiar to Africans only. Some foreigners, Asiatic or European, who pose as African leaders must be categorically denounced and rejected. An African must lead Africans. Africans must honour, venerate and find inspiration from African heroes of the past: Shaka, Moshoeshe, Makana, Hintsa,

Khama, Mzilikazi, Sekhukhuni, Sobhuza and many others. . . .

5. *The divine destiny of the African people is National Freedom.* Unless Africans achieve national freedom as early as possible they will be confronted with the impending doom and imminent catastrophe of extermination. Vol. II, pp. 317-18

Lembede died in 1947 and was succeeded as head of the Youth League by Ashby Peter Mda. From December 15 to 19, 1949, the ANC met in annual conference in Bloemfontein. The Afrikaners were preparing for their Voortrekker Celebrations. Mda and other Nationalists opposed the mild wording of Dr. A.B. Xuma's statement on the Celebrations. Mda advocated a strongly worded pronouncement which would signify:

not only our challenge to the White man's point of view but also an inflexible determination on the part of the African to struggle for National Freedom. Vol. II, Document 47

In its Manifesto, published in 1944, the Youth League stated:

. . . Africanism must be promoted, *i.e.*, Africans must struggle for development, progress and national liberation, so as to occupy their rightful and honourable place among nations of the world. . . .
(THE AFRICAN) NOW ELECTS TO DETERMINE HIS FUTURE BY HIS OWN EFFORTS. . . .

Soon the point must be reached when African Youth, which has lived through oppression from the cradle to the present, calls a halt to it all. . . . In response to the demands of the times African Youth is LAYING ITS SERVICES AT THE DISPOSAL OF THE NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENT . . . IN THE FIRM BELIEF, KNOWLEDGE AND CONVICTION THAT THE CAUSE OF AFRICA MUST AND WILL TRIUMPH. Vol. II, Document 48

In a letter to Godfrey Pitje, dated September 10, 1948, Mda described the fundamental aim of African Nationalism as:

- (i) the creation of a united nation out of the heterogeneous tribes.
- (ii) the freeing of Africa from foreign domination and foreign leadership,
- (iii) the creation of conditions which can enable Africa to make her own contribution to human progress.

—Vol. II, Document 56

A third voice was being raised on the issue of national unity. African Medialism, which had long settled in Cape Town, thought in terms of a

unity which transcended monolithism on the African side; it thought of a unity which would bring together the Africans, Coloureds and Asians. The All-African Convention (AAC), formed in 1935 to fight the Hertzog Bills which abolished the Cape African Vote, was the head of Medialism. In August, 1943, the AAC issued its Manifesto calling for non-European unity:

Of what use is it to us when a few far-sighted Whites are worried over our terrible plight, because the "Native," as they say, "is the backbone of our economy and we must not waste our greatest asset. . . ." It is no use appealing to the government, because it is not our government but the government of the White man. It is no use appealing to parliament, because it is not our parliament but the parliament of the White man. It is no use appealing to the law courts, because the law is made by the White man against us. . . .

The White rulers of South Africa, especially, with views similar to Hitler's race theories, will not voluntarily give us our freedom and our rights. From the pronouncements of the Prime Minister . . . he wants to unite all White people for a final settlement of the relations between Black and White, meaning, of course, all Non-Europeans.

—Vol. II, Document 64

Cape Town was the base of the Coloured community. The Medial wing of African Nationalism was facing the challenge presented by the existence of the large Coloured minority. The unity the Convention was thinking of would bring together all the non-Whites. I.B. Tabata indicated in a letter to Nelson R. Mandela on June 16, 1948:

The interests of each are the interests of the whole, a unity in which the growth of a part automatically means the strengthening of the whole, a unity which will serve as the basis for a further development leading to a truly national movement, nationalism. And this is the very anti-thesis of sectionalism or racialism.

—Vol. II, Document 67

The federal structure of resistance was not a new development. The Xhosa experience had well-known examples of it. Cape Town had for years been the main base for Xhosa Medialism. Cape Town was also the main base for the Coloureds. In this setting, those whom the Whites punished for being the children of their particular parents created a synthesis of political outlooks. Devoted men like I.B. Tabata, Wycliffe Tsotisi and others spent their lives developing the synthesis. One result of these years of dedication was the epoch-making decision by the Coloured community of Cape Town to throw in its lot with the Africans after the

outbreak of the Soweto Rebellion. We shall say more about this partnership in the heat of battle, later.

