

mitment. Zulu acceptance of an independent Natal state would be viewed as an act of betrayal in the other African communities. Afrikaner diplomacy could then go around telling the Xhosa, Basotho, Shangani and others things like:

We have always warned you against the hegemonistic intentions of the Zulus. They only used you to get Natal restored to themselves. See what they'll do, now that the Afrikaner has given them what they have always wanted.

A Zulu state in Natal would offer other attractions. It would solve Afrikanerdom's Indian problem. The Afrikaners have no liking for the Indians who were brought to Natal by the British, mainly as indentured labour in the sugarcane fields of the province. The Afrikaners inherited the Indian problem from the British and could see some benefits in saddling the Zulus with it—now that India is a nuclear power. With the Zulus placated, Afrikaner statesmanship could think in terms of a military alliance with these warrior people, to guarantee the Afrikaners a secure and permanent place in the African sun. All of this sounds unbelievable; but when one considers the lines of conflict between the Africans and the Boers, nothing is impossible with the Afrikaner.

Accordingly, whenever Bulube mentions a negotiated settlement, his opponents promptly think of the guarantee to the Afrikaners. Maggie does not hide her feelings; she makes it clear that negotiations with the Afrikaner will be conducted over her dead body. What Maggie wants is to cleanse the soil of her land of the white pestilence; one white person remaining on South African soil, she shouts, is an eternity of the evil.

The Marekites agree with Bulube that vultures are already flying over the besieged Afrikaner but, Mareka warns: *Ha eshoa, ea raha!* (The beast kicks most violently when it dies). The possibility that in his troubles, the Afrikaner might smash African solidarity calls for the readiness to *seize the moment* and give Afrikaner domination shoves so massive it will go crashing into the past. The Afrikaner is vulnerable at so many points that the African is at last free to attack where he likes, he says. The African has soaked the soil of South Africa with his blood from the formation of Union to win this freedom. And to negotiate now, when he can strike the white man where it hurts, is to vote for the legitimisation of larceny. There can be no negotiation with thieves of the soul; there is no basis for trying to reconcile *umteto wesintu* and *umteto wesilungu*. Violence of every form, on every plane, is the only language the Afrikaner is capable of understanding.

The only Afrikaner that I love, Mareka tells his closest friends, is a dead Afrikaner! How beautiful they look in the pallor of death! But, dead or alive, I don't want the sight of the pestilence; I wouldn't allow anybody further to desecrate our soil by burying them in our land. There are sharks in the sea; they might enjoy a party in which

Afrikaner steak is served! The only sensible thing for the Boers to do, after the mess they have made of our lives, is to QUIT AFRICA! We are mobilising our forces slowly, and painfully, for the final kill.

Marekitè strategy seeks to enable the African to control the mind of the white man. Violence is the only means of doing this. The white man must be given no moment to relax or to enjoy his life or to have peace of mind or to put away his gun. The black burglar who leaves the location by night and invades white territory is hailed as a hero; he is placed in the vanguard of the Caravan To Blood River. Mareka's followers approve of the burglary into white homes; the burglars, it is said, are doing no more and no less than to recover that which was stolen from their people. The murder of whites on such occasions avenges the dead whom the white man has been killing in the three hundred years he has been in South Africa.

The chief value of the burglaries, however, is that they force the white man to become the prisoner of his gun; Dillo wants him to think only within the range defined by the gun, to accelerate his own destruction. In the suburbs the white man has been forced to go to bed with his wife with a gun under his pillow cushion. Conception takes place on top of the gun and the white woman gives birth to her child in the shadow of the gun. Dillo and Maggie tell every young man who is willing to listen to sneak out of the country as best they can in order to join the guerrillas in Central Africa.

We regard the guerrillas as important, Dillo explains at numerous divining sessions conducted by the army of witchdoctors in the location, not because we think the war of the races will be decided on the Zambezi. We would be fools to imagine that it will be decided there. The chief value of the guerrillas is that they extend the area in which we *xina* the white man.

Our numbers and his stand in the ratio of 4:1. If we keep the bushfires burning on the Zambezi, we force him every year to withdraw so many thousands of the cream of his manpower and to tie down these valuable young people in unproductive military employment. In a country where our colour shuts us out of skilled jobs, the absence of the young whites affects industrial production and could, in the long run, reduce the Afrikaner's ability to pay the high profits which attract foreign investments and threaten to buy alliances. We have thrown the Afrikaner in a cleft stick at this level and we are determined not to allow him to escape; he fights on the Zambezi while his need for foreign investments requires that he should abandon the industrial colour bar. Now, we are taking over the jobs formerly reserved for whites. That is one of the advantages of controlling his mind; we force him to hurt himself and when he retreats, we take over. That is the essence of the *xina* strategy.

Force the Afrikaner to hurt himself and when he retreats, take over—this is the principle around which Maggie's whole life is built. In

the old days, she did not spare herself and learned all she could from the English-speaking young whites in the underground movements before the Sharpeville massacres. Now, she is an ardent prayer woman in the Zion Pentecostal Church, one of many christian sects which thrive in the locations. The joke in white christendom in the country is that the Black Zionists read the bible upside down. They have no time for the new testament and do not mention the name of Jesus Christ. Their exemplars are the prophets of the old testament. They take care, though, not to pray to the God of Abraham, but to the God of Shaka and Dingane and Palo and Mshweshwe.

They meet almost every night in long prayer meetings which combine declamations against injustice with prayer, community singing, drum-beating and traditional dancing.

Men, women and children dress in white in these sessions. Maggie is a medical nurse in the location clinic and leaves work at five, when she puts on her Zionist cloak and spends almost every night in one or the other of the wakes. She is a power to reckon with in the location. It is said of her that there is so much force in her prayers she can command a million African men to march barefooted and unclothed into the furnaces of hell itself. The black security police prudently avoid getting into her bad books or in those of her *intshumentshu*-carrying co-religionists.

As a student-nurse in Durban, Maggie spent most of her free time on the night train to Zululand. Asked why she did this, she explained that she was "in love with a married policeman" in Stanger whose wife was employed permanently on night duty in a sugar plantation hospital near Stanger. Maggie would book a compartment for herself and pack boxes of matches and cigarettes in her travelling bag. She would light a cigarette as soon as the train entered the canefields in the Avoca district, just outside Durban, place its other end against the heads of the match-sticks and shut the box so tightly it held the cigarette firmly against the phosphorus heads. At the opportune moment she would throw the burning cigarette and match-box into a lush canefield where the explosion would set the inflammable sugarcane leaves on fire. She would leave the train at Stanger and return to Durban.

People tell other stories about Maggie. One of the most popular centres on the prayer she gave at a funeral of a young man who had been shot by the police in a strike. As the black Americans would say, Maggie told it like it was, to God himself. That did not please the security police keeping an eye on the burial. Hauled before a court of law, Maggie put up a simple defence:

Your Worship, I did tell God one or two things about the evils of race discrimination. I told him that he makes a mistake by allowing it. If I can't be frank with God, to whom can I open my soul in all its nakedness, Your Worship?

The story is told very largely in the thousands of drinking

parties organised in the location during week-ends, where it draws this comment from the men:

Man! That Kuboni girl! She *xinas* the white man as nobody does!

While the argument about being frank to God got Maggie an acquittal, the police do not think the magistrate was smart enough. Maggie has become a problem for the police. While she is an ardent prayer woman, she mixes religion and politics so well the police are not sure about what to do with her. For example, what do the police do when she sends a seditious prayer to God? If the police try to put pressure on her to say the right things to God, Maggie gets on to hilltops and starts screaming about the police coming between her and God. And Maggie knows how to scream in the right way, in the right place and at the right time. Sooner or later rumblings start in sections of the Dutch Reformed Church; some Afrikaner clergymen make it clear that it is not only the christian's right to open his conscience to God, it is his duty to do this. Preoccupation with the race issue has become the cleft stick in which the Dutch Reformed Church is caught. The Church cannot afford to see christianity discredited beyond a certain point in the African community. Maggie argues that hers is a christian national attitude, just as the attitude of the Dutch Reformed Church is christian-national. She insists that the Pentecostals have as much right to work for the African people as the Dutch Reformed Church has to support the Afrikaner cause.

Maggie is popular with neither the married women in the location nor the police. The latter try hard to enlist the support of the wives by spreading rumours to the effect that Maggie is generous with her body. That sort of characterisation certainly does nothing to make her popular among the wives. But Maggie works so closely with their husbands in the underground that wives find it difficult to attack her and possibly jeopardise their husbands' position. When the women attack her, Maggie replies:

"The skunk conquers with the power of its smell. . . ."

