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A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE DYNAMICS OF THE BLACK STRUGGLE
IN SOUTH AFRICA AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR BLACK THEOLOGY

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INTRODUCTION

The struggle or conflict that this paper is focusing on has now entered into its three hundred and thirty secondth year - 1652-1984. It has been a long and arduous conflict. And far from being a merely exciting academic head-trip, or a fitting topic for some highfalutin, cerebral, palaver, this protracted struggle, in all its stark reality and immediacy, has already claimed thousands of human lives, particularly black human lives. The sixty seven that were left stone dead at the 1960 Sharpeville massacre (Gerhart 1979:238) were but a long distant echo of the 1921 Bulhoek slaughter, where hundred and sixty three black Israelites were gratuitously mowed down by the sputtering rifle and machine power of the South African police and the defence force unit (Roux 1948:136-7). This struggle has always been dead serious.

The aim of this paper is, first of all, to give a brief historical survey of this struggle. This survey will then serve as a kind of backdrop against which an analysis of the nature of this three century saga will be attempted. An analysis, any analysis, is a process of understanding. Its goal is knowledge. But, unless one belonged to that Greek school of philosophers, who believed in the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, the knowledge that accrues to one through the process of analysis is subservient to an evolution of practical solutions to life's problems. Analysis is akin to diagnosis in medical practice. The

goal of diagnosis is prescription. In political parlance, the terms analysis and strategy are, broadly speaking, a rendition of diagnosis and prescription. A strategy or prescription which is not based on a sound analysis or diagnosis is at best 'dangerous whistling in the dark'. Analysis is important. This old Jewish proverb can hardly be bettered on this score:

'If you don't know where you
are going (diagnosis), any
road will take you there (strategy)'.

The paper will then attempt to show that since the early 1970s the South African problematic has been subjected to two conflicting kinds of analysis. It will be seen that the dividing line between these two analytic paradigms approximates the line that cleaves black opposition in this country into two seemingly irreconcilable ideological camps. This is the so called RACE/CLASS debate.

This debate will then be followed by an attempt at assessing or weighing the validity or non-validity of Black Theology in the light of the afore-mentioned debate. Finally a personal assessment will be made of the debate in question and of the status of Black Theology in the maelstrom of this debate.

THE STRUGGLE: A PANORAMIC VIEW OF SOME HISTORICAL LANDMARKS

The conflict between the Natives of this country and Europeans, emigrant non-Africans, may be divided into four broad historical periods - phases of the struggle:

- *The Khoisan phase
- *The Tribalistic phase
- *The Nationalistic phase, and
- *The Black Consciousness phase.

We shall briefly look at each of these historical phases in turn.

THE KHOISAN PHASE: 17th CENTURY

The term 'Khoisan' is used in recent scholarship to refer, collectively, to the so called 'Hottentots' and 'Bushmen'. The pejorative overtones traditionally associated with these latter terms are avoided by substituting 'Khoi' (or 'Khoikhoi') for Hottentots and 'San' for Bushmen (Davenport 1977:3).

When the first permanent European settlement was put up at the Cape in 1652, it was the Khoisan group of South Africans which was destined to deal with this new, portentous encounter.

As we all know, the elements of that encounter are the stock-in-trade of every primary school history book. But what is often not given sufficient emphasis and clarity is the fact that in the minds and eyes of the native Khoisan, the setting up of that Cape settlement was no more and no less than a blatant invasion of their native land by curly-haired and blue-eyed, white-skinned foreigners. And against this foreign invasion, the Khoisan were prepared to put up a fight. They resisted the usurpation of their land by means of at least two recorded wars. Richard Elphick captures the core of that Khoisan resentment and determination to fight as he writes:

'As soon as the freeburghers put their hand to the plough the Peninsular Khoikhoi realised that the European presence at the Cape would be permanent and most probably expansive. The Khoikhoi resented not only the loss of exceptional pastures near Table Mountain, but also the way the new farms blocked their access to watering areas on the Cape Peninsula' (Elphick et al, ed. 1979:11-12).

