

theorizing the specific character of the ideological domain, and, in Wolpe's paper, for theorizing the articulation between this domain and the political. The concept originates in Althusser's article (Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses) (1977). Here, Althusser theorized the relative autonomy of ideology and its real (though relative) social effect. This autonomy and effect of ideology were related by Althusser to the function of ideology - viz, the creation of individuals as specific kinds of subjective agents.

According to Wolpe (1980: 417):

The category of the subject refers here to the qualities, rights, obligations, disabilities, etc, which are attributed to and hence form (constitute) agents placed in specific institutional and organisational matrices. Clearly the latter plays a central role in this process, yet the formation of specific categories of black and white subjects is not reducible to single origin, but must be seen as the outcome of class struggles and social conflict within differentiated but interconnected spheres (economic, etc) of the social formation.

This formation provides a fruitful theoretical basis for further research. The importance of such work within historical materialism should not be underrated. It is precisely the considerable silence of South African academics on questions of subjectivity, consciousness, culture, etc that has left this field open to apartheid ideologists, amongst others. An approach recognizing the primacy of the material world and, in the socio-historical terrain, of the economic instance, does not mean rejecting the concepts of subjectivity, consciousness and culture. In particular, Black and White subject forms are dominant subject forms in SA. They are aspects of the dominant contradiction and are reproduced as such in a complex economic, political and ideological structure.

Unfortunately, the potential theoretical gains are short-circuited by Wolpe, who mechanically applies the concept of subjectivity. Notwithstanding the passage cited above, the categories of Black and White are taken as fixed, and the complex process of subject formation is lost. Some responsibility for this can be placed at the door of Althusser himself. In addition to the strong structural-functional tendency in the first

half of Althusser's discussion, there is too simple an articulation between abstract theses on the ideological in general, and the analyses of historically specific ideologies. Together these lead to the impression that individuals are confronted with a monolithic social order, which places each of them, for all time, within a single, unchanging subject form. In reality, however, the individual should be seen rather as a complex, sometimes contradictory subject in process, traversed by numerous subject interpellations.

## 6 IDEOLOGY AND THE S A STATE

In the case of colonised individuals in SA, the character of the interpellations by which they are addressed is indeed complex and often sharply contradictory. In the ideological discourses and material practices, rituals and apparatuses enforced by the colonizing bloc, colonised individuals are interpellated sometimes 'negatively' and sometimes 'positively'. By a 'negative interpellation' I mean such ideological discourses, practices, rituals and apparatuses that treat colonised individuals as simply other than, and inferior to, White subjects - either as non-Whites, or as sub-human.<sup>9</sup>

This kind of negative interpellation reflects the largely coercive character of colonial oppression. But there are also attempts made by the colonial bloc to exert a 'positive' (and dis-organising) ideological hegemony over colonised individuals. This occurs by trying to interpellate them 'positively' and bestowing them with their own real identity - as "Ciskeian", "Transkeian", etc, and also (another distinctive interpellation) as "legals" with Section 10 rights as opposed to "illegals".

This kind of dis-organization is markedly different from that in non-colonised social formations of the bourgeois democracies. In the latter case (as also within the White colonial bloc in SA) capitalist ideology characteristically interpellates individuals as indistinguishably 'equal' subjects - as Citizens, Voters and Consumers. These are subject forms which obscure the class contradictions between those so interpellated.<sup>10</sup>



As Marx (1973) notes, it is the 'equality' in the sphere of commodity exchange that lies at the basis of this capitalist ideological notion of "Man-in-general":

A worker who buys commodities for 3s. appears to the seller in the same function, in the same equality - in the form of 3s. - as the king who does the same. All distinction between them is extinguished. (1973: 246)

Blacks in SA are partly subjected to such interpellations of bourgeois equality, particularly insofar as they participate in commodity exchange. But in material reality, this marketplace egalitarianism is overshadowed by the dominant colonial division. Moreover, there are a host of other practices, rituals and apparatuses within which Blacks in SA are interpellated (the family structure, churches, sports bodies, etc). These perpetuate many diverse subject forms.

