

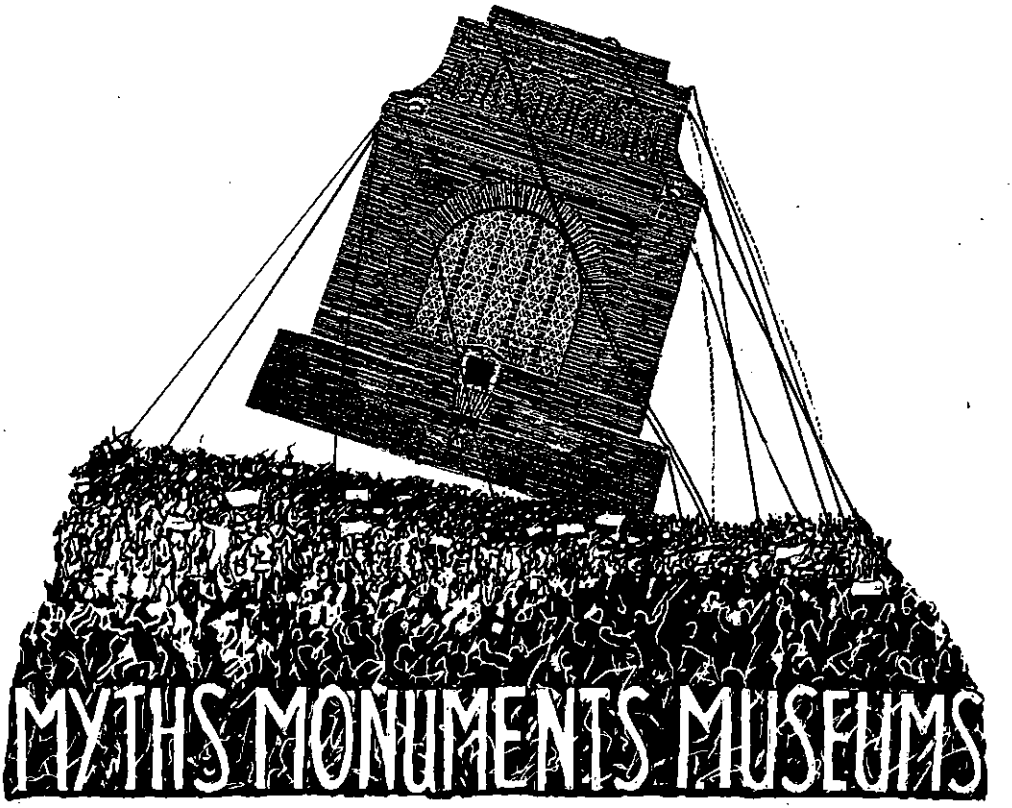
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The 1952 Jan van Riebeeck tercentenary festival: constructing and contesting public national history

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THE 1952 JAN VAN RIEBEECK TERCENTENARY FESTIVAL:

CONSTRUCTING AND CONTESTING PUBLIC NATIONAL HISTORY

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AFRICANA

The 1952 Jan van Riebeeck Tercentenary Festival: Constructing and Contesting Public National History

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In April 1992 Frank van der Velde, the mayor of Cape Town and occupant of the Van Riebeeck Chair, announced that the Cape Town City Council had unanimously decided to cancel celebrations of the 340th anniversary of the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck because "it would be 'divisive' to focus on a one-sided Eurocentric founding of Cape Town". This action provoked an acrimonious response from the Cape Administrator who declared that in future he would present the annual founder's day ceremony himself. "To my mind Jan van Riebeeck's arrival at the southern tip of Africa was indeed a historic occasion in the development of our entire country...." he declared.[1]

In February 1952, Fritz Sonnenberg, then Mayor of Cape Town and occupant of the Van Riebeeck chair, issued a statement responding to accusations in parliament that "Cape Town had forgotten South Africa" and was not pulling its weight in the preparations for the 300th anniversary festivities celebrating the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck. The mayor pointed out that Cape Town had made a major commitment to the tercentenary celebrations by contributing £25 000 to the Festival Committee, allocating the City Engineers Department to work for several months on converting the foreshore into a suitable festival site, building a special Cape Town pavilion costing some £12 000, granting the Festival Committee free use of the City Hall, and finally as a mark of the city's participation in "this great national event", organising an exchange of gifts between Cape Town and Culemborg, Van Riebeeck's birthplace. Members of the Cape Town City Council unanimously endorsed the mayor's statement.[2]

On 27 September, 1951, a meeting held in the Cape Town township of Langa, and attended by representatives of Non-European Unity Movement affiliates and the local ANC branch, unanimously accepted a resolution to boycott the coming tercentenary celebrations. A.C. Jordan of the Unity Movement, gave a graphic description, in Xhosa, of a history of repression and state

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[1]The Argus, 1/4/92; Cape Times, 28/4/92.

