

*Delivered at the 9th Conference of Africanists in Moscow, 21-23 May 2002.*

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*To be published by the Institute for African Studies, Russian Academy of Science, Moscow.*

## **The discussion about South Africa: An analysis of the research debate on apartheid with special focus on the importance of the paradigmatic dispute between liberal and radical historians until 1994**

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### **Abstract:**

This paper will deal with the relations between history, mentality and nation building. Research in the contemporary history of South Africa reflects the deep conflicts in this country. During segregation and apartheid, and to some degree under the ongoing transformation process, historical research has been used extensively to seek solutions on problems of current prominence. Most of the great debates on South African history have had hidden agendas mirroring ardent problems of a later day than the one historically described. The discussion on the frontier theory outlining the self-identification of the Boers on the isolated border, the early liberal formulation of protective segregation, the later liberal critique of dysfunctional elements in the segregation policy, and the making of workers history by radical historians are illustrating examples of history used for ideological mobilisation.

The presentation will examine these and other patterns of use and abuse of history during formation of group identity and national unity. The importance of history and historians in the creation of ethnicity and racialism will be discussed. Classical cases of mentality building in favour of specific socio-economic interest will be outlined.

The discussion could include questions of whether ethnic identity or conflicting social interests should be seen as the single most important element in the institutionalisation and legalisation of racial discrimination and whether the most decisive factor for the liquidation of apartheid has been the natural development of the free market economy or people organised in democratic resistance.

This account of the different angles and views on South African history might be able to show at the same time, how the South African society has been functioning, and in what directions historians and other academic ideologists and policymakers have tried to change it.

### **Introduction.**

In the following, I will try to describe different angles and views on the history of South Africa, partly because I think, it might be a good way to show at the same time, how the South African society has been functioning, and in what directions historians and other academic ideologists and policymakers have tried to change it.

### **Methodological considerations.**

Often the historians divide South African historiography into four to six main waves for example in the following chronological order:

- English-imperial, also known as imperialist or colonial.
- Settler (early nationalist).
- Afrikaner nationalist, also known as republican.
- Liberal (Early / progressive / africanist)
- Radical (new or revisionist)
- Post structural (post-modern or anti-positivist)<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Guy, Jeff: Creating History: An introduction to historical studies: a resource book, Durban: University of Natal, 1996, p. 40.

Even if many would consider this discussion rather outdated, it is in my opinion still the relationship between the liberal school and the radical school, which most clearly reflects some of the main principal social and political problems in South Africa. Maybe because of lack of other reference points this debate is always in the back of ones mind when debating South African history. It is possible thou that post-modernism could do something about that.

The history writing has also been labelled through a whole lot of thematic characteristics such as:

Political history, economic history, social history, Africanist history, peoples history or populist history, workers history, history of mentality and identity, history of women and feminist history, cultural history, rural history, urban history, liberation, resistance or liberatory history, black history, Africanisation, localism, history of medicine, etc.

And many other more or less speculative subdivisions.

All these lines of research mirror to some degree the bitter historical conflicts in the country. They also contain different angles to important developments. Let me try to show in a broad way some of the most common angles used by authors of key works:

- Correlations between race attitudes, class relations and culture.
- Rationalities of growth, economic dysfunctions and criteria of success.
- The transition from pre-capitalistic to modern agriculture.
- Processes of industrialisation, urbanisation and proletarianisation.
- Statutory, white, political domination. Obvious, official racial segregation in institutions, laws and procedures.
- Backgrounds for popular protest and other social forms of expression.
- Identification of essential, underlying societal features.
- Principal historical methods and bearings of theory.

Plus, a great deal of other textual elements, which are difficult to classify generally.

How does one methodically distinguish between different directions of history writing?

It is hardly possible to identify historiographical directions without concrete criteria laid down for the occasion. In reality, it is difficult to locate clearly, internal, scientific guidelines, which could give precise distinctions between historical schools, as many methodological and analytical problems runs completely across paradigms.<sup>2</sup>

It is possible in South African historiography to detect both analytical problems, syntheses and guides for action, which moves transversely to the main paradigms. Never the less in my research I have tried to isolate the two modern, main paradigms, plus a number variants, separated by reasonably clear dividing lines.

What, makes this possible, is to a considerable extent, that the schools differs distinctly in the view on their own present and in their use of history for external purposes. It has consequently been a point of departure for me, that the distinction of paradigms to some degree must be seen from considerations external to science.

Furthermore, a critical historian should not need to be worried by this coherence between paradigms of history and movements in the contemporary reality. A great deal of the most outstanding history writing has been written out off a concurrent commitment.<sup>3</sup>

As a starting point, I have an understanding of the divergent historical schools in the South African context as being to some degree history-ideologies, more or less openly reflecting interests and political thinking of the contemporary society. The products of the historians therefore should be appraised with some regard to external influences from the surrounding community.

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<sup>2</sup> Lipp, Carola: *Writing History as Political Culture, Social history versus Alltagsgeschichte*, *Storia Della Storiografia*, Vol. 17, pp. 67-99, 1990.

Veit-Brause, Irmline: *Paradigms, Schools, Traditions conceptualizing Shifts and Changes in...*, *Storia Della Storiografia*, Vol. 17, pp. 50-65, 1990.

<sup>3</sup> Manniche, Jens Chr.: *Den radikale historikertradition: Studier i dansk historievidenskabs forudsætninger og normer*, Aarhus: Jysk selskab for historie, nr. 38, 1981.

As a result of unequal access to education, the historiographical tradition is marked by the almost total absence of black historians. Even if there have been some black history writers, they have been invincible in the institutional communication of history - and actually, they still are.

With a political climate that did not exactly invite to critical intellectual questioning and a regime with an official ideology based on a view of history, which saw the superiority of the white man as destined, it should not be surprising that the great majority of South Africans, excluded from parliamentary political life, also were to be denied access to their own history.

The whites had colonised history and the restricted education did not give black people any feeling of a past they could identify with.

### **The history of the history writing.**

The so-called race question has always divided historians in South Africa.

Until the mid-1920s, George McCall Theal 's work constituted the central professional historical research in South Africa. From the 1870s and for more than 30 years, he worked on his History of South Africa. The settler tradition, Theal fathered, saw the black South Africans as a primitive, irritating and static element in the development of civilisation.<sup>4</sup>

The national, romanticising work of Theal established several tenacious myths in the historiographical tradition, including that:

- The history of South Africa began with the White conquest.
- The earliest approach of the Dutch East Indian Company to the Khoisan peoples had been a humanistic one.
- The spreading of White colonisation in South Africa and the African immigration from the North into South Africa had occurred largely at the same time.
- That the interior parts of South Africa were unpopulated before the White settlers arrived with the Great Trek in the 1830s.
- That physical appearance and language were inversely proportional to and inseparable from economic and personal competence.
- That all of the four assumed aboriginal physical groups; Bushmen, Hottentots, Negroes and Caucasians, were pure races belonging to at certain geographical area.
- That African societies were static without any kind of structural development.
- That African rulers of the 19. century was nothing but bloodthirsty despots and that Boer martyrs as Piet Retief were the innocent victims of aggressive wilds.
- That the social indignation of John Phillip and other missionaries could be interpreted in favour of racial segregation.
- That the bantustan areas were corresponding with the areas originally inhabited by the Africans.
- That the motivation for English Cape Liberalism was the wish for equal possibilities for all races.
- That African political concepts have always been inspired by European thoughts.