The police do not trust Maggie; they believe she does a lot of politically dirty things. But the blacks in the police force admit that if she does anything at all, she commits crimes in the cleanest manner possible. Pretoria is, for example, very concerned about the report that the independent state which was formerly Mozambique allows plutonium from Niger and weapons from China to be conveyed overland to the Zulu rebels in northern Natal. This portion of Natal has become the most sensitive area in South Africa; the Zulu Territorial Authority has developed the swamps which abound there into lush ricefields, with the aid of Chinese experts from Taiwan. The Zulus look forward to developing the swamps into one of the largest rice-producing regions of the world, when they are free. Pretoria asked them to invite experts from Taiwan. The Zulus were only too glad to bring in the Chinese. Complications developed when Peking suddenly became interested in

the Zulu rice scheme. Radio Peking took care to give progress reports on the rice scheme, which, everybody in Pretoria agreed, was unusual. Peking never cared to praise Taiwan's achievements anywhere. Some of the smartboys at security police headquarters suggested that it would be a wise thing to keep a sharp look-out on the Taiwanese on the ricefields. Some of them might be military instructors or physicists from Peking working secretly with the Zulus on the plutonium from Niger, which comes through Lourenco Marques.

One day, one of Maggie's sisters, who married the man who is now the mayor of Lourenço Marques, died. In her last days she had expressed the wish that she would like to be buried at Kwa Mondri, an African settlement outside Eshowe, in Natal, where her father's parents were interred. Maggie goes to Lourenco Marques and subsequently joins the mourners who travel overland to Kwa Mondri. The security police plant some of their men among the mourners and as soon as the hearse and the cars accompanying it reach the border between Mozambique and northern Natal, the uniformed South African police stop the hearse, seize the coffin and take it to the charge office where they open it, search its contents and run the geiger counter over the corpse in the belief that plutonium might be concealed in the dead body. When Maggie protests to the Afrikaner officer in charge, he apologises politely and then adds:

"The government feels that it can't take chances with the Zulus."

The police find no uranium or plutonium or arms in the coffin. And when news of this reaches Pretoria word goes round in the African locations that Maggie has done it again. The Africans have a way of talking about these things to themselves which cannot be comprehended in white terms. The Commissioner of Police warns his Minister that there is some form of collusion between the black security police and some of the underground groups in the location. At this stage, the Commissioner adds, there is no concrete evidence, only, it seems strange that the black police do not come up with reports on which to base charges.

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In the locations, the clash between the African and the Afrikaner is referred to as the war between two mountains. The collision is defined in terms which preclude compromise and sentiment and moral law. The one mountain is determined to level off the other. The millimetre-by-millimetre progression to the final confrontation has developed a momentum in which respite is neither possible nor expected nor asked nor granted.

As the minority groups sometimes say, the African and the Afrikaner hold each other by their throats and have reached the point where they can allow neither the English nor the Coloureds nor the

Indians to come between them. If any of these minorities try to do this, they risk being bruised or hurt or crushed. But the war of the mountains is such that no group can afford to be neutral in a conflict where non-involvement can mean destruction. The African and the Afrikaner hold each other so tightly they have transformed their fight into a death-struggle; each side strikes to destroy.

Bulube and Mareka might disagree on strategy but both are of one mind on the urgency of organising African labour in such a way that one day the black people should organise a strike that will bring white rule crashing to the ground. The white man's answer has, in the sixty years since Union, been to make it illegal for the Africans to organise trade unions.

De Haas has reinforced the answer by pushing a law through parliament which empowers the white police to shoot first in situations of conflict and to ask questions afterwards. Strikes are defined as situations of conflict.

But the fight goes on on every plane. For nearly a generation now the CNP has used Afrikaans as an instrument for bending the will and controlling the mind of the African. The first thing the Africans do when they gain control of the segregated administrations established for them in the rural reserves is to smash the moulds in which the Afrikaner seeks to cast the mind of the African child. Bulube and Mareka work with equal zeal to smash the moulds.

A situation has arisen in which the white people live in uncertainty about when and where the African will strike; the only thing they are certain about is their gun. Mareka says their thinking must be tied down to the gun, no matter what it costs the Africans. Bulube takes advantage of the white man's preoccupation with the gun as a guarantee of survival to translate traditional values into modern political concepts and programmes in the bid to give a new quality of leadership no longer merely to the black people, but to the brown, yellow and white.

Colonel Prinsloo now attaches the greatest importance to this development, to which he has given the code name *Process TNT*. In a secret memorandum to the Minister of the Police, Nienaber Gehler, and which bears the heading *CRISIS OF SURVIVAL*, the Commissioner argues that there has been a fundamental shift in the balance of black and white power and that this development has implications which strike at the very roots of Afrikaner survival.

Events, he argues, have destroyed the power of the gun as a guarantee of Afrikaner security. It is only a matter of time before the free states of Africa have contiguous borders with South Africa when they will transport guns to the black population of the republic.

Yes, a prominent social welfare worker was recently arrested for speeding on the main Johannesburg-Pretoria road. Her car crashed into a pole and she was taken to hospital where she was kept under guard. The hospital authorities noticed that she was losing blood

rapidly from a vaginal haemorrhage. The cause, it was found out, was a broken glass test tube in her vagina which contained a secret message to a black conspirator giving a list of the military equipment a named African government was sending to the black guerrilla fighters on the Zambezi.

Evidence of Free African involvement in the organisation of an armed revolt in South Africa accumulates, Prinsloo points out. He then proceeds to criticise as unrealistic all talk of an alliance with the United States, to which the prime minister gives a lot of attention. There has been a basic shift in the balance of power from the white race to the black, brown and yellow peoples. A security vacuum has emerged which reduces America's significance as an ally.

Beyond this, there always is the possibility that one day the Arabs and the Africans might present a united front and use their metals and oil against the whites in Africa. These developments have a direct bearing on black politics, Prinsloo argues. The leaders of the rural administrations have rejected the government's offers of independence.

Nowhere, nowhere ever in the world, has a colonial people refused independence when it was offered. The leaders of the black people feel that they have the potential now to settle the race problem on their terms and are translating that potential into political realities. It has taken them more than sixty years to build up the potential.

Now they know that if they want to give the stock exchange a bad shaking and send foreign investments flying out of the country, they have to stage a politically motivated strike and force the police to shoot them.

The black administrations in the rural areas are in the position, finally, to control the flow of labour from their areas and to persuade Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi and Swaziland one day to withdraw the cheap labour they export to South Africa. The meaning of these developments is that the African can withdraw his labour if and when he likes; that he can strike at the white man where and when he pleases.

In plain terms, he is reducing the white people to the position where they will rule South Africa while he determines the country's destiny. To give himself as many options as possible, he refuses the independence which the white man offers him; he is convinced that he can get his freedom on his own terms at the right moment.

Time is his most powerful ally; he has forced the Afrikaner into the position where the Arabs placed the Jews. In this setting, to force the African's women to carry Passes is like playing with dynamite. What Afrikanerdom is up against is no longer the control of the black people's movements; the Afrikaner is up against the spirit of a whole people.

The answer is a peace treaty which will reconcile the black people's desire for fulfilment with the Afrikaner's yearning for a secure place in the African sun. Isn't there anybody with enough brains in the

Union Buildings, Prinsloo concludes, to read correctly the implications of these changes and to start negotiating with the Africans?

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XII. The Child Race

Inhlamba yezithulu kayinamatheli.

(The deaf hear no evil.)

Union Day is a holiday which falls on May 31 to commemorate the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910. The driving power behind this development was Britain's greed for South Africa's mineral wealth. The Afrikaners, who controlled the Transvaal and the Orange Free State had lacked enthusiasm for the unification. They feared that Union would mean the consolidation of British economic power and this is precisely what happened.

They feared, also, that Union would lead to the welding of the various African language groups into a single racial bloc in opposition to the whites and this is precisely what happened.

Now that they have snatched political power from the English and are using it to transfer economic dominance to their side, it becomes increasingly clear to the perceptive few that Union was a white elephant for the Afrikaner.

While de Haas never tires of telling all with ears to hear about the miracle that is Afrikanerdom, on festive occasions, the professionals in UBRA argue that the real victors when the Union of South Africa was formed were the black people.

They had the numbers one day to seize political power from the Afrikaners and do to the latter what the Afrikaners had done to the British; they are marching to a future in which they will use their numbers, first, to seize political power and eventually to use it to transfer control of the country's wealth to themselves. This creates an atmosphere of uncertainty about the future which gives the Afrikaner no peace of mind. In his bitterest moments he blames it all on the British; if they had left him alone, he would have created the world in which he would be sure about the future he was marching to. In this mood, some Afrikaners adopt attitudes of ambivalence toward Union Day.