[2]Cape Times, 27/2/52; 28/2/52.

violence and warned of the dangers of participating. He showed "the 'reward' of the Non-Europeans for taking part in their oppressors' war: After the Boer War the people were rewarded with the Act of Union; after the 1914 War, the people were shot down at Bulhoek and Bondelswartz; after the 1939 war the miners were shot down in 1946, and the peasants were rewarded for active service with the Rehabilitation Scheme". He ended by posing the question: "'What have we to celebrate? Can we celebrate our enslavement.'"[3]

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For all approaches to the South African past the icon of Van Riebeeck looms large. It lies at the very core of debates about South Africa's national history. Perspectives supportive of the political project of white domination created and perpetuate the icon as the bearer of civilisation to the sub-continent and its source of history. Opponents of racial oppression have portrayed Van Riebeeck as public (history) enemy number one of the South African national past. Van Riebeeck remains the figure around which South Africa's history is made and contested.

This strife over South Africa's past and present was no more evident than in the festivities planned to coincide with the 300th anniversary of Jan van Riebeeck's landing in South Africa. The festival was about more than the landing, the settlement and the attributes of Van Riebeeck. Here was an attempt to display the growing power of the apartheid state and to assert its confidence. In so doing, the festival raised fundamental questions about the construction and composition of the South African nation, what constituted a national history, and the icons and symbols of that history.

Power, race and politics in South Africa circa 1950.

The late 1940s saw the capturing of state power by an Afrikaner nationalist alliance "based on Transvaal, Cape and OFS farmers, specific categories of white labour, [and] the Afrikaner petty-bourgeoisie".[4] Apartheid was the agreed political programme but, as Posel has shown, the precise terms of the alliance and the details of apartheid policy still required formulation.[5] There has been a tendency to understand modifications in the

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[3]The Torch, 9/10/51.

[4]D O'Meara, Volkskapitalisme: Class, Capital and Ideology in the Development of Afrikaner Nationalism, 1934 - 1940, Johannesburg (1983), p243.

[5]See D Posel, The Making of Apartheid 1948 - 1961: Conflict and Compromise, Oxford (1991).

South African state in the decades that followed through examining the struggles over the development of apartheid policy and the establishment of its internal institutions. Perhaps even more important was the necessity of constructing a white hegemony in civil society in the realm of ideology, "the quest for legitimacy across (white) class lines".[6]

An anti-imperial view of the past and an assertion of the self-proclaimed destiny of the volk had underpinned the march to power of Afrikaner nationalism. The 1938 Groot Trek Eeufees had served to mobilise Afrikaans speaking whites as members of the Afrikaner nation, with its exclusive sacred traditions and history. This vision, carried forward by the *Dingaansdag-Propageeringsgenootskap*, the general *Dingaansdagkommissie*, the Arikaanse Taal en Kultuur Vereneging (ATKV) and the *Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurvereniginge* (FAK) reached its zenith with the inauguration of the Voortrekker Monument in 1949: a monument established to "engender pride in the nation of heroes which endured the hardships of the Great Trek".[7] The frieze on the interior of the monument serves as a symbol of "the Afrikaner's proprietary right to South Africa".[8] This conception of the past portrayed the British as enemies of the Afrikaner nation.

The tenuous victory of 1948, coupled with the limited framework of political support afforded by Afrikaner nationalism, required the power base of the state to be broadened. This meant promoting an accompanying wider white settler nationalism, whose right to rule stemmed from its self-proclaimed role as the bearer of "civilisation", a role which started with colonial occupation in 1652. While, at times, this came into conflict with the narrower Afrikaner nationalist agenda, the foregrounding of Jan van Riebeeck in the 1952 festival was central to the broader political scheme. Van Riebeeck was the symbol, not of the Afrikaner nation, as argued by Shamil Jeppie and Albert Grundlingh, but of white rule as a whole, and Cape Town was promoted as the founding city of the white nation.[9]

The 1952 festival was also about settler nationalism asserting

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[6]Ibid, p 270.

[7]Official Guide to the Voortrekker Monument Pretoria, Pretoria, (n.d.), p 12.

[8]Ibid, p 34.

[9]See M S Jeppie, "Aspects of Popular Culture and Class Expression in Inner Cape Town, circa 1939 - 1959", MA dissertation, UCT (1990), pp 147 - 150; A Grundlingh, "*Die Mite van die 'Volksvader'*", Vrye Weekblad, 5/4/91.

ideological and political control over blacks at a time of emerging resistance to white rule. The late 1940s had seen the growth of the Non-European Unity Movement, the emergence of a more militant African National Congress, the rise of squatter movements, and ongoing attempts by the Communist Party to extend its support. These movements presented a challenge to an exclusive conception of the nation, racial domination and unfolding apartheid legislation. In response the South African state began to ban people and organisations and to propagate its own image of the nation. The Van Riebeeck festival was a presentation of the settler image of the nation on a massive public scale. "300 years of South Africa. We build a nation," was the rallying cry of the festival.[10]

At the same time the South African government was becoming increasingly concerned about managing the growing urban African proletariat. "Strengthening the state's hold over the townships, with demonstrable rigour, was one of the priorities which motivated the construction of Apartheid."[11] While the Native Affairs Department searched for ways to control Africans in the cities, the Land Tenure Advisory Board (later the Group Areas Board) was in the process of defining separate urban residential areas.[12] The Van Riebeeck festival served to portray these developments as part of the natural evolution and structuring of South African society. Africans were recipients of civilisation and under the tutelage of whites. While coloureds and malays were to "organise their own programme", representations of the "native population" were to emphasise "*die betekenis van die blanke beskawing vir die Naturelle*".[13]

Constructing Van Riebeeck's nation

It was a coincidence that the Van Riebeeck tercentenary anniversary occurred four years after the victory of the National Party. Here was a public arena in which white settler hegemony could be constructed and displayed with untrammelled vulgarity; and it was Van Riebeeck who was made to embody this supremacy.