Events began to gallop toward Sharpeville. A self-crippling internal fight had been going on for years between the African Nationalists and the White communists who financed a clique inside the ANC which worked to commit the ANC to teleguidance. The African Nationalists had for a long time not had foreign allies while the Left wing of the Congress had secret connections with Moscow.

The situation changed after the first All-African Peoples Conference in Accra in 1958. The Nationalists embraced Pan-Africanism and established connections with Free Africa. That the African Nationalists had a choice of worlds hardened attitudes and forced the Nationalists to break away to form the Pan-Africanist Congress under Mangaliso Robert Sobukwe.

The relevant aspect of the split for purposes of this section of this chapter is that it did not in any way follow ethnic lines; it was a straightforward clash between those who rejected teleguidance and those who accepted it.

Sobukwe and his supporters saw the Africans as a nation. In January, 1959, he issued a question-and-answer statement in which he clarified the thinking of the Nationalists:

We firmly hold that we are oppressed as a subject nation—the African nation. To us, therefore, the struggle is a national struggle. Those of the ANC who are its active policy-makers maintain, in the face of all the hard facts of the S.A. situation, that ours is a class struggle. We are, according to them, oppressed as WORKERS, both White and Black. But it is significant that they make no attempt to organise White workers. Their White allies are all of them bourgeoisie!....

Q. But are you anti-White or not?

A. What is meant by anti-Whiteism? In every struggle, whether national or class, the masses do not fight an abstraction. They do not hate oppression or capitalism. They concretise these and hate the oppressor, be he the Governor-General or a colonial power, the landlord or the factory-owner, or, in South Africa, the White man. . . . We are not anti-White, therefore. We do not hate the European because he is White! We hate him because he is an oppressor. And it is plain dishonesty to say I hate the sjambok and not the one who wields it.

—Vol. III, Document 38

The moment of confrontation could no longer be delayed. Every major African political organisation started work on plans for an organised underground army. The PAC was determined, from its formation, to seize from the Whites the initiative to influence events on one hand and, on the other, to establish the relativity of White power.

Because he possessed the gun, the White man believed that his power was absolute; exclusive use of it by him, he believed, was his guarantee of security. The rank and file in the White community would not bother about giving any attention to the African's demands for change in racial policies so long as the Whites believed that the gun was their guarantee of survival.

The Africans had to move together as a monolith to create the situation which would force the Whites to realise that the gun was no guarantee of survival. When they did this the White government wrote Sharpeville into South African history.

A White policeman's bullet whizzed through an open window in Sharpeville Location and landed in the brain of the foetus in the womb of an African woman who was serving breakfast to her family in her dining room. The foetus and the mother died.

The foetus belonged to the generation which was to write the Soweto Rebellion into South African history.

Some Whites read the Sharpeville signals correctly and quietly began to emigrate from South Africa. The Collective Will had shown that White power had limitations; that it was becoming strong enough to challenge White power in a frontal attack.

The bans on the PAC and the ANC were designed, among other things, to create a political leadership vacuum which the government hoped to fill with co-operative chiefs who would accept the prescribed destiny on behalf of their people.

The Africans countered with a two-pronged offensive. The militant Medialism which had developed in the Cape in the main called on the victims of apartheid to refuse to collaborate in operating apartheid institutions and worked systematically to isolate the Whites on one plane and, on the other unite Africans, Asians and Coloureds.

The functional monolithism which influenced events mainly in the rural areas decided to "collaborate" in operating the homelands institutions partly to prevent their being controlled by co-operative chiefs and partly to use them as platforms from which to further the ends of the Collective Will.

At first viewing, there would appear to be a fundamental conflict between the positions taken mainly by the urban areas and the people mainly in the rural locations. A closer look, however, shows that the two were related responses by the Collective Will to the same challenge in different environments.

This statement calls for a little more attention. For years, as will be shown in the next chapter, militant Medialism had worked on the schools in the urban locations and in some rural areas to "conscientise" students, as Nkrumah said. The politicisation, as Mda had called it in the days of the Youth League, did not involve significant numbers of adults in the rural areas or the urban locations.

The locations of the Transvaal differed from the locations of, say, Natal and the Transkei; their systems of education were under the direct control of the government in Pretoria and this government was determined to impose Afrikaans as an additional medium of instruction in African schools.

Education affected the students as much as it did the parents. In the Transvaal, and more especially in Soweto, the parents organised themselves into a parents' association which led the campaign against the imposition of apartheid and supported the students who refused to be taught in Afrikaans.