Piet du Toit van der Merwe attended the military parade on Church Square in the centre of the city where Afrikanerdom flexed its muscles. After that, he returned home. Marietjie's health is becoming

increasingly fretful. The death of her father affected her so badly her doctors have warned that a miscarriage could occur. Whenever possible, Piet wants to be by the side of his wife. He is sitting on his favourite chair while Marietjie knits a baby's shawl when Hantie, aged seven, runs into the sitting room, almost out of breath.

Papa! she taps his knee excitedly, there's a kaffer outside; an old nanny; she wants to talk to you!

A kaffer wants to talk to me!

Ja!

Tell Zandile to talk to her.

The child seems puzzled and does not move. After a few moments she races to the kitchen. Zandile walks into the sitting room.

Baas, the old lady has something to say to you personally.

If she won't tell you what she wants, tell her I'm too busy to see her just now.

I think it is important that you should see her; she has the letter you wrote to her . . . about . . .

Me? Write a letter to a black woman?

Marietjie stops her knitting and gives him a puzzled and vaguely hostile look. He rises somewhat angrily from his chair and walks heavily to the back door. Marietjie follows him. He stands under the verandah . . . to keep the distance between himself and the African who wants to see him. She is in her seventies and stoops as though she carries the woes of the world on her shoulders. She holds on to a long staff to support her weak legs and has covered her shoulders with a tattered blanket. A strange light shines from her brown, deepset eyes; she seems to be seeing through everything and to know that she does this. This look, which is characteristic of all the Africans he has met, angers Piet; he believes it to be the look of defiance directed at the Afrikaner. Most of his people believe this. Marietjie, too, does not like the glow in the old woman's eye; it conveys an arrogance which seems ridiculous on a face scribbled all over with defeat, humiliation and grief. Zandile stands on the lawn by the woman, to help with the translation. Piet is the first to speak.

Yes? What do you want?

The old woman disentangles a knot on the scarf on her head and does this so slowly Piet loses his temper.

Tell her, Zandile, that I can't stand for a thousand years here, waiting for her to speak. If she won't talk, I have other things to do.

Zandile passes the message. The woman remains unruffled.

Tell him, child, that he has to have the time for me.

Zandile does not pass the retort to the whites. Black and white in South Africa, as in many parts of the world, are like two deaf men engaged in a violent, mutual swearing and cursing fight. Each says the ugliest things against the other while the other does not hear. Zandile realises that the woman is beginning to be angry with Piet's manner,

just as he is with hers. The old lady turns to her again.

Don't these people have any rules of behaviour? Any law of decency? Aren't they even trained in manners? They're all so rude you'd think they were borne by one loose woman. Doesn't he see I'm untying this knot? Tell him what I'm saying.

Piet has lost a good deal of patience and starts pacing up and down the verandah. It is Marietjie who breaks the silence.

What's she saying, Zandile?

She's talking to herself, nooi.

The lie does not sound very convincing, but Zandile is determined to play the role of diplomat in what she regards as a clash between the Zulu and Afrikaner worlds. The old woman sees the white man from her exclusive perspectives and behaves toward him in terms of the etiquette used in her society. The presentation of a subject must be done according to the rules and the black woman is not going to be rushed to violate them, not even when the white man thinks her a beggar in his backyard.

These rules require that she should prepare the ground for the statement of the theme, develop her subject, establish her point, relate the point to prevailing conditions, and then conclude her presentation. These steps are based on the movement of the person through life on this earth and represent birth, growth, maturity, decline and death. The fingers of the open right hand symbolise each stage and birth starts with the shortest finger.

To shake hands with the next person is to communicate to him vibrations wishing him the happiest passage from stage to stage in life. Children and younger people are touched with the open right hand to pass on to them the vibrations calculated to give them good health, to protect them and set them on the road to success. Refined conversation must be divided into the five parts symbolised by the five fingers. Every statement, every story, every speech, every dance, every form of action must be conceived in five parts. The cultured Zulu casts his conversations with the humblest and the exalted in the form just described.

The old lady has known no other tradition; the impatience and brashness of the white man offend against good taste; in her view, he behaves like a primitive barbarian; he has not been trained in the law of polite conversation. She would like Piet to know what she thinks of him, but Zandile does not think she should oblige. The old woman finally pulls an ancient-looking piece of paper from her scarf and hands it to Zandile.

Give this to him; tell him to read it.

Piet reads it quickly and then turns to his wife, beaming.

Do you know who this is? Bhadama's grandmother. Where do you come from, old woman?

From the land of Zulu. I have been on the road for three

months now.

You walked all the way from Empangeni to Pretoria? Incredible! Why did you do it?

I am looking for Bhadama; I want to talk to him.

But I told you in this letter that Bhadama had died and that he had been burnt so badly only his ashes remained. We buried them. I told you this, old woman!

I want to talk to the ashes.

For a moment, Piet does not understand and he stares at the woman not comprehending what she says and not knowing what answer to give.

How can you talk to the ashes?

For a moment, the African does not understand how the white man cannot follow what she is saying; for a while, she does not know how to answer. She half blames the patient, self-controlled Zandile.

You, white people, you do not understand; I see now that you are only a child-race. We black people were around when the stones cried if pinched. That was long, long ago. We have grown in the understanding of the person; we know how to handle the eternal in him

The old woman pauses for a minute, which looks like a millennium, turning her head first to the whites and their children who are intrigued as much by her queer manners, her slowness, as by their father's reactions to her. The woman then turns and stares at Zandile as though to warn her that disaster is about to descend on the scene. Piet is so tense he stops pacing up and down the verandah and glares at the woman not knowing what could be in her mind and, at the same time, not knowing what to do. If she had not been Bhadama's grandmother, he would have walked away; but, Bhadama's grandmother is a different class of kaffer. If she has come all the way from the land of the Zulus to put him through a test of nerves, he prepares himself for the confrontation.

What you do not know is what the person is; you do not understand that Bhadama is a part of me; not just a part of my flesh, but a part of my spirit. He is the part of myself which belongs to the future. I gave birth to his mother three months after her father's death and she died giving birth to Bhadama. I brought Bhadama up with these bare hands of mine. One day, he grew up and became a man; he worked on the white man's farm for six months and for the rest of the year came here to work for you. Bhadama was a man; a man among men; he worked hard, saved his money and sent it to me. He did not squander it with the women of the location as some young people do. I kept it for him; then I bought him cattle. One day, Bhadama would get himself a pretty girl and found a family. I lived for that moment; then, the fire in your house came Now, I am left alone; I am old and the world is collapsing on me. I want to go to Bhadama's ashes, to his grave, to ask

him to tell me what to do

Tears trickle down the wrinkles on her face. Marietjie steps closer to Piet and holds his hand.

I know how she feels. Poor thing.

Marietjie, you don't understand the native mind; you just have to be patient and let her work off the steam. I still don't know what she wants me to do. A good twenty minutes have gone . . . wasted!

Shall I get her something to eat? She looks hungry.

Zandile will do that when we know what she wants.

While Piet speaks to his wife, the old lady staggers to the ground and sits on the lawn, readying herself for a long talk.

What do you want me to do, old woman? You can't talk to a dead person!

Forgive me, for sitting on your lawn. Being on the road, walking every day for three full months is more than the body of an old woman can bear.

Were you not afraid to be alone, on the road or by night?

You do not understand; you cannot understand. Your wife does. A person has never lain across your middle; your body has never known the experience of passing life to your neighbour; to the future. See it this way: the future is always beckoning to the present, through woman, to pass life from the past to itself. Woman is the custodian of life; she must respond when life calls. I am here to look for a part of my life; for a piece of my flesh; for the umbilical cord I buried when Bhadama was born. It is the cord which links me with the past and the future.

Think of how old I am and how old you are; how old every living person in the world is—old, not in terms of years, but of ages.

The ages are telescoped into each person; successions of umbilical cords linking generations of me and you with antiquity. You and I are not things of the moment; we are eternal persons, linked directly to the beginning of the human experience. See what happens? A part of the umbilical cord drops off the navel of the baby; we dig the soil and bury it. The baby lives and grows up while a part of himself lies buried in the soil. The reason for this is that there is no death; there's life only. We live in death and, dying, are reborn into another dimension of existence. The cord in the earth does not die; it merely changes into earth-stuff or life and vibrates through the soil into the roots of the plant whose grains sustain human life. See what happens? That which is "dead" sustains life. It was like that at the beginning of things; so it is now, as it always will be. That is why I am here. The future is always calling out to me and to you to grow into it. You understand what I mean?