It is a matter of no little significance that the Khoikhoi were themselves pastoral farmers who kept cattle and sheep and who, therefore, harboured a keen interest in the land, water and

pasturage. The Cape settlement community and the freeburghers also shared the selfsame interest. It is therefore the frontiers of trade and agrarian expansion that quickly brought about a bitter conflict of interests: Khoikhoi interests vs White settler interests. As intimated above, contrary to popular South African history the Khoikhoi resisted: in 1659, led by a courageous and determined man by the name of Doman, the Khoi furiously attacked the seven-year old foreign settlement, destroying its food supplies, its farms, and livestock. This was the first Khoikhoi-Dutch War. The indigenous people were defending their land, water and pasture against incipient colonial expansion (Elphick et al, ed. 1979:12). The second Khoikhoi-Dutch War was led by the famous Gonnema and this war was waged intermittently between 1673 and 1677 when Gonnema and his followers were finally brought to heel in the obviously unequal conflict.

From this time onwards both the Khoi and the San were gradually, but inexorably incorporated into white society as farmhands, herders and kitchen servants. By the middle of the 1800s, these fascinating people, who lived so close to 'Mother Nature', were completely defeated and subjected to white rule (Davenport 1977:26).

There are two points that one would wish to make here, namely, that the Khoisan did not willingly submit to their systematic incorporation into foreign, white rule; and that the Khoisan economic base - land and cattle - was the bone of contention between these indigenous people and the white foreigners, right from the onset.

This then was the 17th century phase of the black struggle for the land, water, and pasturage. The scene of the struggle was mainly in the North-Western Cape.

THE TRIBALISTIC PHASE: 18th CENTURY AND EARLY 19th CENTURY

The dramatic events of the second phase of the black struggle were enacted mainly in the eastern frontier. The protagonists in the conflict, this time round, were the so called Bantu and the eastern vanguard of the white settler community in the Cape. The earliest recorded skirmish between Bantu and Boer was in 1702 - exactly a century and a half after the arrival of the Dromedaries, Reiger and Goodehope at the Cape in 1652 (MacMillan 1963:25).

It is this longish time-span between the arrival of white foreigners at the Cape (1652) and their first contact with the indigenous Bantu (1702) which has provided a basis for the popularisation of the thesis that :

'...the Bantu-speakers arrived as immigrants on the highveld of the trans-Vaal at about the same time as the white men first settled in Table Bay' (Davenport 1977: 5).

But recent scholarship is diametrically opposed to this thesis. Radio-carbon dating, for instance, bears testimony to the fact that there were negroid iron age settlements in the trans-Vaal as early as the fifth century AD (Davenport 1977: 5). And if this is true, it means that the Bantu have a head-start of centuries in their occupancy and possession of this southern tip of Africa, relative to white occupancy and arrival. And as regards that particular region called the Cape, the historian, MacMillan, has this to say:

'Undoubtedly the tribes were in effective occupation down to the Fish River long before the Europeans. Williams, of the L.M.S, the first missionary to the 'kaffirs', took up residence at the "great place" of

the paramount chief, Gaika, in 1816. The "great place" of a chief is not an outpost, and Williams' grave remains to show that Gaika was within three miles of the later Fort Beaufort, very near the Fish River. Even the outposts still further west in the Zuurveld must have been fairly strongly held' (MacMillan 1963: 25).

The Bantu were here long before the turn of the 17th century. Now, as in the case of the Khoi, the Bantu were pastoralists, with a keen interest in cattle and sheep. But over and above this, they were almost like the Boers in that they tilled the soil and were, therefore, less nomadic than the Khoi and San. It is these characteristics of their economy - pastoral and agricultural - that were destined to initiate and fan some of the fiercest conflicts between Bantu and Boer on the eastern frontier, starting from the latter part of the 18th century.