Wolpe, however, neglects the complexity of the process. This neglect has practical consequences. Nowhere is this more evident than in Wolpe's mistaken assertion that "the category of black subject gives the proletarian masses access to and constitutes particular state apparatuses as forms of organisation of the masses ... (It is) a condition of access to ... Bantustan legislative councils and administrations". (1980: 418) This is simply not true. The category of the black subject does not have a particularly strong presence within the juridico-ideological discourse of the dominant ideology. Indeed, at the ideological level it is precisely the undermining of a common black subjectivity that characterizes Bantustan apparatuses. Hence the disorganizing effect of interpellating individuals as Ciskeian, Transkeian, etc subjects needs to be part of the evaluation of whether such apparatuses constitute fruitful sites for mass organization.

The consolidation of a unified, anti-colonial national consciousness and its concomitant black subjectivity is not, then, simply given by the situation. The common cultural ('racial') ordering experienced, unequally, by all classes of South Africans constitutes the objective basis for developing such consciousness. But this always occurs in the context of disorganizing attempts of all kinds from the side of the white colonial bloc. Against this continuous disorganization, the colonially oppressed

have to organize themselves. While Wolpe does not note this, the subject interpellation of individuals does not come simply from apparatuses controlled by the dominant class and its allies. On the terrain of the ideological, the colonially oppressed can, and do, organize their own resistant practices, rituals and apparatuses. The claim to subject forms 'African', 'South African' and 'Black' are among the ways in which the colonially oppressed struggle against political and ideological disorganization.

## 7 WOLPE AND POLITICS

This brings me to a last significant problem in Wolpe's 1980 paper: a lack of concrete analysis of contemporary realities in South Africa. As already argued, Wolpe's lack of empirical analysis is reflected in his theoretical overestimation of the pre-capitalist mode of production in the reserves in earlier times (Section 3), and his empirical underestimation of its importance in the present. When this in turn leads Wolpe into giving undue importance to the superstructure in SA, he again neglects empirical analysis. The superstructure - and especially its ideological and subject forms - is Wolpe's replacement for the supposed collapse of his erstwhile 'major'/'dominant'/'principal' contradiction in the base - i.e. the articulation between two modes of production. That he can give constitutive and foundational force to subject forms in SA indicates how out of touch he is with the reality of special colonialism in SA. The categories of Black and White subjects that he offers are an aspect, but not the whole, of CST and the dominant contradiction in SA.

Wolpe's neglect of contemporary political reality is again reflected in his apparent ignorance of current struggle in SA. Apart from a passing reference to military conflict in SA, a major absence in Wolpe is any consideration of conflict or political organisations which are not state apparatuses. To be sure, the topic of his paper is expressly "Towards an analysis of the State", but he initiates this analysis in terms of the question of sites of mass struggle. The assessment of the state apparatuses in these terms cannot be separated from the question of other, and perhaps alternative, organisational forms.



Again, this problem can be traced back to its source in Althusser's Ideological State Apparatuses essay. Althusser sees the State as being made up of various apparatuses - those operating mainly as repressive apparatuses (eg. police, prisons, army, courts), and those operating mainly with ideology. In this latter category, Althusser has many apparatuses which are not, in fact, State apparatuses. For instance, he includes political parties, trade unions and even families as ideological State apparatuses.<sup>11</sup>

It would be much more accurate to distinguish between State apparatuses and apparatuses of class domination. The latter concept includes the former, but is considerably wider. For instance, in the SA social formation, the SABC is an ideological State apparatus, and therefore also an apparatus of class domination. It upholds through ideology, the dominance of monopoly capital and its allies in the White bloc. The Argus newspaper company is also an apparatus of the same class domination. But it is unhelpful to collapse this into the undifferentiated category of ideological State apparatuses. There are important differences between the SABC and the Argus Company, and these differences are, in part, related to the State character of the SABC and the non-State character of the Argus Co. The dangers of conflating all ideological-political apparatuses into State apparatuses applies even more forcefully to the case of organisations that are prospective allies for the proletariat.

