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The Political Economy of the South African Revolution

Bernard Magubane

The white man in South African Colonies feels that the colony ought to be his and kept up for him, because he, perhaps, with his life in his hand, went forth as a pioneer to spread the civilization of Europe and to cultivate the wilds of the world's surface. If he has not done so himself, his father did it before him, and he thinks that the gratitude of the Mother Country should maintain for him the complete ascendancy which his superiority to the black man has given him. I feel confident that he will maintain his own ascendancy, and think that the Mother Country should take care that the ascendancy be not too complete.

Anthony Trollope

Preliminary Remarks

The study of South Africa continues to pose a dilemma to the social scientist. Insofar as it owes its present circumstances to the post-feudal movement from Northwestern Europe, the movement that "discovered" North and South America, Australia, and the sea-route to India, South Africa is part of the so-called New World.

However, unlike the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, i.e., countries that the Europeans claim as part of the West, South Africa remains an African country and therefore part of the Third World. What makes South Africa the country of the African is not the fact that Blacks constitute the majority of the population; nor even that they are the indigenous inhabitants. After all, remnants of the indigenous peoples of America, Australia and New Zealand are still there, but clearly their lands, except for the reservations to which they have been confined no longer belongs to them; more they are clearly fugitives in their native countries. That is, they have been reduced to anthropological museums in which researchers continue to indulge their nostalgia about "primitive" cultures.¹

What makes South Africa the Black Man's country is the fact that after almost three centuries of unrelenting warfare by European settlers to exterminate him and to reduce him to a fugitive and marginal status, the African

today occupies the very heart of South African society as its worker². This unenviable position the African occupies has only one consolation for him, and that is, he holds in his hands the fate of South Africa. In other words, despite all the suffering he has borne, despite all the tribulations that are still to come his way, the African nonetheless determines and will continue to determine the future history of South Africa. The current attempts to denationalize him from what is called "White South Africa" notwithstanding, South Africa is a Black Man's Country. This single fact separates the fate of Native Americans, Australians, Canadians and New Zealanders from that of Native South Africans, despite the obvious superiority in their material conditions at the present moment (cf. Trollope, 1878:454-462).

South Africa: The Key Question

The crucial question that confronts social scientists today is: Why did the black people of South Africa not suffer the fate of other peoples in what are called white settler colonies? Alternatively, what are the implications of the fact that even though white settlers claim the country to be their own, Africans in South Africa constitute the majority of the population in every part of South Africa? In other words, how should the African struggle be conceptualised?

The white rulers of South Africa have tried to deal with this dilemma at two levels. First, the Nationalist Party that has ruled South Africa since 1948, has waged an ideological war by manufacturing a version of past and present South Africa, which they have systematically attempted to impose everywhere from the schoolroom to international public opinion. When the Dutch settlers arrived at the Cape in 1652 they found a country that was virtually empty. They penetrated to the interior peacefully until they met other intruders who were migrating south from the north. These intruders are depicted as barbarians without any culture or history, who waged aggressive wars and raids against the innocent settlers. With a Bible in one hand and a rifle in the other, the settlers fought to achieve victory over these savages. The impression is given that African settlements were always more or less confined to the areas that in 1913 were set aside as reservations. Secondly, the white rulers have physically moved "excess" Africans from the so-called white areas to the reservations where they can pursue their "own" modes of development without interference, just as whites pursue their cultural development without interference. Were this version of South African history without consequence it would be laughed at and dismissed as nonsense. Unfortunately, it tells a great deal about the character of white settler society.

This requires that we look at white settler phenomena more closely. White settlers became the historic instruments created by the emerging world economy of capitalism in the seventeenth century to establish beachheads

in certain key areas of the world that were being incorporated. The white settler would safeguard colonial conquest and secure these countries as future outlets for excess population and for investment of capital from the metropolitan country. Anthony Trollope, a British novelist who visited South Africa in the 1870s, in his influential book: *South Africa*, revealed a basic aspect of the imperial frame of mind namely the belief that the possession of the virtues of responsibility, trust and integrity were the preserve of the English and that these virtues legitimised intervention and the seizing of power over the so-called "backward" peoples of the earth:

Of all the questions which a conscientious man has ever had to decide, this is one of the most difficult. The land clearly belongs to the inhabitants of it — by as good a title as England belongs to the English or Holland to the Dutch. But the advantage of spreading population is so manifest, and the necessity of doing so has so clearly been indicated to us by nature, that no man, let him be ever so conscientious, will say that throngs of human beings from the overpopulated civilized countries should refrain from spreading themselves over unoccupied countries partially occupied by savage races. Such a doctrine would be monstrous, and could be held only by a fanatic in morality. And yet there always comes a crisis in which the stronger, the more civilized, and the Christian race is called upon to inflict a terrible injustice on the unoffending owner of the land. Attempts have been made to purchase every acre needed by the new comers — very conspicuously in New Zealand. But such attempts never can do justice to the savage. The savage man from his nature can understand nothing of the real value of the article to be sold. The price must be settled by the purchaser, and he on the other side has no means of ascertaining who in truth has the right to sell, and cannot know to whom the purchase money should be paid. But he does know that he must have the land. He feels that in spreading himself over the earth he is carrying out God's purpose and has no idea of giving way before this difficulty. He tries to harden his heart against the Savage, and gradually does so in spite of his own conscience. The man is a nuisance and must be made to go (Trollope, 1878:45).

Put simply, the settlers came to South Africa as robbers and enslavers and they stayed as colonizers. The country belongs to the African people, both by hereditary right and through life-and-death labors extracted from them to build everything that the settlers claim as their own. That the current apartheid system has its origins in the politics of land seizure based on the frontier policy of the settlers from the seventeenth century is not in doubt. The location system, later to be called Native reserves was devised by Sir Theophilus Shepston as the best way of governing an African population outnumbering the whites by more than tenfold.

Above, I have asked the question, why did Africans not experience the fate of other indigenous peoples in settler colonies? The answer lies first in the wars of resistance that Africans waged in defense of their sovereignty

and second, it lies in the logic of the capitalist mode of production that developed in South Africa, especially in its relationship with metropolitan Britain. Like European settlers in North America, the white settlers in South Africa fought hard to subjugate the indigenous peoples. But while the whites in North America succeeded in exterminating the better part of the Native American population, the white settlers in South Africa failed. The black people of South Africa: the Xhosa, Zulu and Sotho Kingdoms defended themselves with the most heroic and stubborn resistance and received this grudging admiration of Lord Bryce, the British minister who visited South Africa in the late nineteenth century. According to Bryce (1969:477):

The other set of race troubles, those between white settlers and the aborigines of the land, have been graver in South Africa than any which European governments have had to face in any other new country. The Red man of North America, splendidly as they fought, never seriously checked the advance of the whites. The revolts of the aborigines in Peru and Central America were easily suppressed. The once warlike Maoris of New Zealand have, under the better methods of the last twenty-five years, become quiet and tolerably contented. Even the French in Algeria had not so long a strife to maintain with the Moorish and Kabyle tribes as the Dutch and the English had with the natives of the Cape. The Southcoast kaffirs far outnumbered the whites, were of courage, had a very rough and thickly wooded country to defend . . . The melancholy chapter of native wars seems now all but closed . . . these wars, however, did much to retard the progress of South Africa and to give it a bad name. They deterred many an English farmer from emigrating there in the years between 1810—1870. They annoyed and puzzled the home government and made it think of the colony as a worthless possession, whence little profit or credit was to be shown in return for the unending military expenditure.

