

## Chapter 2

# Race and Democratisation in South Africa: Some Reflections

*Bernard Magubane*

### Introduction

On 28 April 1994, about 20 million South Africans from all walks of life went to the polls to elect the first truly democratic government in the history of South Africa. The result was a stunning victory for the African National Congress (ANC) and its allies, the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). The Government of National Unity (GNU) that replaced the apartheid regime after the election brought to an end 86 years of white supremacist rule and the protracted armed conflict between the apartheid regime and the liberationist movements. However, decades of abuse and want have left wounds whose healing is a daunting challenge. An understanding of what happened before 1994 in South Africa will help to devise strategies to meet this challenge in the short and the long term.

### The Period 1910-1990

The Union of South Africa came into existence in 1910. A new dominion of Britain, it was the result of reconciliation between Boer and Brit after the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) and a step towards greater independence from Britain. However, the Act of Union of 1909, which was the foundation of the new dominion, excluded Africans in the Union of South Africa from political participation in their land of birth. Their opposition to this exclusion led to the formation of the ANC in 1912. In due course, the more dependent the white ruling class became on African sweat and skills

for its prosperity, the more jealous it became of its monopoly over economic and political privileges, and the more finely it sharpened those instruments to suppress black opposition to its hegemony (Slovo, 1976, p. 108).

The Sharpeville massacre of defenceless protesters in March 1960 finally convinced the ANC and its allies that the days of “non-violent” resistance and extra-legal methods were over. The resultant internal revolt was reinforced by worldwide condemnation of white minority rule, spearheaded by the newly independent African states and their compatriots in the Non-Aligned Movement.

In March 1961, the then prime minister, H.F. Verwoerd, called a referendum to let white voters indicate whether South Africa should become a republic or remain a British dominion. The ANC saw this as further entrenchment of arbitrary Afrikaner rule. Therefore it called a national convention in which representatives of all the people of South Africa could make their wishes known. If the regime failed to heed its call for representative government, the ANC would call for a general strike to coincide with the declaration of the Republic of South Africa scheduled for 31 May 1961.

Black opposition to the state was severe. In response, the apartheid regime declared a state of emergency. On 16 December 1961, Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation) started bombing government installations and declared:

The people’s patience is not endless. The time comes in the life of any nation when there remain only two choices—submit or fight. That time has now come for South Africa.

This development, even though dismissed at the time as a pinprick, proved once again that the past is never past, but active in the present. Indeed, the evolving anti-colonial struggle in southern Africa was a reversal of colonialist expansion—the so-called *Kaffir* wars of the early nineteenth century repeated themselves, but this time around the momentum was from north to south and not from south to north.

In Guinea-Bissau the signal event was the bloody repression, in which fifty workers were killed and many injured. In

Mozambique it was the 1960 Muenda massacre of 600 at a peaceful meeting. In Angola it was the killing of thirty and wounding of 200 at a meeting in Calete to protest the arrest of MPLA leader Agostino Neto, combined with the brutal repression of the Maria uprising led by a militant Christian sect. In Zimbabwe a series of preparations for armed struggle were prompted by the settlers' successful Unilateral Declaration of Independence, which shattered any remaining illusion that Britain might act against the interest of its kith and kin to enforce majority rule. In Namibia, the turn to armed resistance occurred immediately after the abortive 1966 judgement of the International Court of Justice, when the process of international and legal pressure had been tested to its limits and found wanting. (Slovo, 1976, pp. 183-184.)

Southern Africa in the 1960s was not only a sphere of European interest; it was also a promising sphere of interest for the new American empire. Here was produced one-fifth of the world's copper and tin, nearly one-fourth of its manganese, more than half of its gold, four-fifths of its cobalt and almost all of its industrial diamonds. More than half of the world's known supply of uranium lay in the Congo, Namibia and South Africa. The *Chicago Tribune* commented at the time:

The public investment of United States money in Africa runs into more than half-billion dollars, and private investment may even be as much or more. Imperialism would be a nasty word to describe our expanding interests in Africa but the list of American projects to develop the vast military resources of this continent suggest that the nineteenth century imperialism of England, France, Belgium, and Portugal is a child's play. (*The Nation*, 26 December 1953, p. 557.)