When student resistance exploded into the Soweto Rebellion, it had the immediate support of the parents' side. That co-operation helped to give magnitude to the Soweto Rebellion. Since the imposition affected the Transvaal, the rebellion quickly spread to other locations in this province.

The imposition of Afrikaans was, however, the tinder that ignited the African community's anger against apartheid which originated from, and was given aggressive support by, the Afrikaner monolith.

An altogether different situation existed in Cape Town where African and Coloured students openly courted death in revolts against race humiliation. In this city, which is the original home of the Coloureds, Afrikaans could not be an issue because it is more or less the language of the Coloured people.

It was said earlier that African Medialism, which had developed mainly in the Cape Province, made Cape Town its base. Contact between the African and Coloured intellectuals had reinforced Medialism and had strengthened its commitment to a larger concept of nationhood and federalism. As shall be shown in the next chapter, the striving toward a synthesis of destinies in Cape Town dated to about the end of the nineteenth century.

Apartheid's rise to power gave added appeal to the synthesis of destinies. The Immorality Act and the Mixed Marriages Act insulted the entire Coloured community while the expulsion of these people from the city where they had first emerged cut wounds in their psyche which nothing could heal.

The consciousness of being Coloured which apartheid stirred up combined with African Medialism to draw in sharper outlines the dimensions of a larger grouping of forces against White domination: the super-monolith. The super-monolith would be the largest united front to oppose the Whites, who had no answer to it other than to surrender power to the non-Whites.

The united front of the Africans, Coloureds and Asians could paralyse South Africa's economy and bring it to a dead stop. It had the added advantage that, in terms of human lives, it was the cheapest weapon against apartheid and would move events to a decision faster than an armed struggle.

Noncollaboration had taken deeper root among the Cape Africans and Coloureds partly because these communities had the longest contact with the Whites and partly because they had been humiliated by the whittling of their rights to have their names on the common roll of voters. The rise to power of apartheid was intolerable; they had to take action against it no matter what it cost.

In this mood, the Medialists saw the realism of the monolithal functionalists as an attitude of collaboration. They felt so powerfully against collaboration they did not see Buthelezi's functional "collaboration" as a response which complemented their campaigns of noncollaboration.

The divergent tactics of the noncollaborationists and the functionalists had nothing to do with nomarchism, as the revolt by all language-groups in the urban areas of the Transvaal showed.

What was happening was that the two dimensions of the Collective Will—militant Medialism and Monolithal functionalism—were moving on different planes toward convergence. Confrontation with the White power-structure would be the point where they could co-ordinate action.

FUNCTIONAL "COLLABORATION"

World hostility against apartheid is rightly intense and many people are so taken up with the idea of an armed struggle that they see the South African crisis only in broad outlines and ignore the important but complex dispositions of power on both sides of the colour line inside South Africa.

One of the developments ignored is the direction in which the Collective Will is moving events inside the segregated homelands. Whether or not we like the leaders of the homelands is not important for purposes of this discussion; what matters is whether or not their actions serve the ends of the Collective Will.

One of the goals the Collective Will set itself was, according to the Constitution of the Congress, "to bring together into common action as one political people all tribes and clans of various tribes or races." Another was "to secure the elimination of racialism and tribal feuds by . . . economic combination, education, goodwill and by other means."

The Bloemfontein Conference gave the African peoples an *Ideal of Nationhood*. The All-African Convention translated it into action in terms which it stated clearly, and restated from time to time. At the December 16-17, 1948, joint conference of the AAC and the ANC, Tabata proposed the following as a formula for unity:

1. It should be based on the Convention's ten-point Programme. The Ten Points were read to the Conference.
2. The federal structure of the Convention should be retained.

3. The Unity should be based on the acceptance of the principle of the unity of all non-Europeans.
4. It should be based on a policy of "noncollaboration with the oppressor." Vol. II, Doc. 69

Medialism moved events toward a united nationhood which included all the races which had made South Africa their home and regarded non-European unity or super-monolithism as the best vehicle for moving to its goal. Non-collaboration was the weapon it used.

Monolithical Functionalism moved toward the same goal but proceeded along a different route. It preached that there could be no effective unity between the African and any other group so long as the Black monolith was poorly organised and weak. A strong African community was the only precondition for a viable non-European united front. To build this strength on every plane was the goal the functionalists set themselves. *Every plane* was the operative phrase.

The functionalists argued that African history taught that to take a militant stand when the Africans were unorganised and weak placed the government in the position where it silenced the leaders by banning or jailing them. This created a leadership vacuum which weakened the African community. The African could refuse to collaborate; he could stage a national strike and paralyse the racist economy only when he was strong. The first priority of the functionalists was to build African power from the grassroots.