According to this kind of late Victorian view, White superiority simply was inseparable from "the law of progress" and needed no further explanation.<sup>5</sup>

In reality, this interpretation of the South African past laid the conceptual foundations for later more or less declared racist histories and for the ideology of Afrikanerdom.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Schreuder, D.M.: *The Imperial Historian as Colonial Nationalist: George McCall Theal and the Making of South African History*, from G. Martel (ed.): *Studies in Imperial History*, London, 1986, pp. 95-158.

Saunders, Christopher C.: *The making of the South African past: major historians on race and class*, Cape Town: David Philip, 1988.

<sup>5</sup> Theal, G.M.: *History of South Africa*. (11 vol.), Sonnenschein, London, 1887 - 1919.

Theal, George McCall: *Belangrijke historische dokumenten over Zuid-Afrika*, 1-3, Kaapstad: Van de Sant..., 1896-1911.

Cory, Sir George E.: *The Rise of South Africa*, vol. 1-5, London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1910 - 1930.

<sup>6</sup> Preller, Gustav Schoeman: *Andries Pretorius. Lewensbeskrywing van Voortrekker Kommandant-Generaal*, Johannesburg: Die Afrikanse pers, 1937.

Analysed in Hofmeyr, Isabel: *Popularizing history: The case of Gustav Preller*, *Journal of African History*, Vol. 29, No. 3, pp. 521-35, Cambridge University Press, 1988.

Cronje, G.: *'n Tuiste vir die Nageslag - die Blywende Oplossing van Suid-afrika se Rassevraagstukke*, Johannesburg: Auspiciis Universitatis Pretorientis, 1945.

As later more critical research has shown, this was not really the full historical truth.<sup>7</sup>

- ✓ In reality there were Bantu speaking Africans in South Africa before Christ was born and more than half of South Africa was occupied by Africans when the first few Europeans began to arrive.
- ✓ Most African rulers were concerned over the economic and political development of their kingdoms and engaged in different kinds of modernisation.
- ✓ Liberalism served the interests of the most well of capitalists and intellectuals.
- ✓ The reserves were a product of White conquest and coercion.
- ✓ The history of the Black peoples shows a great variation of original solutions.

### **The liberal historians.**

From the 1920s, liberal history writing developed as a reaction to this settler tradition. This new school, to some degree, refused Theal 's exclusive way of taking white superiority for granted, and at least periodically, it was able to be openly critical to the racist order under continuous development in the country.

Many liberal academics have been writing in a way, as if they would have wished a different past as basis for a genuine reformatory work, and this interaction between historical reality, historiography and the present has been a typical feature in the writing of history in South Africa.<sup>8</sup>

The liberal point of view contains ideological implications with a universal message, apparently reaching across social layers, ethnic affiliation, nationality and culture, and this part of it was of course a somewhat frightening message for most white South Africans with their long tradition for formalised exclusivities and privileges. The liberal message, taken for its face value, was an invitation to take part in a historical unification process.

The leading personality in this new liberal school, W.M. Macmillan from University of Witwatersrand refused Theal 's easy assumptions. He showed, that it was usually not the blacks, who started the frontier wars and the reason for these so-called Kaffir wars were not Khoi or African appetite for white farmers cattle, but on the contrary their worries over loss of land, cattle and their way of life.<sup>9</sup>

Macmillan and his followers, de Kiewiet and Marais, postulated that those segregational measures, which had been practised in different forms since van Riebeecks landing in 1652, never had functioned satisfactory and were doomed to disappear, because as Kiewiet said sympathetic and a little idealistic:

*“Forces which bring people together are stronger, than those which tries to keep them apart”.*<sup>10</sup>

According to this opinion there had actually all the time, despite separation and exclusivity, been a movement towards closer interaction and co-operation between the population groups and toward a shared economic system.<sup>11</sup>

The liberal economic (historian) Herbert Frankel described the cheap labour system as ineffective because cheap, badly motivated manpower were bad workers, so that mechanisms, which kept the price on African labour low, at the same time hampered economic growth.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Criticised in for example Wilson, Monica / Thompson, Leonard M. (eds.): The Oxford History of South Africa, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969-71.

<sup>8</sup> Saunders, Christopher: *Liberal Historiography Before 1945*. In Butler/Elphick/Welsh (eds.): Democratic Liberalism..., Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1987.

<sup>9</sup> Macmillan, W.M.: Bantu, Boer and Britton: The making of the South African native problem, London: Faber and Gwyer, 1929,

<sup>10</sup> De Kiewiet, C.W.: A History of South Africa: Social and Economic, Oxford University Press, London, 1941, pp. 242-43.

<sup>11</sup> Macmillan, William M.: Complex South Africa. An Economic Footnote to History, London: Faber and Faber, 1930.

<sup>12</sup> Frankel, S.H.: Capital Investment in Africa, Oxford University Press, London, 1938.

Also Van der Horst, S.: Native Labour in South Africa, Oxford University Press, Cape Town, 1941.

With the passing of the Hertzog Bills in 1936-37, which restricted the remaining African parliamentary rights, the liberals saw the gap between their visions and the South African realities grow wider. Nevertheless, most of them seemed very confident and held on to their hopes from the following deterministic logic:

The growth of the manufacturing industry would create a need for skilled manpower. The limited size of the White workforce would necessitate training of a larger part of the black workers. The migrant labour system would not be able to fulfil this need, and a growing part of the Africans was bound to be permitted permanent settlement in the cities. They also had to be given better wages, some education, a certain level of social security and possibly even some political rights. The new manufacturing industry would blossom in an expanding domestic market and this would call for all South Africans to be integrated into the society, Not just as manufacturers, but also as consumers.<sup>13</sup>

Already in the mid-1930s, many liberals thought, that this line of development was under full realisation. Therefore, the irrational job reservation would disappear, and South Africa would work herself out of racism's obsolete patterns within a comparatively short space of time.<sup>14</sup>

It was Eric Walker, liberal history professor at University of Cape town, who from 1930 developed the general thesis on the socio-psychological reasons for the unfolding of race exclusivity and racialism in South Africa.

According to his Turner-inspired frontier theory, those race prejudices, he saw as the cause of the segregation policy, should be found in that Afrikaner-mentality, which developed in the expanding frontier areas early in the 19th century.<sup>15</sup>

It was in these isolated areas, that the trekboers started a self-identification as whites, superior to the aboriginal population, and this spitefulness was intensified during the boer voortrekkers penetration of the interior.

There was a powerful anti-Afrikaner tendency in this liberal explanation. The fact that racial prejudice was just as developed in English dominated Natal was ignored.