Piet does not answer; he turns his face and looks at his wife, who has her face turned to his. They hear words and feel the power of the thoughts behind them, but do not understand what the woman is

talking about. It is as though they hear a voice in the dark, from another planet; she talks to them from one level of experience and they hear her from another and neither side understands the other.

I see; you do not understand. Bhadama now belongs to the past, which is also the future. He calls out to me and I have to respond when he calls; I have to rise up and heed the call, even when it means I have to walk barefooted around the earth. For, I must heed the voice of the part of me that is in the soil.

What do you want me to do?

I am old now and too weak to work for the white man who owns the farm on which I live. I have no relatives to work for him in order to have a roof over my head. He says I should leave his farm if I can't work; he says a lot of hard things; you would think his heart was made of stone. He says he'll take my cattle; Bhadama's cattle, to cover my rent for living on his piece of earth. If I tell him that the cattle are the pillar which keeps me alive, he says my life is my business and not his; that he came alone into this earth and shall be alone in death. If I ask him where I shall get food when he has taken my cattle, he says I should ask the government. I went to the white government in Empanjeni; they told me that the law says I should go when a white man says I should get out of his land.

There are scores of Bantoe reserves in Natal. Can't you find a place in any of them?

Child of a white woman, have you ever been to a reserve? Those places are overcrowded; people live like cattle in a stockyard! I thought you would do better than tell me about the reserves. The government cannot take any more people into them because there's no more place for them; that is what the chiefs tell me. See what this means? If there is no place for a black person, then we must no longer bear children. I asked the Bantoe affairs commissioner how he would solve the land problem, since people would continue to be born. The women must push a cork stopper into their genitals. That is what he told me. But, even if I were to find a place, I could not take my two huts on my head and carry them to a reserve. I would have to sell the cattle in order to build a new house and I would be left with nothing to give me food.

You have your customs; you share things; your neighbours would share their food with you.

You do not understand. How do you grow food on overcrowded land? Who ploughs the lands, because you take our men from their homes; you want them to work for you in your towns. Those reserves are places where people starve, die and rot. Bhadama used to tell me that you are one of the white lords; that you work for the chief of the white people; that the chief makes the laws for the white people. I have come to ask you to help me; I need your help. I came to you because I believe you are the only white man who can understand; Bhadama stood by you too, in your hour of need. I don't say pay me

for that: I ask you to understand . . . I need a place where to hide my head.

She has a point, Piet.

Marietjie! You don't understand! How on earth can an Afrikaner prime minister force an Afrikaner farmer to accommodate a kaffer on his farm, whom he no longer needs? Put aside the political implications which I, his secretary, dare not even consider. Think what the principle does; it strikes at the very roots of Afrikaner survival.

But this is a special case. Our children . . .

Don't repeat liberal sobstuff to me. All you need to do is to get the opposition paper in Johannesburg, the *Rand Post*, to publish the story that a black woman shed tears which melted the prime minister's heart. See what would happen? You can't expect me to shatter the prime minister's image! I, his own private secretary, to be involved in a thing like that would be a scandal with which I could never live.

Piet shoves his hands into his pockets and steps heavily up and down the verandah while Marietjie disappears into the house.

If you were younger, I would ask you to come and work for a friend of mine in the city here; then, you would have the right to rent a municipal house in the location. But then, you are too old to help yourself. And, if a Bantoe affairs commissioner says his reserves are full, I can't do much to help; the law ties my hands just as it ties his.

Was that law made by human beings, for human beings?

That riles Piet; he takes his hands out of his pockets and, glaring at the old woman, shouts.

Who do you think made it? These trees?

They are too understanding to do that.

Well, if that's what you travelled all the way to tell me, talk to them!

You are such handsome people; look at your pretty wife, as beautiful as a budding flower on a spring morning. Look at your children; look at yourself, a pillar of strength; manliness at its best. Such handsome people! Does it not hurt your conscience or anything decent in you to make yourselves ugly by enacting ugly laws which make life ugly for other people? Don't you ever sing or dance or open your lives to your neighbours or lose yourselves in the beauty of all the people with whom you inhabit the earth?

We are a different people.

Indeed, you are. But, don't you get tired of remaining a child race when all the people around you are growing up? All the other people ask is that you should grow up and learn to live with them as adults do. An adult is a civilised person and to be civilised means wanting nothing for yourself which you will deny your neighbour. That is the law enunciated by our ancestors when the stones were so soft they cried if pinched.

Zandile was happy to translate all of this.

* * *

Bus Number AZ 1021 is not as crowded as it is on workdays. Zandile leads Bhadama's mother to a seat for two.

Child, now that we are alone, tell me: How do you live with those barbarians?

We do not live with each other; we just watch each other. When we are hungry, they give us jobs; when they have work to do, they need our labour. We know where they are strong and weak; they know where we are weak and strong; we work where we are weak and watch where we are strong. They do the same.

How long will you go on like that?

How long did you think you would go on when Bhadama went to his ancestors?

That white couple for whom you work! There's nothing human in them. They couldn't even shake hands with me, just to express gratitude for what Bhadama did for them!

No! They wouldn't shake hands with you. They don't shake hands with me or with any black person, except the diplomats from the land of the Nyasa. The Afrikaners do not shake hands with black people; that is their law.

What do they lose when they shake hands?

They know best.

That white man again! Did you see the way he eyes you? I don't blame him. You are such a pretty child the sun itself hides its face when you look at it. You make him feel deeply human; he desires you; he can't control himself.

Sometimes he says silly things.

Watch out, child. I once was a pretty girl, too.

He told you that he is a prisoner of the law; the law controls his passions.

Now, I want to see your husband. He must be a very handsome man to have a wife with such a beautiful spirit. How shall I express my thanks for your offer to keep me in your house until I have seen Bhadama's house. May more be added to everything you want in life.

I'll tell you one thing, mama, about my husband. He'll be hurt, very deeply, when you tell him that those *gatwysers* would not shake hands with you even after Bhadama had given his life to save their children.

Well, let me not tell him, then. The white people are a child race; they do not know how to handle the most beautiful, the most precious and the most sacred thing on earth: the human personality. It does not matter who has it. Let me hope that you townspeople do not allow the diseased mind to contaminate yours. For, what shall we be

the day our minds are diseased, like the white man's? There won't be a single black person left on this land. To save yourselves and all of us, you have to refuse to punish a person simply because he is the child of his parents.

My husband finds it hard to live according to that rule.

Child, he has to abide by it not because he likes the white people but because he is different; the rule is one of his guarantees of survival. The day he throws *umteto wesintu* out of his life, he will walk the earth like a disembowelled shell of flesh, without *ubuntu*, without a sense of direction and without a future. The white man said they are different; we, too, are different from them. If they handle the human personality with untidy hands, we prefer to handle it with clean hands.

* * *

By May, autumn has said its farewells to South Africa and winter, windy, cold and dry, is round the corner. People no longer walk leisurely from the bus terminal to their homes; they run. As a rule, the door of a normal African home is never shut by day as long as there are people in the house. In the locations, however, crime is rising in such a way that people open the front doors only when they are in the living-room. The open door is a signal that human beings live in the house; being human means that the people who live behind the open door want nothing for themselves which they would deny their neighbour. In the old days, the doors were shut only on cold, rainy or windy days.

In spite of the cold, Pumasilwe stands in front of his main door, waiting for his wife. He rushes to the gate and opens it and helps her with the groceries. The old lady smiles approvingly. She has heard that the people in the towns have adopted the white man's lifestyle and have lost their regard for privacy. Men, she has been told, will smoke in a room where women are present. Husbands and wives embrace and kiss in public. When people talk to each other, they look each other in the eyes. In her culture only crooks look people they are talking to in the eyes; uncultured people, too, do this. Crooks are uncultured people; they have no sense of decency. Boys and girls kiss in the presence of older people. A flash of fear passes through her mind; suddenly, the meeting with Zandile's husband might be an encounter with white backwardness in the black community. Pumasilwe does not kiss his wife and she does not in any way indicate the readiness to be kissed in public. A well-bred Zulu youth or girl knows that people in love kiss in their bedroom. In the old days, when a boy or girl reached puberty, a private hut was built for him or for her so that he or she should have the privacy to express love to the loved one.

Why do you stand in the cold? Zandile is speaking.

Waiting for you.

Good news, bad news?

Good! It had to be good. I know you don't have much time for Maggie, but she did a good job.

Alright, father of the children, you'll tell me more about her later.

