

*Amanda!*

**A Teachers Guide  
to Accompany  
the Slide Show**

**by Kevin Danaher**

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# Introduction

**I**n a time of economic crisis throughout the world it is hard to be concerned about matters which seem remote from our immediate self-interest. With the tendency of television news to focus on immediate areas of conflict such as the Middle East or Poland, it is easy to lose track of what is happening in other areas where conflict is for the moment more subdued or not as dramatic.

Precisely for these reasons, however, we feel it is all the more necessary to build a broader understanding of the fundamental issues which underlie the conflict in South Africa between the only legally racist regime in the world and the African majority of South Africa's people, those who are not of European descent.

The information which comes to us from newspapers and from television is not likely to encourage us to be concerned with what is still seen as "the dark continent." The news comes to us through stereotyped images: "*Terrorists strike in South Africa.*" "*Tribal warfare threatens Zimbabwe's stability.*"

To the majority of African people in South Africa the young men who are fighting the apartheid system by attacking police stations, power lines, oil depots and other government installations are "the boys" or the "freedom fighters," not "terrorists." The white government and the international press use "terrorists" so habitually that it readily becomes part of our mental imagery. And yet the violence of the state police apparatus which uses torture, detention and threats of force habitually is not "terrorism."

"Why," Africans ask, "are we regarded as 'tribes'? There is something racist in the use of the word." It smacks of the primitive and barbaric. We would not say that the dispute between Catholics and Protestants in northern Ireland is a fight between tribes. The people who are waging the bitter, violent and savage war in northern Ireland are regarded as Christian and civilized.

Before we can begin to care, we have to tear down the stereotypes which the media build in us. We shall have to understand the roots of the conflict in South Africa, which, with all its ebbs and flows, grows steadily in intensity year by year. It is a struggle that has gone on for centuries. It began with African resistance to European conquest, a conquest that was made possible by superior technology. European settlers had guns and horses. When the conquest put most of the African societies under white rule, Africans fought non-violently to be included in South Africa as citizens. But their peaceful petitions, passive resistance tactics and demonstrations were met with accusations of communism, treason and savage suppression. Africans were forced by white intransigence to take up arms as a necessary means of continuing the fight.

Why should Americans care about this conflict?



Americans live in an inter-dependent world. The United States imports many of the mineral resources it requires for its industries and homes from Africa. Nigeria, for example, is the second most important exporter of petroleum to this country. Zaire is the source of 75% of the world's cobalt. The United States markets more and more of the goods and services it produces overseas. US banks finance such diverse countries as Zaire, China and Poland. The United States needs international support for its political goals.

In such an interdependent world, identification of the United States with South Africa's overt racism has costly consequences, for the Third World sees South Africa as a symbol of global inequity and racial domination.

Sixty-nine percent of the world lives in Africa and Asia, and the population of those countries is growing much more rapidly than those of Europe or the United States. Yet of the non-white countries only Japan has a national income that ranks in the top twenty. The top twenty have 69% of the world's income while the bottom twenty have a mere 1.9%. Africa and Asia have the lowest per capita incomes in the world. Not unnaturally, the Third World associates economic injustice with racial privilege.

When we turn to look at South Africa's population and income proportions, we will be struck by the resemblances to the figures cited above. South Africa's whites, who are only 16% of the total population, enjoy 64% of the national income. Africans, who are 72% of the population are estimated to be earning only 12.8% of the national income. The lowest twenty percent of those with incomes would necessarily have to have an infinitesimal share of the national pie, probably less than 3%.

South Africa, then, is the world in miniature. It is a microcosmos.

Third World people identify the United States with the privileged white minority in South Africa because they see US foreign policy as hypocritical and covertly racist: condemning the overt racism of apartheid while in fact profiting from trade, investment and political arrangements which make the United States a behind-the-scenes accomplice in a racist system's maintenance. If the United States is unable to demonstrate its good faith in South Africa, it can have little chance of successful non-military, diplomatic influence with Africa, Asia or other parts of the world where the majority of people are not white.

Quite aside from such policy considerations, however, Americans need to understand the tragic and illogical system of apartheid as a crime against humanity, an atrocity which needs to be attacked. Nowhere else in the world is there a country which systematically de-humanizes the majority of its population by excluding them from participation in citizenship purely on the basis of their race. Rights which Americans now take for granted (even though some of them have only recently been won by minorities): the right to vote, to own real estate, to travel and to reside where one desires—these are denied to Africans in South Africa.

In a time of economic crisis, racism and other dehumanizing behavior tends to increase as inter-group competition rises. Yet this is all the more reason not to avoid the issue. By studying South Africa, we can lay bare the ultimate conclusion to which racism leads, a ruthless system which can never know peace, a system of institutionalized violence which inevitably leads to counter-violence.

Quite aside from the issue of morality, young people are bound to be concerned that they might be sent as soldiers, sailors, air personnel or marines to fight and perhaps to die for a cause they do not believe in, white supremacy, if the United States comes to the defense of South Africa. Even if this seems unlikely, it is not impossible.

There are over three hundred American corporations which do business in South Africa. What are the implications of this involvement for those in the United States who go to work for these corporations? What are the implications of workers' pension funds, university or church investments being tied up in companies that profit from apartheid? Are these safe and sound investments? Are they morally acceptable? Such questions are not new; they have been asked for more than twenty years with growing intensity.

For black Americans, the story of blacks in South Africa is bound to elicit special empathy, identification and support. They are bound to see parallels as well as differences between the two societies which have been guilty of institutionalized racism, segregation and unfulfilled promises. For native Americans, the parallels are equally, if not more, poignant.

This project springs out of our perception that if progress is to be made toward a more humane society by the overthrow of apartheid in South Africa and racism here, many more Americans need to understand and support the fight which the African people of South Africa are waging as an integral part of our concern about racism.

The artistic and creative work for *Amandla* is that of Peter Davis, independent film-maker, whose full-length feature film, *Generations of Resistance*, created such favorable comment. Many of the photographs used in this slide show/filmstrip have been used in *Generations*. In addition, however, many new photographs have been added. We wish to especially thank in this connection the International Defense and Aid Fund for South Africa which threw open its London archives for our use.

Unfortunately, because of the numbers of photographers involved in this historical sketch it is impossible to thank them adequately and some of them are not even known. And so we will simply have to thank them all collectively without naming them.

In order to make sure that we were not committing errors in historical treatment or using racist stereotypes ourselves, we asked a number of experts to review our narrative text and give us the benefit of their critique. We wish to thank especially Robert Edgar, Adwoa Dunn and Brenda Robinson of



the Howard University African Studies Center; Marylee Wiley, David Wiley and David Robinson of Michigan State University African Studies Center; and Jo Sullivan and Mary Mubi of Boston University African Studies Center for their helpful comments and suggestions. William Minter of *Africa News* and Jennifer Davis, Executive Director of the American Committee on Africa, were especially helpful in reviewing our work and making suggestions. While we are very grateful for the help thus provided, we remain solely and fully responsible for the narrative text. We have accepted many of the criticisms and suggestions but the final blend is ours. We would be most grateful for any further critique which will help us in further work that we project.

We wish to thank also Mr. Bill Greaves, an independent film-maker and a former actor, who furnishes the steady, clear and careful narration of *Amandla*, and Kevin Danaher, a Ph.D. candidate at the University of California Santa Cruz, who wrote this readable guide for us.

What follows is a sketch in somewhat greater detail of the story told in *Amandla*. It is designed for the teacher who needs to master essential background facts. For those who wish to know more, the resource list in the appendix should prove helpful. Suggestions for classroom discussion and exercises are included in a separate pamphlet, which we hope will be added to, as those who use this slide show/filmstrip comment on, and make suggestions for its use.

*Amandla* is a New African Horizons production, a joint venture of Villon Films and the Washington Office on Africa Educational Fund, and was made possible in part by a grant from the United Nations Center against Apartheid and by the generosity of Carol Bernstein Ferry and Elizabeth Landis.

Edgar Lockwood  
Executive Director  
Washington Office on Africa Educational Fund

## Chapter One

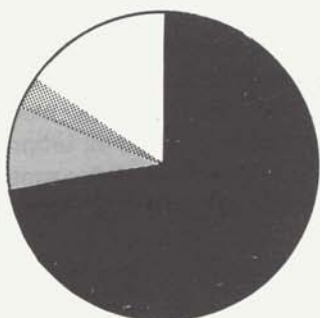
# The Imprisoned Society: An Overview

## South Africa: Land of Inequality

The central fact of life in South Africa is extreme racial inequality. Blacks comprise over 70 percent of the population (see chart below), yet the all-white government restricts blacks to just 13 percent of the land. Whites, comprising less than one-fifth of the population, control 87 percent of the land.

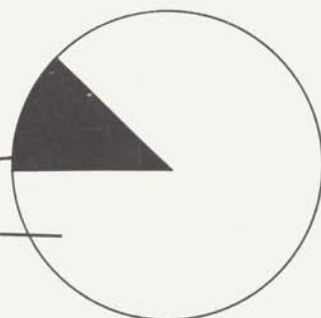
### South Africa's Population by Race (1980)

Black	20,084,319	72%
White	4,453,273	16%
Coloured (mixed, black and white)	2,554,039	9%
Indian (from India)	764,639	3%
Total	27,886,270	100%



land reserved for blacks

land reserved for whites








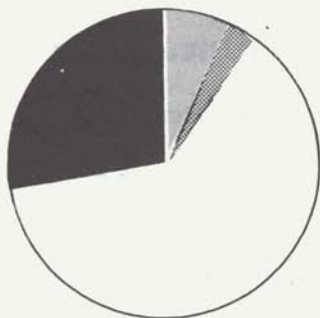
The distribution of income is as lopsided as the division of the land. Whites get nearly two-thirds of total income, whereas blacks receive only a little more than one-fourth.

### Distribution of Income (1978)

Whites	64%
Blacks	26%
Coloureds	7%
Indians	3%

#### Key

	Black
	Indian
	Coloured
	White



Most industry, commerce, and agriculture is owned by whites. In addition, white workers are paid much higher wages than black workers. (See table on following page.)

The same pattern of racial inequality can be found in social services. Whites average one doctor for every 400 persons, whereas blacks in rural areas average one doctor for every 40,000 persons. Between 1968 and 1977 whites comprised 97 percent of the doctors graduating from South African medical schools; blacks comprised only 3 percent. These facts are reflected in an infant mortality rate of 12 per 1,000 for whites, 69 per 1,000 for urban blacks, and 282 per 1,000 for rural blacks. Malnutrition and related diseases are rampant in black areas. Roughly ten black South Africans die of tuberculosis every day.

The root cause of this inequality is a system, the system of apartheid. Apartheid is often described as "segregation" or "separation" of the races. Yet it is much more than this. South Africa's white minority developed the system of apartheid to accomplish two basic objectives: 1) provide a low-cost labor force for the white-owned economy, and 2) deny blacks any political rights which they could use to change the system.

In practice, the apartheid system is comprised of several components.

## 1. Bantustans

The 13 percent of South Africa reserved for blacks (the "homelands" or "bantustans") is the least fertile, and contains no major mining deposits,

## Employment and Average Monthly Wages

	Manufacturing, 1980		Mining, 1979	
	Average No. Employed	Average Mo. Wage	Average No. Employed	Average Mo. Wage
African	772,100	\$ 308	675,604	\$ 175
White	314,300	\$1273	112,021	\$1,056
Coloured	241,900	\$ 355	14,040	\$ 461
Indian	89,000	\$ 399	1,594	\$ 518

Institute of Race Relations, SURVEY, 1980

**Agriculture:** (Regular Farm Workers, average cash earnings per year, 1974). Africans—\$268. Whites—\$4987. Coloureds—\$502. Indians—\$1309.—SURVEY, 1977.

**Domestic Workers:** In Johannesburg the average weekly wage for domestic workers is \$21 for a work week that is often 70 hours. In smaller cities and towns the average wage is \$13 per week and in rural areas it is \$9 per week or less. —*New York Times*, March 30, 1981.

**African Income vs. Poverty Level:** In 1980 the estimated percentages of African households in major urban areas with incomes below the Household Subsistence Level (HSL) were: Johannesburg (62%); Pretoria (58%); Durban (65%); Port Elizabeth (70%). The HSL estimates the minimum income essential for the subsistence of an African family of six. — SURVEY, 1980.