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[10]Minutes meeting Executive Committee of Van Riebeeck Festival, 16/10/50, Box 49, H B Thom Papers, University of Stellenbosch (hereafter Thom,[US]).

[11]D Posel, Making of Apartheid, p 270.

[12]See A Mabin, "'Doom at One Stroke of a Pen': Urban Planning and Group Areas c. 1935-1955", paper presented at History Workshop Conference, University of Witwatersrand, 1990.

[13]Minutes Executive Committee Van Riebeeck Festival, 3/11/50, Box 49, Thom [US].

By the 1940s South African had a weak national history. Historical figures were not accorded national prominence; events were not recorded as national South African milestones; there was no historical progression towards the accomplishment of nationhood. Building blocks for this national history had already taken some shape through Afrikaner nationalist histories, in which movements, processes and the accomplishments of the ordinary people were highlighted. S.F.N.Gie, Stellenbosch University's first professor of South African history, in his introduction to a senior history textbook published in the wake of the 1938 *Eeufees*, argued:

> *Ons...dink aan die groot en bekende figure, helde van die daad en van die woord; maar terwyl ons hulle die eer gee wat hulle toekom, sal ons ook in herinnering moet bring die oengenoemde duisende, die bree volksmassas, ons direkte voorouers, wat deur geslagte heen, dag na dag, hulle eenvoudige pligte nagekom het. Hulle werk, hulle hooghou van die eer van die witman, hulle moed en geduld en vryheidsin is dit veral gewees, wat n Suid-Afrika aan ons gegee het, waar ons gelukkig en vry en...ryk kan wees.*[14]

In retrospect Van Riebeeck may have been seen as important in processes, like *volksplanting*, but he had quite an ordinary historical place. Though the Voortrekker centenary celebrations of 1938 certainly started at the foot of the Van Riebeeck statue in Cape Town, he was not portrayed as the founding father. Indeed, it was in spite of the intentions of Van Riebeeck and the Dutch East India Company, who had no plan of establishing a permanent presence at the Cape, that a "*blanke gemeenskap wortelgeskiet het in die land*".[15]

In fact, up until the 1940s, Van Riebeeck and 6 April had very little place in public history. Except for intermittent moments of small scale ceremonies, confined to isolated venues, the landing was barely commemorated. In 1852 services were held in the Cape and Natal colonies to commemorate the 200th anniversary

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[14]S F N Gie, Geskiedenis van Suid-Afrika, Stellenbosch (1940), piii; see also A Grundligh, "Politics, Principles and Problems of a Profession: Afrikaner Historians and their discipline, c. 1920 - 1965", Perspectives in Education, 12,1, 1990/1, pp 7,9 for a discussion of Gie's role in the development of *volksgeskiedenis*.

[15]D. Mostert (ed) for the ATKV, Gedenkboek van die Ossewaens op die Pad van Suid-Afrika, 1838 - 1938, Cape Town (1940), p 59.

of Reformist Christianity; a statue of Van Riebeeck, presented by Cecil John Rhodes, was unveiled in Adderley Street, Cape Town in May 1899; a re-enactment of Van Riebeeck's landing was included in a pageant for the Union celebrations in 1910.[16] The Algemeen Nederlandsch Verbond (ANV), which promoted Dutch-South African relations, received permission in 1921 from the Town Clerk of Cape Town to "place some wild flowers" each year at the base of the Van Riebeeck statue in the city. Despite these annual offerings, F. Oudschans Dentz of the ANV lamented that the anniversary of the landing was going by virtually unnoticed and, in respect of Van Riebeeck, there was almost total "*vergetelheid*".[17]

In these isolated commemorations different meanings were being ascribed to Van Riebeeck and 6 April: reformed Christianity, Dutch-South Africa relations, volksplanting. It was only after the second world war that Van Riebeeck acquired the singular, almost unanimous, symbolism of white settler power. Based on many of the building blocks derived from previous usages, Van Riebeeck was qualitatively transformed from a person involved in historical processes to an icon of national history. When the Cape Town City Council took over the flower laying ceremony, the commemoration acquired official status with representatives from Afrikaans, Dutch and English organisations participating.[18] More importantly, alongside its planning for the Voortrekker Monument inauguration ceremony, the FAK established a special committee in 1945 to oversee arrangements for all Van Riebeeck celebrations and in particular to plan towards commemorating 1952. In the immediate aftermath of the nationalist victory in 1948, this committee identified the need to broaden its base to include the administrators of the provinces, Prof T B Davie, the principal of UCT, G Siemelink, "Hollander" and chair of the ANV, government delegates, representatives from three Dutch churches and "four English speakers".[19]

The making of the festival

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[16]F O Dentz, "Van Riebeeck was Byna Vergete"; Ino, "Veertigduisend Toeskouers by Eeerste Uniedag-Fees", Bc 1011:G1, Bax Collection, University of Cape Town (UCT) Manuscripts division (hereafter Bax [UCT]); J Bruwer, "Jan Staan Sy Man", Vrye Weekblad, 5/4/91; See also the inscription on the Van Riebeeck statue, Adderley Street, Cape Town.