They walk into the house and settle down for the evening. In their bedroom that night Zandile asks her husband about the good news.

Maggie contacted Paul Kritzinger's cook. Yes, the Kritzingers hate the van der Merwes—as bitterly as the hen hates the wildcat. If the women are planning a showdown with the government on the law forcing them to carry Passes, in Pretoria, at least, we shall be fighting a police force with a split mind. Our tactics will be based on the quarrel between Kritzinger and Piet van der Merwe on one side and, on the other, on the conflicting views between de Haas and the Commissioner of Police. You did a fine job, Mother of the Children.

It was all a waste of time

Procuring information on the heads of the government? How can that be a waste of time? How else can you control the mind of the white man if you don't know what he is doing?

From to-day, Father of the Children, I feel I am a changed woman. I grew up being told that there are millions of paths to Blood River and that each person is one of these. I thought I understood what this meant; I was ignorant; that was my undoing. I could not have understood; all the education I have reduced me to a carbon copy of the white man. I saw reality as he dictated. He told me who and what I was. I accepted his definitions of the truth and made myself his consenting slave. I told myself that love is the only thing to live for. Since I loved you, I sacrificed my personality at the altar of love; since I loved our children, I became a slave to the family. To keep it together was the thing I lived for. The family had been transformed into the prison of the mind in which my real self was locked. Society's mind was locked in that jail. People regarded the family as so sacred, it was an unforgivable sin to do anything to shake its foundations; people lived in fear of the consequences of shaking the family. But the fear was one more instrument the white man used to control our minds and manipulate our lives. From to-day, I shall never again be a slave by consent!

What is happening to you? Are you telling me that the doors of your heart are now shut to me?

No. I love you; but now I am a custodian of life and I love you as such. Those white people for whom I work . . . they wouldn't shake the hand of a woman like Bhadama's grandmother! That Bhadama who died saving their children. I was so hurt, I asked myself: Zandile, what is it that you live for? Forever to be spat upon even when you do good? Forever to be spited for being the owner of your land? Forever to be despised, just because you are the child of your parents, in your own Africa? No, I told myself; I live to be a woman; the custodian of life

and the destroyer of life

Pumasilwe still does not think he understands what is going on in his wife's mind. The hot tears from her eyes warn him that mud has been stirred at the depths of her being. Each time she does this in reaction to treatment by the whites, which is not infrequent, he feels pangs of guilt. He asked her to join the underground, to collect information on the whites at the head of the government and he knows that he cannot make much use of it. He, Mareka and Masilo plan strategies based on it which do not seem to hit the white power-structure where it hurts.

They meet and manufacture home-made bombs and occasionally blow up small bridges and electric pylons, but never strike where the white man will be forced to realise that the black people are determined now to restore their land and its wealth to themselves.

If the tactics of the underground leave Zandile frustrated, she leaves her husband in no doubt about her feelings on the futility of blowing up electric pylons in the hope that this might inconvenience the whites and frighten them into quitting South Africa. And each time she says this, she makes it clear that the underground is, in the final analysis, delaying the struggle's march to freedom. Pumasilwe knows that she no longer has the confidence she once had in the underground.

She stays on her job out of love for him and Puma is not the type of man who is not affected by this. She collects whatever bits and pieces of information she can because she loves him and sometimes he hates himself for placing her in this position. And when she breaks down and cries, he finds it difficult not to feel guilty.

In such moments, when he does not know what to do, he turns to the breastbone of the cat and holds it between his fingers. That steadies his nerves and gives him at least a feeling of security. He has it between his fingers as his wife talks; it has become the prop he turns to in moments of challenge. He and his wife sometimes quarrel badly over even this prop. The bone, she tells him then, will not do the thinking for him.

Do you know what happened, Father of the Children?

I am listening.

In one short encounter, that old woman taught me what I had not learned in all the years I had been in the white man's schools: she showed me what it means to take the white man out of my mind. She spoke to the whites in her own language, according to the rules observed in her culture and at a level beyond their range of thinking. The whites just did not know what to do or how to handle her; she dominated the scene. Their arrogance, superior knowledge . . . all that ceased to have meaning in the situation she created. Piet's final answer was to lose his temper. The old lady was not ruffled; she never stepped out of her world. He raved and ranted and there the old custodian of life sat on the lawn telling him that he was a handsome man who

defiled himself and plastered his personality with ugliness. In effect, she told him to stop being silly by inflating his personality out of all human proportions. You should have been there, to see how calm she was, even when the gatwysyer was red in the face I realised then what the poet meant when he cried out: "Arise and march, O ye bones which lie buried on the banks of Blood River!"

That was some experience, her husband agreed.

I said I am a changed woman? No; that is the wrong word. I became an experience older; I grew up. If woman has the power to create and destroy life, that power is not given to her by the white people and cannot be taken away from her by any force on earth or in the whole of creation. The old lady used the power which inheres in the woman to create a situation to which the whites had to respond, regardless of whether or not they liked it.

I still do not know if I understand what you are telling me.

I'm telling myself something. If I can create and destroy, I can destroy to create. If the whites pass the law which forces us to carry passes, we can crack their psyche; we, the women of Africa, can use the power which inheres in us as the custodians to create the situations in which we shall crack the stoutest Afrikaner heart. That is the lesson the old woman taught me. I never thought of it

As she speaks, her face brightens as though it is illuminated by an invisible, inner light. She looks as though she has suddenly been lifted to a higher plane of consciousness. Puma notes the change; Zandile radiates an aura of beauty which is no longer of this earth when she is ovulating. It is then when she loves him best; when she is irresistible. But he knows that she is not going through the most beautiful cycle in the life of a woman and, at that moment, she is not thinking about love; she has her mind on the things that hurt a black person; the things that drive black and white to war. The woman thinking of war is not a woman in love. Puma is puzzled and whenever he faces a problem he cannot solve, he takes refuge in his prop. He shoves his hand into his pocket and strokes the breastbone of the cat.

Zandile is now quiet. Her mind wanders back to her childhood days; to the moments when she would live on her grandmother's lap, to have the nits picked out of her hair. Those, she always tells herself, were the most precious moments in her life, when her grandmother explained the mysteries of existence to her. The old lady had been born toward the evening of Zulu power. Two years after she was born, the British had declared war on the Zulus, forced Cetshwayo into a war he had not wanted and crushed the Zulu empire in order to establish the Union of South Africa, dig up the gold and the iron and the diamonds in the lands of the Africans and ship these to the lands of the white people. Grandmother had grown up in the shadow of defeat and humiliation; she had seen the man she was to marry recruited and forced to work on the road and then the railway line from Durban to

Johannesburg; it was like conscription; armed police roamed the countryside hunting for young men to be conscripted into the labour gangs. People died by their hundreds in the filthy compounds in which they were locked at night. Those were the years of the hated *isibhalo*. That was what defeat meant; the white man sent his police and came with the gun to force a man out of his home, to work for the whites.

The defeat had stirred up an unprecedented desire for changing defeat into victory. The Zulus realised that the collapse of their power meant that they had to fight the white man with his own weapons. All over Natal, people sent their children to school; mastering the white men's techniques was the most powerful ambition of the times. The head of grandmother's clan, wise old Chief Ngangezwe, was the subject of this panegyric poem:

UNkulunkulu mkhulu,
Emkhulu kangako uSomandla,
AkangangoNgangezwe,
Umgqwabagqwaba omile emandulo,
Waqhakaza ngalëna kwe phakade.
Umkhulu Ngangezwe!

(God is indeed great;
Although he has all the power,
Ngangezwe is greater;
He is the tree rooted in antiquity
And grows and flowers on the other side of eternity.
Thou art great, O Ngangezwe!)

Ngangezwe had forty wives and two hundred children; his cattle were as many as the sands of the Tukela River and it was said that there was enough gold in his great house to outshine the sun. Ngangezwe fought in the war of 1879 against the British. After defeat he returned to his kraal, which was a town by itself and made up his mind to adapt to the challenge of defeat. One morning, he loaded half a ton of gold on one of his ox-wagons and led one hundred of his children to the mission school.

Take these Zulus, he told the principal, and teach them the wisdom of the white people!

These were the times in which Zandile's grandmother had grown up. The old lady denied that the human being was created; he had emerged, she insisted, from a cleft reed in a primeval swamp; his entry into the earth was an act of his will. He owed his life to nobody other than himself; he was not owned by any power in heaven or on earth. That had been reassuring to Zandile; she had grown up feeling at home in the cosmic order.