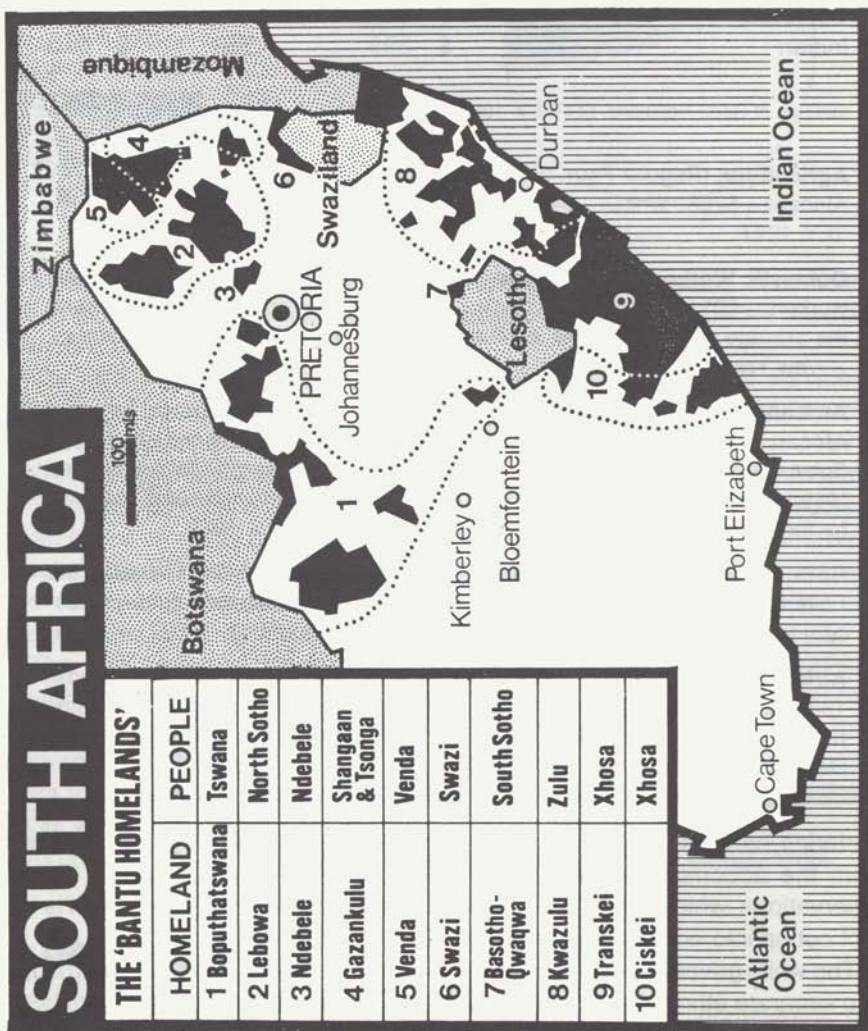
**Rural Areas:** It has been estimated that 75% of African families live below the Poverty Datum Line, another estimate of minimum household income necessary for subsistence. —*The Star*, Johannesburg, October 11, 1980.

**African Unemployment:** The government's Minister of Manpower estimated in 1980 that there were more than 1 million unemployed Africans; other estimates put African unemployment as high as 25%, or almost 2 million people. — *Rand Daily Mail*, November 7, 1980.

factories, harbors, or other assets that would make it valuable. As will be seen from the accompanying map of the bantustans, there are nine of these reservations, which do not even connect with each other. Each of them is in fact cut up into non-contiguous parcels.

The white government is trying to weaken the black majority by dividing it up into separate ethnic groups and forcibly relocating them to the impoverished bantustans. Several million blacks have been uprooted and moved to these

barren reservations. The government's plan is to declare the bantustans "independent nations" even though they are dominated economically and politically by white South Africa. Each time the Pretoria government declares one of these ethnic reservations 'independent,' blacks of that language group automatically and without their consent lose their South African citizenship. Not only do South African blacks reject this scheme but *not one* government in the world (other than South Africa's white government) has officially recognized these new "nations."





## 2. Influx Control

The bantustans are used as a dumping ground for unemployed blacks. Only those Africans who are needed in the white economy are allowed into the cities. No black can legally enter the city without an employment contract obtained from a government labor bureau. When a black loses a job he or she is liable to be "endorsed out" to a bantustan.

Roughly half of all black workers (3,687,000) are migrant laborers who must leave their homes in rural areas and travel to the city to find work. The government prohibits the migrant workers from taking their families with them. It is normal for migrant workers to be separated from their loved ones for a year at a time. This enforced separation has the effect of weakening black families by splitting them apart.

## 3. Pass Laws

Every black over the age of 16 must carry an identity book containing his or her name, photograph, identification number, ethnic group, and employer's name and address. The employer must re-sign the passbook each month to verify that the person is still working and therefore residing legally in the area. The passbook must be shown on demand to police and other government officials, and failure to carry one's passbook is punished with immediate arrest. No black may stay in a so-called "white" area for more than 72 hours without a permit. The government has recently proposed that this restriction be tightened so that "unauthorized" blacks cannot be in white areas for more than a day and in no case overnight. Employers who employ "unauthorized" blacks are subject to heavy fines and imprisonment. On the average, over half a million blacks are arrested for passbook offenses every year.

## 4. Government Repression

The white government has gone to great lengths to restrict political organizing in the black community. The Suppression of Communism Act gives the government broad power to repress anyone opposing apartheid. *Communism* is defined so broadly that it is equated with any scheme which "aims at bringing about any political, industrial, social or economic change within the Republic" by disturbance, disorder, or by unlawful acts or omissions or threats of such. One distinguished South African legal scholar has written:

"In its totality the Act constitutes a license granted to certain officers to abrogate almost every conceivable civil or political liberty."

—A.S. Matthews, *Law, Order and Liberty in South Africa* (1971)

As if this law were not enough, the Terrorism Act of 1967 goes even further. Terrorism is defined to include among other things encouraging any social or political change if it is done in cooperation with any foreign or international body; causing dislocation, disturbance or disorder; obstructing traffic; embarrassing the State, etc., etc. In addition, the Terrorism Act allows the police to arrest and detain suspects or possible informants without warrants, without trial and to question them indefinitely under solitary confinement. A detainee can be held for life if need be. And the police need tell nobody who is detained. The person's family or the person's lawyer cannot see him or her. The courts have no jurisdiction to interfere.

The denial of political rights to blacks is enforced by an immense police/military apparatus. The South African police are well-known for their brutal tactics. During the Soweto rebellion of 1976 the police shot down hundreds of school children. The children's "crime" was to protest against racial inequality.

Church groups and humanitarian organizations such as Amnesty International have documented systematic use of torture by the South African police. In its 1981 report Amnesty International found that: "The government's response to black protest, non-violent as well as violent, was marked by large-scale violations of human rights." Many political prisoners are killed while in police custody (the most well-known case being that of Steve Biko in 1977). Every year South Africa leads the world in the number of prisoners it executes.

The repression is not limited to blacks inside South Africa. The white government has assassinated opposition figures inside and outside South Africa, and launched military invasions of many neighboring countries (e.g., Angola, Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Mozambique and the Seychelles). The United Nations has condemned South Africa for these acts of aggression. But also increasing numbers of countries in the United Nations and other international forums have criticized western governments for failing to isolate South Africa politically and economically and condemned multinational corporations for continuing to lend money to and invest in South Africa. They are particularly critical of firms which supply South Africa with computers, aircraft and other advanced technology which helps make the South African state powerful and efficient in dealing with its opposition.

It is inevitable that black South Africans would fight against a system which denies them their humanity. Despite centuries of repression they continue to struggle for freedom and equality. The pages that follow provide a more detailed history of how apartheid was constructed over the years, and how blacks and some whites have fought against the system. Chapter Two examines the Soweto rebellion and the inequalities of the education system which produced that uprising. Chapters Three and Four give an overview of South African history, focusing on the various forms which the black freedom

struggle has taken. Chapter Five concludes the booklet with a look at U.S. government and business involvement, and raises questions about the future of America's role in South Africa.



## Chapter Two:

# The Soweto Rebellion and Apartheid Schooling

With over one million residents, Soweto\* is South Africa's largest black city. Although the uprisings that shook South Africa in 1976 and 1977 are commonly referred to as the "Soweto rebellion," the disturbances were actually nationwide. In every corner of the country—Cape Town, Durban, Port Elizabeth, Pietersburg, Pretoria—young blacks mounted mass protests against the apartheid system and the "Bantu" education system which reinforces it.

The black elementary and high school students who initiated the demonstrations were angry over the fact that their education is grossly inferior to that received by white students. The immediate cause of the rebellion was that the government was trying to change the language of instruction from English to Afrikaans (the native language of the ruling Afrikaners). The students and their parents consider Afrikaans the "language of the oppressor." They want instruction to be in English, rather than Afrikaans or one of the Bantu languages, because English is an international language. It opens up the world of science, politics, engineering and the humanities through a vast literature.

When one considers the extreme racial inequality that is built into the apartheid education system it is not difficult to understand why black students rebelled. Not only does the government segregate students in different schools according to race, it also forces black students to study from a syllabus that is purposely inferior to that used by white students. It is designed to "keep blacks in their place."

Public education is compulsory and free of charge for whites: Black parents must pay special fees and schooling for their children is not mandatory. In fact, it wasn't until the mid-1950s that the South African government took responsibility for the education of black children. Until that time black education was left up to the churches and local governments. And it wasn't until 1979 that the government made any provision for the education of black children suffering from mental retardation and other learning disabilities.

The greater attention the government gives to white education results in a much higher enrollment rate for whites than for blacks. Nearly 100 percent of

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\*The name Soweto is an acronym for South West Township although this full name is never used. It is pronounced SO-WAY'-TOO.

white children between the ages of 6 and 17 are attending school, but only about half (56%) of black children in the same age group receive any education. The overwhelming majority of black children do not complete elementary school. *Only 9 percent of black students receive a high school education.* As for college, South African government statistics for 1979 show that there were 118,193 whites in college and only 6,364 blacks. This is in spite of the fact that blacks comprise 72 percent of the population and whites comprise only 16 percent.

### **South African Government Expenditures\***

<i>Year</i>	<i>White</i>	<i>Black as</i>	<i>% of White</i>
1953	128	18	14.0%
1960	145	12.5	8.6
1968	228	14.5	6.4
1975	644	42	6.5
1977	654	49	7.5
1979	724	71	9.8

\*Amounts are given in South African rand. The rand is roughly equal to the dollar.

Because the white government spends ten times as much on the education of each white child as on that of each black child, the equipment and facilities for black students are extremely inferior. Overcrowding in the black schools creates a special burden for black teachers. The average white teacher handles less than 20 pupils, but the average black teacher is responsible for nearly 50 pupils.

In addition to providing only an inferior education in government schools for black children, the white government purposely makes it difficult for blacks to seek alternative education. If an African adult offers classes at home to other blacks he or she is guilty of a crime punishable by a \$200 fine or six months in jail. If a white man or woman takes a few hours a week to teach his or her household servants to read, he or she is also breaking the law. If a black minister conducts classes in which he or she teaches the congregation to read the Bible, that minister is guilty of a crime. It is illegal for a black student to attend even one lecture at a white university unless he or she first gets permission from the government.

By its rigid control of the education system—determining who will be allowed the “privilege” of an education and what the content of that education will be—the white minority government hopes to maintain its control over the black majority by making them “unqualified” or “incompetent.”

In 1976, when students organized demonstrations to protest their inferior education, the government reacted as it had in the past. Police were sent in to stop the demonstrations. They attacked the students with teargas, clubs, pistols, shotguns and automatic rifles. The police killed several hundred children and wounded thousands.

The brutal repression by the government had a devastating impact. Many young blacks, fearing for their lives, fled South Africa for nearby independent African states. Many enrolled in schools run by the African National Congress of South Africa or went to study on scholarships in colleges and universities in Europe, the United States or one of the socialist countries. To this day, thousands remain political refugees, exiled from their homeland but not integrated into the work life of the host country. In some cases the US Immigration and Naturalization Service has aggressively tried to deport South African political refugees from this country.