Both sides had one fatal weakness: they did not have a newspaper or printing press to enable themselves to conduct a meaningful debate on the pros and cons of the strategy proposed by each side. The militant Medialists argued that revolutionary fervour would develop among the masses as they were involved in action; that action would give a unifying momentum to the Evolving Revolt and eventually overwhelm White domination. The functionalist answer to this was that this strategy led to one Sharpeville after another. A succession of Sharpevilles certainly radicalised the masses of the African people, but the radicalisation of a people whose anger was focused on goals that were not clearly understood degenerated into mob rule which could destroy the Bloemfontein Ideal of Nationhood. Apartheid, the functionalists continued, had set itself the goal of destroying the Bloemfontein Ideal. It was not the business of any African to do the dirty work for apartheid.

These differences had nothing to do with nomarchism; they had nothing to do with whether the Africans lived in the urban locations or the rural areas. They issued from the logic of fragmentation, which will be the subject of the next chapter.

The functionalists adopted the strategy of attacking apartheid from positions which demanded minimum investments of human life to move to the goals toward which the militants were also marching. That the

militants and the functionalists moved to common goals was no secret. The international edition of the *Johannesburg Star* (August 28, 1976) gave front-page prominence to excerpts from an interview its daily edition had had with Chief Gatsha Buthelezi, the principal spokesman of functionalism. Its report stated that Buthelezi had:

stressed that the objectives of his Inkatha movement were the same as those of Black Consciousness movements such as Saso and the BPC.

On November 7-8, 1973, the leaders of the main homelands administrations had met in conference in Umtata, the Transkeian capital, to tell the world where they were leading their people. The conference rejected the fragmentation of the African people and the balkanisation of their lands, and confronted the apartheid regime and the world with a geopolitical alternative. The relevant resolutions read:

2) Having understood that:

a) the idea of Federation is a long-term policy

b) that Federation is vital to the unity of the Black people, and bearing in mind that our people should be fully informed of the idea of Federation, this Conference resolves that in principle the idea of Federation be propagated to the people by the various Homeland leaders.

3) That in principle this Conference supports the establishment of a Black bank for Black people.²

By committing themselves to the ideal of establishing a federal state — Buthelezi called it a Federal Union of the Autonomous States of Southern Africa — the leaders of the main bantustans gave geopolitical content to the Bloemfontein Ideal of Nationhood and confronted the apartheid regime with an alternative to the vassalage Pretoria peddled as independence in unviable mini-states.

The Bloemfontein Unity Conference had set out specifically "to bring together into common action as one political people all tribes." The Umtata Conference expressed its commitment to the principle of unity by translating it into the ideal of creating a federal union.

The Bloemfontein Conference had also sought to "secure the elimination of racialism and tribal feuds by...economic combination...." The Umtata Conference committed itself to the establishment of a Black bank. The African Bank of South Africa was established shortly thereafter.

Buthelezi was not the initiator of the principle of federating. The principle had a long history, into which we shall go when we discuss the five moods of African Nationalism. Paramount Chief Kaiser Matanzima of

the Transkei had committed himself publicly to the ideal on several occasions before the Umtata Conference. This commitment expressed the rejection by Medialism of racism.

This is how Buthelezi stated his commitment to the ideal of a federal union:

Let us face it that we can never really talk terms with Whites as small separate entities. We can only bring White South Africa to her knees if we achieve and use Black solidarity....

We realise as Blacks that if this dream (of a federal union) came true we could not have Black unity and our sense of Nationhood in the various Black states, on the basis of crushing the languages and cultures of non-Africans. Each member of such a new society would of necessity have a right to live out his or her life in the light of his or her experience and choices.

The bond of union should be our common humanity, *ubuntu*, or Humanism and not race, creed, colour, age or sex. This means a non-racial society in which every human being would have the right and opportunity to make the best possible use of his life.³

The functionalists went beyond confronting Pretoria with a Geopolitical Alternative to apartheid. Those among them who accepted "independence" made it clear that they adhered to the Umtata commitment. In his speech when the Transkei became "independent" Matanzima included these remarks:

Certainly we are a party to the break-up of South Africa in the form which has only satisfied a minority of its inhabitants and we shall be a party by necessary inference to the restructured southern African sub-continent which we hope will emerge in the not too distant future.