It took almost two hundred years of unrelenting warfare before the African was defeated. And then only because the best British troops were eventually brought to South Africa with weapons and organization far more advanced than that of the pre-capitalist African society. The African people were unprepared for the brutal effectiveness of the scorched-earth policy used by the British invaders.

The wars of resistance waged by African Kingdoms in the nineteenth century explain why the Europeans in South Africa have remained a minority. In the middle of the nineteenth century, in order to develop the sugar cane plantations in Natal, where 4 000 British settlers had been brought in the 1840s, the British brought Indian indentured laborers. These indentured laborers have been described in a book by Hugh Tinker: *The New System of Slavery*. In the United States we know there is a link between the destruction of the Indian communities and the introduction of the African slaves. Suppose the African had succumbed, would the Indian be occupying the posi-

tion occupied by the Afro-Americans in the USA? I do not want to belabor the point, but I think it is important in any analysis of the political economy of South Africa.

Synthetic Characterization of South Africa

The characterization of the system of white domination and exploitation in South Africa remains elusive. Liberal writers derive it from notions ranging from the crude notions of social and cultural pluralisms as primary determinants,³ to the descriptions of South Africa as a dual society embodying the First World economy and the Third World economy. Earlier liberals were preoccupied with the nature of race prejudice and methods of dealing with it. The neo-Marxists' range from the notions of conquest as a determinant, to simplistic and mechanical applications of Poulantzas' class analysis and his ideas about intra-capitalist rivalries, the relative autonomy of the state and internal colonialism.

I start with a characterization of South Africa as a settler capitalist social formation, which is the product of the imperialist extension of advanced capitalism. As a Dominion, South Africa was originally developed with British capital to fulfill the colonial role of an agrarian auxiliary and source of raw materials for British industrial capitalism. From the standpoint of what I have said in the previous section, white settlers and capitalist development turned South Africa into a link in the chain of imperialism. From 1910 to 1963, when South Africa was expelled from the Commonwealth, it enjoyed a special relationship with Britain and other white Dominions. R. Palme Dutt (1953:43 - 44) described the place of "white" dominions in the British empire as follows:

These "White" Dominions, while member states of the Empire, are in effect independent sovereign states or secondary imperialist powers, closely associated with British imperialism and with British finance-capital interests strongly entrenched in them, but increasingly subject to the counter-pull of American imperialism. Their peoples have in general strong ties of kinship (with the exception of the French-Canadians in Canada and the Afrikaners of Dutch descent in South Africa, as well as, of course, the African and other non-European majority in South Africa), language and tradition with the British people. Their bourgeoisie may be regarded as offshoots of the British bourgeoisie, representing "colonial" settlements in the old Roman sense rather than in the modern sense of subjection and government of alien nations; that is to say, their conquest of the countries they occupy was followed (with the exception of South Africa) by the more or less complete extermination of the original populations, thus turning their sparsely occupied territories into white settlement territories, within general stringent regulations to limit coloured immigration, as in the "White Australia" policy.⁴

Thus, regardless of anything else, the Africans and European settlers were sharply counterpoised to each other by virtue of their contradictory expectations. The wars fought between Africans and the White settlers in the nineteenth century demonstrated how ruthless and irreconcilable was the conflict between the opposing social forces. Palme Dutt refers to the complexity of the situation in the "White" Dominions in the sphere of social life, e.g. the question of the relations between descendants of the Dutch settlers and English in the case of South Africa and the French and English in Canada and superimposed on these intra-white conflicts was the fundamental conflict between whites as settlers and blacks as the victims of conquest, dispossession and exploitation. Within the total set of relations, the problem to British imperialism was to assign black and white labor different tasks in the productive process reflecting their assumed 'inequality' in the scale of evolution!

The problem between black and white in South Africa is posed theoretically as essentially a national one. That is to say, it is a problem of imposition of alien rule by the fact of conquest and the deployment of the member of conquered kingdoms into various categories of labor power in the settler economy. If we study the actual thrust of South Africa's development from 1875 to 1985, it is possible to determine the underlying principles which shaped the South African society.

The inner logic of South Africa's development was determined not only by the fact that it was first and foremost a settler society but also by the fact that it is a capitalist political economy. The settler population itself was a product of capitalist development in England and elsewhere. In Holland the collapse of feudalism had created displaced and superfluous layers among the peasantry of the seventeenth century. In England the rise of industrial capitalism had displaced many petty bourgeois farmers in the early part of the nineteenth century. In fact, the 1820 and 1840 settlers were made up mostly of these displaced farmers. The discovery of diamonds (1866) and gold (1884) opened an avenue of escape for certain layers of the British proletariat who were experiencing hard times due to the Depression of the 1870s.

The growing contradictions of capitalism that produced the massive unemployment and growing social discontent in the 1840s in Britain expressed itself in an intensified search for a new homeland for the redundant sectors of the population. For Cecil Rhodes, (the founder of the DeBeer's financial empire based on South Africa's diamonds and gold) the colonies provided the British with a safety valve. Speaking to Stead, a journalist friend, Rhodes expressed his fears about the future of England and why he was also a social imperialist:

I was in the East End of London yesterday and attended a meeting of the unemployed. I listened to the wild speeches, which were just a cry for 'bread', 'bread', 'bread', and on my way home I pondered over

the scene and I became more than ever convinced of the importance of imperialism . . . My cherished idea is a solution for the social problem, i.e., in order to save the 40 million inhabitants of the United Kingdom from a bloody civil war, we colonial statesmen must acquire new lands to settle the surplus population, to provide new markets for the goods produced by them in the factories and mines. The Empire, as I have always said, is a bread and butter question. If you want to avoid civil war, you must become imperialists. (Quoted, Lenin, 1967: 737)

In the specific case of British capitalism, the colonies played an exceptional role in relieving internal contradictions. In the age of imperialism the importance of the colonies increased even more as developments in South Africa illustrate so well. To Cecil Rhodes and other British social imperialists, British economic and social problems were exported to the colonies.

For example, with the Anglo-Boer War fresh in his mind, J. Hobson, a British economist, described the connections between imperialism and the interest of the 'financiers' whose growing profits from contracts, supplies, etc., depended on the empire: "While the directors of this definitely parasitic policy are capitalist," he writes "the same motives appeal to special classes of workers. In many towns the most important traders are dependent upon government employment or contracts; the imperialism of the metal and ship building centres is attributable in no small degree to this fact." (Lenin 1967: 756)

It was the highnoon of imperialism that the then current vogue of social Darwinism with its doctrine of the struggle for existence and survival of the fittest developed, providing persuasive rationalisation for settler colonialism and other *expansionist forces*.⁵ It justified the seizure and exploitation of the lands and people who were considered inferior to Europeans. While politicians like Ernest Chamberlain sang the virtues of economic imperialism, social scientists like Benjamin Kidd and Karl Pearson sang the virtues of social imperialism according to which the struggle of different "races", for instance, was seen as a basic principle of history. Kidd and Pearson asserted that England's first concern — if she meant to maintain her world position — was the welfare of her own people at the expense, if need be, of other "inferior" peoples. (see Semmel 1960).

Mr. Cecil Rhodes has been described as the most powerful agent of British imperialism in the late nineteenth century and the bearer of its spirit. Expressing the true sentiment of the time he wrote:

I contend that we are the first race in the world, and that the more of the world we inhabit the better it is for the human race. I contend that every acre added to our territory means the birth of the English race who otherwise would not be brought into existence. There be a

God, I think what he would like me to do is paint as much of the map of Africa British red as possible . . . (Stead 1902: 58-9).