In this liberal explanation, ideas and culture were in focus. Racial separation and segregation were seen as descended from security-needs against an old, but now groundless, fear. The segregation policy, aimed at administrative protection of White superiority in all areas of life, was explained as an antiquated mentality arisen on the threatened border. But now implemented by the new trekkers of the day – the poor White Afrikaners moving from land to cities in the beginning of the 20th century.

Therefore, according to these causal explanations, the English-speaking liberals had no responsibility for race discrimination and segregation. However, memory is short. As Martin Legassick and other radical historians have revealed, liberal advocates, in favour of segregation, were actually directly involved in policy making in the beginning of the 20th century with the aim of promoting segregated capitalist growth, acting more as agents for “social control” than for substantial reforms.<sup>16</sup>

Saul Dubow has documented that early liberal theorists, like Howard Pim and Edgar Brookes, played an important role for the introduction of early segregational ideology around the shift of the century. They were engaged in the development of geographical separation of

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<sup>13</sup> Horwitz, Ralph: Expand or Explode. Apartheids Threat to South African industry, Cape Town: Business Bookman, 1957.

<sup>14</sup> Frankel, Sally Herbert: *The Position of the Native as a Factor in the Economic Welfare of the European Population in South Africa*, Journal of the Economic Society of South Africa, 2/1, 1928.

<sup>15</sup> Walker, Eric A.: The Frontier Tradition in South Africa. A lecture delivered before the University of Oxford at Rhodes House on 5th March 1930, London: Clarendon Press, 1930.

<sup>16</sup> Legassick, Martin Chatfield: *The rise of modern South African liberalism, its assumptions and its social base*, Seminar on the Societies of Southern Africa in the 19th and 20th Centuries, University of London, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, 1973/74.

Legassick, Martin: *The making of South African 'Native Policy' 1913-23: The origins of segregation*, Institute of Commonwealth Studies postgraduate seminar, 5/2-1972. University of London, 1972.

Legassick, Martin: *British hegemony and the origins of segregation, 1901-1914*. Seminar on the Societies of Southern Africa in the 19/20 Centuries, University of London, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, 1974.

different “culture groups” as a possible solution to South Africa’s “native question”. Their purpose was presumably to humanise forms of White hegemony and secure a gradual civilisation of the natives, during which they could maintain a rural lifestyle protected against direct industrialisation.<sup>17</sup>

Up until Prime minister Hertzog outlined his Native Bills in 1925, liberal academics helped define the “native question” with the formulation of a reserve based territorial segregation and with delivering the conceptual arsenal of segregation.

From 1927, there are signs on a growing liberal disillusion over parts of the segregation-idea. It is rather obvious that the lack of political representation for civilised and enlightened Africans were resting heavily on the liberal conscience.

The reasons for this growing liberal dissociation from segregation should be found in the still more hardened debate over the Hertzog Bills, the passing of the Colour Bar Act in 1926 and the Native Administration Act in 1927, and the fact that the reserve policy really didn’t work, and a higher liberal consciousness of the mechanisms of modern capitalism.

In the decade between 1926 and 1936, the opposition to Hertzogs Native Bills was the main political activity for progressive liberals.

The full meaning of Macmillan’s work on the left side of the liberal spectrum was not totally accepted by the liberal main stream.

Actually, as the first, he pointed at the fundamental inner contradiction of segregation. The segregation ideology was brought to live to dam up the social conflicts made by the industrialisation process, but actually the process of industrialisation automatically created an economic and labour market integration, which in the long run would render segregation impossible.

However, Macmillan’s historically based vision also had its own problems. In my eyes the South African liberal way of thinking has contained a market determinism, which deliberately placed the political realisation of a predicted future on the agenda.

The success of segregation as the ruling ideology in South Africa for many years before apartheid can be measured by the backing from most whites and even from many Africans.

It was only seen as an openly fraudulent legitimisation of White supremacy, after the growing belief in modern worldwide Democracy had made it obsolete. As we shall see, this happened rather late and reluctant.

From 1929, SAIRR, South African Institute of Race Relations, functioned as the rather conservative liberal ideological stronghold and think tank with the help of many historians and other academics.

The leader, Rheinallt Jones, argued that the scientific research should be linked to practical civilisation and westernisation of political life and the institute “succeeded” in profiling itself as a “credible”, half-official organ often working more or less directly for the fusion-government of the 30s even if private funds secured a formal independence. Its non-political, fact-orientated, practical research was to some degree an accept of the segregation logic.<sup>18</sup>

During Second World War black urbanisation resulted in social control problems and SAIRR’s expertise was used “constructively” by for instance the Smith Commission, which recommended a more soft segregation as long as black labour was needed.<sup>19</sup>

Only after National Party’s second electoral victory, the implementation of apartheid, the formation of Liberal Party in 1953, and Patrick Duncan’s support for passive resistance, the main liberal view began to look like a clearer alternative and from the late 1950s SAIRR for a period worked as a debate-creating centre for South African pluralism.

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<sup>17</sup> Dubow, Saul: *Liberalism and Segregation Revisited*, Collected Seminar Papers, No. 38, Series; Societies of Southern Africa...Vol. 15, pp. 1-13, 1990.

Dubow, Saul: *Racial segregation and the origins of apartheid in South Africa, 1919-1936*, Basingstoke: St. Antony's College, Oxford /Macmillan, 1989/91.

<sup>18</sup> Jones, Rheinallt J.D.: *The Need of a Scientific Basis for South African Native Policy*, *South African Journal of Science*, 23, 1926.

Keppel-Jones, Arthur: *Friends or Foes?*, Pietermaritzburg: Shooter and Shooter, 1950.

<sup>19</sup> Horton, J.W.: *South Africa's Joint Councils: black-white cooperation between the two world wars*, *South African Historical Journal*, No. 4, 1972 (Now).

### **South Africa according to the liberals: Modernisation theories and theses on colour blind industrialism.**

Nevertheless, in principle, main figures from the liberal school of historians rather early postulated, that race prejudice and race separation in it self were outdated and irrelevant and that they would be gradually weakened due to the logic of modern economic rationality.

According to the liberal ideologist Herbert Blumer, capitalist market production would change the traditional society in many ways:

- Many traditional, everyday life-expressions would be harmonised because production efficiency would need the active rational participation of the single producer.
- Positions of status in productive life would be replaced by contracts or agreements. Positions gained through personal, tribe or family relations would be replaced by impersonal conditions of appointment.
- The employees are transformed into anonymous units, with positions determined only by their contribution to the production process.
- Impersonal power relations.
- Financial mobility is maximised. Labour, land and capital easily shifts ownership or affiliation.
- Growing social mobility. Social climbing is only decided by personal initiative, individual skills and market situation.

In this way the modernisation process, first of all the industrialisation, destroys “ties of blood and land” and replaces it with a functional and universal new order.<sup>20</sup>

This now rather conventional view on the modernisation process as destroyer of the pre-industrial order could, according to Blumer, in the case of South Africa, be extended to an almost self-evident explanatory model for developments in race relations.

Race discrimination in this view has its origins in a pre-industrial order, where contacts between people from different social or race groups were difficult. Due to entirely new group relations, race groupings will, - not entirely disappear, but will soon be seen as anachronistic and unimportant.