One day, little Zandile went to school, where they told her

about genesis. That introduced conflicts which shattered her feeling of security in the world. The missionaries and the teachers taught that God had created the person; that he had the copyright on the person's life; that he owned her! If he owned her, his representatives had the right to own her. The feeling of being owned distorted Zandile's personality and filled her mind with fear. She became uncertain about her position in the cosmic order; that made her a prisoner of the white man's God; the whites punished her for being black and God created her to be punished; it was a crime for her to be alive. The old lady tried to reassure Zandile:

Child, do not worry; it is not a crime to be an African; the race of men has not as yet been born which shall say it has conquered the African. See, child, you can take all the soap there is in the world and wash the black skin . . . it won't turn white. There is a power in us which makes us endure what no other race of men has endured. We grow and keep growing. The white man builds his jails, crowds us in the locations, steals our land, starves us and builds all sorts of walls within which to confine us and when he has done everything, we outgrow it all and keep growing. How do you conquer a people like that?

Zandile remembers how some of the things her grandmother told her were puzzling and how she would ask endless questions.

Grandma, does it mean that the person does not really die?

Yes, he does not die.

But people do die!

Yes, they do die.

Zandile would sometimes be angry with grandmother's abstruse explanations of the truth. There was so much the little girl wanted to understand about life and there were not many grandmothers to appeal to.

See, child, we human beings are still ignorant; that is why we die. We are not as yet aware of the power of emergence locked in us. One day we shall be aware of it. We still concern ourselves with the physical aspects of our lives and ignore the cosmic influences which shape our bodies and affect our health or love or hatred. Medicine treats the physical in us; it has not as yet been developed to control the cosmic forces and focus these on the treatment of disease. Our ancestors had mastered the art. In his ignorance the white man called the art witchcraft. But, one day, things will change; the white people shall grow out of ignorance . . . Then, people shall not die!

As Zandile sits next to her husband, these thoughts enter her mind. To her, the behaviour of Bhadama's grandmother translates her grandmother's teachings into experience.

Think of it, Father of the Children! The power of emergence! I can move out of the owned slave-self that I am to become the self-determining self on my own steam! By an act of pure will! Nobody has any copyright on my life; that old woman, Bhadama's grandmother, showed how this is not so! The white man's God doesn't have this

copyright and not even the white man who stole my land. Grow out there on the plain by myself; stand out there alone in order to strike the Boer where he is weakest! Boy! Shall I not strike!

I thought people like Bulube called that the *xina* technique? You create the situation in which you seek to make it impossible for white domination to survive . . . even if it takes you a thousand years to create it . . .

I don't see how the underground is doing better. Blowing up an electric pole here, cutting fences there and burning an old deserted house and wearing a particular type of necktie or not cutting your hair or wearing long beards and blasting white power out of existence with the irresistible might of the conference resolution! You call that fighting? I don't!

You can't fight if the good-boys are around, the quislings and their allies stand in the way. You have to get rid of the enemies of freedom so that the masses can march to freedom.

Then, why don't you kill the good-boys? Why don't you kill the quislings and their white friends?

That will play into the hands of the enemy; it will split the masses . . .

Excuses! Excuses! Always excuses. He who is determined to be free strikes with every weapon within reach; with his bare hands if nothing else is available and, if necessary, with his body or freedom or life.

You have to prepare the masses . . .

Rhetoric! More rhetoric! It all makes me sick! In 1912 our fathers went to Bloemfontein and told us that white domination is wicked. Since then, what have we been doing? Vying with each other in denouncing white domination; making great speeches, passing portentous resolutions, preparing learned memoranda, writing learned books, analysing white domination, planning action . . . in a desperate bid to avoid action. How much have our leaders spent in air fares, flying from one foreign capital to the other planning action, attacking white domination and all the time saying nothing new!

You have to fight wherever you can hit the enemy . . .

I'll tell you what I think is wrong. The underground does not know what it really wants.

That's nonsense! Everybody knows we want freedom?

What is freedom?

The right to determine our lives.

The white man's definition again. You want what the white man has; you want what he says is good. Why not want something different? Something higher?

What is more precious than freedom?

I hate freedom; it gives all the scoundrels of the world the right to meddle in the lives of their fellowmen. I want to know where and how to hit to kill the enemy; I want to know how I can create a

responsible and balanced society; I want to know how to feed, clothe, house, educate and cure every person. Freedom won't enable me to do that. In your great democracies, people are free to starve; in your people's republics people have enough food, though they are slaves.

In the name of goodness, what do you want, then?

To be like that woman I brought home with me; to have the white man out of my mind; to be able to say to myself and to all the people of Africa: Don't waste your time writing about the evils of white domination! Don't waste your words condemning the whites. They can't do better than what they are doing. Let them enact the Pass Law; let them please themselves; let them make our honour the plaything of any scoundrel in uniform. Cease to respond to their initiatives, for then they do the thinking for you and for us.

Zandile's voice rises scornfully. Then, I would tell myself: let them always have the power to keep the sun in the skies to give them continuing power; I would tell myself: Let the day never come when the sun shall set; for the black woman shall rise, draw the line and say: thus far, white man, and no farther! For when that moment comes, there shall not be enough tears in the world to wash the wounds we shall have torn into the body of Afrikanerdom. There shall not be enough tears to extinguish the fires which shall rage in this land.

* * *

The Sunday is the first Bhadama's grandmother has spent in Pumasilwe's home. Zandile and her husband understood that the most important business in her trip to Pretoria was to visit Bhadama's grave. She had lost most of the cattle he had bought and therefore had no money to buy a train ticket to Pretoria. She is old; but not even this stood in her way. She had to rise to a dimension of existence where she would do the things she wanted done.

She steps out of the house, into the car Pumasilwe has borrowed from Father Maimane of the Zion Pentecostal Church. Zandile and the old lady sit in the back seat. It is a momentous day for the old woman; night after night she has been meditating on this moment; she meditates on it as the car drives to the African cemetery. Sunday is, as a rule, burial day in some of South Africa's largest locations. Most people do not work on this day; they therefore are free to accompany their loved ones to their last resting place. Pumasilwe and the two women leave their car at the gate to the cemetery. Pumasilwe warns the old woman:

We will walk a long way to Bhadama's house. We shall take our time and do not strain yourself, Mother.

Every Zulu who has been brought up the right way refers to every woman about the age of his mother as Mother and she, in turn, calls him Son or Child. Zandile's guest moves nearer to her as the two

walk slowly down the footpath to Bhadama's grave in the distance.

Did you say, child, that only black people lie in these graves? Yes, mother.

So many graves? Of adults and infants? One would think there were no more black people left in Pretoria.

There still are many of us, mother.

I have never seen anything like this! So many people dead? In peacetime? This frightens me. You live in the midst of undeclared war; a very real war because people die.

She shakes her head and holds her stick tightly. After a long silence she addresses Zandile again.

Child, how do you live with these people, who live to destroy? How do you survive the peaceful war? These graves . . . they are the foundations on which white power is built; they are the pillars of the white people's rule. No wonder the whites are so thoughtless and so inconsiderate; their power is founded on death. Yes. The death of little children; the death of adults and the death of everybody and everything. I did not know . . . that such beautiful people can overload their hearts with so much wickedness.

She is quiet again; she wants to think of Bhadama, but the sight of the vast cemetery and what she regards as its implications for her race almost overwhelm her. She talks to Zandile again.

Child, you went to school and you send your children to school. Why do you do that? You learned the ways of the white man. You want your children to learn these ways; to be like him; to destroy life instead of preserving it. Why do you want your children to see the truth as he does? They will commit the mistakes which are his to-day. Are you not afraid, that when the death by which he lives has overtaken him, your own rule will be founded on the power of death? Look at all these graves! You want to have as many of them too when you rule? The thought frightens me.

The path to Bhadama's grave has taken a sloping bend and the old woman feels the strain. She stops for a while and turns her body downhill, to draw a larger volume of air into her lungs.

Graves! Graves wherever you turn! You want your children to learn how to send more people to the grave?

Not at all! We send them to school to learn how to survive the death. We want them to understand the mind of the enemy so that they should be able to fight to win. We must know where the enemy is weakest.

And now, you think you know?

Not yet, because they are still our masters. But that will not last too much longer. We know now that the truth by which they live destroys everybody and everything they come in contact with. That is one of their weaknesses; we must work harder to speed their march to self-destruction.

The old woman takes a deep breath and starts the uphill climb.

She walks for a while and stops again.

Graves! Graves everywhere. You are mistaken, child. You will not beat the white man at his game. You will become worse destroyers of your fellowmen . . .