[17]F O Dentz, "Van Riebeeck Vergete".

[18]Ibid.

[19]Memorandum of FAK Van Riebeeck Festival Committee to D F Malan, 1/3/49, vol 338, A1646, T E Donges Collection, South African Archives, Cape Depot (hereafter Donges [CD]).

Following the recommendations of the FAK and of C F Albertyn of Nasionale Pers, the government in March, 1950 convened a meeting of the "*Bree Kommittee van die Van Riebeeck Feeskommittee*".[20] At this meeting the government committed itself both demonstrably and financially to supporting a national festival in April 1952. Initiatives were set in motion to establish a central executive committee and a special Cape Town committee to oversee the construction of the festival. The composition of both committees followed the broad outlines suggested by the FAK, with the added suggestion of "*n paar dames*" for the Cape Town Committee".[21]

As soon as these committees were established, deputations were received from various interest groups which made proposals about what the central themes of the commemoration needed to be. A group of medical doctors suggested the establishment of a Tercentenary Tuberculosis Trust, which would be beneficial to "all races".[22] Another suggestion was that "the cultural traditions of the Cape be promoted and preserved". Even the proclamation of Table Mountain as a national monument was considered as the central theme. "Silently and nobly it watches not only over Cape Town, but over the whole of South Africa which we love so much. It symbolises the efforts and glories of the past and the hopes of a future generation of a united South African nation."[23] Ironically, these suggestions were given short shrift by the Cape Town and Central Executive Committees as too narrow. The Executive Committee decided that the Van Riebeeck festival should be a "symbol of national unity". This meant that "300 years of western civilization" had to be exhibited through historical displays which included a pageant highlighting certain events of South African history, a reconstruction of the landing of Van Riebeeck's ship, the Dromedaris, the convergence of mail coaches from different corners of South Africa in Cape Town and a massive "festival fair" exhibiting "300 years of agriculture, industry and mining".[24] In these ways, Jan van Riebeeck was given pride of

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[20]Letter from C F Albertyn to T E Donges, 15/9/49; Letter from T E Donges to the General Secretary Jan van Riebeeck Feeskommittee van die FAK, 20/2/52, vol 338, A1646, Donges [CD].

[21]Minutes of the first meeting of the Bree Kommittee van die Van Riebeeck Feeskommittee, 10/3/50, vol 338, A1646, Donges [CD].

[22]Minutes of meeting of the Cape Town Tercentenary Committee, 28/6/50, vol 338, A1646, Donges [CD].

[23]Agenda for Executive Committee Van Riebeeck Festival Meeting, 16/10/50, Box 49, Thom [US].

[24]Minutes of meeting of the Executive Committee of the Van Riebeeck Festival, 3/11/50, Box 49, Thom [US].

place in South Africa's public history.

Thirty sub-committees, with specific responsibilities were established to plan this public historical extravaganza. Administrative committees dealt with finance, publicity and accommodation. The content of particular events was dealt with by the art, culture, industry and sports committees. Certain committees focused on the participation by women and youth. A separate sub-committee, headed by I D du Plessis, formerly of UCT, now Commissioner for Coloured Affairs and "*Maleier-kenner*", was charged with the task of encouraging malays and coloureds to take part in the revelry.[25] Significantly, African participation was organised outside the official structures of the festival committee by the Native Affairs Department (NAD).[26] Those aspects of the festival which were historically symbolic fell under the auspices of the emblem, the fair and the pageant sub-committees.[27] The festival fair and the pageants were pivotal events in establishing the paradigm of a national history and constituting its key elements.

A massive 50 000 seater stadium and exhibition halls were built on Cape Town's foreshore to accommodate the envisaged festivities. This was an expensive operation, requiring the construction of an infrastructure virtually from scratch, and costing some £450 000.[28] The choice of venue was not accidental. The foreshore had been recently reclaimed as part of a massive centralised planning venture, as the port of entry to "civilisation", the proposed "Gateway of South Africa".[29]

The fair itself was based upon a tradition of great exhibitions and world fairs that had become very popular from the late nineteenth century in Europe and America. These "ephemeral vistas" were mediums of nationing, rendering the world, the self

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[25]Official Programme of the Van Riebeeck Festival, Cape Town (1952), pp 135-8; See also M S Jeppie, "Historical Process and the Constitution of Subjects: I D du Plessis and the Re-invention of the 'Malay'", Honours Dissertation, UCT (1987), pp 77-9.

[26]Van Riebeeck Festival Fair Guide Book and Catalogue, Cape Town (1952), p 59.

[27]Official Festival Programme, pp 135-8.