The eight or so wars that characterised this second phase of the struggle came down in liberal history as the 'Kaffir Wars'. The first of these was in 1779 and the last in 1879 - a hundred years war between several clans of the black vanguard, Xhosas, in the eastern Cape, ancestors of a Mandela, Biko, Pityana and an Ntwasa, on the one hand, and the white settler communities, on the other hand. More often than not when there is talk about this period, the impression is given that the basic reason for this hundred year conflict was the fact that the Xhosas were bellicose savages, filled with lust for colonial cattle and an irrational desire to spill white Christian blood with their metal assegais, - in short, an inevitable clash of two cultures, one superior and civilised, the other inferior and barbaric. The historian, C.W. de Kiewiet, provides us with a different version of this ferocious saga:

'For the most part the wars were not caused by the inborn quarrelsomeness of savage and war-

like tribes, but by the keen competition of two groups, with very similar agricultural and pastoral habits, for the possession of the most fertile and best-watered stretches of land' (de Kiewiet 1957: 74).

Again as was the case in the first phase, in this second phase, the land was indisputably the issue. The indigenous people were dispossessed, sometimes by violent force of arms, at other times, by sheer 'non-violent' chicanery. Either way, the bone of contention was the land. Says de Kiewiet:

'Land was bought with harness, guns, and cases of brandy. It was acquired by the process of turning a permission to graze into the right to occupy' (de Kiewiet 1957: 75).

These sordid deals were made possible because of the Natives' different philosophy or understanding of ownership. In the white settlers' minds, ownership was more important and more decisive than 'use'; whereas for the African Native it was 'use' that formed the basis of their relationship towards their communally-owned land.

'The notion that a signature or the gift of a spavined horse gave a white man the right to hold land to the exclusion of all others was foreign to the native mind. Even more foreign was the notion that land where all men's beasts had grazed without let could be reserved for the herds of a single individual' (de Kiewiet 1957: 75).

However, be that as it may, the dispossession of the people's land and livestock went on unabated. The 1878 routing of the British forces by King Cetshwayo's Zulu army at Isandhlwana and the 1906 Bambata Rebellion were but late 19th and early 20th century echoes, in the interior of the land, of

the tumultuous hundred years war in the Cape eastern frontier.

The Sand River Convention (1852) and the Bloemfontein Convention (1854) recognised and ratified the sovereignty of the Boers both in the Transvaal and Orange Free State. This meant that the Boers in these newly 'established' Republics would deal with their 'kaffirs' in the way they saw fit. So could the English in the Cape and Natal. All what this meant was that by the turn of the 20th century there was relatively little independence left among the indigenous people of this country. Their socio-political structures and their economic base had been overrun by the ruthless and insatiable white settlers' hunger for land and labour.

'In the land in which they (Natives) lived the free resources of soil, water, and grass had been expropriated or diminished. These resources represented the capital upon which tribal life had been based. Without these resources of soil, water and grass the natives were obliged to do labour for those who now controlled them. Acquisition of land by Europeans was quite frequently a method of annexing labour as well. Since the earliest days it was frequent practice for farmers to buy land, not for the land's own sake, but in order to command the labour of the natives upon it. It was a process that deliberately extinguished native property in the land and their security of tenure upon it, so that they were helpless before the power that private ownership conferred on the whites' (de Kiewiet 1957: 82).

The land had been foundational to the lives of the indigenous people. When they lost the land, they lost their independence and the ability to shape and determine their destiny.

The Natives lost the land, but not without struggling valiantly to keep it.

This is what we would refer to as the Tribalistic phase of the struggle. It was characterised by the individual African tribes struggling to hold onto their land; each tribe labouring under the illusion that it could win that struggle on an individual, tribal basis. The beginning of the 20th century saw almost every tribe or clan in South Africa virtually incorporated into the socio-political and economic system of the white settlers. The conquest was all but complete at the turn of the present century.

THE NATIONALISTIC PHASE: END OF THE 19th CENTURY- BEGINNING 20th

By the mid-19th century the delineation of South Africa into the four provinces was already a de facto reality: the two Boer Republics in the North, Natal and the Cape. Each of these provinces dealt with its 'native problem' in the way it saw fit. The Natives, in turn, generally responded to this provincial handling severally and fragmentally, in a haphazard, un-coordinated manner. Individual, small tribes still believed in 'bargaining' with the white conquerors in the hope of getting a better deal for their individual communities. It is for this reason that very often when there was a military clash between a given tribe or clan and the white settler commandos, the latter invariably found it quite easy to enlist the help of the 'good, loyal' Natives against the recalcitrant 'black rebels'. This is exactly what happened in the 1906 Bambata resistance: not only the Native police (Nonqai), but also Native 'soldiers' recruited from 'loyal tribes' made it extremely difficult for Bambata and his courageous followers to mount an effective resistance (Roux 1948: 95).