The second logic of South Africa's social development is offered by the nature of South Africa's economic development as a capitalist social formation. While it is true that South Africa's fortunes, were determined by the development in European politics and economy, going back to the seventeenth century, the breadth and depth of this influence changed considerably after the discovery of diamonds and gold. To exploit the diamonds and gold, British imperialism delivered to South Africa monopoly capitalism ready-made; including the skilled miners. With rifle and bayonet British imperialism also drove the African peasants and Boer farmers from their subsistence environment straight into capitalist exploitation. The evolution of the settler state is closely bound up with the requirements of the political economy of capitalism based on mineral extraction.

Whether South Africa was going to be the "white man's" country in the sense of the United States, Australia, or New Zealand or in the political sense, became a serious issue in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. A great debate began in England regarding the future of the African in the South African colonies. The various options of what to do with the Africans are summed up by Trollope (1878:4556) whose work I have already referred to above;

What is our duty to the Kaffir or Zulu? There are so many views of our duty! One believes that we have done the important thing if we teach him to sing hymns. Another would give him back — say a tenth of the land that has been taken away from him and then leave him. A third, the most confident of them all, thinks that everything hangs on "a rod of iron", — between which and slavery the distance is very narrow. The rod of iron generally means compelled work, the amount of wages to be settled by the judgement of the master. A fourth would give him franchise and let him vote for a Member of Parliament — which of course includes the privilege of becoming a Member of Parliament and of becoming Prime Minister if he can get enough of his own class to back him.

Before the discovery of diamonds in 1867, South Africa, "was an impoverished bundle of colonies and Boer republics perched on a savage continent. Cape Town may have been called the Mother City, but the town that gave birth to the modern state of South African was Kimberly". (Jessup 1979:13) It was the genius of Trollope to foresee this. Indeed, the discovery of diamonds in Kimberly gave a new support to those who favoured the 'iron-rod' solution to the 'Native Question'. By 1875, the Kimberly mines were already employing 3 500 African miners. Trollope, who visited Kimberly in 1877, saw these Black miners hard at work and became hypnotized by the

prospect of the future use of African labour in the mines and other industries that mining generally spawned. Waxing eloquent about the virtues of work as a civilizing agent Trollope wrote:

Who can doubt but that work is the great civilizer of the world — work and the growing desire for those good things which work only will bring? If there be one who does he should come here to see now; those dusky troops of labourers, who ten years since were living in the wildest state of unalloyed savagery, whose only occupation was the slaughter of each other in tribal wars, each of whom was the slave of his Chief, who were subject to the dominion of most brutalizing and cruel superstitions, have already put themselves on the path towards civilization. They are thieves no doubt; — that is, they steal diamonds though not often other things. They have an hour in the middle of the day, and know that they have to work during the other hours. They are not Christians. They do not yet care much about breeches. They do not go to school. But they are orderly. They come to work at six in the morning and go away at six in the evening. They take their meals regularly and what is the best of all, they are learning to spend their money instead of carrying it back to their Chief (op cit: 368).

In a paragraph before this, after criticizing the slowness of 'philanthropy and religion in civilizing the savages' Trollope makes the point that:

The seeker after diamonds is determined to have them [Africans B.M.] because the making of his fortune depends upon them; and the kaffir himself is determined to come to Kimberly because he has learned the loveliness of 10 shillings a week paid regularly into his hand every Saturday night. (Ibid.)

Trollope prophesied further employment of Africans in other mining ventures in the future:

We have fair reason to believe that other similar industries will arise. There are already copper mines at work in Namaqualand, on the western coast of South Africa, in which the Natives are employed, and lead mines in the Transvaal. There are gold fields in the Transvaal at which little is now being done, because the difficulties of working them are at present overwhelming. But as years roll quickly on, these too will become hives of coloured labour and in this way Kimberly will arise in various parts of the continent (Ibid: p. 369)

It could be argued that Trollope was expressing his own racist sentiments in no way representative of British imperialism. Placed in the context of all the events which were taking place and which would make South Africa a 'white man's country', Trollope expressed the thinking of the times.⁶

Alexander Wilmot (1895: 2-3), a Cape Town politician and a fellow of the Royal Geographical Society not only stressed racial solidarity, migration and conquest in justifying White political supremacy, but the importance of White exploitation of 'coloured' labor.

The existence of the coloured race is an immense benefit, as, by means of them, cheap labour is obtainable, and large agricultural supplies can be constantly procured; but Southern Africa, although its population chiefly comprises the descendents of stalwart nomadic races who have migrated from a northern part of the continent, is eminently a white man's country, where homes can be found for millions of the overflowing population of Europe.

I have already referred to Cecil Rhodes social imperialist view. Let me now briefly refer to his political views toward the African population. For instance, in moving the second reading of the Glen Gray Bill, Cecil Rhodes, Prime Minister and also Minister of Native Affairs in the government of the Cape Colony, favored the sentiment of those who preferred the "rod of iron". Arguing against the policy of extermination he said:

If you are one who really likes the natives you must make them worthy of the country they live in, or else they are certain, by an inexorable law, to lose their country, you will certainly not make them worthy if you allow them to sit in idleness and if you do not train them in the arts of civilisation (Quoted by Hepple 1967:197)

In forthright and unequivocal terms, Rhodes set forth the principles that would guide black/white political relations to the present.

I will lay down my policy on the Native question . . . either you will receive them on an equal footing as citizens or call them a subject race . . . I have made up my mind that there must be class (race) legislation . . . The Native is to be treated as a child and denied the franchise. We must adopt the system of despotism . . . These are my policies and these are the politics of South Africa. (Quoted Stavrianos 1983: 573).

In short, the genocidal wars of the nineteenth century, stopped at the point where their logic might have been detrimental to the labor needs of imperialism. According to Cairns (1965:238):

The Africans, unlike the American Indian or the Australian aborigines, were expected to play a permanent role in future economic development. Consequently, theories justifying their extermination lacked utility, and accordingly were not employed. In essence, the use of evolutionary theories stopped at the point where their employment might have been detrimental to European interests.

The position the African occupies in South Africa today reveals a tension between the logic of settler colonialism — extermination — and the need for his labor power — 'protection'. The treatment of Africans as a subject race became a policy of the settler state, not because of racial prejudice, as some would have us believe, but, rather, because it was going to be economically profitable to the likes of Rhodes, while also safeguarding the interest of the expatriate white settlers.

It was Adam Smith who argued that a colonial system embodies in exaggerated form the virtues and vices of the metropolitan power. The English reproduced in their settler colony of South Africa the structural defects of the metropolitan class structure. Lord Milner, high commissioner for South Africa and Governor of the Cape and Transvaal colonies (1897-1905), argued in favour of a social and political order in which the interest of the White settlers would be paramount:

We do not want a white proletariat in this country. The position of the whites among the vastly more numerous black population requires that even their lowest ranks should be able to maintain a standard of living far above that of the poorest section of the population of a purely white country . . . However you look at the matter, you always come back to the same root principle — the urgency of that development which alone can make this a white man's country in the only sense in which South Africa can become one, and that is, not a country full of poor whites, but one in which a largely increased white population can live in decency and comfort. That development requires capital, but it also requires a large amount of rough labour. And that labour cannot to any extent, be white, if only because, pending development and the subsequent reduction in the cost of living, white labour is much too dear (Quoted, Marks and Tropic, 1979:66).