As we all know, the South African reality developed a little different. A distinct characteristic during the last 100 years and until very recently has been an increasingly extensive legislation after race lines, which resulted in growing social divisions, racial pre-justice and antagonisms.

One of the most dramatic liberal works from the 1960s was Michael O’Dowd’s “The Stages of Economic Growth and the Future of South Africa”.<sup>21</sup> O’Dowd tried to prove that conditions for development in South Africa did not differ much from other late industrialised countries. His point of departure is Rostows general phase-theory for political and economic development:

Stages of economic development:

1. Phase: Pre-take-off, undeveloped infrastructure.
2. Phase: First industrialisation stage, slow growth, high capital concentration. Bad living conditions.
3. Phase: Second stage of industrialisation. Rapid growth.
4. Phase: Third industrialisation stage. Slower growth, weight on research.

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<sup>20</sup> Blumer, H.: *Industrialisation and Race Relations*, in Hunter, G. (ed.): Industrialisation and Race Relations, OUP, 1967.

See also Greenberg, S.: Race and State in Capitalist Development, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1980.

<sup>21</sup> O’Dowd, Michael: *South Africa in the light of the stages of economic growth*. In Adrian Leftwich (ed.): South African Economic Growth and Political Change, Allison & Busby, London, 1974, pp. 29-43. Also in Schlemmer, Lawrence / Webster, Eddie: Chance, Reform, and Economic Growth in South Africa, Centre for Applied Social Sciences / Ravan Press, 1978.

Stages of close corresponding political order:

1. Phase: Political instability, irrationality, possibilities for revolution.
2. Phase: Undemocratic and authoritarian regimes secure stability, people unsatisfied.
3. Phase: Reform governments and growing, but limited democratisation.
4. Phase: Steady development of modern welfare state.<sup>22</sup>

The interesting in his interpretation is of course, the lucky perspective for the rest of the 20th century, it foresaw. Through comparative analyses O'Dowd predicted in 1966 that South Africa around 1980 would have reached a stage, where government-initiated reforms would bring democracy and neutralise race discrimination.

O'Dowd's thesis expressed a cornerstone in liberal development optimism. The free market was colour-blind and would liberate suppressed race groups, so that the close connection between race and class affiliation would be broken.

Even if it can be argued, that in the end history to some degree proved O'Dowd right, his unambiguous connection between economic growth and liberal reforms showed highly problematic. Throughout the 1960s, economic growth was very high indeed – and coupled with extreme suppression. Moreover, at the political level, the thesis in practice was used as a tool to pacify the freedom movements. Their activity was unnecessary, if just the market were allowed to do the job.

### **The dysfunctionality of apartheid.**

Since the liberal South African historians agreed, that economic development reduces race barriers, the explanation of race discrimination had to be found outside the economic sphere. So, the reasons were found in anti-liberal and restrictive state interference caused by harmful political decisions. An irrational ideology of exclusivity had been put at the throne as a result of the growing influences of the Afrikaner community and later by its total assumption of power.

Political decisions were made by the Boers in unproductive contradiction to the needs of the new expanding industrial economy:

- ❖ The migrant labour system not only destroyed family households, but also prevented training of the workers.
- ❖ Job reservation ignored normal evaluation of qualifications.
- ❖ The market price on labour was distorted by the employment of expensive white workers prior to cheap blacks.
- ❖ Employers were forced to see competitiveness and productivity as subordinated to the irrational race criterion.
- ❖ Influx control curbed the mobility of important production factors.
- ❖ Restrictions on black trade unions kept wages ultra low and reduced the level of consumption and the domestic market.
- ❖ Resulting psychological barriers and a swollen administrative apparatus meant misuse of resources.

All together an extensive waste of potential resources.<sup>23</sup>

### **The liberal dilemma.**

The most obvious objection against the liberal argumentation is of course the fact, that South Africa, despite the rigid race policy measures, have had a very satisfying growth rate most of this century, also during the relatively developed industrial period. After 1948, the apartheid government spread out racial discrimination to all areas of society. But at least for the first two and a half decade, apartheid did not slow down growth at all!

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<sup>22</sup> Rostow, W.W.: *The Stages of Economic Growth. A Non-Communist Manifesto*, Cambridge: CUP, 1960.

<sup>23</sup> De Kiewiet, C.W.: *The Anatomy of the South African Misery*, (The Whidden Lectures), OUP, 1956. Houghton, Hobart, D.: *Apartheid Idealism versus Economic Reality* in Rhoades, N. (ed.): *South African Dialogue*, Johannesburg: McGraw-Hill, 1972.

Also Houghton, Hobart D.: *The South African economy*, London: Oxford University Press, 1976.

However, present realities did not deter the liberal history-ideologists and as times went by, it became clear that there were some truth in their beliefs. Especially the following line of argumentation was considered important by liberal historians for a development away from apartheid:

- a) The owners of capital want to realise their resources as rational as possible. To compete they would therefore educate their key resource of manpower.
- b) During this process, contacts between white and black workers with almost the same job-status will become more normal and race prejudice will be undermined.
- c) If this development of competitiveness is slowed down, the living standards of whites will be threatened.
- d) Faced with the choice between race prejudice and material welfare, the whites will decide for economic growth.<sup>24</sup>

### **Cause and effect in the history of South Africa.**

Despite, and partly contradictory to, this economic determinism, most liberals believed that the roots of South Africa's deviation from "normal" evolution should not be found in the economy, but in politics. The decisive conflict is localised to the misuse of state power by a perverted political culture and its responsible leaders. An explanation, whereby capital interest are freed for responsibility.<sup>25</sup>

Human mentality has been a related area for basic explanations. For most liberal historians, the encounter between different ethnic groups, has been the most important single factor in South African history. South African history is about race relations. It is about interaction between race groups and different cultures.

It is the ideological, political and administrative order, which create conflicts, while causal explanations with departure in the economic basis are ignored from the point of view, that a growth progressive economy on the contrary will balance social tensions.

### **The Radical historiography.**

This historiographical concept was not allowed to stand unchallenged. Between the late 1960s and the late 1980s, South African historiography underwent a partial change of paradigm. Marxist inspired historical research broke through and challenged the liberal standpoint as the dominating view at the universities, although it never came close to replacing it.

Apparently, reformism could not give answer to the questions that the present had to ask history. Moreover, the liberals could at this stage show an impressive list of defeats and political miscalculations. New historical models had to be found.

The point of departure for the radical revisionism was the criticism of the liberal doctrine that capitalism played a progressive role in the undermining of apartheid; a perception, which seemed almost shameless in the light of the total suppression of the 1960s. The rapid economic growth of the late 1960s, occurred simultaneously with the implementation of an all-embracing policy of racial segregation, from the perfection of petty apartheid in its most humiliating forms to grand apartheid's forced removals of three million people.

Thus, the radical historians primarily attacked the liberal historians because of their uncritical belief in the liberalising effects of the market economy.

However, current politics had a lot to do with it. Some academics felt it necessary to distance themselves from the liberals relaxed evolutionary beliefs and more or less collaborative attitude towards the police state.