This fragmented response to white settler encroachment was a characteristic feature of both the first and second phases of the struggle for the land.

The tail-end of the 1800s and the beginning of the 1900s in South Africa were clearly marked by the defiant stand of the

two Northern Boer Republics - the Transvaal and Orange Free State - against any imperial interference in their affairs and attempts at annexation to the two Southern British Colonies, Natal and the Cape. At this stage South Africa's 'native policy' was in a fragmented state. For instance, the Cape Colony during this period operated a non-racial, qualified franchise, property and education being the only qualificatory factors. It is on record that by the 1880s there were well over 12,000 Africans on the common voters roll in the Cape, having considerable influence in at least five constituencies in the eastern Cape. In 1886 they made up 47% of the electorate in these five constituencies (Walshe 1973: 5). This so called 'Cape tradition' came to be idealised by many African leaders as a system which offered '...a new method of political adjustment, an alternative to the wars of resistance' (Walshe 1973: 5). This idealisation of the Cape liberal tradition was made to look even more attractive by what was at the time obtaining in Natal and the two Boer Republics - up North.

Natal had evolved its own brand of native policy. Despite Natal's non-racial constitution, less than a dozen Africans appeared on the common voters roll. Clever administrative devices insured that this was so (Walshe 1973: 6).

In the independent Republics of the Transvaal and Orange Free State their constitutional stand was simple and straightforward: there was to be no equality between Bantu and Boer, both in church and state. The extension of the franchise to the Bantu in this two Republics was a matter that could never be contemplated.

Thus both Natal and the two Boer Republics offered an unattractive alternative to the slightly lenient and partially open Cape liberal tradition. The extension of this tradition to the rest of the country became the *raison d'etre* of the black struggles of this period and after.

This was the cry of the Transvaal Native Congress (TNC) founded

in 1905. Comparable organisations in the Orange Free State and Natal also hankered after the Cape tradition. The African People's Organisation (APO) established in 1902 in the Cape aimed at fighting for the maintenance of the much valued Cape liberal tradition (Denoon 1982: 110).

It is in this context of the idealisation of the Cape liberal tradition that one can understand why the bulk of the indigenous people of this country had their sympathies, and often, active support, on the side of the British imperial armies in the 1899-1902 Anglo-Boer War. As T.R.H. Davenport so aptly notes, this was a white man's war, a war between whites '...fought to determine which white authority held real power in South Africa' (Davenport 1977: 144). But the Natives, no doubt naively, had come to believe in and rely on '...the sense of common justice and love of freedom so innate in the British character' (Walshe 1982: 38). And so, in this sense, British victory over the Boers would represent, in the eyes and minds of the Bantu, the extension of the Cape liberal tradition, which was the only non-violent and constitutional way to the total incorporation of every South African in a unified socio-political and economic structure of their fatherland.

In this context, the Treaty of Vereeniging, which was signed by Kruger and Briton in 1902 came as a world-shattering disillusionment to the Africans. In the incisive words of de Kiewiet: 'Downing Street had surrendered to the frontier' (de Kiewiet 1957: 144). Native policy and political unity of the four provinces were the two issues that clamoured for immediate attention at the Vereeniging peace treaty. Britain, for fear of fragmenting white unity, left the decision on the enfranchisement of the Natives in the hands of those who thought the very notion of native enfranchisement anathema.

For Britain to have insisted 'upon a higher place for the natives was to offend the white communities, especially Natal and the Republics, in their deepest convictions. Humanity and liberty became opposites which for long years had paralysed action' (de Kiewiet 1957: 143).

It was the British failure to uphold and defend the well-appreciated Cape liberal tradition, the non-racial albeit qualified franchise, which prompted African leaders, in the four provinces, into realising that 'white unity' had to be met with 'supra-tribal African unity'. This crucial awakening was long in coming.