"However we may feel ideologically", the editorial continued, "we are politically and financially increasingly committed to the Empire—either our allies or our own in competition with theirs. How much of our billions in foreign aid to France, Britain, and

Belgium has gone to strengthen the machinery of colonialism?...Whether we give or invest, we invite responsibility. And in view of some of our allies at least, we are at last learning to discharge that responsibility in a proper fashion.” The editorial also noted the behaviour of the United States representative on the Trusteeship Council, who it said showed United States support for South Africa.

Thus at a time when the protection of the Western World’s vested interests in Africa south of the Sahara has become seemingly a matter of life or death the winds of revolution are sweeping across the continent. If the white man has ever before been so keenly aware of the value of Africa’s resources, the black man has never before been so keenly aware of the values of freedom...The United States is in Africa to stay, just as it is in Europe. (*The Nation*, 26 December 1953, p. 557.)

After 1964, when Nelson Mandela and his compatriots were sentenced to life imprisonment, white supremacy, with the help of the United States and its allies, appeared triumphant. Nevertheless, the spirit of resistance of the peoples of southern Africa was not broken. In 1975 the people of Mozambique and Angola became independent. In 1976 the situation in South Africa changed dramatically. The Soweto student revolt broke up the logjam, whereafter black resistance took a menacing turn. To fortify itself, the apartheid regime formulated what it called a “total strategy”—unparalleled repression of the liberationists and “reform” of apartheid. The latter included “granting” independence to the African reserves (then called “bantustans”) of the Transkei, Ciskei, Boputhatswana and Venda. The regime also “reformed” the laws governing African labour, and gave the so-called coloureds and Indians a share in the constitutional dispensation by means of the so-called tricameral constitution of 1983. However, whites maintained firm control.

The independence of Mozambique and Angola in 1975 and Zimbabwe in 1980 was the writing on the wall for the white minority regime in South Africa. The intensification of the popular struggle in

South Africa and the defeat of South Africa's expeditionary forces in Angola did immeasurable harm to the prestige of the white minority regime. The shock of the military defeat was compounded by the fact that it was with the help of socialist Cuba that the MPLA movement achieved victory over the South African forces in Angola. This situation together with the split in Afrikanerdom between the so-called enlightened faction (*verligtes*) and the hidebound faction (*verkramptes*) caused the white bourgeoisie to take a deep look at what it stood to lose if the extreme elements in Afrikaner ranks triumphed.

The struggle within the country was boosted by the formation of the United Democratic Front in 1983 and COSATU in 1985. The struggle was gathering momentum: students, workers and peasants were striking out against the apartheid regime in all directions. These developments accelerated the disintegration of the apartheid regime. In the summer of 1985, *The London Economist*, in a special issue on South Africa, described the situation that faced P.W. Botha as a "degenerative collapse".

Interest groups with a lot to lose from the escalating conflict began to make tentative approaches to the ANC. In 1985, representatives of South Africa's major capitalist institutions made a pilgrimage to Lusaka to open talks with the ANC. These included representatives of the Premier Group, Barclays Bank, Sanlam and Barlow Rand. The leader of this delegation was Gavin Relly, chairperson of Anglo-American Corporation.

The impending defeat of the apartheid regime in the 1980s elicited fear in the Reagan and Thatcher administrations. Both stood for a capitalist white-ruled southern Africa in contrast to the "chaos" and "disintegration" in the black-ruled "socialist" states north of the Zambezi. However awful the oppressive system of apartheid was, any revolutionary alternative had to be worse in their view. Southern Africa, following the collapse of Portuguese colonial rule in Angola and Mozambique, became the battleground of the Cold War as never before.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s the United States and Britain used their veto right in the United Nations to ensure that the white minority regime was protected from international sanctions. In addition, the United States vetoed (with Britain abstaining) a resolution to condemn South

Africa for its brutal invasion of Angola in August 1981. In May 1986 both the United States and Britain used their veto after Pretoria attacked Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe, killing innocent civilians. The following month Britain and the United States vetoed another resolution condemning South Africa for further attacks on Angola. Indeed, between 1980 and 1988 the Western powers vetoed twelve United Nations Security Council resolutions condemning apartheid South Africa—the United States vetoed all twelve, Britain vetoed eleven and France vetoed four. Six of the twelve vetoes related to South Africa's illegal occupation of Namibia, and four related to South Africa's aggression in the Front Line States.