Given their views, it is not surprising that Milner and those who worked with him left South Africa a colonial structure of exploitation unique in history. In his single minded pursuit of imperialist interest Milner threw all integrity and morality to the wind, and did not hesitate to use the most perverse logic. On his return to England he became a peer and a member of the Coefficient Club . . . rewarded for an imperial job well-done.⁷

The policy of British imperialism was reckless and irresponsible, but not by chance, and not because of subjective mistakes of one leader or another. The nature of the views of Rhodes, Milner, etc., historically reflected the assumptions of imperialism. Make no mistake about it, African subordination was carefully planned for. Marxists understand that Black inequality was enshrined in the Union Constitution because of the enormous benefits which the bourgeoisie derive from it. The African people, placed under the

iron hell of imperial capital would pay tribute in unbelievable torment and suffering.

The result of Milner's policies in South Africa are well known. The resulting subordination of blacks founded and retained by British imperialism was accepted by white labor, and became a basis of a system of capitalism which made the attainment of democracy impossible. The price of the arrangement was to make the white population as a whole the social base for the indirect exploitation of South Africa's mineral and other resources by imperialism. The racial character of capitalist development in South Africa, premised on a system of exploitation designed to reproduce unlimited supplies of cheap black labor to all white employers created conditions of national oppression. The differential wage scales imposed for different grades of labor made the formation of common labor organization for white and black almost impossible.

The phenomenon of the British ruling class buying off and politically corrupting some sections of the working class is well known and was commented upon several times in the nineteenth century. Lenin coined the concept of the "aristocracy of labor": from practices of the British ruling classes and from similar practices in the "white" parts of the British Empire. The "aristocracy of labor" is a privileged stratum of the working class. "It arises when economic circumstances of capitalism make it possible to grant significant concessions to its proletariat, within which certain strata of workers manage, by means of their special scarcity, skill, strategic position, organizational strength, etc., to establish notably better conditions for themselves than the rest." (Habsbawn. 1973:123)

Further, Lenin's theory of imperialism argues that the "handful of the richest, privileged nation's" turned into "parasites on the body of the rest of mankind," i.e. into collective exploiters, and suggest a division of the world into "exploiting" and "proletarian" nations. Lenin also reminds us that the original Roman proletariat was a collectively parasitic class and "lived at the expense of society". (Ibid., p. 1927)

What happened in South Africa was not something new. Already in 1858 Engels sarcastically described the tamed British workers, as follows:

The English proletariat is actually becoming more bourgeois, so that this most bourgeois of all nations is apparently aiming ultimately at the possession of a bourgeois aristocracy and a bourgeois proletariat alongside the bourgeoisie. For a nation which exploits the whole world, this is to a certain extent justified. (Quoted, Lenin, 1967:760)

With minor modifications the above characterization of the labor aristocracy in England described the settler social and class system.⁸

'The social heritage of settler colonialism in South Africa was not merely a rigid structure of an elite of wealth, status and power at the apex, and at the bottom a pyramid, a mass of poverty-stricken, marginal, powerless and subordinated people. Such societies have flourished everywhere. The tragedy of the colonial heritage was a social structure further stratified by color and physiognomy — by what anthropologists call phenotype: an elite of whites and a mass of people of color — coloureds (mixed blood), Indians and Africans — in that ascending order. The British imperial bourgeoisie, like their North American counterparts had come to understand that a society may perpetuate social inequalities and injustices far more effectively when the maldistribution of income is buttressed by phenotype.' (Stein and Stein, 1970:57) were describing the colonial heritage in Latin America. Their description may well be describing the class structure of South Africa as it emerged from conquest.

In sum, then, practices and habits of thought nurtured over centuries and handed down from one generation of exploiters to another are not easily forgotten. The social relations by which all Africans are subordinated to whites are deeply implicated with class and racial structures. They are also shot through with contradictions. Although intraclass differences have developed within each of the three officially defined "races", the defining feature of South Africa is white rule which can also be defined as racially structured capitalism. As Legassick (1974: 32-33) put it:

The structures of South Africa sustain a situation in which it is whites (although not all whites) who are the accumulators of capital, the wealthy and the powerful, while the majority of blacks (though not all blacks) are the unemployed, the ultra-exploited, the poor and the powerless.

The South African state reflected the interest of a relatively independent, stratified white society, based on the exploitation of the black population with a legitimating ideology of white superiority. Inter-class white politics would redress, at least, for the white working class the inequality generated by "free-market" capitalism, without endangering the interests of imperialism.

The Act of Union, which handed political power to white settlers enabled them after 1910 to establish a pattern of "race" relations which ensured that in every respect the Africans served white interests. As the Simons (1969: 623) put it.

Parliamentary government in a racially stratified society made white interests paramount. If universal suffrage produces a welfare state under

capitalism, white suffrage gives rise under colonialism to a color-bar state. A political party that appeals to white voters alone invariably make their claims the touchstone of policy, plays on their collective fears of black power, excites and reinforces their racial antagonisms and consolidates them into a hegemonic bloc in opposition to the voteless majority.

The Jim Crow system in the US offers a useful analogy to the system of segregation and apartheid in South Africa. It was imposed by denying and disenfranchising Black voters. Jim Crow segregation denied Black voters their citizenship rights through fraud and denial of the right to vote. According to Barnes (1985:14):

The Jim Crow system at its fullest development was the attempt in the states of the old Confederacy to institutionalize, codify in law and make permanent the expropriation and oppression of Black people — the freed slaves and their descendants — by separating them from all economic, social and political activity engaged in by white people. Its purpose was to make it as difficult as possible for Blacks to become free farmers, and to make it impossible for them to ever compete on an equal basis with white workers in selling their labor power to the capitalists.

It should be clear from the preceding discussion that no analysis of the historical and contemporary situation of Africans in South Africa would be adequate which failed to recognize the important role of British imperialism then and now in creating the conditions for black subordination both in the overall division of labor and the racist ideological forms which have accompanied that position.

In what ways are the concrete conditions of exploitation of black labor as a fraction of the South African working class, essentially different from those of white labor? How significant are those differences, in both qualitative and quantitative terms? And how were these differences connected with the expanded reproduction and development of racial capitalism? The study of the South African mining industry, especially gold mining is extremely important and provides answers to these questions.

The Social Legacy of Diamond and Gold

Let me discuss the logic of South Africa's most important industry — diamond and gold mining. Barrington Moore, Jr. (1967:433) has observed that certain forms of capitalist transformations may succeed economically — in the sense of yielding good profits — but are, for fairly obvious reasons unfavorable to the growth of the free institutions of the old capitalist societies. This happens, he says, when the ruling classes maintain intact the pre-existing peasant society, introducing only enough changes in the rural society to ensure that the peasants generate a sufficient surplus which can be appropriated

and marketed along the lines of the basic plantation "model" of mercantile capitalism. Moore further points out that "Straightforward slavery in modern times is likely to be the creation of a class of colonizing intruders into tropical areas." (p.433)

The "labor-repressive" versus "market" commercial distinction in labor recruitment are at the heart of the explanation of different patterns and outcomes of modernization. "Reactionary capitalist" modernization is possible, according to Moore, if a country is invaded by mature capital, greedy to make super-profits (Ibid.). That is, territorial expansion of capital not only opened up new opportunities for investment, the 'home' state was often called in by investors to create a political and judicial environment suitable for their activities.

Can the situation which obtains in plantation economies be useful in studying mining economies? In South Africa there is a symbiosis which links gold and diamond mining to African servitude. Many writers have produced arguments, which are convincing that diamond and gold mining industries like plantation systems provided imperatives to reduce black workers to servile conditions.