Without actually making this conflation, Wolpe simply ignores the wide range of progressive mass organisations that have emerged in the post-1976 conjuncture. It would be wrong to assume that participation in bourgeois State apparatuses by the proletariat and its allies is always and everywhere to be rejected. But in a colonial situation, where the majority is excluded from such apparatuses such possibilities are, however, liable to be greatly curtailed. A concrete evaluation of the parameters and dynamics of State structures has to be made. But it has to be remembered that 'access' to State apparatuses is far from providing the only doorway to sites of mass struggle. As is currently being underlined in practice, non-participation may not just be a principled tactic; it can be a major form of progressive consolidation. We have a duty to learn from these concrete events, and a concomitant duty to use academic skills to provide a deeper understanding of South Africa and the present conjuncture.

## FOOTNOTES

- 1 The National Question has long been an integral part of historical materialism, and the concept of the nation has a specific material meaning within this body of thought. Basically the National Question concerns certain material features which transcend class differences and which link classes and class fractions together at various levels and in varying degrees of strength. These material features are a common national territory, economy, language and culture, and all the material practices these features involve. These features are all dimensions of the National Question and involve forms and degrees of unity between classes and class fractions. (Clearly, unity is not the same thing as an identity of classes).

Always historically specific, the National Question varies in the specific form of class organisation, mobilisation and alliances that it takes. In early 20th century Europe it took the form of the right of self-determination of nations as against the Tsarist Empire. However, in SA different aspects have been involved. At first, the need to transcend tribal divisions was the key issue in SA (eg. the founding of the Native National Congress, 1912 - partially in response to the political, territorial and economic unity that proceeded apace after Union in 1910). With the Congress Alliance in the 1950s, the National Question can be seen as primarily a question of inter-racial unity.

With the latest attempts by the Apartheid State to co-opt the African, Coloured and Indian petty bourgeoisie in the 1980s, the question of maintaining the inter-class unity (under proletarian hegemony) of the oppressed in SA has come to the fore as the current form of the National Question in SA. The constitution of a South African nation as such is, however, an ongoing process of struggle - the class outcome of which cannot be prejudged.

- 2 The concept of "Internal Colonialism" is sometimes used interchangeably with the concept of "Colonialism of a Special Type" (cf Wolpe, 1975). However, one must be careful to avoid equating the CST thesis



with the considerably different notion of Internal Colonialism (or Domestic Colonialism). In this latter case, "domestic" or "internal" refers to the relationship between "White" SA and the Reserves (cf Carter, 1967). While this relationship is a part of CST, CST itself holds that all Blacks in SA are subject to colonial oppression, and not just those territorially confined to the Reserves. The notion of Internal Colonialism as used by writers such as Gwendolyn Carter is also part of a quite different theoretical outlook.

3 The concept of "masses" is used here in the scientific sense to refer to the range of popular classes and non-class groupings oppressed by a particular social order.

4 In the first part of Wolpe's 1975 article (1975: 234), he appears to reject the concept of "Colonialism of a Special Type" only in the end to present a view which is more or less indistinguishable from that of the CST outlook. (Cf *ibid*: 248-9) The grounds for his initial rejection are that the CST thesis involves inconsistencies concerning the question of power in SA. Indeed some of the more programmatic formulations of CST might appear to involve a contradiction. On the one hand, there is the idea that power resides with the White bloc. On the other hand, it is argued that "real power" resides with monopoly capital. However, this contradiction is more semantic than substantial. Power, particularly political power, is undoubtedly possessed by the White bloc as a whole. But this power is unevenly distributed with the White bloc, and it is monopoly capital which exercises dominant power, particularly (but not only) in the economic domain. The inconsistency that Wolpe uncovers is easily resolved with a few preliminary qualifications of this kind.

5 The polemic with the Narodniks can be instructively considered in this context. Despite the proportionately minute size of monopoly capital in pre-revolutionary Russia, the Bolsheviks argued that the contradiction between capitalist forces and relations of production was the principal determining contradiction, i.e. that it was the contradiction with the greatest determinate effectivity.