Zandile does not want an argument. The cemetery is not the place to discuss race politics. Besides, the old woman has touched on a point where most educated Africans are sensitive. They realise that they are people of two worlds; that for good or for evil, they see reality from two, often conflicting, perspectives. While they are aware of the truth as it has been revealed to their race, they also understand the white man's outlook on life. The African who has not been to school sees reality from one angle, like the white people. The bifocal mind has its advantages. Bulube has used it to create a synthesis of political experiences with which he has established a leadership vacuum in the country. He has created a situation in which the whites progressively lose their sense of direction at the time when their army has never been stronger and the market for gold has never been better. Above all, he has developed leadership initiatives which promise to lead South Africa along safer routes to a better future.

But the bifocal mind also has disadvantages. The educated Africans resist with difficulty the temptation to define fulfilment in terms which are laid down by the whites. Very many of them are still christians; they see nothing wrong with a philosophy which stresses individuality. If that works for the fragmentation of their society, just as it has split the whites throughout history, some of the educated hope that one day they will adapt christianity to the demands of a responsible society. They are not ready to face the truth that *ubuntu* and christianity are ideological incompatibles. The unreadiness develops an ambivalence which some of the educated would like to conceal.

Some even give interpretations of christianity which are so revolutionary that they have no place in the white man's religion. Largely as a result the African's political thinking is always in three directions: there always are the traditionalists who see fulfilment for themselves in burning the white man's cities and purifying their soil by driving every white person into the sea.

At the other extreme are the conciliators. Largely christian in outlook or background, they adhere to the concept of human brotherhood with a determination which nothing seems likely to crack.

Between the two is the majority which has blended African and white traditions and produced a syncretic culture based on the *Buntu Ideal*. Bulube belongs to this group. In the South African setting, every African has something of a traditionalist, a conciliator and a syncretist in him. At the same time the clash between black and white is so fundamental it works for the continuous clarification of attitudes in every walk of life.

Traditionalism, conciliation and syncretism exist in every walk of African life. The Africans who have not been to the white man's

schools draw no distinction between the conciliators and the syncretists; all of them have, as the saying goes, licked the spittle of the white man and are regarded with varying degrees of hostility. When Bhadama's grandmother persists in questioning Zandile about the children's education, she expresses this hostility.

The old woman will not allow Zandile to retreat easily; in her view, people who send their children to school are the unconscious allies of the destroyers.

How will you push the whites to self-destruction, the old woman asks.

We shouldn't make them better human beings.

You do not understand, child. The whites are human beings; the human being grows; peoples, too, grow. As the child approaches puberty, he becomes aware of the tremendous powers locked in him. He has all the energy he needs; he believes human wisdom begins with him; all those who have gone before him are fools; he alone has a solution for every problem. He would destroy the world itself if he could . . . to prove his wisdom! The white people are reaching puberty in the growth of nations. In every nation, the child is not punished and rejected for growing into puberty; the older people understand. The whites are a young people; we are very much older; we should understand. Sometimes the older people will whip an adolescent child who makes a nuisance of himself; but the correction is based on understanding. We will go to war with the white man one day, to stop his habit of destroying. I would think we would fight because we understand. And what we understand is simple: the white man is too young to have learnt the habit of living with other peoples.

Pumasilwe now stands on the side of a low mound which has collapsed in the centre; the women come slowly toward him.

This, mother, is Bhadama's house, he says.

The old woman holds herself together and raises her right hand in which she holds her walking staff. She salutes Bhadama's spirit by calling out the name of the most famous Ntuli ancestor:

Mpemba!

She walks in circles around the grave reciting the poem in which the deeds of Bhadama's greatest ancestors are preserved. At the conclusion of the recitation she stands still near where Bhadama's feet lie. Torrents of tears rush down the massive grooves on her face. The recitation was a simple act of faith in and identification with the eternal person who lives beyond death. Her presence by the grave of her grandson defines the completeness of her defeat and the reality of both the irony and the tragedy of her life.

But the thousands of graves around her give a larger dimension to her tribulation; they project Bhadama's life as one of many destroyed by the white man. The ages rise and file past her mind's eye. History has become a depraved adversary, bombarding her with questions she cannot answer and reducing virtue to a cruel joke; it magnifies

her tribulation into a punishment for her race; her suffering has become the epitome of her people's tragic experience. The blows are more than her frail knees can bear; she staggers unsteadily. Pumasilwe and Zandile help her kneel by the grave. She kisses the mound of earth and then picks a handful of its soil which she presses to her bosom. At that moment she feels the presence of her grandson.

In the old days the soldier who fell in battle was not mourned publicly. A special ceremony was conducted in his kraal to speed his socialisation in the world of the spirit-forms. A short lament was recited during the ceremony. After conquest by the whites, the Zulus no longer went to war. Young men left their homes to seek employment in the white man's towns. Some of them died in the white world. In orthodox homes, these young men are regarded as having died in action and are not mourned. To leave one's people and accept employment in a white man's town, hundreds of miles from home, is to go out on a crusade. The money is not the most important thing in his life; it is the means by which he will buy the cattle which will enable him to marry the girl of his choice, have a family, project the name of his ancestors into the future and rear the men and the women who will continue the march to Blood River.

History turned the wrong way at Blood River, every Zulu child is told; his most sacred mission in life is to return to Blood River to correct the error of history.

In the view of his grandmother, Bhadama died in action. The soil she presses to her bosom is a real part of her grandson. She buried the umbilical cord which tied him to his mother. With her own hands she did it; she was the witness of history. When he lived, a part of his body was in the soil; the whole of it is there now and she presses it to her bosom. She has composed this lament for the occasion:

Wangenzake mntanomntanami!
Wangenza ungazenzi;
Wawuthi wenza ubuntu;
Kanti ubenza kubantu
Abangazi buntu!

See the fate you brought on me,
Child of my child!
A fate you did not desire.
You did the human thing
To people who knew not
What it is to be human
(And that was my undoing!)

After the lament she speaks to the elements, in which Bhadama now lives, detailing her troubles and concludes the statement with this question:

Tell me then, scion of Mpemba, how shall I get out of my

tribulation?

She then rises to her feet, wipes her face with her tattered shawl and moves away from the grave without turning her back on it.

* * *

XIII. Revolution From The Countryside

*Lapho ake ema khona amanzi
Ayophinde ame futhi . . . (John L. Dube)*

*(Water will stop again where it once
formed a pool.)*

In the white man's societies, the most successful revolutions tend to be led from the cities where overcrowding, boredom and deprivation have visible meaning in the daily lives of the poor. The revolution going on in South Africa is remarkable in one major respect; it is fuelled by political choices made in the rural reservations. This puzzles the experts on the race quarrel. The people whom the policies of the CNP hurt most are the dwellers in the locations. During the first fifty years after Union, political fashions were set by the urban Africans, many of whose leaders were "exempted natives" who believed they could establish a Bantu-oriented society through co-operation with the whites. This policy failed, among other things, because it ignored the ideological character of the race quarrel; it did not make adequate allowance for the conflict between the white and the African evaluations of the person. The more the African begged for co-operation with the white men, the more he fought race oppression on ground chosen by the whites; the more he used weapons borrowed from the whites, the greater the ground he lost.

The African did not have much of a choice at the time. The location, pass and educational systems made him the prisoner of the white man. They were used to controlling his thinking in ways which served white ends; they were visible provocations on which he was compelled to concentrate, to facilitate the control of his own mind. The African in the rural areas was not controlled in the way his urban brothers were; he did not live in an overcrowded, soul-crushing location. While the schools did their part in brainwashing him, history and his past were always real in the institutions which moulded his life in rural communities. These cushioned some of the shocks of defeat by the white man. Of greater importance, however, is the fact that conquest did not destroy his roots in the soil where his ancestors were buried. As long as this remained the case he regarded conflict between black and white as a collision between irreconcilable spiritual values. Since he was the incarnation of these values, he regarded race discrimination as an attack not only on his person but also on the meaning by

which he understood reality. In this setting the seizure of African land had a graver significance for him than the mere conquest of territory; it was a desecration of that from which he derived his being.

For him, the race quarrel was defined, less in terms of colour and more in terms of ideology; there was a direct relationship between race humiliation, the desecration of the graves of his ancestors and the land as a determinant of being. In the old days, he had suffered profounder shocks from defeat on the battlefields. The imposition of white rule had been like salt rubbed into the wounds of defeat. He had all the time to live out history almost in everything he did, whereas the urban African was too busy with the struggle for economic survival to have the time to think too much of history. The rural African supported the urban-oriented political parties more as a declaration of faith and an act of identification and less as a conscious act of determining his destiny in the light of his choices.