According to Johnstone (1985:422):

Gold was the key to South Africa's 'great transformation' into an advanced industrial economy and a modern system of racial domination. And the story of gold encapsulates and symbolises much of the larger story of South Africa. It is what I have referred to . . . as the 'play within a play', which as in *Hamlet* starkly reveals certain underlying themes which here, unlike in *Hamlet*, are about capital, labour, exploitation and what Engels, in his initial investigation of the first 'great transformation' called 'social murder'.

The secret of the power of gold lies in the fact that for centuries it symbolized wealth, and the most absolute, tangible and universal form of money. From the 1890s until World War II and, to a lesser extent, even until today gold mining has been the fulcrum, the privileged expression of South Africa's political economy. It is no accident that the story of the Rand (the gold mining industry of the Witwatersrand) has figured prominently in the class analysis of racial domination. Marx (1970:146) summed up the role of a key industry like gold as follows:

There is in every social formation a particular branch of production which determines the position and importance of all others, and the relations of all other branches as well. It is as though light of a particular hue were cast upon everything, tingeing all other colors and modifying their specific features; or as if either determined the specific gravity of everything found in it.

The study of the developing social relations in the gold mining industry provides clues, not only to an understanding of the South African society and its class and national conflicts, but its links, through gold with the world imperialist system: "The Anglo-American Corporation of South Africa — the world's biggest mining finance empire — sprawls across Africa from Cape Town in the south to the shores of Lake Victoria in the northwest. Its mining activities cover America, the frozen wastes of Canada and the arid land of Australia. Its sinew of development, Anglo-American money, is finely woven into the business texture of England and intertwined with the major financial centers of Europe." (Jessup 1979:3)⁹

The Configuration of South Africa's capitalism around gold mining, the one industry most infiltrated by foreign capital in search of usurious returns, has serious implications. Gold mining in particular established an organic ascendancy over the other sectors of the economy becoming, as it were, the "heart" of South Africa's political economy, thanks to its organic link with outside capital. Until recently the role of external finance capital enjoyed a marked relative autonomy from the domestic polity. In 1910, when South Africa became 'independent' the "heart" of its capitalism stood independent from the very "body" it controlled so easily, resting upon its great institutional and international strength and its world network of world interests.¹⁰

In the gold mining industry, the civil society derived its poisonous nourishment and its distinctive character. Through the poisonous nourishment provided by gold profits and dividends the economy grew to be the deformed monster that it is today. Pyrah describes the impact of the discovery of gold in South Africa thusly:

The discovery of diamonds and more particularly gold on the Rand in 1886, wrought an economic revolution which precipitated a new crisis in, and gave a new complexion to, almost every feature of South African life. As the mining community increased, an industrial economy came to be founded on permanent lines in the heart of the Boer country. It brought into salient relief the deep opposition of the Old Africa and the new, of the farms and the mines, of the Afrikaners and the British. Two types of civilization, conforming largely to the racial division, came face to face. In such a situation the reverberations of clashing interests, attended with impatience or irritation, might easily cause a collision; and after the British occupation of Southern Rhodesia there no longer remained an outlet, a new unsettled hinterland, whither the Boer people could trek in order to preserve themselves and their institutions inviolate from the march of modern industrialism.

To understand the importance of South Africa's gold finds, we need to remind ourselves that over three-quarters of the gold produced in the entire history of gold mining has been produced since the 1890s that is precisely

in the epoch when the South African gold mines were discovered and began to be exploited. Today South Africa produces almost seventy-four percent of the world capitalist supply of gold. Until the 1940s, gold was the cornerstone of foreign exchange and primitive capital accumulation for South Africa itself. The crucial and strategic importance of gold points, therefore, to its other important aspect — it is not only an industry most penetrated by foreign capital, it is also a privileged industry in South Africa itself. What social and political structures were established to make gold mining profitable?

In relation to other sectors of the South African economy, the gold mining industry presents unique racist features: (1) it used large quantities of black, cheap labor supervised at strategic points by a small elite of white skilled workers; (2) its entire output it destined for foreign consumption rather than local use. Thus, in the historic conditions that formed South Africa's political economy of racial capitalism in the last decades of the nineteenth century, in her conquest, her classes, her state, in the continuing dependence of her gold industry on imperialist investment, we ought to locate an important dimension perpetuating her structures of racial exploitation and social inequality. For South Africa, the gold industry is capital par excellence, for whose expansion and preservation everything was done, including the mobilization of labor from China and the whole of Southern Africa.

In what ways did the gold industry "modify the specific features" of South Africa's political economy? The gold mining industry is notorious not only for the most reckless use of African labor but also for the shameless use of racial exploitation. It is not an exaggeration to say that many of the patterns of racial exploitation currently practiced in other industries can be attributed to the dominant influence of the productive relations first articulated and formulated in the mining industry. The following formulation by Marx (1970, Vol. III:791 – 792) with minor modification as indicated describes the importance of gold in the political economy of South Africa:

The specific economic form in which surplus labor is pumped out of direct producers, (in the mines) determines the relationship of rulers and ruled, as it grows directly out of production itself and, in turn, reacts upon it as a determining element. Upon (the relations in the gold industry) . . . is founded the entire formation of the economic community which grows up out of the production relations themselves, thereby simultaneously its specific political form.

He goes on to say:

"It is always the direct relationship of the owners of the conditions of production to the direct producers — a relation always naturally corresponding to a definite stage in the development of the methods of labour and thereby its social productivity — which reveals the innermost secret, the hidden basis of the entire social structure, and with

it the political form of the relation of sovereignty and dependence, in short, the corresponding specific form of the state. This does not prevent the same economic basis — the same from the stand point of its main conditions — due to innumerable different empirical circumstances, natural environment, racial relations, external historical influences, etc., from showing infinite variations and gradations in appearance, which can be ascertained only by analysis of the empirically given circumstances.

For South Africa, as a whole, the most important domestic development after the discovery of diamonds and gold was the elaboration of racial laws to make these two mining ventures profitable. The blighting effects of the mining industry in association with farming were extraordinary. In time, all segments of the political economy were profoundly affected.

Gold mining, the domain of exploitation par excellence, produced violence, plunder and enslavement of the work force, which in the history of the primitive accumulation of capital is unequalled. Cecil Rhodes and De Beers introduced a novel system that has become a classic system of labor control and theft prevention in the South African mines. H.J. and Ray Simons (1969:42) write:

They hit on the idea of confining African miners in closed compounds for four or six months of their contract period . . . The compound was an enclosure surrounded by a high corrugated iron fence and covered by wire-netting. The men lived, twenty to a room, in huts or iron cabins built against the fence. They went to work along a tunnel, bought food and clothing from the company's stores, and received free medical treatment but no wages during sickness, all within the compounds. Men due for discharge were confined in detention rooms for several days, during which they wore only blankets and fingerless leather gloves padlocked to their wrists, swallowed purgatives, and were examined for stones concealed in cuts, wounds, swellings and orifices.

It was Marx (1970, Vol. 1.863) who foretold in a classic way the fate that awaited indigenous workers in mining operations:

The discovery of gold and silver in Africa the extirpation enslavement and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of conquest and the looting of East Indies, the turning of Africa into a warren for commercial hunting of black skin signalized the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production. These idyllic proceedings are the chief moment of primitive accumulations. This phase of the accumulation process was accomplished not only by domestic exploitation but also by the looting of traditional stores of non-European peoples, and fostering of a new system of slavery to exploit their labor.