As it is now known, the 1902 Vereeniging peace treaty was but a prelude to the 1910 exclusive white union of South Africa. The impending white union gave rise to the Native Convention, which met in Bloemfontein in 1909 to discuss the burning problems spawned by the exclusion of Blacks from the union talks. Writes Edward Roux:

'This was the first occasion on which politically minded Africans came together from all corners of South Africa to discuss common problems. To this meeting came Walter Rubusana from the Cape, John Dube from Natal, M. Masisi and J. Makgothi from the Orange Free State. In addition, were delegates from the Transvaal and from Bechuanaland' (Roux 1948: 108-9).

The mild and sycophantic requests that were issued by this 1909 Native Convention were hardly heeded by the British Crown or the architects of the union. The white union of South Africa a constitutional reality in 1910.

It was only at the end of 1911 that a more permanent form of African political opposition to the union began to take shape. One of the moving spirits behind this historic move was one Pixley ka Izaka Seme. On October 24th, 1911, Pixley made this impassioned plea:

'The demon of racialism, the aberrations of Xhosa-Fingo feud, the animosity that exists between the Zulus and the Tongas, between the Basuto and every other Native must be buried

and forgotten...We are one people. These divisions, these jealousies, are the cause of all our woes and of all our backwardness and ignorance today' (Roux 1948: 110).

Pixley advocated the immediate formation of a South African Native Congress and suggested an agenda for an inaugural meeting. So on 8th January, 1912, several delegates assembled in Bloemfontein. This was considered by many as the triumph of supra-tribalism and the birth of a South African black Nationalism.

The executive of this all important Congress consisted of eleven members, who clearly represented the ideals of the elite of the African people. Of the eleven, four were ministers of religion, three were lawyers, one, Solomon Plaatje, was a newspaper editor, whilst Makgatho and Pelem were teachers and Mapikela a building contractor (Walshe 1982: 36). It was therefore not surprising that the general characteristic of this first group of leaders was political moderation. The fact that the newly formed Union Government was invited by the conveners of this first permanent African National Congress to send its representative to open the inaugural meeting of Congress, is sufficient indication of Congress' political moderation and unwillingness to unnecessarily anger the powers that ruled over the country (Denoon 1982: 110).

The leaders and delegates of this Bloemfontein Conference were anything but hot-headed trade unionists or fire-eating political radicals. Their demands were simple and straightforward. In his key-note address to the Conference, Pixley ka Izaka Seme intoned:

'The white people of this country have formed what is known as the union of South Africa - a union in which we have no voice in the making of laws and no part in their administration. We have called you therefore to this Conference so that we can together devise ways and means of forming one national union for the purpose of creating national unity and defending our rights and privileges' (Walshe 1982: 34).

Mobilisation at a national level, creating a supra-tribal organisation, was obviously a means towards the attainment of what they considered to be their 'constitutional rights' - that is, 'equality of opportunity within the economic life and political institutions of the wider society' (Walshe 1982: 34). The ideal was always the Cape qualified but non-racial franchise, which they had so fervently hoped that at the end of the Anglo-Boer War, would be extended throughout South Africa as the foundation for the creation of a just and harmonious South African polity.

In contrast, therefore, to the first two phases of the struggle, where arrows, spears, assegais and shields were used in an extra-constitutional or extra-parliamentary effort to win back the land - this third phase tended to concentrate on non-military strategies and tactics in an attempt to win 'constitutional rights'. This is, obviously, a crucial distinction. Peter Walshe seems to confirm this shift in strategies, tactics and principles, when he writes:

'In his letter accepting the presidency, Dube (the Rev. John Dube, first ANC president, elected in absentia) set out to clarify the objectives of Congress and his own hopes. The eighth of January (1912) had been a day heralding the renaissance of the Native races. Although the first-born sons of Africa, they were now the last-born children and citizens of the glorious British Empire. In the excitement of this awakening to political life, the emphasis was nevertheless to be on prudence, restraint, and dutiful respect for the rulers God had placed over them. The motto, he suggested, was festina lente (Walshe 1982: 37).

Thus the period between 1912 and 1960 was, on the whole, marked by the sometimes powerful, at other times intermittent and hesitant activities of the ANC. We used the qualificatory phrase 'on the whole' because in 1919 another powerful African organisation called the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU),

led by men like Clements Kadalie and George Champion, emerged to share the stage with the ANC. But by the end of the 1920s, ICU was a spent force.