In 1986, following the declaration of the second state of emergency by P.W. Botha, public indignation and pressure in the United States and Britain increased for the imposition of sanctions against South Africa. Reagan and Thatcher tried to establish a moral equivalence between apartheid and sanctions. For instance, Reagan criticised apartheid as morally wrong and politically unacceptable but in the same breath agreed with Mrs Thatcher that punitive sanctions were also immoral and repugnant. Pretoria, he said, was not obliged to negotiate with terrorists of the ANC, but Mandela should be released to participate in the political process. The strongest allies of blacks, Reagan insisted, were the Western businessmen who brought in their own ideas of social justice: "Capitalism is the natural enemy to such feudal institutions as apartheid" (Simpson, 1987, p. 14).

The years of the Reagan and Thatcher administrations will be noted above everything else for the green light they gave the apartheid regime to destroy the economies of the Front Line States. South Africa, the United States, Britain and other Western powers never accepted the regimes that assumed power in Angola, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. Nor did they look favourably on the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC). In order to neutralise Angola, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, the Pretoria regime adopted a three-pronged strategy. First, with the strategic support of the United States and Britain, the regime did everything to prevent SWAPO from assuming power in Namibia. Second, the regime tried to prevent the ANC and SWAPO from obtaining bases in

Angola and Mozambique. Third, Pretoria attempted to suffocate the embryonic nine-nation SADCC.

When the Reagan administration assumed power in 1980, a fourth dimension was added—South Africa worked towards replacing the MPLA with the UNITA bandits in Angola, and FRELIMO with the RENAMO bandits in Mozambique, or at least have both bandit organisations included in coalition governments. From 1981 the South African forces occupied and pillaged the southern part of Angola while RENAMO wreaked havoc on the economy of Mozambique. However, under the guise of “constructive engagement” the apartheid regime obtained freedom from the threat of sanctions with the help of its imperialist allies.

### **Mandela’s Release in 1990**

If we really want to lose everything, then we must hang on to everything now. Donald Masson (retired president of the Afrikaanse Handelsinstituut, an Afrikaner commercial institution), June 1986, quoted by Simpson, 1987, p. 11.

On 2 February 1990, President F.W. de Klerk, who had replaced P.W. Botha, announced that on 11 February Nelson Mandela would be released from his life-term prison sentence and that the ANC, the PAC, the SACP and other liberationist organisations would be unbanned. He also expressed the hope that a new constitutional settlement including all the people of South Africa would be negotiated. With that announcement the history of South Africa turned full circle. At Groote Schuur (a house that Cecil Rhodes built) F.W. de Klerk and Nelson Mandela sat at the same table and talked about a new constitutional order for the country, something that was hardly expected to occur then. It was as if the ideology and infrastructure that strangled people’s minds for nine decades had collapsed overnight.

The symbolism of the place where the talks took place was as important as the substance of the talks. It was the “first truly serious meeting” between the white government and the ANC in 78 years, Mandela observed. The event, he went on, was “freighted with deadly weight of the terrible tradition of a dialogue between master and servant”.

To overcome that burden, Mandela requested “all who are hostages of the past to transform [themselves] into new men and women who shall be fitting instruments for the creation of a new South Africa”.

These developments had no obvious precedent in history. It was the first time that a ruling racist regime of any white settler country had begun what would lead to a fundamental change in the constitutional structure of such a country. This actually was “Part 2” of the South Africa Act of 1909, which had led to the creation of the dominion of the Union of South Africa in 1910. It was also an admission that South Africa was not and could not remain a “white man’s country” but, in the words of the Freedom Charter of the ANC, must belong to all who live in it. In May 1990, the ruling National Party (NP) and the ANC began the tedious process of negotiating the modalities for dismantling white minority rule. Difficult as the process would be, the people of South Africa needed to create a new constitutional formula in order to escape the crippling legacy of colonial conquest and its distorted psychological legacy.