In South Africa the exploitation of diamonds and gold created an insatiable demand for cheap labor and accelerated conquest which turned Southern Africa, south of the twenty-second parallel, into a huge reserve for commercial recruitment of black skins, thousands of whom have since been entombed in the deep bowels of the South African gold mines, where fortunes were

made overnight. The wealth made in South Africa's mining is phenomenal. Frankel (1938:52) writes that:

The wealth accruing from the production of diamonds in South Africa has probably been greater than that which has ever been attained from any other commodity in the same time anywhere in the world.

If all the accumulated capital from the profits of gold is added to this, the magnitude of the wealth produced by black labor becomes gigantic indeed.

To Keynes, gold was a "barbarous relic" and indeed it is. Yet it forms the backbone of South Africa's political economy. But if the South African mines were elsewhere they would not be worked. Hance (1964:523) an American geographer writes that:

If the gold reefs (of the Rand) were situated in the United States, they probably would be of interest only to students of geology; they would not be worked.

Why then are the South African mines still being worked? The reason is given by *Newsweek* (December 16, 1974, p. 82):

The gold that everyone is talking about comes mostly from South Africa, where this year 400 000 blacks supervised by 36 000 whites mined about 729 metric tons, or about 23 million ounces, worth \$4.2 billion. That is more than half of the world's total yearly output. Six powerful financial houses run the apartheid nations 42 gold mines, and they make a good profit mainly because of the abundance of cheap, black African labor. For every metric ton of gold that is produced, more than 100 000 tons of ore must be brought to the surface — often from the depths as great as two miles — and milled.

British Imperialism and the Gold Mining Industry

The discovery of gold and diamonds revealed the real intentions of British imperialism in South Africa. It initiated the conquest and unification of the country. Thus the period from 1870 until the turn of the century was marked by a wave of aggressive wars launched by Britain and its Cape Colony to dominate the entire subcontinent. Thereafter Britain utilized the territory as a primary area of investment and, indeed, until recently, British and American interests have controlled the bulk of capital investments in the gold mines.

The central fact about the South African economy after the discovery of gold in 1886 would be its domination by British capital — by British imperialism. It was from its domination by British financial interests that the specific characteristics of the South African political economy flowered. After 1910 the white settlers were politically in control, but the British owned the diamond, the gold mines and the railways, etc. that transported these minerals. Thus, the country's basic industry, or its "heart", was a British appendage. Through control of the gold industry, British imperialism had power without responsibility. British imperialism wanted to exploit South

Africa's gold on "easy", i.e. predatory terms, thanks to the almost slave-like conditions to which black miners had been reduced by racism.

In South Africa as elsewhere the British took care to tighten this supremacy over the entire region on a lasting basis before given political control to the Boers. Duncan Innes (1983:70) explains how British supremacy was established and what he says is so important that it deserves quoting at length:

It is not always appreciated in commentaries on this period of South African history — particularly by those who interpret it in terms of a conflict between modes of production — that the key to understanding why events unfolded as they did lies in recognizing the specific form of the international capitalist relations of *monopoly* capitalism. It is this which explains why the gold mining industry developed on such a large scale in South Africa: why it was possible for gold ore of very low grade, buried deep in the earth's crust under thick layers of hard rock, to be removed and profitably exploited; why it was possible for the resistance of millions of black people to be broken; why it was possible not only to control these people but also to discipline them so that their labour would be sufficiently cheap for the industry to develop on a profitable basis; why it was possible to prevent the advantages secured by highly paid, organized skilled workers from permeating through to other sectors of the workforce; how it was possible for the labour and other economic needs of the mining industry to be secured without destroying other local industries, such as agriculture and infrastructure, on which mining also depended; and, finally, how it was possible to secure all this while at the same time securing sufficient political influence in the region to ensure the social and political stability on which the future reproduction of the industry was equally dependent. These were no mean achievements. They amounted to no less than the greatest social revolution ever carried out on the African continent. Their effect is still felt today in the daily lives of many millions of people.

If I can sum up this section, the most important point to make is that white settler domination and capitalist development have been built on a legacy of ruthless wars of subjugation and enslavement of African kingdoms, on indentured Indian labor, on contract labor from China; and as a legacy, on a system of migrant labor which relied on impoverished African peasants held prisoner on reservations as a main source of cheap and profitable labor. The migrant labor system was reinforced by the pass system and extended to embrace all the British colonies, the Protectorates and Portuguese colonies.

In the last one hundred years, the lot of Africans in South Africa has been dictated by the interests of imperial marauders. Their will has been bludgeoned and coerced under some of the most vicious forms of human exploitation ever inflicted upon one people by another. Their material poverty is a vivid memorial of its opposite — the extra-ordinary quantity of material wealth which their labors have produced and which has been stolen from them particularly in the gold mines.

The Evolution of a Theory of the South African revolution

The history of South Africa is a history of armed resistance by Africans: first in defence of the sovereignty of their chiefdoms and kingdoms. This phase of the struggle lasted for almost two hundred years. Their assegai, knobkerrie and ox-shield were no match for imperial Britain's maxim gun. Following their defeat in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the incorporation of their men and women folk into the settler economy, the political struggle against settler domination and class exploitation was joined.

The Black struggle was a struggle against national oppression and exploitation. I have already referred to Lenin's characterisation of the world created by imperialism which he said was divided into oppressed and oppressor nations. Given the integration of South Africa into the world economy, the struggle against national oppression and exploitation became indistinguishable from, and one with, the struggle against imperialism. Prior to the creation of the Union various congresses representing ethnic formations emerged: the Coloured Peoples' Organisation, the South Indian Congress and the Native Congress in the Cape, Transvaal and Natal which in 1912 merged to form the Native National Congress, later to be called the African Congress. Today, the South African liberation, headed by the ANC, is a multi-class alliance embracing these ethnic movements, and draws its inspiration from two modern political currents: nationalism and socialism (cf Jordan, 1985:3).

The fundamental problem that faced the African National Congress in 1912, two years after the creation of the exclusive White Union of South Africa was, one of developing unity among hitherto independent African groups and communities into a national formation. As independent and divided groups, Africans, Coloured and Indians would stay vulnerable and would not be able to resolve the vital problems that white settler domination posed for their survival. Africans fragmented by language differences, balkanised into ethnic communities would not be able to accept the challenge of history. Coloureds and Indians existing as a buffer between Africans and the Whites could always be used as scapegoats. How were these groups to be united? The rulers of the recently defeated kingdoms and the educated elite resolved in first conference of all the peoples of South Africa to lay the basis of national unity.

The African struggle for national and social emancipation developed dialectically from the contradictions inherent in the nature of settler colonialism and capitalist exploitations. Settler colonialism as we have seen creates a threefold national question. It deprived a whole people or peoples of their birthright; of their land. Secondly, it creates another problem too, because of the nature of settler colonialism, the process of development of conquered peoples is not only frozen, but in fact attempts are made to force them to

regress. Not just feudal autarchy but tribal autarchy was systematically imposed on African chiefdoms and kingdoms. That is what the so-called "self-development" schemes of the Bantustans are all about. Thirdly, there is the gross exploitation of Africans by local and imperial capital. The development of monopoly capital as the dominant form of capital in the South African gold mines imposed usurious conditions on black workers. Here is an industry where black workers are reduced into labour units in a way that is so profound it is perhaps inconceivable. The pass system, the mining compound and the migrant labour system typify this gross injustice and exploitation. In other words, South Africa is a mirror, an intense magnification of social oppression and degradation of capitalism under colonial conditions.