The period between 1912 and 1960 would not come to a close before a very significant split between the ANC and the Pan-Africanists within Congress became a formal reality. The Pan-African Congress (PAC), led by stalwarts like Robert Sobukwe, Potlako Leballo, and Peter Raboroko, was formed in 1959. Many people believe that the formation, in 1943, of the Congress Youth League, foreshadowed this 1959 split.

Three things stand out clearly in this third phase of the struggle:

- * Africans made a valiant attempt to struggle as a 'Nation' instead of on the basis of tribal or clannish fragmentation.
- * These first South African Nationalists operated within the parameters of a completely conquered and dispossessed people. At this stage, conquest and dispossession were a fait accompli. Hence their integrationist demands. The overthrow of the State was furthest from their minds and hearts. They merely pleaded for the end to their collective exclusion from the system. Their perspective on the land had shifted considerably compared to what it was in the two previous phases: the Khoisan and the Tribalistic.
- * For almost half a century the ANC refused to let the flickering flames of the black struggle to die. At the end of the '60s, this sensitive torch was handed over to younger hands.

THE BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS PHASE: END OF THE '60s ONWARDS

Ideologically this fourth phase - the Black Consciousness phase of the struggle - represents an almost total break with white liberal tutelage. The classic definition of B.C. as 'an attitude of mind, a way of life', puts this movement at the philosophic and introspective level (Lodge 1983: 322). It was a hefty attempt at severing what one may call, for lack of a better term, the 'psychological umbilical cord' that held the black man tied to the slow-moving liberal band-wagon. The black man was to be on his own because, the B.C. ideologues reasoned, the black struggle for genuine liberation could only be waged on the basis of black unity, black solidarity.

The Black Consciousness philosophy made itself felt through organisations like SASO, BPC and many others. For instance, the BPC constitution declared that membership of BPC 'shall be open to blacks only'. It continued to say 'unless inconsistent with the context, "black" shall be interpreted as meaning Africans, Indians and Coloureds' (van der Merwe et al ed. 1978: 92). Here was a clear rejection of the integrationist and multi-racialist approach adopted by the ANC in the 48 years of its struggle for black freedom. This shift was no doubt significant. But it remains to be seen whether it was a shift at the level of principles (ideology) or merely at the level of strategies and tactics.

It is about time we brought this sketchy but necessary historical overview to a close, and went on to the analysis of that enormous political terrain.

THE ANATOMY OF RIVAL VISIONS

That there is a struggle, a conflict, in South Africa, nobody can deny. The existence of this conflict has been amply evidenced by what we have, perhaps artificially, referred to as the four phases of the black struggle in this country. Conflict, red-hot and acrimonious, exists in this country and stares every South African in the face. The controversy is rather about how one can best charac-

terise and analyse the exact nature of this conflict. And it is important to realise that this controversy is not spawned by South Africans' puerile and inane desire to indulge in mere academic par-laver or logic chopping. No, South Africans are engaged in this debate because they suddenly realise that there must be something disastrously wrong for a people to struggle along for well over three hundred years and yet have very little to show by way of tangible and lasting results at the end of that gruesome period. There must be something very ineffectual with regard to the way they go about the struggle, their chosen strategies and tactics, and, perhaps, this lack of effectiveness may be due to poor, careless and inaccurate analysis of their problem. Strategies and tactics, it must be remembered, are derivatives. Good, effective strategies, like good, effective medical prescriptions, are those which are based on painstaking and accurate social analysis, diagnosis, in medical parlance.

This controversy about how best one can understand the root-causes of the South African socio-political problems, analyse them and gain deeper insights into the present situation, and thereby be in a position to evolve correct and effective strategies for change in South Africa's Apartheid society, gained particular ascendancy in the beginning of the 1970s, probably occasioned by the publication of the Oxford History of South Africa in 1971, which epitomised the liberal interpretation and analysis of South African society. The attack on the liberal interpretation of South African history came fast and furious. For instance, Harrison M. Wright says that:

'In 1972 alone four influential reviews (of the Oxford History of South Africa) by four South African historians living abroad - Martin Legassick, Shula Marks, Stanley Trapido, and Anthony Atmore - directly challenged the assumptions, the interpretations, and the social value of the liberal historians' (Wright 1977: 18).