[28]Van Riebeeck-Fees Verslag Oor Geldelike Sake, 17/7/52, vol 339, A1646, Donges [CD].

[29]See D Pinnock, "Ideology and Urban Planning: Blueprints of a Garrison City", in W James and M Simons (eds), The Angry Divide, Cape Town (1989), pp 150-68.

and the other knowable, and engendering self-regulation.[30] The exhibitions sought

> to place the people - conceived as a nationalized citizenry - on this side of power, both its subject and its beneficiary. To identify with power, to see it as ... a force regulated and channelled by society's ruling groups but for the good of all: this was the rhetoric of power embodied in the exhibitionary complex - a power made manifest ... by its ability to organize and co-ordinate an order of things and to produce a place for the people in relation to that order.[31]

The central elements in this "exhibitionary complex" were the displays of industrial progress and "human showcases".[32] After all, industry was civilisation and human progress; this state of 'human evolution' stood triumphant over the 'savagery' of the 'native condition'.

The juxtaposition of these two elements was the central organising feature in the making of the Van Riebeeck Festival Fair. The achievements of industry, science and mining were put on show alongside the "Bantu pavilion", a "Zulu kraal", a display of "South-west African bushmen", a reconstruction of a "traditional English village" and a replica of the market place of Culemborg, Van Riebeeck's birthplace.[33] The Dutch and English villages - the latter named after a popular BBC radio programme "Much-Binding in the Marsh" - served to connect the South African nation to its European past. "Culemborg" and "Much Binding-in-the-Marsh" did not represent backwardness, but created a quaint, rustic atmosphere, with "all... the best tradition of thatch and pints of beer", an "'olde worlde'... under the comforting wing of temporarily invisible industry".[34]

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[30]P Greenhalgh, Ephemeral Vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World's fairs, 1851 - 1939, Manchester (1988); T Bennet, "The Exhibitionary Complex", New Formations, 4, Spring 1988, pp 76 - 80.

[31]Bennet, "Exhibitionary Complex", p 80.

[32]Bennet, "Exhibitionary Complex", pp 93 - 6; Greenhalgh, Ephemeral Vistas, ch 4.

[33]Fair Guide, pp 37 - 59.

[34]Official Festival Programme, p 53; P Greenhalgh, Ephemeral Vistas, p 108.

Situated near the replica of the market place of Culemborg was the "native village".[35] The "kraals" in this village were, by contrast, displays of a simple, primitive "tribal life".[36] The bushmen, under the supervision of the Chief Game Warden of South-West Africa, P J Schoeman, crafted bows and arrows in the gaze of thousands of onlookers.[37] Crowds were eager and curious to see their "childlike simplicity", hear their "animated clicks" and touch their "olive skins".[38] In the Native Affairs Department exhibit the "Bantu" built "native huts", practised potmaking, basket making and beadwork.[39] Education and 'progress' were portrayed as the results of European tutelage and protection. Indeed, the festival fair was seen as part of this civilising mission. A Cape Times reporter predicted the possibility of the visiting Bushmen setting "themselves up as a capitalist class" by using their salary to hire other bushmen as hunters when they returned "to their tribe". The manager of the SWA pavilion came to the conclusion that, on return, the bushmen would almost certainly "ask the Administration to add toilet soap to its ration list".[40]

At the heart of the scientific and industrial side of the fair were the achievements of the gold mining industry, displayed through a dazzling multi-media extravaganza at the enormous pavilion erected by the Chamber of Mines. Here the visitor could see displays of goldware and coins, cut-away exhibits of deep-level mining operations, model ships carrying gold bullion abroad, and photographs, through an epidiascope, portraying the concern of the mines for the welfare of its workers. The highlight, for many a visitor, was to experience the simulated adventure of going underground in a mine; there were no dangers of rockfalls at this "gold mine at the sea side".[41] The scale and variety of these displays were geared towards establishing a fundamental link between "the nation" and economic development. A direct comparison was drawn between the enterprise of mining and Van Riebeeck's courage and vision "in starting the first

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[35]Official Festival Programme, p 53.

[36]Fair Guide, pp 53, 55, 59.

[37]Cape Times, 8/3/52.

[38]Cape Times, 27/3/52.

[39]Fair Guide, p 59.

[40]Cape Times, 26/3/52.

[41]The Mining Survey, 3,6, March 1952, Transvaal Chamber of Mines (Van Riebeeck Tercentenary Number; miniature edition), p 1.

civilised settlement at the Cape".[42]

At the gold mining pavilion, the visitor also received a pack of literature containing factsheets, photographs of a visit to a mine, explanatory material on the position of gold in the South African economy and a booklet contrasting "kraal and compound".[43] In these displays and materials were depictions of migrant labour and the compound as civilising agencies. The "stilt huts of a kraal near the Zambesi River", the "interior of a Native hut" and "crude surgery in the kraal" were compared very unfavourably with the modern "native single quarters on a gold mine", the "cleanliness" of a mine kitchen and the "modern science [of] a mine Native hospital". Over and above this, claimed the Chamber, all the services were

> provided by the mines without cost to the Native, and ... contribute to the healthy advancement of the Native himself and increase his potential worth to his people and to South Africa.[44]

These 'civilising' representations, together with the technological, economic and social imagery, served to assert the primacy of the mining industry, at a time when there were suggestions that its importance was declining in favour of secondary industry, and in relation to state power. The mining industry, on the contrary, was experiencing a period of renewed confidence. The Chamber of Mines and Anglo American entered into an agreement with Britain and the United States to provide uranium for their atomic energy programmes. Handsome profits were generated from the mining of uranium derived from the tailings of the Witwatersrand gold mines. In the 1950s the state in fact gained over £100 million a year in taxes from uranium mining alone.[45] Bolstered by this confidence, the mining industry was

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[42]Ibid. Inside cover.