The older clan chiefs who went to Bloemfontein never tire of giving lengthy monologues on what happened after defeat by the white man, in the endeavour to establish the relationship between defeat and race oppression and in that way rally the young behind the political renaissance which the rural areas are leading. Revolutionaries from the rural areas urge their people to grab the opportunity to appoint their own representatives to the segregated rural administrations and to use these as the platforms from which to re-define the race quarrel and as the bases on which to build dual-authority situations as an answer to the policies of the whites. In the rural areas, people believe that segregation is a blessing in disguise; it forces the Africans to concentrate on the things which matter most in life instead of living for the tinsel which passes for wealth in the urban areas. Land is the most crucial of these. The Africans do not think of it as territory only; it is their mother. If woman is the custodian of human life, the soil is all life; the umbilical cord is buried in it to continue the cycle of life. The soil cannot be destroyed; it can only be desecrated. In African societies, no crime is more heinous than the desecration of the soil. The Zulu words for the crime are *ukukhanda inhlabathi* (restructuring the soil) and have cataclysmic connotations. He who interferes with the soil creates a cosmic crisis; this, in the African view, is what witchcraft is all about. Life is an infinity; it cannot be cut up into areas or acres or plots or periods of time; it can only be used to sustain itself and is not owned by any person. When the white man cuts up the soil and claims proprietary rights over it, he commits a crime against life; he practices witchcraft. The Africans laid down their lives in the defence of their soil, it is said in the rural reserves, they must die again in order to have it returned to themselves.

If the soil cannot be destroyed, physical woman can be—by the simple fact of desecration; by making her honour the plaything of any scoundrel in the uniform of a policeman. Woman destroyed is a people destroyed, old Chief Yedwa Zama tells his councillors in Natal's

vast Valley Of A Thousand Hills.

First, it was the land; the white man tried to kill it; now, it is woman—he is trying to kill us; before he does it, cows shall give birth to human beings. First, he said we must worship a wraith called Jesus Christ; then he took our land and, finally, he has declared war on our women. He said polygamy was sinful and created a society in which each man could have only one wife. But which child in all creation does not know that more women are born than men; that men die sooner than women? The women who cannot have homes and husbands become prostitutes. See what his monogamy has done? It has brought prostitution into our lives. I am old now; I have shed my tears over the fate of our daughters. But I am glad about one thing; I have lived to see the dawn of a new day; the educated people are at last taking the white man out of their minds . . .

Unlike most elderly chiefs, Yedwa believes with Bulube and Mareka that in the final analysis the conflict between black and white is a war of minds. He was a young man when the Bloemfontein conference met in 1912; people called him a young man because he had just been installed chief, his sixteen years notwithstanding. Clan warfare had erupted on such a vast scale in the Valley after his father's death the government had to accede to pleas that he should be installed as chief. Like a few other chiefs at the time, he attended the Bloemfontein assembly and never tires of telling about his experiences.

I was born in the sunset of African independence and grew up amidst the shocks of defeat. At the time of my birth the smell of gunpowder filled the air and our kingdoms were destroyed one after another. I saw the man who would get to the top of a hill by day or by night bringing tidings of the end. Ye who hear, he would shout, note that I am the last of the doomed! The white invaders had descended on his people and blasted them out of existence.

Then Seme came; he said there was no reason why destruction should be our fate; we could, if we used our brains, create for ourselves the world we desired. We would have to abandon the loyalties which made us narrowly Zulu or Sotho or Xhosa; we all had to be reborn into a new people: the African people. Rebirth would be painful and slow, he warned us; but after it, we would have a quality of power before which nothing would stand. From 1912 to the mid-twenties we toiled to make regeneration a fact of our life. Then, the era of the coalitions with the whites, the Coloureds and the Indians began. We hoped to persuade them to accept our ideal of nationhood. For a whole generation we formed alliances across colour or racial lines. But, viewing everything in retrospect now, the coalitions were doomed from the beginning. Our ideal gave us one set of priorities while the white liberals, the Coloureds and the Indians adhered to different sets. Instead of the coalitions developing into cohesive united fronts, they degenerated into ideological battlegrounds where each group strove to advance its ends at the expense of the others. There could be only one end to all

this: the African people were split from head to feet.

The coalitions were doomed for another reason: to be good allies of the minorities, we had to abandon the traditional methods of organising ourselves which had been passed on to us by our ancestors and adopted the white man's ways. That was our undoing; the white authority picked out our elected leaders and silenced them, it proscribed our political organisations and isolated the masses of our people. But the greatest mistake we made was to take our mind from the Afrikaner; we were told and believed that our struggle centred around doctrines developed in Europe. We took sides in a quarrel that was none of our business. We believed that the European powers or America could become our allies if we showed them that we adhered to their ideologies. Our educated people said ideologies would be our salvation. We believed them and stopped evolving strategies based on our experience, culture and history against the Afrikaner. When we tried to speak to the Afrikaner in the language we were told he would understand, he wrote Sharpeville into history.

Chief Yedwa pauses at this point; the fire in his greyish eyes glows as though it encompasses the past and the future. Visions from the past flash in his mind and fade into the future. Men had come to the fore in this Valley, which stretches for miles in front of him, who said the firestick was the only instrument by which to open the footpaths to Blood River. Every tinsmith in the Valley became a gunsmith. On the roads which criss-cross the Valley one would meet women carrying pieces of steel water piping or see children running to shops with hens or cockerels under their arms to buy steel coil springs. By day and by night one heard the sound of the axe hitting the hardwood trees in the forests of the Valley. The community had been isolated from its leaders and had been shut out of the ideological struggle. In its moment of weakness, it had turned inward, to itself and its past in order to discover its own paths to Blood River.

Never, in living memory, had there been so many home-made guns in the Valley. Then, one day, the police got wind of what was happening; they swooped on the Valley and what they found shook white South Africa to its foundations. Every head of a family had a home-made gun; others had more for their sons and relatives. More than this, the police realised in time that the Valley Of A Thousand Hills was not the only rural reserve manufacturing its own guns; large numbers of them in Natal were building a stockpile of these crude weapons. When news of their discovery reached the Commissioner of Police in Pretoria, he promptly flew to Durban to organise campaigns for disarming the Zulus. The police went through every reserve with a fine-tooth comb.

Prinsloo's instructions were that nothing should be done to provoke the Zulus; there were to be no arrests; the police would enter the reserves quietly and move from house to house and kraal to kraal and cave to cave, searching for and seizing all home-made guns. Month after month troop-carriers roared into African reserves every day with

police. The operation was carried out without a single incident. Police non-violence had paralysed the Zulus; it was contrary to their way of doing things to fight when the police talked peace and did not arrest anybody. And yet, deep in the heart of every Zulu in the Valley the police campaign was a moment of humiliation and when Yedwa stares vacantly into space until a tear trickles down one side of his face, the men around him understand.

Perhaps it is as well that the police took our guns from us, Yedwa continues. We were like a cleft reed; the people in the locations were quarrelling about ideologies while we in the reserves were arming to avenge Blood River. We were a nation whose mind was at war with itself. A cleft reed cannot stand in the wind. Chief Luthuli was a wise man who kept his ear to the ground; he told all our people to avoid violence at the time. I had told you in this Valley, I don't remember how many times, that you were fools to make those crude guns and hope to fight the white man with them; to imagine that you could use them against his flying-machines and his wireless. You did not listen; one day, the police swooped on this Valley. Most of you were in Durban or Pietermaritzburg at work.

Did you expect the women and the children to take up the guns against the police? he demands. The police were smart; you were fools; they could afford not to arrest you; they had better brains. For there is only one way to beat the white man: to have better brains; to do what he cannot do. If he survives on one loaf of bread per day, survive on one loaf for twenty days; if he works one hour, work twenty hours and if he reads one book to gain wisdom, read twenty books. That is the only way to beat him. Any other course is a shortcut to defeat

Some of the young men seated around the chief shake their heads; others start whispering to each other while three of the most militant rise to their feet, salute the assembly and walk away. This old man, one of the young men tells the other two in tones loud enough to be heard by everybody, contradicts himself. First he tells us that the Passes will expose our women to humiliation and then he turns round to say we must defend our women by putting on their skirts!

About twenty other young men rise and rush after the three.

Didn't anybody teach you the law? Did you not herd your fathers' cattle? That you should insult the assembly of men!

The twenty beat up the three, who are forced to return to the assembly.

That is one thing good the Afrikaner did to us, Yedwa says, pointing to the twenty. He rejected us. The missionaries and the English had transformed us into individuals with no sense of community. Rejected now by the new rulers, we have turned back to our own law and become human beings once more and not individuals.