Indeed, ever since that time the two opposing kinds of socio-political analysis, which can be roughly termed the Liberal and the Radical paradigms, have openly fought it out in the country's debating arenas. And as it was stated earlier on in this paper, this controversy between these two paradigms split black opposition into two seemingly irreconcilable and mutually exclusive camps. The now well known obstreperous RACE-CLASS debate had begun in earnest. Furious and unremitting, it was.

There were those who were fully persuaded that 'race' provided them with an adequate explanatory key to the understanding of the peculiarities inherent in the South African scene, while others rejected this approach and opted, just as strongly, for the adoption of a 'class' analysis of the South African situation. The basic problem, the class-analysts intoned, was not so much who should sit on the 'park benches', but who should enjoy the largest share of the 'goodies'. The controversy, as we know, often presented its participants with an EITHER/OR, clear-cut dichotomy between these two opposing views, with the protagonists on each side refusing to accept even the slightest possibility of a tertium quid.

THE TWO PARADIGMS IN SILHOUETTE

In this section we shall give a general outline of each of the two paradigms and see how the insights yielded by each position would apply to our so called four phases of the black struggle. This is crucial because a good paradigm ought to be always open to empirical correction.

THE RACE-ANALYSTS' POSITION

What do the race-analysts say in general? For them the basic ingredient in the South African three hundred year conflict is 'race'. The primacy of racial ideology or politico-racial factors, they say, should be obvious to any unbiased analyst of the South African problematic. This is their point of departure. And it is this which leads them to reject what they term the non-racial myth of proletarian unity between South Africa's black workers

and white workers. The basic polarisation is not between 'classes' but between groups that are segmented on the basis of pigmentation. Pigmentocracy, therefore, is the name of the South African game. The whole wide world knows that. Interests are polarised on the basis of race, not class or economics. It is for this reason that the high-priest and architect of racism in South Africa, Dr. H.F. Verwoerd, could feelingly argue that he would rather remain white and poor, than rich and mixed (Botha 1967: 111). The proponents of the race-analysis approach point to such sentiments as being affirmations of the primacy of 'race' in South Africa's social formation. For them 'race' is the unmistakable criterion of differential incorporation into the South African social system. And it is this differential incorporation which determines what size of the economic cake one is entitled to; it is not the size of the economic cake that determines the nature of this incorporation; otherwise financial heavy-weights like our own E.T. Tshabalala, Habakuk Tsikwane, San Motsuenyane, etc., would be enjoying full franchise and parliamentary rights on the same par with South Africa's white oligarchy. They do not. The South African situation, therefore, seems to indicate that it is rather the ideology of 'class consciousness' - and not that of 'race-consciousness' - which is false, erroneous, twisted consciousness, an inverted image of the South African reality. Race is still a valid analytical concept to use for the understanding of South Africa's core problems, this approach argues.

The protagonists of the race-analysis approach do not see how the struggle of the people, at least at this stage, could be anything but a nationalistic struggle. They point to the obvious fact that in this country the so called 'non-whites' are oppressed, excluded, discriminated against as a black nation, and not as a class. And, therefore, the proper response to this blatant and obvious national oppression, is some form of 'nationalism', - not classism. Nationalism at this present stage is still the only rallying cry which has the potential to rouse the oppressed African masses to join the struggle and substitute genuine democracy for an oppressive pigmentocracy.

Another point, the situation in South Africa has an unmistakable

colonial character. Some would like to describe it as 'internal colonialism'. However, this designation does not alter the basic picture. The basic picture is colonial: a white settler community lording it over a black indigenous community. Colonialism is by definition collective exploitation and oppression of a whole people - not classes of people. Colonialism is not the selective exploitation and oppression of certain strata of people, but that of the indigenous people as a totality. Such an oppression gives rise, not to a class consciousness, but to a national or race consciousness. Thus national oppression not only transcend class, but it also turns it into an irrelevant, strategically weak, variable in the people's struggle.