[43]Transvaal Chamber of Mines, Van Riebeeck Festival Folder, Johannesburg, 1952.

[44]"African Contrast", Transvaal Chamber of Mines, PRD Series No. 27, 1952, in Van Riebeeck Festival Folder.

[45]Heads of Agreement between the Atomic Energy Board of the Union of South Africa and the Combined Development Agency, signed Pretoria, 23/11/50, file EG1/126, document 1; UK Atomic Energy Authority aide-memoire on discussions between Authority officials and Mr R B Hagart, Anglo American Corporation deputy chairman and member of the South African Atomic Energy Board, 24/5/57, file EG1/126, document 178, Public Record Office. Thanks to Dave Fig for the information and references.

contending that it was a modern day Van Riebeeck.

Presenting the past

The festival fair appropriated the Van Riebeeck icon to establish a dichotomy in South Africa between 'civilisation' and economic progress, on the one hand, and 'primitiveness' and social backwardness, on the other. It took a different medium, that of the street pageant, to provide white power with a history and legitimacy. Historical pageants were held throughout the country. These culminated in a historical procession in the streets of Cape Town on the 3rd of April, which was repeated the following day. The scale and spectacle were of monumental proportions. It took 70 floats, 400 horses, 132 drummers, 9 full brass bands, and, in total, 2 000 participants to create a moving pageant of the past.[46]

Although there had been presentations of the past through drama before, notably at the 1910 Union celebrations, this was the first time that a procession of pageantry was the medium used to display a South African past. There had been a dispute over the appropriateness of the moving pageant form. Some had predicted it would detract from the seriousness of historical theatre and become a "hospital rag". The Cape Town City Council was worried about the unnecessary expenses a pageant would entail. Others thought it was a tedious dramatic form and that onlookers would lose interest very quickly. These concerns were rejected by the pageant committee. It cited its reasons as "the absence of a suitable stage", the problem of theatre in two languages and that only a few would be able to witness the event if it were held in the stadium.[47] In essence, the playlet form of pageant was ruled out in favour of the visual spectacle and powerful impact of the large-scale moving procession. The pageant mistress, Anna-Neethling Pohl, actress, theatre producer and "student of history" had recently visited similar parades in Europe, and she was going to use her "artistic sense" to create a "*n fees vir die oog*".[48]

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[46]Die Burger, 3/4/52.

[47]Die Burger, 3/6/50; 11/4/52/; Abridged notes of representations made by members of the City Council to Cape Town Committee Van Riebeeck Festival, 24/8/51, Vol 339, A1646, Donges [CD]. Acting Chair of the Pageant Committee to members of the pageant committee, "Reply to criticisms of the pageant made by a City Council deputation on 24 August, 1951", confidential document, n/d, W E G Louw Collection, [US], 158.Ku.1.Va. (12).

[48]"Reply to criticisms", W E G Louw [US], 158.Ku.1.Va.(12); Die Burger, 9/4/52.

There were more serious disputes about the historical conceptualisation of the pageant. Fears were being expressed in the pages of the Rand Daily Mail, that the purpose of the pageant would be to display a hostile British imperialism persecuting the Afrikaner nation. "We are to be given Boer war generals under flags at half-mast...lorry-loads of burning farm houses", and "...a float with a laurel wreath, followed by 60 women and children in black".[49] Anglo-American Corporation and the Transvaal Chamber of Mines threatened to withdraw because of what they saw as "objectionable floats", "serious omissions" in the planned content - such as the Act of Union - and the perceived use of the festival as a "political demonstration", a "second Voortrekker Monument".[50]

The Rand Daily Mail went so far as to suggest a number of additional floats to provide a more balanced perspective: the British victory over "the greatest Bantu nation" at Ulundi, the Royal navy protecting "Van Riebeeck's port of arrival", the consequences of the mineral discoveries by "uitlanders", South African pilots in Korea fighting against "communism", and "a very small float, somewhere at the back, suggesting that the non-Europeans may have taken some little part in the development of the country".[51]

As a result of the mud-slinging in the press and the threat of withdrawal from mining capital, it took numerous drafts before the final pageant script emerged. At every stage of its development the script was scrutinised by research students working for "long hours". Historical details were derived from the "skills of professors of South African history".[52] Prof Thom, the head of the Department of History at Stellenbosch University and translator and editor of the Van Riebeeck diaries, served as consultant on historical authenticity.[53] Anna Neethling Pohl gave her assurance that events would be depicted "in every historical detail" and "will breathe life into the musty pages of history". A few days before the planned pageant

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[49]Rand Daily Mail, 10/7/51; 11/7/51.