6 'To imagine that social revolution is conceivable without revolution by small nations in the colonies and in Europe, without the revolutionary outbursts of a section of the petty bourgeoisie with all its prejudices, without the involvement of non-class conscious proletarian and semi-proletarian mass struggles against the oppression of the landlords, the church, the foreign cultures, etc. - to imagine this means repudiating social revolution. Only those who imagine that in one place an army will line up and say "we are for socialism" and in another place another army will say "we are for imperialism" and that this will be the social revolution, only those who hold such a ridiculously pedantic opinion, could vilify the Irish rebellion by calling it a "putsch".' (Lenin, 1964: 355-6)

Whoever expects a "pure" social revolution will never live to see it.

7 There is not space here to present full empirical evidence for suggesting that Wolpe has somewhat overemphasised the present demise. But - in a few words - Wolpe is correct to note the steady decline of the proportion that non-capitalist agriculture contributes to the GDP of the Reserves (although its absolute value has increased). He is also correct to note that increasing numbers of people in the Reserves are landless. But it is wrong to assume that the reproduction of cheap labour power through this articulation between modes of production requires that workers from the Reserves should all have kinship ties with those working some land. The wages of all migrants are socially determined, somewhat, by the fact that some migrants have such ties. The particular situation of individuals is a matter of considerable indifference to capital, as long as labour power in general, and a reserve of labour, are reproduced. Despite the desperate situation of the Reserves, these still provide some (direct) subsidization. A recent estimation for example reckons that "almost 40% of migrant workers in Cape Town ... (have) neither land nor cattle in their homelands" (Carter, 1980: 42). This still means, however, that the reproduction (albeit a desperately impoverished reproduction) of some 60% of Cape Town migrants and/or their families is being subsidized by subsistence production in the Reserves.



8 The exception worth noting is the tentative (but essentially correct) thesis advanced by Innes and O'Meara (1977) towards the end of their article on class formation and ideology in SA. They argue that the actual experience of migrants, and of women who are confined to the reserves and engaged mainly in subsistence reproductive activities, lays the basis for a progressive unity in struggle under the banner of African nationalism: "it is through an understanding of the White oppression that the struggle of women in the reserves and men at the points of production can be linked together" (1977: 83). They add that because the Apartheid State offers little scope for the advancement and political participation for the African petty bourgeoisie, a large part of this class is also "attracted to forms of African nationalism, particularly in its class struggle form - the petty bourgeoisie allied with the proletariat" (ibid). However, Innes and O'Meara appear almost apologetic about this state of affairs. The peculiar character of the Apartheid social formation means that the "experience of capitalist exploitation and its effect on consciousness" gives rise to "the susceptibility of the proletariat to African nationalism of various forms, the common feature of the urban and rural experience of capitalist exploitation is not overt capital itself. Rather it is the white man and his oppressive system of Apartheid (and particularly the pass laws) which can be seen as responsible for both urban and rural poverty ... " (ibid: 82-3, my emphasis). In these formulations, national-colonial oppression tends to be presented merely as the 'phenomenal' form, given immediately to consciousness, of the 'real' oppression - viz capitalist exploitation. As I've already argued, the principal (but not the only) determining contradiction in SA is, indeed, the fundamental contradiction within the capitalist mode of production. But the dominant contradiction of colonial oppression that characterizes the SA social formation is itself real and material enough. This colonial oppression is related to, but it is not reducible to, capitalist exploitation. There are various currents within nationalism (capitalist, petty bourgeois, and proletarian). The proletarian struggle and a national struggle against colonial oppression are not necessarily in contradiction. The internationalism of the proletariat's struggle is precisely that - an inter-nationalism, not a cosmopolitanism.

- 9 "Some people say we are not people", "We are living worse than dogs", "These drivers must think they are transporting some class of animals" (These are drawn from a letter in Golden City Press 6.9.82)
- 10 Woods (1977:76) gives an excellent example of an assumed identity blatantly masking class divisions, in a passage drawn from the British Conservative Party's 1974 election propaganda: "Every reasonable person knows that if we pay ourselves higher wages than we can afford, sooner or later we shall have to pay higher bills than we can afford."
- 11 For a sound criticism of Althusser on this issue see Anderson (1977).

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