For years now absenteeism and rebellion in the schools have been widespread. Students in all parts of the country have boycotted classes on numerous occasions. This has resulted in many students being unable to complete their education successfully. Statistics for 1981 show that in cities like Soweto only 57 percent of high school students passed their final exams. This compares with an 87 percent pass rate in 1976.

It is only logical that black students and their parents object to this deterioration of the black schools. However, now even white business leaders are lamenting the fact that there are not enough whites to fill all the skilled job positions and that the segregated education system is not producing enough qualified blacks. To a limited extent private companies have moved to fill this educational gap by providing training for blacks. However, the few who are selected for such training receive a very narrow technical education that is suited to the company's interests rather than to the broader needs of the student.

The negative impact of apartheid education has an international dimension as well. The Soweto rebellion and the government's harsh crackdown caused a worldwide outcry against apartheid. In the United Nations and other international bodies every government in the world denounced South Africa's system of racial inequality. As it has done many times over the years, the U.N. passed resolutions calling on all nations to force South Africa into abolishing apartheid. In addition to exerting direct pressure on the South African government, many nations have stepped up their assistance to the African National Congress and other groups working for democracy in South Africa.



## **Chapter Three**

# **Early History**

## **The Cape Colony: European Settlers Encounter African Societies in the 17th Century**

African societies inhabited South Africa long before the arrival of whites from Europe. When Dutch people established their first settlement at Cape Town in 1652, they soon encountered the Khoi-Khoi and the San people, who had been living in the Cape area for hundreds of years. Archeological evidence shows that the San had been in South Africa as early as 8,000 BC.

The San, sometimes given the derogatory term "Bushmen" by whites, were hunters and gatherers who roamed the semi-desert western Cape. The Europeans steadily encroached on San hunting grounds and attempted to force the San into working for them. This provoked armed clashes between the two groups. The whites formed commando units, armed and on horseback, to conduct raids on San villages. A leader of one such commando unit reported attacks which resulted in 3,200 San killed or captured; another reported participating in raids which killed 2,700. The San continued to skirmish with the white settlers for 200 years but they were eventually almost exterminated. Today no more than 50,000 survive, dispersed across the vast expanse of the Kalahari Desert, most of which is in Botswana.

The Khoi-Khoi, whom whites derogatorily referred to as "hottentots," were pastoralists with large herds of sheep and cattle. They were also skilled craftspeople, making their own baskets, pottery, mats, tools, and ornaments.

As the Dutch settlers began to expand their stock farming, constantly searching for more pasture for their cattle and sheep, they would take over land where the Khoi-Khoi had traditionally grazed their stock. This take-over, which the Khoi-Khoi saw as theft, touched off fighting between the two groups. Though the Khoi-Khoi fought bravely, they were no match for the horses and guns of the Europeans and they were gradually pushed inland. Deprived of their land and cattle, conscripted into forced labor, and decimated by European diseases such as smallpox, the Khoi-Khoi gradually declined as a society.

However, some of the Khoi-Khoi were assimilated into the white colony. In the early days of the settlement there were very few Dutch women willing to forsake the comforts of home for the rigors of a colonial outpost. Therefore it was common in the early years of the Dutch settlement for European men to live with and even, in some cases, to marry African women. The children of these unions were deemed "half-castes" and were referred to as "Bastards"

or "Basters." The colonial government soon, however, outlawed marriage between whites and persons of unmixed African descent but marriages between whites and half-castes were permitted up into the 20th century.

Not only the indigenous San and Khoi-Khoi interbred with whites. The white settlers brought in African slaves from Angola, Madagascar, and East Africa, and Malay slaves from the Dutch colonies in the Far East. The genetic mixing of these various groups produced people known today as the Cape Coloured. The political significance of these developments should be clear. As the historian Freda Troup points out:

... despite spasmodic attempts in earlier days and intensive efforts more recently to prevent it, dark blood flows liberally in white men's veins. It has been estimated that anything up to one-third of the White South African population, including some of the oldest and most prominent families, has submerged Coloured blood.

As a group genetically in-between blacks and whites, the Coloureds occupy a political and economic position that is not identical with either of the two major racial groups. Most Coloureds speak Afrikaans and are forced to live separately from Blacks in so-called "Coloured" areas. Coloureds are generally not as poor as blacks. Yet the Coloured population still suffers the indignity of being classified as second-class citizens in their own country. Though Coloureds once had voting rights, the ruling white minority has gradually stripped the Coloureds of any real power in government. For political reasons many Coloureds now consider themselves Black and are attempting to forge alliances with African political groups. At the same time, the South African government is attempting to win their allegiance by proposing to give them representation in a separate parliament of their own, a concession that would not transfer any substantial control or power from the white ruling group.

Although the Portuguese and the English had explored the coast of South Africa in the 1500s and early 1600s, it was the Dutch in 1652 who became the first Europeans to establish a colony on the Cape. This early settlement was intended as a provisioning station for ships sailing to the colonies in Asia. Almost from the very start, the colonial company, which was trying to make a profit from the settlement, imposed strict regulations on the work and trade of the settlers. The settlers were concerned with improving their own situation on the Cape, whereas the colonial policy makers back in Holland were more concerned with the overall health of the Dutch commercial empire. This difference of interests caused friction between the settlers and their home government. The friction intensified when the Cape was taken over by the English.



## The European Conquest of Sotho and Nguni Land

In 1795, as part of their rise to dominance of the world's sea lanes, the English sent a large force to Cape Town and forced the Dutch governor to surrender control of the colony. While the more efficient administration and increased trade associated with English rule brought some degree of prosperity to the colony, attempts to impose English as the official language and efforts to restrict the practice of slavery angered the Dutch settlers, who wanted to be free to do as they felt best. The "Boers," as the Dutch farmers were called, decided to make a "trek" inland with their families and cattle in order to seek more land and less control by the colonial governor in Cape Town. Although there was abundant land to the north, much of it had already been settled by African societies, which can be broadly grouped into two major categories, the Sotho people and the Nguni people. Both the Sotho and the Nguni were descendants of a group of Africans known as the Bantu-speaking people, who had migrated into central and southern Africa from the area of the Cameroons long centuries before.

The Sotho were living in the area of what is now the Orange Free State and the Transvaal of South Africa, Botswana and Lesotho. They had lived for centuries in towns with stone buildings and as many as twenty thousand inhabitants. The Sotho mined iron, copper and tin, from which they made implements and articles for domestic use as well as weapons. They were organized into small kingdoms which traded with other regions.

Closer to the eastern coast were the Nguni people, subdivided into two major groups which today are known collectively as Xhosas and Zulus.

In the early 1800s, the Zulus had been transformed from a loose confederation of clans into a militarily powerful nation state under the leadership of Shaka, the son of a king who had rejected his mother. Shaka was a military genius who organized Zulu regiments into disciplined elite troops and evolved highly successful tactics for them, using mass military attacks by warriors equipped with stabbing spear and shield. As the Zulu nation developed fearsome military superiority, it conquered, absorbed or obliterated related African societies or forced them to flee. The expansion of the Zulu nation created forced dislocation and chaos among the Nguni people on the coast and the Sotho people on the inner plateaus, who were driven to seek new locations. These displaced groups began to pillage and raid their neighbors as their traditional sources of food disappeared. This time of trouble is called Difaane or Mfecane (forced migration).

The southern branch of the Nguni, led by the Xhosa, had been living along the southeastern coast of present South Africa since the sixteenth century at least. The Xhosa lived in small villages some distance from the coast with settlements as far south as the Mthatha river and perhaps beyond. They owned cattle herds and flocks of sheep and grew millet. By the nineteenth



century, the Xhosa kingdom had divided and subdivided into a number of small states and chiefdoms. Besides the Xhosa states, there were other Nguni kingdoms such as the Thembu and the Mpondo.

The Xhosas made their first contact with European settlers as early as 1750 at Sundays River on the eastern Cape. By 1780 Xhosa and white cattle farmers had begun to engage in raids and counter-raids such as occurred in that of the western part of this country between pioneers and Indians.

One of the underlying roots of conflict lay in the different concept of land which Africans and Europeans had. African societies regarded the land as a sacred heritage from their ancestors, to be held in common, whose use would be allocated temporarily to individuals but with the understanding that its use was a loan in trust. The European settler regarded the land as a means by which the individual could build up his own wealth and that of his family, even at the expense of others.

In no case did the Sotho and Nguni people intend to hand over permanently the land which they had inhabited for centuries to the aggressive newcomers.

Thus, when the Boers trekked into the high veld north of the Orange River and asked permission of the Sotho ruler, Moshweshwe, to use Sotho grasslands until they could move further north, Moshweshwe, in granting their request, stressed the fact that he was giving them no permanent land rights. But by the 1840s it became apparent that the Boers had no intention of leaving. They stayed on in the places which the Sotho had lent them. As more and more white farmers moved in, the conflict between the Sotho and the Boers developed into open war.

To the north, the Boers occupied the Transvaal, driving out the Zulu-related Ndebele people, who had settled there under one of Shaka's rebellious generals, Mzilikazi, who was forced to lead his people across the Limpopo into the western part of what is now Zimbabwe, a region called Matabeleland today.

Some of the Boers then proceeded from the Transvaal east into the land of the Zulus. At first, the Zulu king, Dingane, promised to give the Boers land if they would bring back some of his cattle which had been stolen by a Sotho chief along with the thieving Sotho leader. Although the Boers delivered the cattle, they released the responsible chief and kept his guns and horses. Dingane was angered and executed the Boers who came to report to him. He then set out to destroy the Boer farms. But at the battle of Blood River, the Boers defeated him and forced him to hand over part of his land to them.

While the Zulu nation tried to keep the British out of their dispute with the Boers, they were ultimately unsuccessful. When the British took control of the Transvaal in 1877, they supported Boer claims to Zulu land and saw the Zulu military as a possible threat to the spread of European rule. In January, the British High Commissioner launched a military expedition to crush the Zulu nation, an expedition which began, however, with a disaster.

At Isandhlwana a large Zulu force made a surprise attack on a British force composed of regulars and African troops, totally routing them. With the loss of 1600 men, the British suffered their most humiliating defeat since the Crimean war. Within six months, however, they had crushed the Zulu army at Ulundi, the Zulu capital. The Zulu king, Cetshwayo, was captured and imprisoned and his kingdom divided into 13 chiefdoms under subservient sub-chiefs. Although rebellion continued under Cetshwayo's heir, Dinuzulu, and under Bambatha, the power of Shaka's nation had been shattered.

Some African leaders took a less confrontational approach. Moshweshwe, the great Sotho king, tried to protect his people from being conquered through a combination of warfare and diplomacy. Moshweshwe's forces, who were armed with horses, muskets and rifles as well as the traditional African weapons which the Zulus had used, were able repeatedly to defeat forces which the British, the Boers and their African allies sent against the Sotho. They made skillful use of the precipitous mountain terrain of the Drakensberg mountains. But Moshweshwe also made conciliatory gestures and was constantly seeking the possibility of fruitful negotiations. He was a resourceful diplomat. But agreements were often broken by the aggressive and growing Boer settler group.

At length, Moshweshwe was forced to turn to the British crown for protection. In 1868, the British declared Basotholand a Protectorate or Crown Colony, which Moshweshwe continued to rule until his death. Later, the British tried to turn over Basotholand to the Cape Colony to control. But when the Cape required all Africans to be disarmed, the Sotho revolted and successfully fought a war against Cape armies, retaining their arms and a measure of independence under British protection.

A different kind of resistance still was offered by the Xhosa. In 1857, a young religious prophetess named Nongquase persuaded the Xhosa that an apocalyptic event was about to happen. The God of Africa would intervene. The Xhosa dead would be resurrected. The British would leave. Xhosa kraals would be filled with the best cattle the whites had. In preparation, Nongquase insisted, the Xhosa must kill and eat all their cattle and then eat or destroy their grain. Many people were filled with hope of deliverance and obeyed the seer's order. On the appointed day, however, nothing happened and as a result many people starved to death. Those who were left were not able to help themselves and were forced to beg for work on white farms or in white towns. By 1894 all of the Xhosa-speaking people were under Cape Colony rule.