The very acknowledgement that the ANC could not be ignored was a major achievement. From 1912 the ANC had been the chief custodian of the national aspirations of the African people under the most difficult circumstances. The unbanning of the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) was a surprise. One of the first measures taken by the NP after it came to power in 1948 was to pass the notorious Suppression of Communism Act in 1950. The chief reason for the Act had been to defend “white” South Africa from the twin dangers of black nationalism and “communism”. Now all that fear seemed to have been jettisoned.

The event of Mandela’s release was transmitted around the world by satellite. The celebration that followed, especially Mandela’s whirlwind visit to the United States, underlined the scale of the defeat of De Klerk and the international forces of imperialism that supported the Afrikaner regime in its forty years of brutality. The man the regime had sought to condemn to oblivion in 1964 had not only survived, but had come out a world statesman, and the organisation whose politics he had been convicted for had emerged as a major negotiating partner. In its revised strategy, the ANC stated in 1991 that:



All these developments represent a major victory for the forces, led by the ANC, which have struggled for many decades for the destruction of the system of white minority domination and the transformation of South Africa into a united, democratic and non-racial democracy. The immediate issue on the agenda was the question of political power. To effect the transfer of power into the hands of the people as a whole was and still is the most crucial and immediate challenge facing the national democratic movement.

However, even with the start of the negotiations, the ANC could not lose sight of the fact that the regime still retained the capacity to implement counter-revolutionary measures on a whole range of fronts. “The white ruling group”, the 1990 *Guidelines on Strategy* stated, “has entered the negotiations process with its own agenda: a radically reformed system of apartheid which will retain the essentials of white domination of economic, political, and social institutions of our country”. Developments in South Africa from 1990 to the eve of the 1994 election somewhat vindicated this conclusion.

### **The Meaning of 1994**

Looking back at the period 1910 to 1994, one is struck by the monumental efforts of white settlers to reduce Africans to nothing but labour power. This effort involved domination unmediated by any compassion. Almost 84 years after Britain created the edifice of white minority rule, those whom Fanon called the “damned of the earth” woke up from the dead under the leadership of the ANC to rejoin the living. As Nadine Gordimer (1994, p. 4) put it, the election of the African National Congress as the head of the transitional government in May 1994 was not just a new beginning.

It was a resurrection; this land rising from the tomb of the entire colonial past shared out among the Dutch, the French, the British, and their admixture of other Europeans, this indigenous people rising from the tomb of segregated housing, squatter

camps, slum schools, job restrictions, forced removals from one part of the country to another; from burial of all human aspirations and dignity under the humiliation of discrimination by race and skin; this people rising, for the first time in history, with the right to elect a government: to govern themselves. A sacred moment is represented in the act of putting a mark on a ballot.

The triumph of the ANC and its allies was a watershed between the period of colonial dominance in Africa. The 1913 Land Act made 87% of South Africa a “white man’s country” where Africans were allowed only if they came to sell their labour power. The NP, which was formed in 1914 to represent the national aspirations of the Afrikaners who had suffered defeat in the Anglo-Boer War, assumed power in 1948 and began a programme to finally solve the “native problem”. If 1948 marked the apogee of Afrikaner nationalism, 1960 marked the nadir for African hopes. In 1960, the ANC and the Pan-Africanist Congress were summarily banned because of their demand to share power in a unified South African state. The then Minister of Justice interpreted this demand as follows: “What they want is our country” (Fine & Davis, 1990, p. 220).

In 1966, during the fifth anniversary of the declaration of South Africa as a republic, Prime Minister Verwoerd declared: “Although we are young, we are a nation in South Africa to whom all belong, and all of us can say with pride, this is our country” (Hepple, 1967, p. 185). At another occasion Verwoerd declared that “South Africa is a piece of Europe at the tip of the African continent” (1966, pp. 705-706). In other words, the apartheid system was more than an oppressive and exploitative legal structure with far-reaching social and economic consequences; it refused to accept Africans as legitimate inhabitants of the country. Segregation and its successor, apartheid, became state policies for mobilising the force and violence necessary to regiment black labour for the economic advancement of whites.