Chief Lucas Mangope of Bophuthatswana went farther. On the day his country became "independent," he told the world that he regarded the acceptance of "freedom" as a step toward establishing the federal union.

The role of the functionalists is of the greatest importance in the changing dispositions of power inside South Africa. To begin with, they have administrative power which they can use at least to build an effective political base from which to launch powerful campaigns against apartheid. To ignore the fact that they have the potential to form a united front and lead their people in a strike that would paralyse the apartheid economy is to be guilty of a dangerous and uninformed misreading of the situation inside South Africa.

The misreading is particularly serious when one bears in mind that some of the homelands leaders are committed Nationalists who are defending the Bloemfontein Ideal in singularly difficult conditions.

Mention is made of the danger because events are moving the Africans in South Africa in directions which are to a large extent the exact opposite of those taken by some of the Africans' "allies" in the outside world. We shall come to this point shortly.

For the present, let us return to the argument that the African has his heart in the "tribe."

It has been shown that the Sudiic African regards agmination as the basic relationship in the cosmic order; that this principle of unity issues from the consubstantiality of all phenomena. It has been shown, also, that the logic of the Sudiic evaluation of the person moves peoples toward convergence. The movement from nomarchism in Kwa Zulu, about five hundred years ago, to the Bloemfontein Ideal of Nationhood, shows the logic of the Sudiic view of the human being in action in one African community. Scholars from other African language-groups are redefining the history of their people and are bringing to light aspects of their history which the conquerors suppressed for obvious reasons. One day they, too, will tell the world what their ancestors were doing before the coming of the Whites.

Above all, the testimony of the leaders of the African people, given over nearly a hundred years, shows solid and consistent movement toward united nationhood. Even the nomenclature used by the Black people in this period to describe themselves shows that unity has always been their goal. They started by calling themselves Zulu, Xhosa, etc. They abandoned this style after contact with the Whites and described themselves successively as Natives, Bantu, Africans, and now as Blacks. The changes responded to an evolving understanding of the nationhood they desired.

If we start with Cetshwayo's efforts to create a collective security area, we will see that the determination to unite the Black peoples found expression in concrete action over a hundred years ago.

People do not go to war, organise resistance movements for over a century, and systematically lay down their lives in efforts to restore to themselves their land and freedom merely to play political games. To dismiss as a "political strategy" all these protests against race humiliation is not only to be tragically insensitive, showing the quality of mind which could make the Police Minister say Steve Biko's death left him cold; it is also *to prescribe destiny for the Africans*.

MOSCOW'S ROLE IN SOUTH AFRICA

The involvement of the Soviet Union in South Africa dates back to 1921, when the Communist Party of South Africa was formed. The new

nation and its **Evolving Revolt** had been in action for nine years. The basic premise on which the new nation had been built and the Evolving Revolt organised was that the African people had reserves of power and points of weakness which called for a grassroots revolution designed to crack the united front of White monoliths where it was most vulnerable and refrain from attacks where the Whites were strongest. This gave rise to types of activism and functionalism which created awkward problems for the Soviet Union.

Soviet action in South Africa, as in other parts of the non-Caucasian world, was designed primarily to serve the ends of Soviet policy, just as Christianity had been used to serve the ends of Western policy. For this reason, African Nationalism had to be controlled and forced to move in directions which promoted Soviet interests.

The late George Padmore was a West Indian who was for many years a member of the Communist International (Comintern) which formulated policy for and guided International Communism. He subsequently walked out of the Comintern because he realised that the Soviet Union set out to impose a prescribed destiny on the Black world. His is an inside view of communism's functioning in the Black world:

Economically depressed communities and racially oppressed peoples inevitably receive the attention of the Communists. Therefore, we are not surprised that they should have spent considerable effort to win the Negroes to their cause. Yet, sustained and energetic though this endeavour has been, the number of Black converts to the cause of World Communism has been quite incommensurate with the time, money and efforts expended to win them. To a large extent the failure to make a greater impact upon popular Negro opinion has been due to the tactical mistakes and psychological blunders which the Communist Parties of the Western World — America, Britain, France and South Africa — have made in their approach to the dark peoples.