The new radical school of historians tried to localise South Africa in a global context with categories such as capitalism, development, international class struggle, global economy and

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<sup>24</sup> Van den Berghe, P.: South Africa: a study in conflict, Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1965.

Hutt, W.H.: The economics of the colour bar, London: A. Deutsch, 1964.

Keppel-Jones, A.M.: South Africa: a short history, London: Hutchinson, 1975.

<sup>25</sup> Lipton, Merle: Capitalism and Apartheid. South Africa, 1910 - 1984, London: Gower/Temple Smith, 1985/86.

imperialist exploitation, and they included the African extra-parliamentarian movements in the historical analysis as principal agents of progressive social change. In this new radical universe, capitalist economic development and racial discrimination were seen as complementary and mutually reinforcing elements.

The Canadian Frederick R. Johnstone was the first to develop an explanatory model for the actual and demonstrable harmony between the racial exclusion system and the concurrent high degree of economic vitality in South Africa.

Johnstone saw apartheid as a rational policy, whose main purpose was to prevent social mobility among blacks. By keeping the educational level of the blacks down, by preventing blacks from handling their own interests on the labour market and by obstructing blacks in the accumulation of capital, the racist system secured distribution and reproduction of the cheapest possible manpower.<sup>26</sup>

The new radical school turned the liberal viewpoint upside down. The foundation for South Africa's economic growth was precisely the cheap labour system and its mechanism of extra-exploitation. Race system and economic growth depended on, and supported each other. From its outset, this new historical analysis brought the evolution of the gold mining industry into focus.

Some radical authors as Wolpe, Legassick, Trapido, Johnstone and Magubane emphasised the tight relation between capital and state power. Others like Bundy, Keegan, Morris and Trapido worked with the impact of white capitalism on the African agriculture and they argued, contrary to most of the liberals, that this developed rather flexibly and competitively until it was banished to the reserves by the Land Act of 1913. Others as Simons and Simons, O'Meara and Hemson placed analytical emphasis on forms of persistent resistance of the African workers.<sup>27</sup>

### **The White class alliance.**

The following examples will illustrate the radical universe of history and show the identity-creating picture the radicals tried to paint of South Africa.

After the discovery of minerals, international capital and European workers poured into South Africa. The necessary type of deep shaft mining required lot of workers and because of the poor quality of ore, they had to be cheap.

Due to urbanisation processes, many poor white boer farmers moved from land to city, and this new, poor, unskilled population group had, unlike the skilled english workers, an interest in positive discrimination.

So, the poor white workers objective interest, and thereby their consciousness, became racist. The white workers resistance against even cheaper black labour led to the Rand Revolt, which was suppressed by the military.

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<sup>26</sup> Johnstone, F.R.: *White Supremacy and White Prosperity in South Africa Today*, African Affairs 69/275, 1970, pp. 124-140.

<sup>27</sup> Trapido, Stanley: *South Africa in a Comparative Study of Industrialisation*, Journal of Development Studies, Vol. 7, No. 3, 1971.

Wolpe, Harold: *Capitalism and Cheap Labour Power in South Africa: From Segregation to Apartheid*, Economy and Society, Vol. 1/4, pp. 425-56, London, 1972.

Magubane, Bernard M.: The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1979.

Bundy, Colin: The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry, Berkeley: UCP / London: Heinemann, 1979.

Beinart, William.: The Political Economy of Pondoland 1860-1930, Cambridge University Press, 1982.

Murray, Martin / Post, Charles: *The Agrarian Question: Class Struggle and the Capitalist State in the United States and South Africa*, Insurgent Sociologist, XI/4.

Keegan, Tim.: Rural Transformations in Industrialising South Africa, London, 1987.

Morris, Michael Leon: *The development of capitalism in South African agriculture: Class struggle in the countryside*, Economy and Society, 5/3.

Because of this experience, the white workers separated even more from the black workers. At the same time, the small Afrikaans speaking middle and upper class were too weak to gain power by itself.

The logical solution was the Pact-government of 1924: An alliance between the upcoming national bourgeoisie and a privileged white working-class aristocracy with an extensive consideration to the English mining capital.

According to the radical historians, this strategic alliance is the key to an understanding of the South African society. Until very recently, it was this constellation, which constituted the basis for state power in South Africa.

In the view of the radical structuralists, the white working class developed into more of a workers aristocracy, which were actually not exploited, but on the contrary was part of the exploitation of the majority of black workers. Robert Davis tried to prove this through rentability studies. If all workers had had white salaries, most gold mines would have been unprofitable.

The working class as a whole was split, and stability was secured by paying off the white workers in this way:

- The Civilized Labour Policy of the Pact-government
- Labour market legislation: Industrial Conciliation Act
- High minimum wages favoured skilled Whites
- Fair Wage Clause and Satisfactory Labour Conditions
- Selection of firms for contracts and customs protection
- Colour Bar job reservations, Mines and Work Act

Another factor was the development of a state monopoly production sector through the creation of korporasies like ISCOR, ESCOM, SASOIL, FOSKOR, and Krygskor. According to Bunting, this provided a lot of new white jobs and education.<sup>28</sup>

### **The declared apartheid.**

A significant condition for the new wave of radical and Marxist historical investigation was the recurrence of popular trade union activity and political struggle, which characterised South Africa from the beginning of the 1970s. Especially the South African Labour Bulletin (SALB), which appeared from May 1974, played an important role in the discussion on the historically conditioned suppression of independent working-class organisations.

The liberal perspective was now also attacked for its approach to group identity, for seeing race and nationality as the major determining components in South African history.

After the Soweto Uprising in 1976, historians were influenced by a growing respect for the militant black resistance. From the last half of 1984 the situation in South Africa was characterised by repeated waves of widespread popular resistance and by the brutal attempts to suppress them. At the same time, the economy moved into a real crisis. This situation also affected the choice of subject matter researched by progressive historians so that new themes were brought into focus. For example, the process of proletarianisation, the social effects of industrialisation, the organising and culture of the black working class, the strength and flaws of the popular movements, the development of consciousness among blacks, the forgotten struggles in rural areas and other local forms of freedom struggle became popular fields of research.<sup>29</sup>

The internal black freedom movement, the trade union movement, the ANC and the Communist Party, were now seen as important agents of radical change and their historical achievements simultaneously grew in importance to the identity of black South Africans.

Studies of popular movements improved the understanding of mass mobilisation around important conflicts in South African history. Tom Lodge's overview of the black resistance after 1945 and Helen Bradford's comprehensive examination of Industrial and Commercial

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<sup>28</sup> Van Onselen, Charles: Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand 1886 – 1914, Longmans, 1982.

<sup>29</sup>Bozzoli, Belinda (compiled by): Labour, Townships and Protest. Studies in the social history of the Witwatersrand, Ravan Press, (History Workshop), Johannesburg, 1979.

Webster, Eddie (ed.): Essays in Southern African Labour History, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1978.