In summary, we can say that almost all of the African societies lost control over their land and were beaten back into the more barren and inhospitable areas which the whites did not desire. Through superior military technology or by negotiating treaties which would later be broken, whites took over the land now known as South Africa.



## **The Birth of ANC Opens a New Era**

Only six years separate the time of the Bambatha rebellion of 1906, the last armed uprising by one of the traditional African societies and the founding of the African National Congress. The ANC's aim was to unite all black South Africans, whatever their ethnic or language differences might be, into one national resistance movement. By 1912 a new phase of resistance had begun: peaceful protest, petition for redress of grievances and passive resistance would be the tactics. The ANC would campaign for those democratic rights which were said to be the glory of European civilization and which white South Africans enjoyed. It would appeal to Christian moral principles to sustain the dignity and equality of all.

It is clear that at no time have Africans accepted their permanent subjugation. It is difficult to find a time in South African history when blacks were not putting up some kind of resistance to European domination.

## **Industrialization**

The discovery of diamonds in 1867 brought a new tide of people into the interior of South Africa. Kimberly was the site of the largest deposits and soon diggers, prospectors, traders, saloon-keepers, missionaries, and various others were flocking to the area. The wealth of the deposits created an economic boom in which some white entrepreneurs became very rich. This wealth provided a base for developing a much greater mineral resource whose discovery came right on the heels of the diamond boom.

In 1886 gold was discovered in the area of present-day Johannesburg. This find altered the course of South African history more than any other single event. As word spread that area contained large deposits of gold, it touched off a mining boom far larger than the California gold rush of the 1840s.

Businessmen from many countries, especially Britain and the United States, invested large sums in the complex machinery and numerous workers needed to mine the gold. Although there were more Afrikaners than British in South Africa at the time, the British had more capital to invest and they controlled the mines even though the Afrikaners controlled the local government. Conflicts developed between the British mining companies, who wanted Britain to take control of all South Africa, and the Afrikaners who wanted to remain free of British domination.

By 1899 full-scale war broke out between England and the Afrikaner republics (the Transvaal and the Orange Free State). Known as the Anglo-Boer War, the conflict had two basic causes, one political, the other economic. The English feared that if allowed their independence the Afrikaner republics might form alliances with England's enemies in Europe, particularly Germany.



On the economic side, important people on both sides of the conflict considered South Africa's mineral wealth a prize worth fighting for.

However, it can be argued that the prize being fought for was not the mines themselves but rather control of the African workforce. No mineral can be extracted from the earth without human labor. Were it not for the large black workforce, and the political repression that has kept black wages very low, South Africa's gold and other minerals would not be produced profitably, if at all. In effect, the British and Afrikaners fought viciously for three years (1899-1902) to see who would reap the benefits of controlling African workers.

Nearly half a million British troops were sent in against one-tenth as many Afrikaner troops. The British spent hundreds of millions of dollars in the attempt to take over South Africa. Even though the British burned many Boer homes and farms, and confined civilians in wretched concentration camps where over 20,000 Afrikaners (mostly women and children) died, they were unable to win a clear victory. The war ended inconclusively. The peace treaty signed at Vereeniging on May 31, 1902 ensured that the British would control the gold mines but it gave Afrikaners the vote. Since the Afrikaners formed a majority of the white population they eventually took control of the government.\*

## **Foundations of Apartheid**

In addition to stimulating conflict between the British and Boers, the gold mining industry formed the starting point for the industrialization of the South African economy. In order to get cheap labor for the mines and other businesses the white government pushed through laws designed to deprive blacks of their land, control their movements, and generally force them to work for low wages. These regulations were eventually spread through the entire economy.

In the late 1800s the white minority government began erecting a complex system of laws aimed at keeping blacks economically weak and without political rights. The whites forced Africans to pay taxes on their land, their houses, and even their dogs. Not only did this bring revenue into the white government, it also forced Africans to work for white businessmen in order to earn the cash needed to pay the taxes. Mineowners, who benefitted from these laws, instituted the compound system as a further method for ensuring

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\*The vast majority of the people, Africans, Coloureds and Indians, were not allowed to vote. Only in the Cape were there legal voting rights for them. But the Cape Constitution did impose income and property qualifications, which were jacked up in 1887 when Africans were close to a majority of voters. In 1936, Africans' rights were further reduced so that they could be represented only by a small number of European legislators and in 1956 Coloureds were similarly reduced to indirect representation. Today even this representation is gone.

cheap, docile labor. Black miners are not allowed to live with their families and are forced to live in all-male compounds with as many as twenty men to a room in filthy conditions. Their families are required to stay out in the rural areas ("reserves") on small plots of land. The women and children grow crops to help feed the family. The mineowner pays the black miner a wage that is not enough to sustain the miner's family. While this system brings large profits to the employer, its effect on black families is devastating. Black miners see their families for only a week or two per year.

Early in the 20th century another cornerstone of apartheid was taking shape in the countryside. For many years white farmers had grappled with the problem of how to ensure an adequate supply of black farmhands. The white settlers had grown accustomed to having blacks do most of the physical labor on the farms. Many Boers looked down on manual labor and mainly concerned themselves with overseeing the work of blacks.

However, during the late 1800s and early 1900s independent black farmers were successfully competing with white farmers. Many black farmers were expanding their operations by purchasing land from whites. Other blacks were living as tenant farmers on white-owned land, paying the owner half of their crop as rent: this was known as farming-on-the-half. This presented a problem for white farmers. If blacks could survive as tenants or independent farmers, they would not need to work as low-paid farmhands for white farmers. In addition, many rural blacks were leaving the countryside for employment in the growing cities. The combination of these factors led to a shortage of blacks willing to work on white farms.

Because white farmers did not want to raise wages as a way to attract more black workers, they lobbied the government for legislation that would force more blacks to work on white farms. The 1913 Land Act was designed to solve this labor shortage and at the same time prevent blacks from buying up white-owned land. The Act made it illegal for blacks to purchase land from whites. Blacks could only own land in 7 percent of the country. The Act also abolished the practice of 'farming-on-the-half.' This forced thousands of blacks to give up their productive farming operations and hire themselves out at low wages to white farmers.

White farmers wanted a surplus population of workers so that the farmhands would be desperate for work and willing to accept low wages. However, not all white farmers dealt with the problem in the same way. The sugar plantation owners in Natal, for example, imported indentured servants from India to work the cane fields. This is the origin of South Africa's population designated as "Indian" by the government.

By the 1920s South Africa was beginning to develop its own modern industrial base, complementing the mines, which were its foundation. As more and more Africans moved into the cities in search of the more attractive industrial jobs, white workers became fearful that their own jobs would be lost



to low-paid blacks. Africans were capable of performing the jobs previously monopolized by whites, and many bosses wanted to save money by replacing high-wage whites with low-wage blacks. In the 1920s white workers carried out strikes, demonstrations, and other forms of political protest to force the government to protect white jobs. This marked the beginning of what is known as the *Colour [Colour] Bar* and *Job Reservation*. These are comprised of laws, regulations and employment practices which limit the right of any company to employ blacks in higher-level, more skilled positions.

Only in recent years have the color bar and job reservation been relaxed somewhat. This has been due to pressure from employers who can't find enough whites to fill all the skilled positions. The color bar has not been eliminated, It has simply been raised. This means that some blacks can now rise to higher jobs than in the past but the best jobs near the top are still strictly for whites.

In 1924 the white government passed a key piece of legislation: the Industrial Conciliation Act. This law established an institutional mechanism for bargaining between trade unions and employers' organizations ("collective bargaining"). Although the law did not explicitly mention race, it defined employees in such a way as to exclude most blacks who therefore were not allowed to take part in the very negotiations which determined their wages and working conditions.

The key point in all this is that the labor laws, the bantustans, and the other forms of control exercised by whites over blacks, were not simply a product of racist attitudes. It is certainly true that most South African whites are prejudiced and believe blacks to be inferior. However the foundation of South Africa's racist laws can be found in a system of great economic inequality which yields profits and a high standard of living for the white minority at the expense of the black majority. Mineowners and white farmers wanted an abundance of low-cost African workers. White workers also wanted blacks to be tightly controlled so that they wouldn't take away white jobs. This led whites to devise numerous ways of keeping blacks powerless and under tight control. The many laws and regulations that keep blacks down simultaneously make many whites rich. White workers, who often hold jobs which involve simply supervision of blacks rather than manual or skilled labor, enjoy a vastly more comfortable standard of living than blacks. Racist attitudes facilitate this process but personal prejudice is only one cause of the oppression of blacks. Another (perhaps more important) cause is the economic and political power of the white minority, which dominates and exploits the majority for its own benefit.



## Chapter Four

# South Africa Since World War II

World War II stimulated the growth of the manufacturing sector in South Africa. The major industrial nations were diverting much of their productive capacity to the war effort and this diversion created an opening for South African manufactured goods. The rapid growth of factories acted like a magnet to draw blacks from the rural areas into the cities seeking jobs.

Blacks have always outnumbered whites in South Africa but as long as blacks stayed in the countryside most whites did not feel threatened. As more and more blacks migrated to the cities, whites grew uneasy at the prospect of living right in the midst of a black majority. The political party in power at the time, the United Party, did not have a solution acceptable to most whites. But the far-right Nationalist Party had a plan—they called it Apartheid.

In 1948 the Nationalist Party (NP) won a majority of seats in parliament for the first time. Since then they have ruled south Africa continuously right down to the present. The NP is mainly comprised of Afrikaners. And most NP members are also members of one of the two white Dutch Reformed Churches of South Africa, whose form of Calvinism requires racial segregation, a doctrine which caused the World Alliance of Reformed Churches to suspend them for heresy in August, 1982. Afrikaners believe that God led them into South Africa as a chosen people, who were to maintain a strictly separate racial and national identity. Opposed to humanist beliefs that government is created by people for their own use and deviating from John Calvin himself, Afrikaner neo-Calvinism makes the state sovereign in its own sphere. The church, whose sphere is the spiritual, has no right to interfere in matters of government. While the individual has a right to participate in politics, the church as a church cannot make prophetic criticism of the state. In theory and in practice, Afrikaner Calvinists believe that God is opposed to racial mixing; hence they refuse to participate in holy communion with black Christians. They also tend to believe that the white race is naturally superior to other races and that therefore whites are justified in exercising a paternalistic dictatorial rule over blacks.

If Afrikaner theologians provided the framework for apartheid, the full ideological content of this religious race nationalism was worked out by the Broederbond (Band of Brothers), a secret society of well-educated, articulate and powerful Afrikaners, which emerged in the 1930s. Influenced by German philosophy and determined to preserve Afrikaner identity at all costs, they fought to end British domination in thought, culture and politics and to defend racial dominance against the "black threat." To this day, the Broederbond

remains the most important power behind the scenes of Afrikaner politics and church life.

The similarities between what the Afrikaners call their "Christian Nationalist" philosophy and Nazism / fascism are clear. In fact, during World War II the NP supported the war effort of Hitler and Mussolini. The South African government at the time supported Britain and the United States but the Afrikaner Nationalists supported the Nazis. To block South African government support for the Allies the most militant Afrikaner groups carried out guerrilla war by dynamiting railway lines, telegraph poles and theaters, and assaulting the police and military.

These militant supporters of Hitler later gained prominence when the Nationalist Party came to power. Dr. Verwoerd, the editor of an influential Afrikaner newspaper which openly propagandized for the Nazi cause during the war, later became Prime Minister. Future Presidents Swart and Diederichs were Nazi sympathizers. One-time Prime Minister Vorster, a former commandant of the Ossewabrandwag (a right-wing terrorist group) declared in 1942: "We stand for Christian Nationalism, which is an ally of Nazism." Vorster was jailed during the war for his pro-Nazi activities.

The fact that the NP was opposed to the United States during World War II is a significant fact with regard to current U.S. policy toward South Africa. NP leaders hide the fact that they supported Hitler, and many Americans are taken in by this deceit. President Reagan asserted that we should be friendly with the white minority regime when he asked: "Can we abandon a country that stood by us in every war we have fought?" While it is true that the party ruling South Africa during World War II sided with the United States, the Nationalist Party which now rules South Africa was against the U.S. and supported the Nazis.