Negroes are keenly aware that they are the most racially oppressed and economically exploited people in the world. They also are very much alive to the fact, demonstrated by the opportunistic and cynical behaviour of the Communists, that the latter's interest in them is dictated by the ever-changing tactics of Soviet foreign policy rather than by altruistic motives. Their politically minded intellectuals know that the oppressed Negro workers and peasants are regarded by the Communists as "revolutionary expendables" in the global struggle of Communism against Western Capitalism. They know that Africans and peoples of African descent are courted primarily to tag on to the White proletariat, and thus to swell the "revolutionary" ranks against the imperialist enemies of the "Soviet Fatherland." This attitude towards the

Negroes is fundamentally part and parcel of the Communist philosophy relating to racial minorities and dependent peoples, and it has been influenced by the experience of the Russian Bolsheviks in their struggle for power.⁴

The ends of Soviet policy required that the new nation into which the Africans had united themselves should be defined in Soviet terms. Abuse was showered on African refusals to be defined in alien terms. H.J. and R.E. Simons were insiders in that section of the White community which functioned as the surrogates of the Soviet Union in South Africa. This is what they say of the Soviet approach to the leadership of the African nation:

The late I.I. Potekhin, a Soviet historian of Africa, argued that they (the chiefs in the ANC) were *compradores* (Black agents of foreign firms) who controlled the ANC for many years in opposition to the progressive intellectuals of the rising national bourgeoisie. It was because of the chiefs' influence, he maintained, that Congress rejected illegal mass struggle against oppressive racial laws and crawled before the authorities. In his opinion, an insoluble contradiction existed between the aim of building a nation and the aim of strengthening tribal institutions. "An organisation of feudal *compradores*, such as was the ANC at first, cannot be the standard-bearers of a nation." Some, like other right-wing leaders, Potekhin wrote, actually lowered the level of national consciousness by teaching Africans to think of themselves as junior partners of the White man who had brought peace and goodwill to Africa. "Congress never even put the question of national independence for the Bantu or of freedom for their country from British imperialism."

Potekhin did not adequately examine the process of amalgamating scores of formerly independent and often antagonistic ethnic societies into a single nation. No Marxist who is familiar with the concept "national in form, socialist in content" should be surprised to learn that tribalism will wither away only if given free play in a non-tribal environment....

The Chiefs were neither "feudal" nor "*compradores*." Cast in conflicting roles, they defended their people against the colonists and also served as minor functionaries of the White bureaucracy.⁵

Potekhin was one of the top Soviet authorities on Africa. He left visible marks on Soviet policy in Africa. The two Simons, who were White and were deeply involved in the work of the Marxists in South Africa, tell us that Potekhin was not properly informed on the situation in the African community. Coming from known Marxists, this tells us a lot; it tells us,

among other things, that the advice which Potekhin gave to the Soviet government was less informed than it should have been. This advice was one of the bases on which Soviet policy for South Africa was formulated. Basing policy on this ignorance is what we call prescribing destiny for the Africans.

But we should not go too far in our condemnation of Potekhin. His White sources of information on the African people were themselves inadequately informed on developments in South Africa.

With the best will in the world, it is impossible for a White person to have a clear view of the situation on the African side of the colour line. To a lesser extent, it is impossible for the African to have a clear picture of what is in the minds of the Whites. He has some advantages over the Caucasians; he works for them in their homes, farms and factories, goes to schools they have set up for him, and reads, writes and speaks their languages; and he has created a synthesis of cultures based on parts of his tradition and borrowings from the Graeco-Romano-Hebraic experience.

The Whites have no way of having first-hand knowledge of what is going on in the mind of the African. Segregation makes it impossible for them to have any intercourse with the Africans which would inform them on developments on the Black side. This has been the case since at least the establishment of the Union of South Africa in 1910.

The Whites whose books Potekhin had read lived in rigidly segregated White areas, where they were born, grew up and died. The Africans were born, lived and died in their equally segregated areas.

The Whites had one system of education, while the Africans had another. The rhythms which gave colour to and harmonised life in the African and White areas were poles apart. The Whites who managed the Communist Party of South Africa did not, as a rule, speak a single African language.

Except through the police, magistrates, commissioners and other White officials, racial laws and the economy, there was no meaningful communication between Black and White. At every level in parliament, the government, the economy, education and the church, the Whites laid down the law. In this setting the only possible relationship between the African and the White man was the servant-master relationship.

This setting forced the communists to see the Black-White quarrel from White perspectives. They could not be other than contemptuous of African definitions of the "race" problem. They offered solutions based on Caucasian perspectives and when the new nation said these had no relevance in its situation, the communists vilified its leaders, split its political organisations and created their own which sooner or later collapsed. These organisations could not survive because they were based on alien definitions of Africa; and they set out to impose a destiny prescribed by foreigners.

In these conditions, and with the best will in the world, the imposition of White-oriented destinies could not be anything other than attacks on the Collective Will; they could not be other than manoeuvres to effect the ideological deheathenisation of the African.