When the Dominions Office became the Commonwealth Relations Office in January 1947, *The Times* remarked the following in a lead article:

The historic word Empire, however it may have been misrepresented abroad, calls for no apology...It commemorates the centuries in which the British have striven, first to work out the conception of political liberty for themselves, and then to communicate that liberty to all the peoples who share their allegiance. The goal and achievement are now summed up in a title that is proof against detractors, the British Commonwealth of Nations. (Grierson, 1972, p. 298.)

What did the establishment of the British Commonwealth of Nations amount to? According to Grierson (1972, p. 298),

[a]ny photograph of a Commonwealth Conference in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War will supply the answer—a small group of white men standing protectively around the British monarch on the Buckingham Palace lawns. “The Commonwealth is a closed group, said the Honourable D.F. Malan, Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa, in the spring of 1951. “The Commonwealth can...exist only as a result of an essential identity of interest between all its members.”

The irony of ironies is that Malan, a racist to the core, could define the nature of the Commonwealth! South Africa, having been forced to leave the Commonwealth, would, after the triumph of Mandela, rejoin it with a markedly different perspective from that of Malan and kindred spirits.

### **The Inauguration of the Government of National Unity**

“On 10 May 1994, amid an atmosphere that was joyous, moving and solemn”, writes Judd (1996, p. 410), “Nelson Mandela was sworn in as the State President of the Republic of South Africa”. The ceremony ended 350 years of white domination in South Africa. Mandela, in his calm and dignified bearing, sometimes dissolving into small and spontaneous displays of pure pleasure, swore “to be faithful to the Republic of South Africa, so help me God”. In his inaugural speech, the new State President announced: “The time for healing of wounds has come. The moment to

bridge the chasms that divide us has come. The time to build is upon us.” He concluded with this promise: “Never, never and never again, shall it be that this beautiful land will again experience the oppression of one by another” (Judd, 1996, p. 410)

The end of white domination had enormous international significance. The event itself was witnessed by one of the largest gatherings of world leaders of all political persuasions. President Fidel Castro of Cuba (the long-time Achilles heel of the United States) received the loudest and most prolonged ovation. He shared the stage with the United States first lady, Hillary Clinton, and Vice President Gore. So did Libya’s Moammar Gaddafi and Yassar Arafat of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation—two other Achilles heels of the United States. President Mandela shared the stage with what seemed (to those who formulated the Nixon and Reagan policies) a lost generation of “freedom fighters” if they were charitable, or “terrorists” if they expressed their true feelings. The freedom fighters included Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, Joe Slovo, etc.

In the background were grim-faced, uniformed pillars of the soon to be discarded Anglo-Afrikaner white supremacist state who stood “like undertakers or godfathers” (Judd, 1996, p. 410) at the burial of the old order.

In a sense, the inauguration of Nelson Mandela, based on the irrefutable triumph of the African National Congress in the preceding general election, may be seen as one of the last and, arguably, one of the most dramatic and moving transfers of power within a country which had formerly been among the most prosperous, controversial, valued and bitterly contested within the British Empire and the Commonwealth. (Judd, 1996, p. 411.)

The “new” South Africa was born amidst profound relief, a palpable desire for reconciliation, overwhelming optimism and genuinely high hopes for the future. Even with all the birth pangs, the Government of National Unity managed the transition with remarkable success. How did South Africa escape what President Mbeki, on the occasion of the adoption of

The Republic of South Africa Constitution Act, called an “immoral and amoral past”? It has to do mainly with the character of the ANC and the nationalism that it represents, that is, the long tradition of building a “broad church” or “hegemonic organisation” that does not seek to define itself in exclusionist or narrow ideological terms (ANC, 1998, p. 4).

Furthermore, in 1990, when De Klerk released Mandela and unbanned all “subversive” organisations, neither side had defeated the other. “The corollary of this was that both sides continued to dispose of sufficient strength to inflict casualties on each other.”

Equally important, each side understood clearly that because the other had these possibilities, continuation of the conflict meant that whoever sought to assume a militant posture, summarised in the slogan “The Struggle Continues”, would have to accept that they too would be severely bled and weakened, to the point where any victory they secured might very well result in them as victors having to preside over a wasteland. (Mbeki, 1998, p. 54.)