## **Constructing Apartheid**

Since the earliest years of colonization whites have enacted laws to control the lives of African workers. By the time the NP rose to power in 1948 South Africa had an elaborate system of laws for keeping blacks weak politically and economically. However, the NP's plans for apartheid called for even tighter control of the black population.

The new system aimed at separating blacks and whites more completely than in the past. The 1953 Reservation of Separate Amenities Act provided for the segregation of all public facilities. Busses, trains, hotels, restaurants, public toilets, park benches . . . nearly every facet of public life was divided along racial lines. The Immorality Act made sexual intercourse between people of different races illegal. The Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act made marriage across race lines impossible. The Bantu Education Act tightened government controls on African schools: not only did the new apartheid



education system force blacks to attend schools separate from and inferior to white schools, it also segregated black schools by language group (e.g., Zulu, Xhosa, Sotho, etc.) as a way of keeping the black population divided.

The NP tightened existing restrictions on black mobility. New laws intensified the PASSBOOK system whereby black men and women are required to always carry an identity document which must be shown to police on demand. The NP extended the system of INFLUX CONTROL whereby LABOR BUREAUS in the rural areas ensure that the labor needs of white farmers are met before allowing Africans to travel to urban areas.

In what was probably its most far-reaching program, the NP began transforming the rural areas reserved for Africans ("native reserves") into what are known today as BANTUSTANS (or HOMELANDS in government jargon). The basic idea behind the bantustan system is older than colonialism itself: divide and rule. In addition to separating blacks from whites, the government would now divide the black population into ten ethnic 'nations,' each isolated from the others on its own small piece of land, and each with its own separate government. However, the leaders of these ethnic mini-states have been hand-picked by the white government in Pretoria. In addition, key functions of these black 'nations' are kept in the hands of the white government.

Comprising only one eighth of the land area of South Africa, the bantustans are all desolate pieces of earth, lacking infrastructure, industry, or major mineral deposits.\* This ensures their economic dependence on South Africa. By making black South Africans "citizens" of these bantustans the white government is systematically stripping blacks of their South African citizenship. To date, four of these mini-states have been established: Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda and Ciskei. The millions of blacks who against their will have been made "citizens" of the bantustans have even less rights than the average black South African. Eventually the white government plans to deprive enough blacks of their South African citizenship that official propaganda will be able to claim that blacks no longer comprise a majority of "South Africans." Most will be labelled "Transkeians," "Ciskeians," etc.

Not only South African blacks have resisted this scheme. *Not one* government in the world (other than Pretoria) has recognized any bantustan as a legitimate nation. In spite of this worldwide rejection of their divide-and-rule strategy, the white government continues to strip blacks of their South African citizenship and deport them by the thousands to these desolate rural areas.

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\*When minerals are discovered in the bantustans, as they have been in Bophuthatswana and Lebowa, the South African government continues to control the licensing agreements. The amount of revenue that accrues to the bantustan governments from these arrangements is unclear. Probably very little benefit comes to them.



The strict racial inequality implemented by the Nationalist Party galvanized blacks into new and stronger resistance. It stirred new protest even among whites. In order to suppress this growing opposition the white government passed laws restricting political activity. The Prohibition of Improper Interference Act outlaws the participation of the various races in the politics of other racial groups. The Terrorism Act, carrying a maximum penalty of death, defines the crime of terrorism so broadly as to include any act committed with intent to endanger law and order. Disrupting business, for example, is considered an act of terrorism. The law effectively shifts the burden onto the defendant to show that he or she did not intend to disrupt law and order. Material witnesses may be held indefinitely in detention under this act without any right to see their family or their lawyer and courts have no right to review the detention. Witnesses are subjected to solitary confinement and prolonged questioning under torture to obtain information. The result is often forced confessions, witnesses involuntarily becoming informers against their own community, and psychological maiming. For those who resist, death may be the end result, a death which will be portrayed as a suicide, although police culpability is not in doubt.

Another harsh law is the Suppression of Communism Act of 1950. This measure gives the Minister of Justice a wide array of powers to silence critics of the regime. For example, he can "ban" any individual considered a danger to the government. Banning orders are of different types. They can prohibit the banned person from public speaking, writing or being quoted in publications, attending meetings, belonging to particular organizations, meeting with more than one person at a time, leaving a particular magisterial district, or even leaving home. In this way critics of apartheid can be effectively silenced even if they have not broken any law.

In sum, the Nationalist Party has created a police state in South Africa. Citizens are spied on; civic and church groups are infiltrated by government agents; people are arrested and held for months without ever being charged with a crime or brought to trial; and when black youth and workers protest in the streets, they are shot down by police. This war against its own people is the reason why an overwhelming majority of nations condemns the South African government.

## **The African National Congress of South Africa**

It is only logical that black South Africans would attempt to change the system of white minority rule. The oldest and most popular resistance organization, the African National Congress of South Africa (ANC), was formed in 1912 and is still struggling for equality today.

The ANC's first big campaign was against the Native Land Act of 1913. As

stated above, this law amounted to an assault on black farmers; it confined blacks' right to own land to a mere 7 percent of the country. Members of the ANC won some public support in their efforts to block this legislation but the government ignored them and passed the Land Act anyway, thus depriving millions of Africans of land their families had possessed for generations.

During its early years the ANC was far from being a 'radical' organization. Its leaders were mostly lawyers and other black professionals, drawn from different ethnic groups and all sections of the country. The group held moderate political beliefs, relied solely on peaceful methods, and even cooperated in a government scheme whereby blacks were allowed to elect white members of the parliament to represent them. Over the years these policies proved ineffective. The ANC's mild-mannered protests were ignored by the white government. As a result during the 1930s and 1940s the ANC gradually began losing the mass support it once enjoyed.

Eventually a new generation of African leaders, among them Nelson Mandela and Oliver Tambo, realized that a new, more militant opposition to white supremacy was needed. In 1944 these younger leaders formed the Youth League of the ANC. The Youth League argued that the elitist politics of the old ANC leadership had proven ineffective and that a new strategy of mass organizing was needed. Still committed to non-violence, the Youth League advocated mass demonstrations and active civil disobedience as methods for pressuring the government.

In 1949, as the new Nationalist Party government was rapidly tightening its grip on South African society, the ANC organized a work stoppage and mass demonstrations for May Day. Although all the demonstrations were peaceful, the police broke them up with clubs and guns. Eighteen Africans were killed and more than thirty were wounded.

In 1952 the ANC again tried to influence the government by means of a mass demonstration. The "Defiance Campaign" brought out thousands of volunteers to purposely disobey many of the new apartheid laws that were being enacted. Much like the sit-down tactics used in America's civil rights struggle, the Defiance Campaign was based on a simple strategy: if enough people would openly disobey racist laws, it would become impossible for the government to enforce them and the hated legislation would be dropped. As thousands of black and white South Africans went to jail for minor crimes such as violating curfew and using public facilities reserved for another race group, the Defiance Campaign attracted publicity overseas, especially in Britain and the United States.

The government moved quickly to put an end to the protest before it could spread further. In addition to using more police brutality against the demonstrators, the government passed new repressive legislation (the Criminal Law Amendment Act and the Public Safety Act). These provided severe penalties for breaking any law as an act of political protest. For



example, a black person sitting on a park bench reserved for whites would normally be fined a few dollars and given a few days in jail. Under the new laws that same person could have all their property confiscated, be fined up to \$1,000, be imprisoned for up to ten years, and be lashed ten times with a whip. Although thousands of ANC followers were originally prepared to go to jail for weeks or even months, few were willing to risk having their lives ruined by such heavy penalties. The protests soon died out. Once again the government had beaten back mass opposition by increasing the level of repression.

## **The Freedom Charter**

Although the Defiance Campaign had failed in its objective of overturning unjust laws, one positive result of the campaign was greater cooperation among the various racially oppressed groups (Africans, Coloureds and Indians). In 1954 the African National Congress forged an alliance with the Indian Congress, the Coloured People's Congress, and a small group of anti-racist whites known as the Congress of Democrats. This alliance organized a "Congress of the People" in order to draw up a unifying document for all the groups working for democracy and human rights.

During months of preparation this alliance of groups set up elections in all parts of the country so that people could choose representatives to the Congress of the People. On June 26, 1955 several thousand representatives, despite harrassment by police, gathered in Kliptown near Johannesburg to ratify the document that to this day stands as the single most important statement for equality in South Africa.

The Freedom Charter is similar to the American Declaration of Independence in that it states the basic aspirations and demands of the people. Based largely on the United Nations' Declaration on Human Rights, the Freedom Charter calls for a truly democratic government in which "every man and woman shall have the vote and the right to stand for election to all bodies which make laws." It demands equal rights for all, regardless of race, religion or gender. The Freedom Charter also goes beyond a call for equal political rights by stressing the need for equal opportunity in the economic sphere as well. The Freedom Charter is in direct opposition to apartheid, whose main goal is to perpetuate political and economic inequality.

Those who put together the Freedom Charter realized that the white minority government would be opposed to the ideas embodied in it. Echoing the words of Patrick Henry, the drafters of the Freedom Charter ended the document with these words: "... let all those who love their people and their country now say as we say here, 'These freedoms we shall fight for side by side, throughout our lives, until we have won our liberty.'"



*The "Freedom Charter" was unanimously adopted at a "Congress of the People," held in Kliptown, near Johannesburg, on 25 and 26 June, 1955.*

*The Charter was adopted by the four sponsoring organizations as their policy and became a manifesto of their struggle for freedom.*

*A year later, 156 leaders of these organizations were arrested and charged with "treason." They were acquitted after a trial lasting more than four years, but the ANC and the Congress of Democrats were soon banned, while the other two organizations were effectively prevented from legal operation by the banning of their leaders.*

## **The Freedom Charter**

**We, the people of South Africa, declare for all our country and the world to know:**

- that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white, and that no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of all the people;
- that our people have been robbed of their birthright to land, liberty and peace by a form of government founded on injustice and inequality;
- that our country will never be prosperous or free until all our people live in brotherhood, enjoying equal rights and opportunities;
- that only a democratic state, based on the will of all the people, can secure to all their birthright without distinction of colour, race, sex or belief;

And therefore, we the people of South Africa, black and white together—equals, countrymen and brothers—adopt this Freedom Charter. And we pledge ourselves to strive together, sparing neither strength nor courage, until the democratic changes set out here have been won.

### **The people shall govern!**

Every man and woman shall have the right to vote for and to stand as a candidate for all bodies which make laws;

All people shall be entitled to take part in the administration of the country;

The rights of the people shall be the same, regardless of race, colour or sex;

All bodies of minority rule, advisory boards, councils and authorities shall be replaced by democratic organs of self-government.

### **All national groups shall have equal rights!**

There shall be equal status in the bodies of state, in the courts and in the schools for all national groups and races;

All people shall have equal right to use their own languages, and to develop their own folk culture and customs;

All national groups shall be protected by law against insults to their race and national pride;

The preaching and practice of national, race or colour discrimination and contempt shall be a punishable crime;

The people shall share in the country's wealth!

All apartheid laws and practices shall be set aside.

**The people shall share in the country's wealth!**

The national wealth of our country, the heritage of all South Africans, shall be restored to the people;

The mineral wealth beneath the soil, the banks and monopoly industry shall be transferred to the ownership of the people as a whole;

All other industry and trade shall be controlled to assist the well-being of the people;

All people shall have equal rights to trade where they choose, to manufacture and to enter all trades, crafts and professions.

**The land shall be shared among those who work it!**

Restrictions of land ownership on a racial basis shall be ended, and all the land redivided amongst those who work it, to banish famine and land hunger;

The state shall help the peasants with implements, seed, tractors and dams to save the soil and assist the tillers;

Freedom of movement shall be guaranteed to all who work on the land;

All shall have the right to occupy land wherever they choose;

People shall not be robbed of their cattle, and forced labour and farm prisons shall be abolished.

**All shall be equal before the law!**

No one shall be imprisoned, deported or restricted without a fair trial;

No one shall be condemned by the order of any government official;

The courts shall be representative of all the people;

Imprisonment shall be only for serious crimes against the people, and shall aim at re-education, not vengeance;

The police force and army shall be open to all on an equal basis and shall be the helpers and protectors of the people;

All laws which discriminate on grounds of race, colour or belief shall be repealed.