[50]Report for the Festival Fair Committee on the Political Aspect of the Transvaal, 1951, vol 339, A1646, Donges [CD].

[51]Rand Daily Mail, 11/7/51.

[52]Cape Times, 29/3/52.

[53]See numerous letters between J C Pauw, Organising secretary, and H Thom, as well as letters between A Pohl and Thom, in which assistance on historical matters is requested and provided, November 1950, December 1950, July 1951, January 1952, May 1952, Thom [US], Box 49.

the final touches were given to the historical creations at Wingfield airport, which became "a nation's historical workshop".[54]

The final product was witnessed in two days of historical revelry in the streets of Cape Town. The skies were clear, the streets were rinsed after twenty-four hours of rain and "*die son (was) op sy beste*", to reveal to the public a monumental history pageant premised on white unity and supremacy: the "People's Pageant".[55] The key reference points of the pageant were two floats constructed by the Speech and Drama Department at the University of Cape Town. At the head of the procession was a float which served to justify processes of conquest and settlement in South Africa: "Africa Dark and Unknown". Masked figures, attired in black robes and shackled in chains, marched alongside the scene of a despotic figure who held them in "mental and spiritual darkness". One-and-a-half hours later, in the final group of floats, "Africa Awakes" appeared. Presenting a contrasting image to "Darkest Africa", it reinforced the notion of the benefits of settlement. The float contained a scene of figures dressed in white symbolising "youth, strength and purity, the foundation on which rests the freedom of the individual and of Africa as a whole".[56]

In the same group as "Africa Awakes" moved "We Build a Nation". Presented by Mrs D F Malan, the wife of the prime minister, and sponsored by Association of Chambers of Commerce and *Die Afrikaanse Handelsinstituut*, this float depicted two huge white horses "rearing their forelegs in the sky, drawing a chariot, guided by a white clad youth with a young girl holding the Union flag beside him". This was intended to symbolise the "courage, faith and strength" with which "the young South African nation enters the future". South African history was thus cast as a progression away from darkness and towards "European civilisation", the seeds of which had been "planted three hundred years ago".[57]

The intervening floats traced moments in this "history of enlightenment", as the nation came into being based on the co-operation of ruling classes, in a history devoid of conflict. There were no "Boer farmhouses in flame" and "legions of mourning women" in the depiction of the South African war of 1899-1902, as the Rand Daily Mail had suspected. Great Boer and British

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[54]Cape Times, 29/3/52.

[55]Die Burger, 5/4/52; Official Festival Programme, p 79.

[56]Official Festival Programme, pp 100, 123.

[57]Official Festival Programme, pp 122-3; Cape Times, 4/4/52.

generals rode alongside each other, and women, dressed in white formed a guard of honour symbolising the "*moed en volharding van die Boerevolk*".[58] The "Act of Union" which the representative of Anglo-American had noted as a serious omission in the initial script, now found its place in the pageant. A coach containing the last Transvaal president, Paul Kruger, followed shortly after a float depicting "The Legacy of Rhodes". For the pageant committee, this legacy consisted of his "influence on education, agriculture, transport and native welfare". There was no Jameson Raid here.[59]

The nation depicted in the pageant was founded by the efforts of all settler communities. The Dutch, the English, the French, and even the Scots and the Germans contributed to this nation, in processes ranging from *volksplanting* to the mineral revolution. The uitlanders contributed most to the development of mining, transforming the Transvaal "into one of the richest territories in the world". Although this had brought with it "some difficult problems", the central theme of the pageant asserted the development of settler co-operation in the founding of the South African nation.[60] This was highlighted in a float which historically recreated a once insignificant incident which took place on the outskirts of Grahamstown in 1837: the solemn presentation of a bible by English settler and frontier merchant, William Rowland Thompson, to Trek leader, Jacobus Uys. It is significant that the roles of these figures were played by their direct descendants, Martin Thompson and Jacobus Uys. The general idea of the float "was to represent the harmonious working together of the two principal European races in this country," both in the past and in the present.[61] An apparent act of cordiality was mythologised and elevated to an event of prominence in nation building.

This nation and its history were exclusively white. South Africa's past was conceptualised as the "growth and development of Western Civilization". Separate festivities were designed for those who were not part of the nation. In the initial stages the Native Affairs Department planned to hold a "*Bantoe-fees*" at

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[58]Rand Daily Mail, 10/7/51; 11/7/51; Die Burger, 4/4/52.

[59]Official Festival Programme, pp 117-121.

[60]Ibid, pp 116-7.

[61]Official Festival Programme, pp 110-11; Judge Newton Thompson to Fred and Freda Thompson, 1952, quoted in J. Newton Thompson, The Story of a House, Cape Town (1968), pp 136-140; For biographical details of William Rowland Thompson see, J. Newton Thompson, "William Rowland Thompson: Frontier Merchant", Africana Notes and News, 17, 4, December 1966.