Workers Union, ICU, represent this tendency.<sup>30</sup> Secondly, some studies looked into popular culture, such as music and dance, sport and literature. Studies like these have broadened the understanding of everyday life for township residents and migrant workers.

Finally, a feminist angle of approach emerged in South African historiography. Jacklyn Cock's *Maids and Madams* was an interview-based social history that revealed the conditions for domestic servants, who were exposed to the threefold suppression of race, class and gender. Cock was the object of both death threats and an attempted dynamite assassination after the publication of her book.<sup>31</sup> Other feminist studies were made by Cheryl Walker, Bozzoli, Unterhalter, Marks and others.<sup>32</sup>

### **The radical historians and the Afrikaner society.**

The raise of afrikanerdom played an important part of radical historical studies. Dan O'Meara's book, *Volkskapitalisme*, contributed to the dismantling of half a century of idealising and romanticising Afrikaner historiography and struck a blow against the apartheid ideology.<sup>33</sup>

O'Meara's investigation persuasively challenges the Boer claim of Afrikanerdom as an undifferentiated, timeless, ethnic-cultural *volks-unity*. O'Meara asserts that economic and social processes, not ethnic conflicts, formed the historical basis of Afrikaner nationalism.

Instead of letting himself be pinned down by the obvious, political and ideological expressions of Afrikaner nationalism, O'Meara concentrates on the concrete historical facts, such as the attempts by ambitious Boer-leaders to reach clear material and social targets through the building of organisation, the rewording of Afrikaner ideology, and popular mobilisation. In this way, O'Meara is able to refute the traditional, more ideological interpretation of Afrikanerdom of the liberal school.

Dan O'Meara and other radical historians argued that it was an alliance of corporate Boer capital, lower middle-class farmers with labour recruitment problems, white English-speaking labour aristocracy and Afrikaans-speaking poor whites with unemployment problems, which constituted the core elements behind the reshaped Afrikaner nationalism. Underneath this constructed and controlled brotherhood also lay outright manipulation and banal profit motives. Sanlam supervised the preparations for the *Economiese Volkskongres* in 1939 and most of the new *volks-institutions* channelled the savings of the Boers into Sanlam-controlled firms and stocks. According to O'Meara, this handy, materially determined alliance, which was wrapped up in ethnic and ideological slogans, determined the expression of Afrikaner nationalism. Afrikanerdom should not be seen as a popular response to generations of English suppression but rather as a construction defined by specific class interests and formed through political perseverance. Some colleagues criticised O'Meara for being too simplistic and he took notice of that in his later works.<sup>34</sup>

### **Colonialism of a special type.**

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, there was a lively, academic debate on how to characterise the suppression in South Africa. The intensity of this scholarly discussion reflected the growing political struggle in the country during the last years of apartheid as well as the liberation movement's need for a precise theory that could also mobilise in the freedom

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<sup>30</sup> Lodge, Tom: *Black politics in South Africa since 1945*, Longman, London, 1983.  
Bradford, Helen: *A taste of freedom: the ICU in rural South Africa, 1924-30*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1987.

<sup>31</sup> Cock, Jacklyn: *Maids and Madams*, Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1980.

<sup>32</sup> Walker, Cheryl: *Women and Resistance in South Africa*, London: Onyx Press, 1982.  
Bozzoli, Belinda: *Marxism, Feminism and South African Studies*, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 2, Oxford University Press, 1983.

Unterhalter, Elaine: *Class, Race and Gender*. From Lonsdale (ed.): *South Africa in Question*, London, 1988.

Marks, Shula: *Not Either an Experimental Doll*, The Women's Press, London, 1988.

<sup>33</sup> O'Meara, Dan: *Volkskapitalisme: Class, Capital and Ideology in the Afrikaner Nationalism, 1934-48*, Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1983.

<sup>34</sup> O'Meara, Dan: *Forty lost Years: The Apartheid State and the Politics of the National Party, 1948-1994*, Ravan Press / Ohio University Press, 1996.

struggle. A central aspect of the debate was the theory of colonialism of a special type, which was developed and enhanced by radical historians with relations to the ANC.<sup>35</sup>

The specific trait, which separates internal colonialism from “normal” colonialism, is simply that the colonial power (in the case of South Africa identified as the dominating, racially defined social group) is located within the same geographic territory as the colonised people. The adherents of the model often emphasise that the underdevelopment of the exploited ethnic or racial groups within the state boundaries is reproduced through mechanisms of cultural domination, political suppression and economic exploitation similar to the global mechanisms, which have created welfare and prosperity in the highly developed western industrialised countries through the underdevelopment of their colonial satellites.

The radical historians showed that during the 20th century, this kind of internal extra-exploitation has been possible through the misuse of the pre-capitalist forms of agricultural production in the reserves, bantustans and homelands.

This radical analysis also had implications for the international solidarity movement. It was precisely the colonial character of the apartheid regime, which made its lacking legitimacy unique and made it fundamentally inconsistent with international law.

The traditional liberal understanding of South Africa as an autonomous and legitimate state with unfortunate imperfections might have reduced the freedom struggle to an effort for human rights inside the limits of the existing social order and thus turned the regime into the main agent of lasting but insufficient reforms. Acceptance of the liberal position could have reduced the status of the freedom struggle to less than a fully evolved, national liberation struggle with all its potentials for popular mobilisation.<sup>36</sup>

The nearly complete international isolation of the apartheid government was strengthened by the consciousness of the colonial character of the regime. The decision of the ANC to take up arms depended on the lacking legitimacy of colonialism, and the subordination of the armed struggle to the strategy of mass mobilisation, was also due to the widespread support of national liberation. The radical academics helped to enhance this vision at a critical point in history.<sup>37</sup>

### **Labour history.**

The labour history of the 1970s often developed a pedantic and legitimising air because of its pure class approach, which was oriented directly towards establishing a historical tradition for workers resistance in South Africa. Parts of these historical writing were unmistakably produced to influence a contemporary situation.<sup>38</sup>

During the 1980s, labour history changed considerably, partly because of the influence from modern social history. As Murray has established, social history has been affected by the increased interest in the history of working-class organisations and in social relations at the workplace, including the actual work-process. The fact that South African labour history soon developed a broader understanding, can be seen as a direct consequence of the close relationship between economy and politics in this country: the black trade unions were forced to operate in a broader social framework and frequently organised outside the workplaces, in order to survive and be effective.<sup>39</sup>

Working class history was hereafter often identified with a narrow, workerist political tradition, which reflected its modern, academic origins in the early 1970s. Social history on

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<sup>35</sup> Wolpe, Harold: *The theory of internal colonialism: The South African Case*. In Oxaal, I/Barnett, T/Booth, D. (eds.): *Beyond the Sociology of Development*, London, 1975.

Slovo, Joe: *South Africa - No Middle Road*. From Davidson/Wilkinson: *South Africa: The New Politics of Revolution*, London, 1976. Also Slovo, Joe: *Sør-Afrika - Ingen tredie vej*, Pax, Oslo, 1978.

<sup>36</sup> Malapo, Ben: *Marxism, South Africa and the Colonial Question 1-2*, *African Communist*, No. 113 / 114, London, 1988.