**All shall enjoy equal human rights!**

The law shall guarantee to all their rights to speak, to organise, to meet together, to punish, to preach, to worship and to educate their children;

The privacy of the house from police raids shall be protected by law;

All shall be free to travel without restriction from countryside to town, from province to province and from South Africa abroad;

Pass Laws, permits, and all other laws restricting these freedoms, shall be abolished.

**There shall be work and security!**

All who work shall be free to form unions, to elect their officers and to make wage agreements with their employers;

The state shall recognise the right and duty of all to work, and to draw full unemployment benefits;

Men and women of all races shall receive equal pay for equal work;

There shall be a forty-hour working week, a national minimum wage, paid annual leave, and sick leave for all workers, and maternity leave on full pay for all working mothers;

Miners, domestic workers, farm workers, and civil servants shall have the same rights as all others who work;

Child labour, compound labour, the tot system and contract labour shall be abolished.

### **The doors of learning and of culture shall be opened!**

The government shall discover, develop and encourage national talent for the enhancement of our cultural life;

All the cultural treasures of mankind shall be open to all, by free exchange of books, ideas and contact with other lands;

The aim of education shall be to teach the youth to love their people and their culture, to honour human brotherhood, liberty and peace;

Education shall be free, compulsory, universal and equal for all children;

Higher education and technical training shall be opened to all by means of state allowances and scholarships awarded on the basis of merit;

Adult illiteracy shall be ended by a mass state education plan;

Teachers shall have all the rights of other citizens;

The colour ban in cultural life, in sport and in education shall be abolished.

### **There shall be houses, security and comfort!**

All people shall have the rights to live where they choose, to be decently housed, and to bring up their families in comfort, and security;

Unused housing space shall be made available to the people;

Rent and prices shall be lowered, food plentiful and no one shall go hungry;

A preventive health scheme shall be run by the state;

Free medical care and hospitalisation shall be provided for all, with special care for mothers and young children;

Slums shall be demolished, and new suburbs built where all have transport, roads, lighting, playing fields, creches and social centres;

The aged, the orphans, the disabled and the sick shall be cared for by the state;

Rest, leisure and recreation shall be the right of all;

Fenced locations and ghettos shall be abolished, and laws which break up families shall be repealed;

South Africa shall be a fully independent state, which respects the rights and sovereignty of nations.

### **There shall be peace and friendship!**

South Africa shall strive to maintain world peace and the settlement of all international disputes by negotiation—not war;

Peace and friendship amongst all our people shall be secured by upholding the equal rights, opportunities and status of all;

The people of the protectorates—Basutoland, Bechuanaland and Swaziland—shall be free to decide for themselves their own future;

The rights of all the peoples of Africa to independence and self-government shall be recognised, and shall be the basis of close cooperation;

Let all who love their people and their country now say, as we say here:

**'These freedoms we will fight for, side by side, throughout our lives, until we have won our liberty.'**



## The Treason Trial

For the South African government, the Freedom Charter was evidence that a violent revolution was being plotted. During 1955 and 1956, the Special Branch of the police had been raiding the offices and homes of ANC members and of other opponents of apartheid seizing vast quantities of documents, letters, pamphlets, books and even pieces of clothing. Clearly, the government was preparing for a political show trial. Finally, on December 5, 1956 the police swooped down on the homes of the Congress Alliance leadership. One hundred and fifty-six people were arrested: 104 Africans, 23 Whites, 21 Indians and 8 Coloreds. They were charged with high treason, an offense punishable by death.

The prosecution's case was that the goals of the Freedom Charter could only be arrived at by violence. They argued that the language which the accused had used implied the use of violence. Much of the evidence revolved around the use of phrases such as "proletariat," "imperialism," "comrades" or "masses" by the younger members of the liberation movement, some of whom had clearly been influenced by their reading of Marxist political theory.

After a preliminary examination that lasted more than a year, the majority of the defendants were discharged. But for four and a half years, the thirty main defendants were subjected to a total disruption of their regular life. Day after day, they sat in court listening to an endless recital of long documents, garbled reports of ANC meetings and the reports of informers, some of whom were clearly unable to understand what they were reporting on.

After the Sharpeville crisis, one of the prominent black attorneys, Nelson Mandela, emerged as the chief spokesman for his co-defendants. With thousands of others, he had been put under preventive detention even as the Treason Trial continued. By way of protest, the accused decided to do away with their defense counsel and conduct their own defense. Mandela and another accused, Duma Nokwe, took over the running of the defense. Mandela was himself in the witness box for four days, a time in which he adamantly insisted that the ANC was committed to a policy of non-violence, denied that he was a Communist although ANC had worked with Communists (he had once argued strongly that Communists should be expelled from ANC) but that every political organization has a right to exist and advocate its own point of view. ANC was based on opposition to a system of white supremacy.

Mandela argued that the foundation of the early African societies had been a belief that all men are free and equal and that in these societies there had been no class exploitation of the poor by the rich and in fact no classes.

The council, which had governed the affairs of each African society, had been fully democratic: the chief and the ordinary people, warriors and religious leaders all took part and tried to shape decisions. However primitive and insecure these earlier societies had been, they nevertheless contained

the seeds for a new democratic South Africa.

One justice asked Mandela: "Well, as a matter of fact, isn't your freedom a direct threat to the Europeans?"

Mandela's reply was: "No, it is not a direct threat to the Europeans. We are not anti-White, we are against White supremacy and in struggling against White supremacy we have the support of some sectors of the European population . . . It is quite clear that the Congress has consistently preached a policy of race harmony and we have condemned racialism by whom it is professed . . ."

In the end, the court found that the A.N.C. and the alliance had worked to replace the existing form of government in South Africa by a radically different one as outlined in the Freedom Charter but that the prosecution had not proved that it would be a communist government or that the accused had propagated a doctrine of violent revolution or that the policy of the A.N.C. was to overthrow the state by violence.

Defeated in court, the South African government took refuge in new legislation which would enable it to ban any organization that it deemed to be subversive.

The Treason Trial, by bringing together the leadership of groups opposed to apartheid from all over the country, helped to consolidate the Congress Alliance movement deepening the friendship and camaraderie of those who were suffering.

## **The Pan Africanist Congress**

By the late 1950s a split developed within the ranks of the African National Congress. A young minority faction, sometimes referred to as the "Africanists," were opposed to the ANC's multiracial policy of working closely with whites. They argued that due to South Africa's "pigmentocracy" in which whites are automatically accorded power over blacks, it is impossible for whites to be seriously committed to black liberation. According to this view it was necessary for blacks to organize separately, and only at some future date, when blacks had established their own sense of identity, should they associate politically with whites.

Spokesmen such as Robert Sobukwe explained that this black nationalist position did not seek a future society in which whites would be driven from the country or denied political rights. A white pigmentocracy should not be replaced with a black one. But it would be necessary for minorities such as whites and Indians to drop all arrogant attitudes of superiority and give primary loyalty to Africa. In this way, it was argued, whites could become "Africans" and there would be no need in a future African democracy for electoral or constitutional guarantees for minorities.



In April 1959 the black nationalists broke from the ANC to form the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania\* (PAC). Inspired by the decolonization taking place in other parts of Africa, the youthful PAC called for a more confrontational strategy. The ANC had a long record of courage and outspokenness but the PAC sought to spark the latent anger, particularly of urban youth, that could ignite the fires of mass rebellion. Whereas the ANC followed an explicit policy of non-violence, PAC left its options open by refusing to eschew violence as a possible strategy.

## **The Sharpeville Massacre**

In early 1960 PAC leaders decided it was time to back up their militant rhetoric with a program of action. At the time, the ANC was planning to launch a protest campaign against the passbook system. PAC leaders decided to do the same but to act before ANC's campaign could get started. The date set by PAC leaders for beginning their protest was March 21, 1960: a day that would mark a turning point in South African history.

Days before the PAC's protest began PAC leader Robert Sobukwe wrote a letter to the Commissioner of Police. Sobukwe emphasized that the protests would be non-violent and asked for restraint of "trigger-happy, African-hating" police.

The people's response to PAC's call to protest was mixed. In some areas such as Langa near Cape Town and Sharpeville in the Transvaal thousands turned out to demonstrate their opposition to the much-hated passbook laws. Other areas were quiet.

At Sharpeville about 10,000 people including women and children assembled in protest. They were ordered to disperse by police carrying rifles and machine guns. No warning shots were fired to move the crowd back. Suddenly the police opened fire on the unarmed demonstrators. People ran in panic.

At Sharpeville 67 Africans were killed, the majority having been hit from the back as they ran away; 186 were wounded, including 40 women and 8 children. At Langa 2 demonstrators were killed and 49 wounded.

These mass killings riveted the attention of the outside world on South Africa. The name Sharpeville became synonymous with ruthless racial tyranny. The United Nations and practically every individual member government of it condemned the behavior of the South African police.

Within South Africa the massacres had a profound effect on the black

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\*The PAC rejects the name South Africa as a European imposition. Instead they refer to the country as Azania.



resistance movement. There were widespread protests over the killings. The police cracked down by arresting thousands of Africans and beating many more. Sobukwe and other PAC leaders were jailed. The government tightened its censorship of the press. Laws were passed which increased by ten times the penalties for political protest. On April 8, 1960 the government declared both the ANC and PAC illegal under the new Unlawful Organizations Act. In supporting this new legislation, National Party spokesmen took the same position as the prosecution had taken in the Treason Trial: ANC and PAC intended to overthrow the government by violence. The minister of justice, Francois Erasmus, told Parliament:

"Their aim is to bring to its knees any White Government in South Africa which stands for White Supremacy and for White leadership . . . They do not want peace and order . . . what they want is our country."

## **Guerrilla Warfare**

With the jailing of virtually all its leaders the PAC and ANC were forced to make a drastic decision: to go underground and begin clandestine warfare. Those members of ANC and PAC not yet in jail realized the futility of non-violent protest in the face of a government which did not hesitate to shoot unarmed demonstrators. For half a century the Africans had sworn themselves to peaceful forms of political struggle. While morally praiseworthy, these methods had proven fruitless.

Just as American leaders such as Washington and Jefferson had come to realize the necessity of fighting a war to gain independence from England, leaders such as Nelson Mandela and Walter Sisulu reasoned that more forceful methods were needed to gain any concessions from the white racists. In 1961-62 the ANC put together a sabotage organization known as UMKHONTO WE SIZWE ("Spear of the Nation"), and PAC formed an armed section known as POQO. POQO carried out a few assassinations: UMKHONTO's main goal was to cause material damage (e.g., blowing up power lines) without causing any harm to people. Even when it finally turned to "violence," ANC avoided the taking of human life. For two years UMKHONTO conducted numerous acts of sabotage against the government.

However, in July 1963, the police raided UMKHONTO's secret headquarters, arresting its key leaders. In the much-publicized Rivonia trial of 1964, Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, and six other UMKHONTO leaders were sentenced to life in prison. Mandela and Sisulu remain in prison to this day. Recent opinion polls show that Mandela remains South Africa's most popular black leader.

## **ANC and PAC Forced Into Exile**

The black political activists who had not been thrown in jail either laid low within South Africa or went into exile. Those who left the country began building international support for the struggle against the white minority regime. Within a decade the ANC and PAC had gained the support of the Organization of African Unity, the United Nations, the World Council of Churches, and many individual governments, labor unions and churches.

Because multinational corporations based in the United States and other major developed countries in Europe such as Britain, France and Germany, have large and profitable investments in the apartheid economy, the governments of these countries have seen the liberation movements as potentially dangerous to corporate interests. They have refused to assist the liberation movements with arms or by imposing UN sanctions on South Africa.

The ANC and PAC therefore have turned to other countries capable of supplying the weapons they needed—China, the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Some conservatives exaggerate the importance of this aid to the ANC and PAC. It should be kept in mind that these groups are independent South African organizations. Like other liberation movements in southern Africa, they make decisions based on their own needs and goals, not those of their international allies. Also, whereas the ANC and PAC readily admit that they get military aid from Communist countries, they also get substantial non-military assistance from the smaller western countries such as Denmark, Sweden and the Netherlands.