This then was the context of the much-maligned policy of reconciliation. Does reconciliation mean ignoring the injustices of the past and present? The answer to this question raises even more questions. For instance, could reconciliation have taken place without compromises, some of which are extremely painful to the victims? In an interview with the *Cape Times* (24 February 1997) Mbeki underlined the problem:

Within the ANC, the cry was to “catch the bastards and hang them”. But we realised that you could not simultaneously prepare for a peaceful transition while saying we want to catch and hang people. So we paid a price for the transition. If we had not taken this route, I don’t know where the country would have been today. Had there been a threat of Nuremberg-style trials over members of the apartheid security establishment we would never have undergone the peaceful change.

Are these just excuses of a regime that has lost its way and betrayed the revolution? This issue was recently highlighted by Marais (1998, pp. 2, 5), who pronounced the negotiated transition of 1994 a failure because the ANC, instead of transforming the state, itself became assimilated into the status quo. “Already ossifying within the ANC”, he wrote, “are trends that ally it to an agenda which conflicts fundamentally with the hopes and aspirations of the majority of South Africans”. Even worse, Marais (1998) described the ANC as having sold out to neo-liberal policies.

The neo-liberal features of the ANC government’s macro-ventures and *supine postures* struck before the demands of corporate South Africa are, in such a reading, not anomalies. Spurring these developments is the tendency to judge the possibilities of national development on the basis of a deeply conservative and empirically questionable interpretation of globalization. Indeed, the post 1994 development seems to amplify Ellen Meiskin Wood’s lament that: “it is not only that we do not know how to act against capitalism but that we are forgetting how to *think* against it”.

According to Marais (1998, pp. 2-5):

a survey of the ANC’s history reveals telling legacies, which though submerged during the anti-apartheid struggle, have been pushed to the fore during the transition. Indeed, they raise the question whether a process of change centring on the deracialization of power and privilege (but without dismantling the structural foundations of inequality) might not be compatible with the organisation’s historical discourse.

Has the ANC become an instrument of the African petty bourgeoisie? In a discussion document, *The Character of the ANC*, the ANC shows its awareness of the shifting class alliances:

While the overwhelming majority of the poor, unemployed and marginalised are black, the last few years have seen the rapid development of a new black, upper middle-class. The gap

between the richest ten percent of blacks and the majority has grown very rapidly. Many ANC leading cadres have benefited directly from these new realities. The promotion of tens of thousands of formerly oppressed is a progressive development, but it does need us to be thoughtful on this issue. We must ensure that the ANC continues to represent the interests of the great majority, and not, narrowly, those of an emerging new elite. What is now needed is not a “the poorer the better” moralising outlook. Rather, we must ensure that both ideologically (in the values and policies we develop) and organisationally, the new powers, wealth and privileges do not become an end in themselves, but are used in the service of the national democratic struggle. The best means for ensuring this strategic objective is keeping the mass participatory character of the ANC. This is the best antidote to the danger of our organisation being transformed into a narrow, professionalised machine, enjoying support, but not empowering mass participation. (*Umrabulo* no. 3.)

## **Conclusion**

This chapter was aimed at putting South Africa’s transition to democracy into historical perspective. The task of transition is enormous. The travails of nation building in the modern world are well known. Following the end of white minority rule in 1994, the Government of National Unity began to define the character of the “new South Africa”. A new flag and a new anthem, both made up of symbols of the former and the current regime, have been accepted. In building a nation, many traditions have to be taken into account. Many wounds are to be healed. In a multi-ethnic country like South Africa there are many sacred traditions and “illustrious” forebears to be taken into account. Nation building is a common project for the present and the future. The tragedy caused by the white minority was very much in the minds of those who crafted the South Africa Constitution, as evidenced by the institution of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The

rationale was simple—the *capacity to feel shame for the crimes of the past had to be part of any healthy national consciousness.*

Looking at the achievements of the Government of National Unity one has to agree with Anthony Lewis who recently visited South Africa. He wrote in *The New York Times* of 16 August 1999:

Of all countries, South Africa cannot be separated from its past. Not long ago it was a country where people were tortured and murdered because of their politics. A country where, because of their race, husbands were systematically separated from their wives. A country where a small minority, defined by race, held all economic and political power. Given that history, it is something of a miracle that South Africa today is a normal country with social and economic problems. The problems are large, but they can be debated in freedom. Tyranny is only a memory.