Only by taking into account the totality of African experience under white settler colonialism and capitalist exploitation can one begin to understand the theory of the South African revolution and the nature of African National Congress that has spearheaded African resistance in the past seventy-five years. In 1910, Africans were not only politically powerless, they were also disarmed and excluded from military or police training.

The South African National Liberation Movement, headed by the ANC has after seventy-five years, emerged as the only champion of true democracy and national reconciliation. The Freedom Charter adopted by the Congress Alliance in 1955 not only declares that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, but also goes on to say that the wealth of the country belongs to the producers of that wealth. The South African liberation movement, forged in the crucible of the barbarities of white racism and the mean spirit of capitalism, and tempered in the heat of bitter national and class struggles, is demonstrating with each passing day its capacity to undertake the profound historical task of the Freedom Charter which will lead South Africa to genuine freedom. (cf Jordan, 1983).

The most important thesis of the theory of the South African revolution lays bare the relationship between national oppression and capitalist exploitation. The *Strategy and Tactics* of the ANC adopted in Morogoro in 1969, elaborates further the Freedom Charter arguing emphatically that the national and class dimensions in South Africa are inseparable, neither can be stressed at the expense of the other, they must be resolved simultaneously.

Conclusions

In looking at South Africa today, there is no doubt that white minority rule is facing its deepest crisis. It is a picture of the masses of black people no longer willing to accept the daily life of apartheid and all that this concept means. The struggle is breaking out in new and broader dimensions, drawing people from all sections of the communities of South Africa, including

some whites into the struggle. The struggle has heightened fears about the potential not only for civil war but about the future of capitalism in South Africa. The momentous nature of the developing revolution is that it confronts imperialism with the most difficult choices. South Africa is a pillar not only of imperialist interest in Southern Africa; in the geopolitics of the East-West confrontation, it has been assigned a crucial place.

Michael Howard (1983-4: 713), Professor of Modern History at Oxford University, for instance warned that the "sudden collapse of White rule in South Africa would lead to a catastrophe comparable to that of the Russian revolution itself." This alarmist talk on the part of a professor is based on certain realities about South Africa. The editors of *Monthly Review* (1986: 5-6) sum these as follows:

South Africa is a crucial country in many respects. It is by far the most economically developed country in Africa, and it occupies a strategic position as a supplier of indispensable scarce metals to the world market. Its system of racial segregation and repression is a veritable paradigm of capitalist superexploitation. It has a white monopoly capitalist ruling class and an advanced black proletariat. It is also the only country with a well developed, modern capitalist structure which not only "objectively" ripe for revolution but has actually entered a stage of overt and seemingly irreversible revolutionary struggle.

These and other attribute characteristics of South Africa make it unique:

There is no other country in the world that has anything like the material and symbolic significance of South Africa *for both sides* in the conflict that rends the world today. A victory for revolution, i.e., a genuine and lasting change in basic power relations in South Africa, could have an impact on the balance of global forces comparable to that of the revolutionary wave that followed World War II.

The United States and its allies seem to be at a loss as to what to do about the deteriorating situation in South Africa. They have called for stability and reform, lest the country "falls" to forces led by the African National Congress, which given its Freedom Charter, would disrupt profits, not only nationally but regionally as well. Their nightmare is a black revolution sweeping to a successful conclusion across South Africa and spreading its influence to its next logical places: the racist metropolises of England, France and the ghettos of the United States.

That is, apartheid in South Africa reveals, not so much the excesses of global inequalities and economic injustices but its naked and brutal truth. The basis of the London-Washington-Tel Aviv/Pretoria axis is not simply economic in the narrow sense (e.g. the fact that South Africa supplies the capitalist West with gold and other strategic minerals) but is a question of class survival in the larger sense. This means, above all, the imperialist

drive to halt the gains of African independence and reverse the process which seems to lead inexorably toward an African socialist revolution. In the proxy-war to save white minority rule and capitalism in Southern Africa, Angola has become an important battle ground for the future of the African revolution.

Much has already been said and written about the policy of "constructive engagement". No doubt, the assumption of power by the Reagan Administration, willing to defy the world public opinion in its support of racist South Africa, soon after the collapse of Portuguese colonialism and the independence of Zimbabwe, was a welcome development in Pretoria. The policy of "constructive engagement" provided the Botha regime with the moral support it so desperately needed to save itself from the inevitable doom.

Strictly speaking, there is nothing new about the concept of "constructive engagement". Since the early sixties, successive American administrations made their own contribution to the consolidation of relations with the racist regime and to build it up into a bastion of anticommunism in Africa. South Africa is today a nuclear power, thanks to the American support. The South African arms industry was built with the technology and patents sold by the Western countries, who defied the UNO embargoes. But, unlike its predecessors, the Reagan Administration decided to dispense with hypocrisy. It declared from the onset that American relations with South Africa would be built on the basis of its global confrontation with the USSR.

This meant that rapprochement with Pretoria, scuttling the Namibian independence until a formula was found that would reintegrate Angola into the South African sphere of influence. Only then would Namibia be given a settlement advantageous to the United States and South Africa. In the meantime, South Africa would be encouraged to make cosmetic reforms that would help to split and neutralize the African National Congress. Eventually, it was hoped against hope that under US tutelage Southern Africa would again revert back to the status quo ante — i.e. become a "belt" of pro-Western regimes politically and economically dependent on South Africa — the regional settler-type gendarme for Western imperialism.

The most explicit formulation of this policy was supplied by an instruction issued for the internal use of the Radio Free Europe Station, excerpts of which were printed in the *Washington Post*: "However wicked apartheid may be," it said, "South Africa, unlike the USSR, does not constitute a menace to the Free World, and its system does not require aggression against foreign countries to assure its survival. Pretoria has intervened in neighbouring states to remove threats to its own borders, but it has not tried to export apartheid." The instruction points out that this explains why the USA imposed sanctions against Nicaragua, but not against South Africa. This bla-

tant apology for South Africa spells out most adequately the essence of the Reagan Administration policy of constructive engagement.

Finally, from what I have said above, it should be quite obvious that the political economy of settler colonialism in South Africa flows from a specific model of capitalist accumulation, which is inextricably bound up with the interest and imperatives of imperialist capital. The abolition of apartheid is a direct and immediate threat to imperialist survival.

South Africa had its historical beginnings and will meet its historical end, though as it turns out, its destruction has been an even more tortuous, historic process than its genesis — thanks to the support by imperialism.

Notes:

- 1 Fifty years ago, South Africa's Minister of Native Affairs addressed Parliament on the San — better known as the Bushmen, a people once numbering 300,000 who have come within a hair's breadth of being exterminated.
Said the Minister: "It would be a biological crime if we allowed this peculiar race to die out, because it is a race that looks more like a baboon than a baboon itself does. So far, we have about 20 that are just about genuine. We intend letting them stay (in a national park as a tourist attraction) and allow them to hunt with bows and arrows, but without dogs. We regard them as part of the fauna of this country." (Quoted by Valpy, 1986, p.A 8).
- 2 Mark Twain's (1889:91) *Connecticut Yankee* was expressing the same idea when he said of the productive workers that, "they were the nation, the actual Nation; they were about all of it that was useful or worth saving or really respectable, and to subtract them would have been to subtract the Nation and leave behind some dregs, some refuse, in the shape of a king, nobility and gentry, idle, unproductive, acquainted mainly with the arts of wasting and destroying and of no sort of use or value in any rationally constructed world." In developing his teaching about productive labor Adam Smith (1801 Vol II 94-95) had earlier written that: "the labour of some of the most respectable orders in the society is, like that of menial servants, unproductive of any value . . . The sovereign, for example, with all the officers both of justice and war who serve under him, the whole army and navy, are unproductive laborers . . . In the same class must be ranked, some both of the gravest and most important, and some of the most frivolous professions: churchmen, lawyers, physicians, opera-singers, opera-dancers, etc."
- 3 For example, President Botha said recently, 'we are a country of multi-cultural societies. Every one of these multi-cultural societies has certain rights — cultural rights, language rights, a way of life that should be protected. In South Africa, you do not have a white minority as against a black majority. That is quite a wrong way of looking at things in South Africa. We have a country of different minorities — a white minority and black minorities' (Quoted, *Financial Mail*, 31/5/85). Gavin Relly, President of Anglo-American Corporation, spoke of 'the number of different constituencies that make up South African society — whites, coloureds, urban blacks, Zulus, homelands that have achieved a degree of viability and places like Natal where racial integration is already relatively far advanced.' (Ibid.)
- 4 On the same point Robinson and Gallagher (1961:9) write that:
By the Eighteen seventies, confederated Canada, responsibly governed Australasia and the Cape were regarded as constitutional embodiments of collaboration between British and colonial interests working at its best. The further slackening of formal bonds by colonial governments, it is true, raised qualms about the future of imperial unity. Yet the policy-makers felt sure that their self-governing colonials, bound with the silken cords of kindred, tradition and self-interest, would continue to be their most loyal and

energetic partners in spreading British influence and multiplying British commerce. Unlike the financial and trading enterprises which were thrusting into Oriental empires, those of the white colonist were proving commercially and politically creative. They had the supreme virtue of being self-propelling. The impetus to expansion was soon coming, not so much from the Metropolis as from the colonial communities themselves.

- 5 W.E. Stead (1902: 92-94) wrote that: "Mr. Rhodes, as I said, is a Darwinian. He believes in the gospel of evolution, of the survival of the fittest, of progress by natural selection. But Mr. Rhodes is not a Chauvinist. He was conducting a serious examination into a supremely important question, and he would take nothing for granted. There are various races of mankind — the Yellow, the Black, the Brown and the White. If the test be numerical, the Yellow race comes first. But if the test be the area of the world and the power to control its destinies, the primacy of the White race is indisputable. The yellow race is massed thick on one half of a single continent: the White exclusively occupies Europe, practically occupies the Americas, is colonising Australia and is dominating Asia. In the struggle for existence the White race had unquestionably come out on top."
- 6 The Grahamstown 'Journal' felt that Trollope was substantially correct when it editorialized that . . . "the welfare of the native races, no less than our own, imperatively demands that we should strive to fit him (the African) for the humble but happy position which he alone is fit to occupy; and not turn his head with nonsensical ideas of his equality with us in internal powers and social rights. Christianity, to be successful with Kafirs, ought to be studied more in connection with spade and shears, saucepan and flat-iron, than with slate and copy-book . . . Nor do we greatly care to see trade schools established for the natives. Experience does not show that they really practise the trades they are taught in such institutions . . . If they did, it would be with the result of driving the white man out of the country; for Mr. Trollope concludes from his wide experience that the two classes will not work side by side." (Quoted by Davidson 1973:18) in the Intro. to Trollope's book.
- 7 As his aides, Sir Alfred (Lord Milner now) gathered round him as his administrative staff, that group which became known half-derisively and half-admiringly, as Milner's Kindergarten. They must have been collectively the most brilliant, practical and ruthless group of officials ever to serve the British Empire. It is only necessary to mention their names to recognise the political and intellectual calibre of the Kindergarten: there was Philip Kerr, later Lord Lothian; Geoffrey Dawson, later for twenty years the editor of the *Times* of London; Lionel Curtis, later professor of Colonial History at Oxford; John Buchan, the novelist, later Lord Tweedsmuir, the Governor-General of Canada; John Brand, later Lord Brand the famous banker; Sir Herbert Baker, the famous architect; L.S. Amery, the cabinet Minister; Lionel Hitchens, Edward Grigg, Sir Douglas Malcolm, and Sir Patrick Duncan, later Governor-General of South Africa. Their ideological beliefs were explained as follows by Milner: "I have emphasized the importance of the racial bond. From my point of view this is fundamental. It is the British race which built the Empire, and it is the undivided British race which can alone uphold it . . . deeper, stronger, more primordial than these material ties is the bond of common blood, a common language, common history and traditions. But what do I mean by the British race? I mean all the peoples of the United Kingdom and their descendants in other countries under the British flag." (Quoted Semmel: op. cit. p. 1733)
- 8 British imperial policy in South Africa served to reproduce English class relations on an enlarged scale. In the 19th century there was a frequent comparison of Africans to lower classes in Britain. Cairns (1965: 92-93) writes:
 For the humanitarian there was a tendency to regard the Africans as an external proletariat making a claim on the public conscience comparable to that made by the working classes of Britain. There was the same feeling of paternal or aristocratic responsibility. Both were deprived groups, and therefore both made claims on humanitarian and evangelical sympathies. The working class was at the bottom of the internal class hierarchy and the African was at the bottom of the world cultural and racial hierarchy, a conjunction of low status which encouraged placing the two in the same category. Livingstone, for example, frequently compared the African to the British poor. He asserted that the difference in position between Africans and Britons was as great 'as between

the lowest and highest in England', and that if he were not a missionary in Africa he would be a missionary of the poor in London. On another occasion he compared himself to 'those who perform benevolent deeds at home, and his porters to the 'idle and ungrateful poor'. Much of the descriptive language was also similar. When Bishop Steere talked of the frightful immorality of village life — 'simply incredible' — he was in fact referring to rural England. Burton, after castigating the 'sterile' intellect of the East African — 'apparently unaggressive and unfit for change' — remarked that 'his intelligence is surprising when compared with that of an uneducated English peasant. The significance of this comparison should not be exaggerated, for it was not widely used. Yet if the analogy was seldom conscious, there was a sense in which the humanitarian approach to Africa tended to implicitly assume that Britain as a whole stood in the same relation to Africans as a responsible upper class stood to the lower classes within the boundaries of the nation. The tendency for race relations to be patterned after class relations was indicated by the frequent assumption that the most important qualities required of those who aspired to positions of influence and control over primitive populations were found in the attributes of a gentleman. The gentleman concept, with its implication that the utilization of power should be suffused with moral purpose and restrained from abuse by inner controls, was, in an African setting, a direct transference of a successful pattern of responsible class behaviour within Britain. It was later to reach its apogee in the District Officer whose qualifications were related less to high academic attainments than to the intangibles of character.

- 9 S. Arronovitch (1961:43) in explaining the complex ways in which fusion is brought about of banking and corporate capital with industrial capital writes: "Rhodes — in developing the South African gold mines and in forming the Chartered Company of British South Africa, turned to and received help from the Rothschilds in return for a continuing stake in South African gold, diamonds, uranium and other resources. At a later stage in building up the Anglo-American Corporation of South Africa, Sir Ernest Oppenheimer turned to Morgans of America, who invested substantially."
- 10 Ernest Chamberlain, the British Colonial Secretary, prior to the beginning of the Anglo-Boer War 1900-1902 recognised the centrality of the gold mines for the future of South Africa and planned accordingly: "I shall never go into such a war with a light heart, and at the present time we have no reason — either of right or interest — which would justify the enterprise.

If we were forced into it against our will I should try to seize and defend the gold bearing districts. This is the key of South Africa and if we could hold this we need not follow the Boers into the wilderness." (Robinson and Gallagher 1961:432)

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