<sup>37</sup> Hind, Robert J.: *The Internal Colonial Concept*, *Comparative studies in Society and History*, 26/3, 1984 (Jul.).

Wolpe, Harold: *Race, Class and the Apartheid State*, Paris: Unesco, 1988.

<sup>38</sup> Lewis, Jon: *South African Labour History: a historiographical assessment*, *Radical History Review*, 46/47, pp. 213-235, 1990.

<sup>39</sup> Murray, Martin: *The triumph of Marxist approaches in South African social and labor history*, *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 23, 1-2, 1988.

the other hand, with its emphasis on popular culture and group solidarity across class barriers, was more in harmony with the growing political mobilising.

### **Popular history.**

The many passionate interpretations add fascinating flavours to historical research on South Africa. Political grassroots activists across the entire spectrum have used history as a resource of political mobilising. Therefore, it is not surprising that popular history was widespread during the last 25 years of the anti-apartheid struggle.

At the University of Witwatersrand, academic involvement in popular history developed within the History Workshop, which explored and published "counter-histories". Committed social history and "history from below" distinguish these works, which moved the boundaries of historical materialism with the help of oral history and popular traditions.

History Workshop also published a more scholarly "history from below", for example in the shape of Luli Callinicos popular trilogy, of which the first volume, *Gold And Workers*, deals with the genesis of the migrant worker system in the time of primitive capital accumulation, while the second volume, *Working Life*, summarises the history of working class urbanisation, survival and resistance at the Rand until 1940. Callinicos presents the two books as expressions of the development that many radical historians underwent during the 1980s. *Gold and Workers* is an undisguised, class-based counter-history. *Working Life* analyses social structures by means of a deeper, experience-based methodology without forgetting the class view. Both books have been used as alternative material by trade union education committees, authors of amateur history and teachers in need of meaningful material in the classroom.<sup>40</sup>

Callinicos observes various lines inside popular history. At the History Workshop Conference in 1987, a Popular History Day was arranged where questions of professionalism and responsibility were raised from some participants. It was observed that perspectives and emphasis within popular history depended on the positions in society of the author and the audience. While university employed authors were engaged in research-based creation of knowledge, activist-oriented historians were more interested in liberation strategies.<sup>41</sup> Critics of the former were not slow to point out that academics without organisational affiliation are frequently passive regarding popular participation in history writing out of fear of losing their monopoly on knowledge. On the other hand, the university academics have helped to curb a fixation on slogans and triumphalism inside the highly goal-oriented trade union history and workers education.

### **History as victor.**

The general history of the black resistance struggle is reasonably well known and many historical interpretations and types of texts can be found right from propagandist pamphlets over documentary productions to source collections and in-dept research work. It is possible to sketchily identify various approaches to this field of research, for instance a rectilinear, official, liberation history, a deeper ANC-loyal historical analysis and a critical culture-analytical approach.

On the left side of the ideological spectrum, writing can be found that could be labelled black functionary historiography. It is an unreservedly biased history, written out of commitment to (or employment in) a popular movement and tradition.

Even a superficial text analysis will easily identify features that include emphasis on competent leadership, an urban-based point of departure and a somewhat manipulative rhetoric. Colin Bundy has proven that the texts more often than not embody a quite unproblematic view on the past. The ANC is seen to have had a smoothly advancing development towards its current victorious situation, having been almost infallible and steadily growing in membership, maturity and militant bearings as years went by. There is

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<sup>40</sup> Callinicos, Luli: *Gold and Workers, 1886 - 1924. A Peoples History of South Africa, Vol. 1.*, Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1981.

Callinicos, Luli: *A People's History of South Africa Vol. 2. Working Life 1886-1940. Factories, Townships and Popular Culture.* Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1987.

<sup>41</sup> Callinicos, Luli: *Popular History in the Eighties*, *Radical History Review*, 46/47, pp. 285-297, 1990.

not much room in this version for the misjudgements and blunders of the heroes. In addition, there are only very few indications of the many contradictions, tensions or mutual conflicts among the leaders or between leadership and rank-and-file members or between the various social classes united by the freedom struggle.<sup>42</sup>

Henry Bredekamp among others warns the historians. Academics must be aware of the danger inherent in benchmarks dictated by the freedom movement. The history of the people should not become a "handmaid" of the new politicians, but unfortunately, Bredekamp does not point to how extra-academical society should influence the fields of research without violating the historians' freedom of work.<sup>43</sup> Bundy also warns the radical historians against covering up the dark sides of the freedom struggle, as this would only inspire an interpretation of history, which would impair further action for justice. In order for the study of history to contribute with a survey of the past, which could serve as guidance for future action, all dangers on the road must be uncovered. If historical research is unable to contribute to this, it has failed those social and political functions, which Bundy ascribes to the discipline of history.

### **Interpretations of history within the ANC.**

As a significant national movement throughout 90 years, the ANC has attracted many different types of history writers. A more detailed bibliographic investigation would most certainly reveal a mosaic of diverse tendencies and thematic developments, rather than one coherent school.

Tom Lodge has divided the literary, historical tradition of the ANC into four phases up until 1990. They all have a wide spectrum from biographies, historical fiction, social reporting, autobiographies, and works from the Fort Hare generation of exiled black academics and professionals as Bernard Magubane.<sup>44</sup> Magubane for example accentuates the strong, mutual dependence between South African, European and American economic centres. The progressive challenge of the status quo in South Africa also threatened foreign interests. Accordingly, he believed that foreign capital interests for a long time looked at Afrikaner nationalism as an asset to their own efforts of capital accumulation, in spite of its outdated, petite bourgeois character. His work corresponds to an intellectual touch in the ANC debates in the early 1970s.<sup>45</sup>

The bulk of publications, which form the historical tradition of the ANC, are not the work of professional academics. However, this does not mean that the ANC lacks a historical identity. Speeches and statements of the ANC are frequently loaded with historical references to traditions of pre-colonial communities, to early resistance struggles against colonisation and to previous, heroic campaigns. ANC's writers have regularly motivated its positions with reference to historical experiences.<sup>46</sup>

### **Critical writing of black history.**

In spite of the advances of the ANC, many critical interpretations of the history of the liberation movement exists.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Bundy, Colin: Remaking the past: new perspectives in South African history, University of the Witwatersrand, 1986.

<sup>43</sup> Bredekamp, H.C. / Messina, E.A.: *Liberatory History and the Struggle in South Africa*. Proceedings of the IHR History Week '89, UWC., Western Cape Institute for Historical Research, Bellville: Publication Series D1.

<sup>44</sup> Lodge, Tom: Black politics in South Africa since 1945, Longman, London, 1983.  
Lodge, Tom: *Charters from the past: The African National Congress and its Historiographical Traditions*, Radical History Review, 46/47, pp. 161-188, 1990.

<sup>45</sup> Magubane, Bernard M.: The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1979.

<sup>46</sup> For example, Suttner, Raymond / Cronin, Jeremy (eds.): Thirty Years of the Freedom Charter, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1986.