Lewis touches on two important issues: that South Africa cannot forget its past and that though it is now a “normal” country, it has enormous socio-economic problems. The black-white economic disparities are a case in point. They are not an act of nature but were created by humans. Those who wished to create capitalist relations of production chose as their foundation stone the restriction of land ownership to the white minority and the exclusion of the black majority from any share in property. A similar sentiment was expressed in 1910 when the author of the *Gloucestershire Survey* stated without embarrassment the forth-right opinion that the “greatest evils to agriculture would be to place the labourer in a state of independence [i.e. by allowing him to have land] and thus destroy the indispensable gradations of society”. “Farmers like manufacturers”, said another writer of the time, “require constant labourers—men who have no other means of support than their daily labour, men whom they can depend on” (Dobb, 1963, p. 222).

That wealth and poverty are two sides of the same coin in a capitalist society may have been forgotten in the developed world. But in South Africa the concentration of poverty amongst Africans is a constant reminder that white wealth was achieved through economic pressure,



monopoly, political repression, usury and the expropriation of land of the indigenous owners. The South African white capitalist class is a creation, not of thrift and abstinence, as economists have traditionally depicted it, but of unconscionable hunger for African land and the attached economic and political benefits.

This raises the question of the suitability of affirmative action to create a just society. Since 1994, the ANC government's pursued an aggressive policy of equity in the labour market and passed new legislation to ensure that those who had been discriminated against in the past obtained a fair deal. The Employment Equity Act of 1999 is the cornerstone of the new affirmative action policy. Nevertheless, until the economy is democratised, South Africa's newly born freedoms will remain a chimera. This central truth has been obfuscated in South Africa in particular and in capitalist countries in general.

Indeed, the *capitalist market* is seen as the panacea of all economic ills. Moreover, after the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union, *socialism* was pronounced dead and *globalisation* became the new mantra. However, *globalisation* is emerging as the ideology of a new phase of unchecked capitalist hegemony. Indeed, current globalisation with its challenge to the nation state highlights that *under capitalism democracy has always been restricted to the political domain, while economic management has been held hostage by non-democratic private ownership of the means of production*. Such a democracy is incomplete, even by Western standards. Moreover, capitalist economic management is predicated upon the cultivation of egotistical and individualistic human functioning in a market place that crushes the sense of community and comradeship.

## **References**

- Adam, H. (1971), *Modernising Racial Domination: South Africa's Political Dynamics*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
- Adam, H. et al. (1997), *Comrades in Business: Post Liberation Politics in South Africa*, Cape Town, Tafelberg.
- Allighan, G. (1961), *Verwoerd: The End*, Johannesburg, Purnella & Sons.
- Arendt, H. (1962), *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, New York, Meridian Books.