In recent years the ANC has been strengthening its position. Through years of organizing the ANC has developed a broad base of support in South African trade unions, churches, and civic organizations. A 1980 opinion poll by one of South Africa's leading newspapers found that even though it has been outlawed for two decades, the ANC is still the country's most popular black organization.

Recently there has been a sharp increase in ANC-sponsored political and military activity in South Africa. This trend is related to recent changes in the region. Since 1975 three neighboring countries (Angola, Mozambique and Zimbabwe) have gained their independence. All three support the ANC. This makes it easier to train political organizers who then return to South Africa.

## **The Black Consciousness Movement**

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, with the ANC and PAC forced underground and into exile, a new strain of black politics evolved in South Africa, particularly among the youth. Black students began to feel that the existing multiracial student organizations, such as the University Christian



Movement (UCM) and the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS), were dominated by whites and did not focus enough attention on the problems of the black community. They reasoned that because whites had a large stake in the existing system it was necessary for blacks to develop a distinctly black approach to politics and life in general; hence the name usually applied to this movement—"black consciousness."

Steve Biko, the first president of the all-black South African Student Organization (SASO) formed in 1969, was a key leader of the black consciousness movement. Biko and others began formulating a philosophy that stressed the importance for blacks of developing their own self-identity. They argued that South Africa's system of white supremacy had instilled in all black people a sense of inferiority that had to be rooted out. Like the movements supporting 'Black Pride' and 'Black Power' in the United States, the Black Consciousness movement sought to create a new, positive psychology of being black.

SASO grew rapidly, attracting new members in all parts of the country. By 1970 Coloured students in Cape Town and Indian students in Durban were calling themselves "black." The project of creating a new sense of black dignity spawned a whole new generation of organizations: the Black Theology Project, the Black Arts Theatre, and the Black Press Project. The Black People's Convention, formed by Biko and others, acted as a catalyst and an umbrella group for many of these new organizations.

As in the past, the government viewed this movement for black liberation as a threat. With Black Consciousness groups gaining strength throughout the country, the white government moved to crush this new movement before it could build a firm foundation. Beginning in the early 1970s the government banned, arrested, and even killed dozens of Black Consciousness leaders. In many cases, the police would arrest a black activist and torture him, using whatever force they wished even to the point of causing death. To the public the police would explain that the prisoner who died had accidentally fallen from a window or down a flight of stairs or had committed suicide.

The biggest government crackdown on the Black Consciousness movement came in the Fall of 1977. Steve Biko had recently been killed in jail. A government inquest into the cause of Biko's death was about to issue a verdict absolving the police of any guilt. Prime Minister Vorster knew that this coverup would stir widespread protest from the Black Consciousness movement so he decided to arrest as many black leaders as possible before the findings of the inquest were made public. In a broad crackdown, eighteen African organizations and the multi-racial Christian Institute were declared illegal, over forty prominent black leaders were arrested, seven white opposition figures were banned, and the two leading black newspapers were shut down with their editors thrown in jail.

The Fall 1977 crackdown was a severe blow to the various organizations of



the Black Consciousness movement. Yet, as in the past, after a period of regrouping, the black opposition gradually recovered from this government repression and began building new organizations to fight for equal rights.

## **The Resurgence of Black Trade Unions**

Another important trend during the 1970s and early 1980s has been the resurgence of the black trade union movement. As with the ANC, PAC, and the Black Consciousness movement, the government had tried to restrict the development of black trade unions but has not been completely successful.

As early as 1856 African workers formed organizations to press for higher wages and better working conditions. In the 1860s and 1870s black railway workers and construction workers conducted numerous strikes in an attempt to improve the lowly conditions of their employment. In 1887 African diamond miners struck in protest over degrading anal examinations they were forced to undergo. Throughout the 20th century black workers in many sectors of the economy continued this tradition of fighting to expand the few rights they had.

As we saw earlier, the Industrial Conciliation Act of 1924 excluded black wage earners from the definition of "employee." This restriction made it impossible for Africans to join legally recognized trade unions, thus inhibiting their ability to fight for improvements in their work situations. The law did not, however, prevent black workers from organizing; but it made any strike by black workers technically illegal and subjected them to arrest.

Following the lull in black political activism during the 1960s caused by extensive government repression, the black trade union movement began to revive in the 1970s. In 1971 and 1972 in neighboring, South African controlled Namibia, 20,000 black miners shut down the mines to protest their working conditions and the system of apartheid. The South African government sent in heavily-armed troops to crush the worker protest. There were massive arrests and six people were shot dead on "Bloody Sunday," January 20, 1972. But the workers did win some concessions on wages and working conditions.

In 1973 South Africa was rocked by the largest strike wave in its history. Known as the "Durban strikes," these worker protests lasted for months and some 100,000 black workers participated. The strikers were eventually forced back to work because they had no other way to support their families. Although some were arrested during the strikes, the large number and unity of the strikers caused the government and employers to offer wage increases.

Another strike in 1973, this one by black gold miners seeking higher wages, illustrated a feature of South African labor relations which many Americans would find surprising. The particular gold mine being struck, Western Deep Levels near Johannesburg, is controlled by Harry Oppenheimer through Anglo-American Corporation, the huge mining finance house which he

dominates. Oppenheimer is one of the most liberal and supposedly "enlightened" white business leaders in South Africa. Black miners were protesting the fact that while their total wages stood at roughly \$20 per month, white miners were given a raise of \$50 per month. The strike ended when police were brought in and shot 38 black miners.

Several years of growing labor unrest, capped by the Soweto rebellion in 1976, caused deep fear among South Africa's white rulers. Spurred by this pressure, the government began developing a new system for dealing with African workers. In 1979, acting on the recommendations of a government-sponsored study of labor relations (the Wiehahn Commission\* report), South Africa enacted new laws giving blacks limited rights to form trade unions. The law stipulates that in order to be recognized as legitimate black unions must register with the government. Registration involves opening the union's books to the authorities, promising to restrict union activities to workplace issues and not get involved with politics, and generally accepting government control. As *Business Week* put it:

When South Africa gave black workers the right to unionize . . . it also sought to impose tight controls that it hoped would keep black unions as tame as possible.

The government's Registrar has virtually absolute discretion to grant or deny applications by taking into consideration "any factor which would serve to maintain peace and harmony in the undertaking, industry, trade or occupation, and the national interest in question." Unlike US labor legislation, the law imposes no obligation on an employer to recognize or bargain collectively with a union which has the support of a majority of workers. And even if a union does register, it must go through a long and complex process of conciliation which takes twelve to eighteen months before it can call a legal strike. Most African unions therefore refused to register.

In 1981 the government tried to bring the unregistered unions under its control by passing another labor bill which, for the first time, permitted interracial unions to register and all African workers to join unions. But the law also increased penalties for strikes and made it a crime for a union to pay strike benefits to workers if the strike is illegal.

It is understandable why the government should try to manage and control labor union activity. It has the power to shake the economy to its roots. With more and more Africans involved in the modern sector of the economy, the government worries about the political and economic power that a militant

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\*The Wiehahn Commission's 14-member panel included only one African and he was neither a worker nor a trade unionist.

labor movement has already begun to develop. In recent years the black trade union movement has grown at a rapid pace. Only 59,000 strong in 1975, black trade unionists now number well over 300,000. A few unions have registered with the government's labor control machinery, but most others have refused to register, arguing that this amounts to "playing the government's game."

Although it has changed a few laws, the government still relies on traditional methods for suppressing black leaders. For example, Thozamile Gqweta, leader of one of the fastest-growing and most combative black unions, was arrested seven times in one year before he was eventually charged with any crime. In March 1981 unknown arsonists burned his home to the ground. In October the same fate befell the house of Gqweta's mother. Only this time someone wired the doors shut. Gqweta's mother and uncle were burned to death. A week later, at his mother's funeral, police shot and killed his girlfriend, Deliswa Roxiso. Next came his lawyer, Griffiths Mxenge, who was murdered mysteriously by assailants who still have not been caught. After months in jail, and following these personal losses, Gqweta was last reported to be under psychiatric care.

This kind of repression and the new labor laws have not stemmed the tide of black labor militancy. The number of strikes doubled from 1979 to 1980 and nearly doubled again in 1981. Labor unrest has hit many American firms such as Ford, Coca-Cola, and Colgate-Palmolive. This growing black labor movement is part of a more general upsurge in black resistance to the system of apartheid.

As we will see in the next section, the increasing strength of black opposition to the apartheid system, while a positive development for South African blacks, poses some tough policy choices for the United States government. As the conflict between South Africa's black majority and the white government escalates, there will be growing pressure for America to take one side or the other. A neutral posture by the United States will be difficult, if not impossible, to maintain.



## Chapter Five

# United States Involvement

American companies were trading with South Africa as early as the 1700s. However, significant U.S. involvement did not begin until the late 1800s. The discovery of gold (1886) in Johannesburg marked the beginning of important economic ties between South Africa and the United States. Having developed expertise in the California and Alaska goldfields, American engineers and businessmen were eager to employ their technical skills and capital in the booming South African mining industry. John Hays Hammond, for example, was employed at a salary of \$75,000 as the principal engineering consultant to Cecil Rhodes, the most powerful mining tycoon and political empire builder of the period. He urged the importance of South African minerals on the State Department and was an early influence on US policy. Roughly half of the early gold mines were run by American engineers. Not unnaturally, US exports of machines, mining supplies and equipment soared.

The low wages and high profits of the South African economy attracted a number of US companies to invest in the developing South African economy. Among the American firms which got an early start in South Africa were Singer Sewing Machine Co. (1870s), Mobil (1897), General Electric (1899), Ford (1905), and Kodak (1913). Although this was the period when the foundations of South Africa's slave labor economy were being laid, these American companies were not worried about the morality of their participation in such a system.

As the South African economy grew, U.S. companies deepened their involvement. American firms provided many high technology items that were crucial to the industrialization of South Africa. By 1981 the apartheid economy was importing \$2.912 billion worth of American goods per year (mostly manufactures), and selling the United States \$2.445 billion worth (mostly raw materials). Most of the chrome used in making US stainless steel now comes from South Africa. Today the United States is South Africa's number one trading partner.

U.S. companies have made over \$2 billion of direct investment in South Africa. Most of this investment is in key sectors of the South African economy such as petroleum (Mobil, Caltex, Fluor), computers (IBM, Sperry Rand, Control Data, Hewlett-Packard, Burroughs), transportation equipment (Ford, General Motors, Firestone, Goodyear), and nuclear power (Allis Chalmers, Foxboro, General Electric). In addition, major American banks have made billions of dollars of loans to South Africa, easing the economy's lack of foreign exchange. In November 1982, the International Monetary Fund, with the full backing of the United States, granted a loan of \$1 billion to help South Africa sustain its economy. In large measure, South Africa's deficits are brought

about by its ever-mounting military expenses to defend the apartheid system.

Knowing that this technology and capital is vital to the apartheid economy, people opposed to white supremacy suggest that the best way of pressuring the white minority to share power is for the U.S. and other western countries to cut their economic ties to South Africa. This poses a dilemma for U.S. leaders.

## **U.S. Policy: Growing Contradictions**

Prior to 1960, the U.S. government had a straightforward policy toward South Africa. Washington was concerned with promoting American business opportunities in that country despite racial oppression. Trade and investments were openly encouraged. Official policy documents dating from the late 1800s up to the 1950s are concerned almost exclusively with profit making activities; there is no evidence that American officials were troubled by the oppressive conditions imposed on South Africa's black workers.

However, this situation began to change in the years after World War II. In response to mass protests and guerrilla wars waged by Africans, the European colonial powers began granting political independence to the countries of Africa. During the late 1950s and early 1960s dozens of African nations became independent under indigenous black rule. They established relations with other governments and became members of the United Nations and other international organizations.

Although the "new" nations of independent Africa are politically and culturally diverse, they have always agreed on one thing: South Africa's system of white supremacy should be abolished. As more African nations became independent the United States government came under greater pressure to distance itself from the white minority regime in Pretoria.

Another important change came domestically within the United States. During the 1950s and 1960s black Americans struggled to achieve full citizenship. Jim Crow laws enforcing segregation were struck down in the courts. Blacks began voting in larger numbers and in some cases black officials were elected or appointed to positions of power. These changes made it difficult for the U.S. government to maintain its old policy of open friendship with the South African government.