<sup>47</sup> Marks, Shula / Trapido, Stanley (eds.): *Social history of resistance in South Africa*, Journal of Southern African studies, 18, 1. Special issue, Oxford University Press, 1992.

Firstly, there is a critique, (also from inside the ANC) which is mainly preoccupied with tactical and strategic flaws. Occasionally ANC fell behind its vanguard role, so the leadership was lagging behind the militant action of the rank and file.<sup>48</sup>

A much similar, general critique states that the Congress Alliance remained wrapped up in constitutional, parliamentary and juridical forms of resistance, even long after these had been anachronistic.<sup>49</sup>

Another critique deals with the organisational foundation of the Congress Alliance, which in reality accepted ethnic divisions between the various partners in the alliance. That is the ANC, the Coloured Congress, the Indian Congress and the white Congress of Democrats. According to that view, the movement duplicated or reflected certain state views on race at the same time as it concealed the class problem behind African nationalism.<sup>50</sup>

A more fundamental critique perceives the mass-strategy of the 1950s as inadequate. This strategy kept the movement pointing to the political immorality of society and thereby it remained within the limits of protest rather than create a real challenge.<sup>51</sup>

Another critique questions the special type of armed struggle, which the ANC adopted.<sup>52</sup> Finally, a line of critique focuses on class composition and class interests inside the Alliance. In its most simple form, the leadership is renounced as petite bourgeois though and though.<sup>53</sup>

### **The South African formation of society from a radical viewpoint.**

So, to sum up. The South African model of apartheid from the radical point of view would look as follows:

- Mechanism for economic exploitation and labour control.
- Functioned mostly as a rational system for the ruling classes .
- Special kind of internal colonialism.
- Whites kept their privileges through a class breaking alliance.
- Forms of racial suppression changed in agreement with the needs of capital.

And to see it like this would also be right for a radical historian:

- Capitalist development and racial discrimination are complementary elements.
- Continuous aversion against reforms from employers, politicians, and white voters.
- Economic development sustained white supremacy for a long time up to a certain point.

### **The historians and the struggle for a new South Africa.**

The conjunction of scholarly responsibility and political commitment stands central in South African historiography. Under apartheid, pressure on research institutions and intellectuals for products that corresponded with the interests of the state was always present, though the intensity and the character altered. Based on their assumption of influence within the system, many liberal historians were ready and willing to let themselves be used professionally in connection with official government accounts and reports.

For the radical academic, who placed him/herself in open opposition to the prevailing order, resistance against cooption was inevitable. But how should the now reverse situation be assessed? What if the scholar works more or less in extension of the political agenda of a resistance movement? Must progressive intellectuals at institutions of higher education then give up their critical role and restrict their investigations to directions from by the movement or by a progressive government of the people?

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<sup>48</sup> ANC, NEC: Draft report of the NEC of the ANC, submitted to the annual conference, Dec. 1950. From Karis/Carter, Vol. 2, Doc. 85, p. 452, 1973.

<sup>49</sup> Lambert, Rob: *Black Resistance in South Africa, 1960-61. An Assessment of the Political Strike Campaigns*, Collected Seminar Papers, Inst. Comm.St., SSA 7/78, 1978.

<sup>50</sup> Ntsebeza, Lungisile: *Divisions and unity in struggle: the ANC, ISL and the CP, 1910-28*. BA, University of Cape Town, 1988.

<sup>51</sup> Hirson, Baruch: *Year of fire, Year of ash*, Zed Press, London, 1979.

<sup>52</sup> Davis, David / Fine, Bob: *Political Strategies and the State: Some historical observations*, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 12/1, Oxford University press, 1985.

<sup>53</sup> Friedland, Elaine A.: *The South African Freedom Movement: Factors influencing its ideological development, 1912-1980s*, 13/3, pp. 337-54, *Journal of Black Studies*, 1983.

If the investigation is reduced to elaboration of working material in support of an already defined realpolitik, the autonomy of the intellectual work and its important, critical function are removed. On the other hand, the defence of the intellectuals against that kind of socialisation, has often been the traditional and unrealistic argument for absolute autonomy. According to this argumentation, research is seen as ethically and politically neutral, a value-free, objective practice, which evolves within its own rationalism and logic. Research priorities are consequently constituted internally, not out of practical demands, and with no ideological considerations. According to this view, art and science should be totally shielded from any kind of political interference. Progressive academics have been sceptical of "value-free" research for a long time. They recognise that research must inevitably find itself in some kind of relationship with political and social realities.

### **The historians and the future.**

Many liberals still regard the policy of racial discrimination as the root cause of economic inequalities. Thus, their solution is simply liberalising apartheid's institutions. The "economic realities" will then annihilate the racial distinctions almost automatically. After some years of non-racialism, where talk about race was almost taboo, this model has won strength again. For the few remaining, tenacious radical historians the situation is more complex. They are still attentive of the tight connections between capitalism and all kinds of discrimination. Until the end of the 1980s, they considered the apartheid reforms as "adaptive, rather than liberalising." They still do not accept the argumentation that "capitalism killed apartheid," but seek the causes of apartheid's demise in the popular resistance, the international solidarity, the sanction policy and the rising maintenance-costs of the oppressive regime. Johnstone once said that radical historiography could be credited for the constant pressure for reforms:

*"...the new, more radical and class-oriented way of looking at South African history and society, which emerged at the beginning of the decade, definitely influenced the shape and thrust of political opposition to, and pressures upon, white domination in South Africa during the 1970s and into the present."*<sup>54</sup>

The remaining radical historians still assert that the economic basis has to be changed more fundamentally if the social consequences of apartheid are to be overcome. This understanding has been somewhat muddled during the pressure of realpolitik.

Black historians still do not fill much space on the shelves of the university libraries. This is no doubt the most serious flaw in South African historiography, and a heavy responsibility rests both on the institutionalised historiography and on the popular movements. It is essential to raise the share of black contributions to the writing of history if the research milieus wish to avoid presenting themselves as colonial reminiscences from the apartheid era. Such a situation would be the irony of fate for the liberal, English-speaking universities, who have been talking about but not doing racial integration for many years.

Everything seems to show that some of the more open-minded, radical historians are increasing their influence at the English-speaking universities in co-operation with undogmatic, political liberals. Thoroughgoing radical enclaves will still exist in university milieus, just as Afrikaner hedgehog positions, but perhaps the future for South African historical research lays in a new, symbiotic hegemony consisting of all progressive streams from liberal Africanism and radical, social history to ANC-informed strategic thinking. This would certainly appear quite natural in an age with national compromises.

Nevertheless, the severe social distinctions, which South Africa will have to face in the years to come makes it difficult to believe that such a harmony between essentially different ideologies would endure for very long. The discussion about South Africa's controversial past and its significance for the choices of the new South Africa will most certainly arise and resemble earlier controversies between liberal and radical historians. The fundamental disagreements between historians will reverberate throughout the academic universe when the social realities recall them.

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<sup>54</sup> Johnstone, F.R.: *Most Painful to Our Hearts: South Africa through the eyes of the new school*, Canadian Journal of African Studies, 16/1, 1982, pp. 19-20.