Ours is therefore a fundamentally Black versus White struggle, the race-analysts argue. The 1922 Rand miners' strike, is regarded, within this paradigm, as a classic example of lack of 'natural' homogeneity between the interests of white workers and those of black workers. In this 1922 strike white workers unequivocally perceived their interests as being antagonistic to the interests of black workers. White labour and white capital would finally forge a perfect alliance against the subordinated black workers. The predominant factor here was not the so called 'objective material conditions' or 'one's relationship to the forces of production', but the ideological force of racism.

It is this failure of working class solidarity between members of different races which is regarded by race-analysts as being decisive in their decision to carry on the struggle solely on the basis of black solidarity. There is no other realistic formula for change in South Africa, they argue.

The following words are an inference drawn from the above analysis:

'What blacks are doing is merely to respond to a situation in which they find themselves the objects of white racism...We are collectively segregated against - what can be more logical than for us to respond as a group? When workers come together under the auspices of a trade union to

strive for the betterment of their conditions, nobody expresses surprise in the Western world. It is the done thing. Nobody accuses them of separatist tendencies. Teachers fight their battles, garbage men do the same, nobody acts as a trustee for another. Somehow, however, when blacks want to do their thing the liberal establishment seems to detect an anomaly... The liberals understand that the days of the Noble Savage are gone; that blacks do not need a go-between in this struggle for their own emancipation' (Gerhart1979: 266-7).

Let the Blacks do their thing, on an exclusively black vantage point. This is the clarion cry of this camp.

THE CLASS-ANALYSTS' POSITION

Class-analysts inveigh against what they see as the superficiality of the race-analysis of the South African situation. They feel that race-analysis arbitrarily isolates the South African struggle not only from struggles against world capitalist exploitation, but also from liberating currents that have been a long standing feature along the borders of this country. To de-internationalise the struggle in South Africa is to cling to a truncated, myopic view of that struggle. It is to be inexcusably unrealistic about the people's struggle.

South Africa, they argue, is part of the oppressive and exploitative capitalist world. This country is not peripheral to Reaganomics. It is part of the heart-beat of this monster. Reagan's 'constructive engagement' approach and the heavy presence of international corporations, IBM, Siemens, Mobil, etc., in our economy, is sufficient evidence of the fact that the profile of the real enemy is much broader than that which is suggested within the race-analysis purview. And if the real enemy is broader, perhaps, by the same token, the victims' profile should be broadened to include people who are, prima facie, excluded in the narrow profile provided by the race-analysis picture.

Race-analysts are reminded, over and over again, that the international subsidiaries operating in this country are part and parcel of the oppressive and exploitative machinery that grind workers, regardless of their colour, for what the workers can produce to feed the already over fed affluent, capitalist minority. Now, to employ colour or race as a primary criterion in a liberatory struggle is to, automatically, alienate black South Africans, many of whom are workers, from the rest of the worker world. Given the existential set-up in South Africa today, it would be naive in the extreme to imagine that the struggle could be successfully waged internally without a massive dose of external cooperation from the non-black workers of the world. This is not merely to reject the criterion of 'race' for the sake of an ephemeral, passing theory, but it is an attempt to put aside the superficiality of a political-racial analysis in favour of an approach that ferrets out the causal-rootage of the South African conflict.

Racism, they say, lacks an independent explanatory power of analysis. Racial prejudice is either inborn or acquired. If it is inborn or innate, then there is very little that one can do about it. Such inborn-ness of racism would certainly call for acquiescence, not militant involvement on the part of the victims. But the very history of South Africa furnishes us with ample evidence that racism is not an innate factor in man: the origin of the so called 'Cape Coloured', the de-classification of, first, the Japanese, and now Chinese, the existence of legislation to prohibit 'mixed' sexual relations and marriages, etc., etc. All these phenomena point to the fact that there is nothing inherent in man which naturally orients him antipathetically to members of other races who manifest different skin-coloration. Racism is not innate. Thanks God this is so, because if it were innate, it would never be eradicated!

So racism does exist. But it exists as a social, not natural, construct. It is a socially acquired habit, the source or origin of which is something other than itself. White people do not discriminate against black people simply because, innately,

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