*Democracy and Governance Review*

- Bryce, J. (1969), *Impression of South Africa*, New York, The New American Library.
- Davenport, T.R.H. (1987), *South Africa: A Modern History*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Johannesburg, MacMillan.
- Dobb, M. (1963), *Studies in the Development of Capitalism*, New York, International Publishers.
- Cairns, H. & Alan, C. (1965), *Prelude to Imperialism: British Reactions to Central African Society*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Calpin, G.H. (1968), *At Last we have Got our Country Back*, Cape Town, Buren Publishers.
- De Kiewiet, C.W. (1943), *A History of South Africa: Social & Economic*, London, Oxford University Press.
- Dutt, R.P. (1953), *The Crisis of Britain and the British Empire*, New York, International Publishers.
- Farüredi, F. (1998), *The Silent War: Imperialism and the Changing Perception of Race*, New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press.
- Fine, R. & Davis, D. (1990), *Beyond Apartheid: Labour and Liberation in South Africa*, Johannesburg, Ravan Press.
- Gregory, T. (1962), *Ernest Oppenheimer and the Economic Development of South Africa*, London, Oxford University Press.
- Grierson, E. (1972), *The Imperial Dilemma: The British Commonwealth and Empire 1775-1969*, London, Collins.
- Houston, G. (1988), "Capital Accumulation, Influx Control, and the State in South Africa, 1970-1982", *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, vol. 7, no. 1/2.
- Huttenback, R.A. (1976), *Racism and Empire, White Settlers and Coloured Immigrants in the British Self-Governing Colonies 1830-1910*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press.
- James, L. (1994), *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire*, London, Arbacus Press.
- Jay, R. (1981), *Joseph Chamberlain, A Political Study*, Oxford, Clarendon Press.
- Johnson, R.W. (1977), *How Long Will South Africa Survive?* New York, Oxford University Press.
- Judd, D. (1997), *Empire: The British Imperial Experience from 1765 to the Present*, London, Fontana.
- Kuper, L. & Smith, M.G. (1969), *Pluralism in Africa*, Berkeley, California University Press.
- Kuper, L. (1977), *The Pity of it All: Polarisation of Racial and Ethnic Relations*, London, Duckworth.
- Krüger, D.W. (1969), *The Making of South Africa; A History of the Union of South Africa 1910-1961*, Johannesburg, MacMillan.

- Magubane, B.M. (1969), *The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa*, New York, Monthly Review Press.
- Magubane, B.M. (1989), *From Soweto to Uitenhage: The Political Economy of the South African Revolution*, Trenton, Africa World Press.
- Magubane, B.M. (1997), *The Making of a Racist State. British Imperialism and the Union of South Africa, 1875-1910*, Trenton, Africa World Press.
- Marais, H. (1998), *South Africa: Limits of Change, the Political Economy of Transformation*. London, Zed Press.
- Mbeki, T. (1998), *The Time Has Come*, Cape Town, Tafelberg Publishers.
- Milner, L. (1933), *The Milner Papers*, Vol. II, (ed.), Cecil Headlam, London, Casell & Co.
- Moore, B. Jr (n.d.), *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World*, Boston, Beacon Press.
- Morris, J. (1978), *Farewell to the Trumpets. An Imperial Retreat*, London, Farber & Farber.
- O'Dowd, H. (1978), "South Africa in Light of the Stages of Economic Growth", in Schlemmer, L. & Webster, E. (eds), *Change, Reform and Economic Growth*, Johannesburg, Ravan Press.
- Plaatje, S.T. (1916), *Native Life in South Africa*, Johannesburg, Ravan Press.
- Proudhon, P-J. (1924), quoted in *Demanding the Impossible. A History of Anarchism*, (ed.), Peter Marshall, London, Fontana.
- Pryer, S.H. (1955), *Imperial Policy in South Africa 1902 -1910*, London, Oxford University Press.
- Quigley, C. (1981), *The Anglo-American Establishment. From Rhodes to Cliveden*, New York, Books in Focus.
- Robinson, R. & Gallagher, J. (1961), *Africa and the Victorians: The Climax of Imperialism*, New York, Anchor Books.
- Simpson, A. (1987), *Tycoons, Revolutionaries, and Apartheid*, New York, Pantheon.
- Slovo, J. (1976), "South Africa—No Middle Road", *Southern Africa, the New Politics of Revolution*, (eds), Basil Davidson, Slovo & Wilkinson, Penguin Press.
- Trollope, A. (1878), *South Africa, a Report of the 1878 Edition with Introduction and Notes by J.H. Davidson*, Cape Town, Balkana Press.
- Van den Berg, P. (1967), *South Africa: A Study in Conflict*, Los Angeles, California University Press.
- Williamson, J. (1933), *A Short History of the British Expansion*, New York, MacMillan.
- Wilmot, A. (1895), *The Story of the Expansion of South Africa*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London.
- Wolpe, H. (1972), "Capitalism and Cheap Labour -power. From Segregation to Apartheid", *Economy and Society*, vol. 1, no. 4.



*Democracy and Governance Review*

Wolpe, H. (1988), *Race, Class and the Apartheid State*, Amsterdam, Unesco Press.