Since 1960 the United States has exhibited a contradictory policy toward South Africa. Although Washington still allows American corporations to profit from apartheid, U.S. officials take great pains to denounce that system. U.S. policy makers have tried to placate African and other Third World leaders by going along with symbolic protests against apartheid in the United Nations. However, when it comes to proposals for economic sanctions against South Africa in an attempt to *force* an end to apartheid, no U.S. president has been willing to go against the interests of the large corporations who would lose



profits from an economic embargo of South Africa. The result is that the United States ends up being the last-ditch defender of the South African government—the most hated regime in the world!

This policy of denouncing apartheid but actually protecting the white minority government became more pronounced under the Reagan administration. In keeping with its general policy of moving the U.S. closer to right-wing dictatorships in various parts of the world, the Reagan administration initiated a much more friendly policy toward South Africa. In March 1981, top U.S. officials met with South African military leaders—a move interpreted by many as a violation of the United Nations arms embargo against South Africa. The administration weakened the ban on selling U.S. products to the South African police and military. South African Coast Guard officers began training in the United States. When South Africa invaded Angola in the summer of 1981 and the United Nations attempted to condemn the invasion, the Reagan administration blocked any punishment of Pretoria.

The Reagan administration justifies its policy by claiming that these friendly gestures will lead the white minority to trust the United States and hence heed US suggestions for reform. This logic has not been borne out of events. In response to its friendly treatment from the Reagan team, South Africa has stepped up its attacks on neighboring countries and cracked down on internal opposition as well. Since the implementation of Reagan's "constructive engagement" policy the South Africans have: 1) mounted numerous bombing raids and large-scale invasions of Angola, 2) attempted to overthrow the elected government of the Seychelles, 3) launched military attacks on Mozambique, 4) assassinated opposition leaders in South Africa and in neighboring countries, and 5) expanded the illegal military occupation of Namibia.

In addition, the Reagan policy has cost America many friends in Africa and the rest of the Third World. Black and brown leaders around the world see the United States as being friendly to the racist regime at a time when South Africa is becoming more repressive. This approach has resulted in a steady loss of U.S. prestige and influence.

## Conclusion

The situation in South Africa can be likened to an irresistible force confronting an immovable object. The black majority and its liberation movement are preparing to overthrow the apartheid system. However, the white minority is well-armed and ready to fight in order to maintain its wealth and power.

There have been serious armed clashes between government forces and armed revolutionaries. But as more young blacks receive training and



weapons the level of conflict will escalate. As South Africa approaches a state of civil war the United States will be faced with difficult choices. All but the most right-wing analysts agree that Washington could not support the white minority in a full-scale war with its black population. Yet Washington has never in the past supported a black liberation movement and is unlikely to do so this time.

The U.S. government will be under pressure from various quarters to assist different sides in the South African struggle. Only an informed citizenry will be capable of providing support for a U.S. policy based on truly *national* interest, i.e., a policy that takes into account not only the economic interests of U.S. corporations but also represents the moral interest we all have in a world free from racial oppression.

# Additional Resources

Following is a list of organizations and materials which can provide the teacher with additional backup information on various aspects of South African society. The list is not exhaustive but we believe it is more than ample for conducting classes on this subject. Teachers desiring more information on specific aspects of South African life should contact the Washington Office on Africa Educational Fund.

## I. Organizations Supplying Current Information

Two organizations that are particularly useful for their numerous, high-quality publications containing detailed factual and documentary materials are:

The United Nations Centre Against Apartheid  
U.N. Secretariat, Room 3580  
U.N. Plaza  
New York, N.Y. 10017 (212) 754-5291

The Centre Against Apartheid publishes dozens of monographs on virtually all aspects of the system of apartheid and the struggle to change it. Particularly important for teachers is the fact that the Centre's material is free of charge. Write or call them for a literature list.

International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa  
P.O. Box 17  
Cambridge, MA 02138 (617) 495-4940

IDAF publishes a broad range of reliable books and photo exhibits dealing with South Africa. All of their literature is popularly written yet based on solid research. Subjects include bantustans, the military, South Africa's international propaganda apparatus, women in the struggle against apartheid, and recent reform efforts of the government.

Organizations which provide literature and up-to-date information on public campaigns in the United States to combat apartheid and U.S. policies which support apartheid include:

The Washington Office on Africa  
110 Maryland Avenue, N.E.  
Washington, D.C. 20002 (202) 546-7961

Transafrica  
545 8th Street, S.E.  
Washington, D.C. 20003 (202) 547-2550

American Committee on Africa  
198 Broadway, Room 402  
New York, N.Y. 10038 (212) 962-1210

It may be useful for the teacher to compare and contrast the point of view of *Amandla* and of the organizations listed above with the publicity and propaganda

materials distributed by the South African government. Lavishly illustrated free books, magazines and other materials are distributed by the Embassy of South Africa, 3051 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20008. The slide show, *Mosaic of Progress*, while full of distortions and untruths, could be used as a contrast to *Amandla* to sharpen student perceptions. A critique of the distortions involved is available from Marylee Wiley, Curriculum Specialist, African Studies Center, 100 International Center, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan 48824. (517) 353-1700.

## **II. A Select List of Recommended Written Resources**

### **Introductory/Review**

*Basic Facts on the Republic of South Africa and the Policy of Apartheid* by Julian R. Friedman (New York, U.N. Centre Against Apartheid, 1977). One of the best introductions available. Includes statistics on population, education, bantustans, police and prisons, foreign investment, the military, etc.

*Facelift Apartheid: South Africa After Soweto* by Judy Seidman (London, International Defence and Aid Fund, 1980). Good overview focusing on recent efforts by the government to adapt to popular pressure but maintain control.

### **Bantustans**

*Divide and Rule: South Africa's Bantustans* by Barbara Rogers (London, International Defence and Aid Fund, 1980). The best single volume on this subject. Includes maps and data tables.

### **Education Under Apartheid**

*Forbidden Pastures: Education Under Apartheid* by Freda Troup. Available from International Defence and Aid for Southern Africa, P.O. Box 17, Cambridge, MA 12138.

### **Photo Books**

*Portrait of a People* by Eli Weinberg (London, International Defence and Aid Fund, 1981). Hundreds of fascinating black and white photos. Emphasis on political struggles.

*Magubane's South Africa* by Peter Magubane (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1978). Over 100 pages of photos by South Africa's top black photographer.

*Black Child* by Peter Magubane (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1982). Over 100 pages of photos capture the joy and sorrow of growing up black in South Africa.

*House of Bondage* by Ernest Cole (London, Penguin, 1968). Nearly 200 pages of photos with accompanying text illuminate such topics as the mines, servants, education, religion, hospitals, etc.

*Women Under Apartheid* (London, International Defence and Aid Fund, 1981). Over 100 pages of photos and text on various aspects of apartheid as they effect women.



## Women

*For Their Triumphs and Their Tears: Women in Apartheid South Africa* by Hilda Bernstein (London, International Defence and Aid Fund, 1975). Details oppressive conditions affecting women. Emphasizes women's role in resisting the system. Includes many photos.

*The Plight of Black Women in Apartheid South Africa* (New York, U.N. Centre Against Apartheid, 1981). Concise 35 page overview of the subject.

*To Honour Women's Day* (London, International Defence and Aid Fund, 1981). Gives profiles of 29 South African and Namibian women leaders. Fifty-six pages including photos.

*You Have Struck a Rock: Women and Political Repression in Southern Africa* (London, International Defence and Aid Fund, 1980). Good introduction to the subject.

## Periodicals on Southern Africa

*Africa News*. Published by Africa News Service, Box 3851, Durham, N.C. 27705. A weekly digest of news about Africa and brief analytical articles. \$25/year individuals, \$45/year non-profit institutions; \$78/year profit institutions.

*Sechaba*. The quarterly journal of the American National Congress. \$10/year. *ANC Weekly News Briefing*. The most complete digest of newspapers appearing in South Africa which now exists. \$15/year. Distributed by African National Congress, Observer Mission to the U.N., 801 Second Avenue, Suite 405, New York, N.Y. 10017.

*Southern Africa*. Published ten times a year covering events and issues in southern Africa. \$10/year, individuals; \$18/year, institutions.

## Southern Africa Literature Appropriate for Secondary School Use

Abrahams, Peter. *Mine Boy*. New York: Collier Books (Macmillan), 1970. \$1.95. This novel by a black South African depicts life in South Africa.

Abrahams, Peter. *Tell Freedom*. New York: Collier Books (Macmillan), 1970. \$1.95. This novel is an account of growing up in the black slums of Johannesburg.

Feinberg, Barry, Ed. *Poets to the People: South African Freedom Poems*. London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1974. Available from International Defense and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, P.O. Box 17, Cambridge, MA 02138. \$1.75.

Halsey, Peggy L., Gail J. Morlan and Melba Smith, Compilers. *If You Want to Know Me*. New York: Friendship Press, 1976. \$2.25. This is a collection of poetry, art and photographs from southern Africa.

Mandela, Zindzi and Peter Magubane. *Black As I Am*. The Guild of Tutors Press, 1019 Gayley Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90024. \$6.25. This collection of poems and photographs tell the story of South Africa's shanty-towns.

Pieterse, Cosmo, Ed. *Seven South African Poets*. London: Heinemann, 1971. Available from Humanities Press, Atlantic Highlands, N.J. 07716. \$2.25.

Rive, Richard, Ed. *Quartet: Four Voices from South Africa*. London: Heinemann, 1965. Available from Humanities Press, Atlantic Highlands, N.J. 07716. \$2.50.

Shore, Herbert L. and Megchelina Shore-Bos, Eds. *Come Back, Africa!* New York:

International Publishers, 1970. This collection of fourteen short stories by South American writers is available from the New World Resource Center, 1476 W. Irving Park Rd., Chicago, IL 60613. \$1.50.

### **United States Involvement**

*South Africa: Foreign Investment and Apartheid* by Lawrence Litvak, Robert DeGrasse and Kathleen McTigue (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Policy Studies, 1978).

*South Africa and U.S. Multinational Corporations* by Ann and Neva Seidman (Westport, Connecticut: Lawrence Hill and Co., 1977).

The Interfaith Committee on Corporate Responsibility / Corporate Information Center, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, N.Y. 10027 publishes current information on corporate involvement, loans and shareholder actions against operations in South Africa.

### **General**

*South Africa Fact Sheet*, The Africa Fund, 198 Broadway, New York, N.Y. Four page summary of essential data.

*Black South Africa Explodes*, Counter Information Services 1977, available from Institute for Policy Studies, Washington, D.C. Detailed account of the 1976 Soweto rebellion. Many photos.

*A Window on Soweto* by Joyce Sikakane (London, International Defence and Aid Fund, 1977). Moving portrayal of what it's like to live in South Africa's largest black city.

*Working for Freedom: Black Trade Union Development in South Africa* by Ken Luckhardt and Brenda Wall (Geneva, World Council of Churches, 1981). Excellent overview of the history and current status of black unions.

*Ba Ye Zwa: the people live*. Boston: South End Press, 1978. \$4.50. Drawings, poetry and news clips are used to present a picture of life under apartheid.

### **Historical Reference Works**

*The Oxford History of South Africa*, Ed. by Monica Wilson and Leonard Thompson. Volumes 1 and 2. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971 is a standard reference work written from a white liberal point of view.

*Time Longer than Rope*, by Edward Roux. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964 is a pioneer work detailing the history of black resistance, written by a participant in the political movements of the 1920-60 period.

*No Easy Walk to Freedom*. London: Heinemann, 1965. A collection of Nelson Mandela's articles, speeches and addresses to the court during his trials in the 1950s and 1960s.

*I Write What I Like*, by Steve Biko, edited with a memoir by Aelred Stubbs, C.R. New York: Harper and Row, 1978. Articles explaining the philosophy of the Black Consciousness Movement by its most famous leader who died at the hands of the South African police in 1977.

**NEW AFRICAN HORIZONS**

The Washington Office on Africa Educational Fund  
1532 Swann Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20009

Peter Davis  
Villon Films  
Brophy Road  
Hurleyville, N.Y. 12747