The Christian missionaries had used deheathenisation to convert the African to their religion and had produced the Separatist Churches. The capitalists and colonialists had imposed their lifestyle and had brought African Nationalism into being. The White racists had forced the Africans to unite themselves into a monolith. The communists were prescribing destiny for the Black man and were in that way moving him in a straight line to African Maoism.

Moscow's attempts to prescribe destiny for the Black South Africans assumed the form of an attack on the Collective Will and the Sudic evaluation of the person. The rigid insistence on ideological conformity was alien to the Sudic temperament. Preaching class conflict disorganised the African monolith and weakened it for the task of challenging the White power-structure. The rejection of the Bloemfontein Ideal of Nationhood and its substitution with a blueprint drawn up by the Whites was precisely what apartheid had set out to do when J.B.M. Hertzog, the father of Afrikaner nationalism, went to De Wildt in December, 1912, to lay down the principles on which apartheid operates today.

Neither Moscow's White surrogates in South Africa nor Potekhin prescribed destiny because they were Caucasians; they did this because they were the products of a civilisation based on a pessimistic and devaluative attitude to the person.

Soviet Socialism set out to effect the ideological homogenisation of the human race; it was not scientific enough to recognise the simultaneous legitimacy of different cultural self-definitions. At this level, its performance was not different from apartheid's. This created obvious problems for the White communists. When the Black Consciousness Movement came into being after Sharpeville, the militant Medialists took the position that all Whites were similarly motivated and for this reason, co-operation with them was out of the question. In his now famous address to the Cape Town University's Abe Bailey Institute of Interracial Studies in January, 1971, Steve Biko made it clear that he had no time for:

the liberal establishment, including the leftist groups. The major mistake the Black world ever made was to assume that whoever opposed apartheid was an ally....

His answer to the White consensus on prescribing destiny for the Africans was:

- to go alone and to evolve a philosophy based on and directed by Blacks....

- [a] policy of no involvement with the White world....
- rejection of the principle of unholy alliances between Blacks and Whites....
- [the realisation] that a lot of good can be derived from specific exclusion of Whites from Black institutions.

In the above, Biko welded into a single attitude and articulated the rejections of White values by the Africans, Coloureds and Asians whom the Whites had rejected in different ways. The Whites had sown the wind and were reaping the hurricane.

The counter-rejection had important implications for South Africa; it combined with the temper of the dispossessed to provide the inflammable material which could transform the coming revolution into a race war.

Its real importance, for purposes of the present discussion, was that it was part of the Black World's Collective Response to the punishment by the Whites of the African for being the child of his particular parents. This punishment had led to the decision by the Rome Conference of Black Writers and Artists to search for universal dimensions in African cultures, to a commitment to the same search by the All-Africa Church Conference in Nairobi, to the All-African Student Union's stand on Africanism and to Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo's declaration of war on teleguidance at the Khartoum summit conference of the OAU in 1978.

In 1967, Black delegates from all over the United States had met in Newark, New Jersey, to discuss Black Power. In the following resolution, they expressed their commitment to the Collective Response in these terms:

Whereas the Black people in America have been systematically oppressed by their White fellow countrymen,

Whereas there is little prospect that this oppression can be terminated, peacefully, or otherwise, within the foreseeable future

Whereas the Black people do not wish to be absorbed into the larger White community

Whereas the Black people in America find that their interests are in contradiction with those of White America

Whereas the Black people in America are psychologically handicapped by virtue of their having no national homeland

Whereas the physical, moral, ethical, and esthetic standards of White American society are not those of Black society and indeed do violence to the self-image of the Black man

Whereas Black people were among the earliest immigrants to America, having been ruthlessly separated from their fatherland, and have made a major contribution to America's development, most of this contribution having been uncompensated, and

Recognizing that efforts are already well advanced for the convening of a Constitutional Convention for the purpose of revising the Constitution of the U.S. for the first time since America's inception, then

Be it resolved that the Black Power Conference initiate a national dialogue on the desirability of partitioning the U.S. into two separate and independent nations, one to be a homeland for White and the other to be a homeland for Black Americans.⁶

Biko became one of the heroes of the Black Consciousness Movement because of his uncompromising commitment to non-collaboration. He wanted the African to go it alone and to have his own system of values; he demanded that his world should not be involved with the White world and rejected Black-White alliances and stood for the policy of keeping Whites out of Black universities, etc. In going to these extremes, he rejected the destiny prescribed by the Whites; he described the chasm White domination had created between the Africans and the Caucasians; he announced that the African counter-rejection was a determinant of policy among those for whom he spoke.

White "interpreters" of the African experience give little or no attention to the counter-rejection as a determinant of African policies. Because it is one of the influences given the generic name of fundamentals of conflict, the counter-rejection needs to be seen against different White attempts to prescribe destiny for the Black people on the political plane.

BACKGROUND TO REJECTION OF WHITES

From the beginnings of the Communist Party racism had affected its attitudes to the African in the main and to the Coloured to a lesser extent. The Simonses have this to say on the White consensus on race discrimination:

For all their Hyde Park oratory, the socialists failed the sovereign test of political sincerity. They appealed for Coloured votes but were no

more prepared than liberal or racist parties to nominate a Coloured candidate in municipal or parliamentary elections.

—p. 140

This was during the first decade of the twentieth century. Some of the socialists who lacked “political sincerity” subsequently banded together and formed the Communist Party in 1921.

At a mixed meeting in January, 1921, to prepare ground for the formation of South Africa’s Communist Party, the hundred delegates who attended

decided, by forty votes to twenty-nine, that a “Communist Party can at no time identify itself with any nationalist or other bourgeois party, and cannot support its platform.” And further, they determined, there could be no unity with persons who refused to accept the principles of the Third International. Unity would be worthwhile only if it took the form of a strongly disciplined, centralized party affiliated to the C.I. (Communist International).

—p. 260

Ivon Jones and Sam Barlin were the South African Party’s delegates to the third congress of the Communist International. Both were White and got into trouble for not having included an African delegate. The Simonses (p. 263) make these comments on Jones’ experiences:

Like many after him, he found that the colour of his skin, which gave him entry into the racial elite, was something of a handicap among radicals abroad. “Why aren’t you Black?” he was asked. He confessed to feeling “quite apologetic about our colour.” South African delegations should include Africans, but it would be a mistake to exclude Whites. “The African revolution would be led by White workers.” Yet his own analysis might have led him to doubt the proposition.

Jones was thinking of a campaign for the ideological deheathenisation of the Africans. He appealed to International Communism for reinforcements (p. 265):

“A few missionaries, revolutionists who need a spell of sunshine, would be very welcome.”

The language in which the rejection of co-operation with “any nationalist” party was couched was a virtual declaration of war on the ANC — an announcement that the Whites in the Communist Party would work with African political organisations only on their terms. This was precise-

ly the position Afrikaner nationalism was taking. In the view of African intellectuals, the position taken by the White communists indicated that the Caucasians were ganging up against the African on every plane to prescribe destiny for him.

This conclusion was to affect profoundly the relations between African Nationalists and the Soviet Union. The African Nationalists viewed their fight with the united front of White monoliths as a life-and-death struggle. If Whites who sought to identify themselves with the Africans existed at all, they should work with the Black race on its terms and not infiltrate the Black community either to disorganise the Black monolith or to fix goals for it.

The Simonses were devoted Marxists, as any committed South African who worked in the Republic between the 1940s and the 1960s knows. But unlike other Marxists they did not regard the Communist Party of South Africa as having a monopoly on virtue. They reported history as fairly as they could from their particular position. They noted that African Nationalists did not want any White man to prescribe destiny for them. Mahabane’s was one of the consistently strong voices Africans raised against White domination. I myself heard it during the greater part of the forty years that I was in the forefront of our struggle. Mahabane addressed the annual conference of the Cape ANC in May, 1920:

All white party leaders, he said, from Abraham Fischer to Smuts, were determined to keep Africans and Coloureds out of the parliament of the White plutocrats. Yet Africans were the rightful owners of the land, and would never consent to the status of bondsmen. The Whites were foreign fortune-seekers, who had seized supreme political power with Britain’s aid, and used it to entrench themselves in the state, church, civil service and economy.

— pp 250-51

But Moscow was determined to cast African attitudes to White domination in South Africa in its own moulds. Let another insider in the Communist Party give us an inside view of the situation among the ranks of Soviet surrogates. Eddie Roux was one of the very few Afrikaners who crossed the ethnic line on the White side and identified himself with communism, which Afrikaner nationalism regarded as one of its mortal foes. In *Time Longer Than Rope*, he tells us that:

...the party had by now become increasingly Black in composition. Many of the country branches were organised by Native communists. Only occasionally a White communist would come to address a meeting....

In the ranks of the party the best Bantu communists always were those who had not been spoilt by serving an apprenticeship in the Congress