Langa where there would be sporting activities, open-air film shows, choir competitions and where "n aantal beeste vir die *mense geslag word*".[62] There are no indications that this planned event ever took place. Separate pageants, however, did take place, in the Festival stadium, on a special "day for Malay and Coloured communities". The pageants consisted of selected events and personalities in the alleged history of the griqua and the malay. These were displayed, on a rainy autumn day in Cape Town, in a lonely and deserted stadium, to a handful of spectators.[63]

The malay and griqua pageants combined selected snapshots of history and caricatures of contemporary culture. Nine events, beginning with the first Outeniqua contact with Van Riebeeck, depicted the growth of the griqua "*volkie*" under the leadership of the Kok and Le Fleur families. For the malays, Sheik Yusuf ("Joseph"), who arrived in the Cape in 1694 from Java to serve his banishment order, was depicted as the founding father of the malay nation. Two more random events, political exiles arriving in the Cape, and the malay Corps participating in the Battle of Blaauwberg, constituted the history of the malays. The history was followed by snippets of malay "culture", ranging from the "lingo dance" to a malay fishermen and fishsellers. These simple amateurish depictions, which evoked the pleasurable warmth of "*n regtige lekker skoolkonsert*", conveyed a message of separate groups, with their own traditions and proto-histories. While the "people's pageant" built the great white nation, the pageants of apartheid emphasised the values of "*tradisievastheid*", "*suiwer bloed*", and "*eiendomlikheid*" as anchors for the future.[64]

Van Riebeeck, of course, was also given a separate ceremony but this was in order to accord him a place of prominence in the founding of the white nation. While there were five floats in the "peoples pageant" depicting his arrival and early days of settlement, his landing was dramatised on its own on Saturday 5 April. In this historical theatre, played out at Granger Bay, Mouille Point, Andre Huguenet, acting the part of Van Riebeeck stepped ashore, with a party of actors, planted and hoisted a flag, took possession of the land, handed over gifts to a group of "*Strandlopers*", and was acclaimed as founding father. He also symbolically laid down a legacy of civilisation by handing over scrolls of religion, law, freedom, language, agriculture,

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[62]Agenda van Vergadering van Sentrale Kommittee, 29/11/51, Box 49, Thom [US].

[63]The Festival in Pictures, pp 38-9; Official Festival Programme, pp 76-7; Die Burger, 3/4/52; 10/4/52; Cape Times, 3/4/52.

[64]Ibid.

industry and commerce, defence and the arts to the "representatives of the people", all prominent dignitaries in the portals of power in South Africa. Solemn prayers were read and thousands of pigeons were released. From the beach he was conveyed by coach to the Castle, where, from the height of the balcony, he and Frances Holland, who played the wife Maria, waved to the assembled crowd.[65] Jan van Riebeeck had acquired centre stage in South African history. He was imbued with almost messianic characteristics: the son of Europe, the father of white South Africa, the original bearer of civilisation, whose spirit endured in the emerging policy of apartheid.[66]

Boycotting Van Riebeeck's nation.

Just as the Van Riebeeck tercentenary afforded the white ruling bloc with an opportunity to construct an ideological hegemony, it was grasped by resistance movements to launch political campaigns. For the first two weeks of April, within a radius of two kilometres, the central area of Cape Town became a veritable terrain of struggle as mass meetings were held on the Grand Parade, Cape Town's Hyde Park, newspapers and pamphlets were distributed presenting alternative histories of South Africa, and calls were made to boycott the "Festival of Hate".[67] The self-perceptions, images, icons and historical constructions of white domination that were being made on the foreshore and in Adderley Street were being challenged on the Parade.

The major organised political opposition to the Van Riebeeck Tercentenary came from the federal bodies affiliated to the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM). Between the mid-1940s and the end of the 1950s the NEUM sought to build a national movement against racial domination - a united front - around a minimum programme of democratic demands, the ten point programme. Political organisations, like the Anti-Coloured Affairs Department (Anti-CAD) and the All African Convention (AAC), teachers bodies, like the Cape African Teachers Association (CATA) and the Teachers League of South Africa (TLSA), civic and vigilance associations, and even sporting organisations were part of this broad front. Non-collaboration and the weapon of the boycott were, for them, the primary means of struggle. And, the Van Riebeeck festival provided the Unity Movement with the ideal opportunity to

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[65]Official Festival Programme, pp 85-8, 104-5; Cape Times Ltd, The Festival in Pictures, Cape Town (1952), pp 34-5, inside back cover.

[66]See, for example, the "Die Transvaler se Van Riebeeck Bylaag", 4/4/52.

[67]The Torch, 8/1/52.

intervene and put these principles and strategies into practice.

The African National Congress was in the process of transformation to a more militant populist organisation. This was the result of pressures from more youthful elements within its ranks and new conditions of increased proletarianisation and mass struggle. Part of this change in direction at the beginning of the 1950s was a planned campaign to defy the emerging apartheid legislation on a widespread scale. Although 6 April 1952 was selected as the day to launch the Defiance Campaign, little of the action was directed at the Van Riebeeck festival. The ANC decided definitively not to participate in the planned festivities, and in so doing, lent its support to the boycott initiated by the Unity Movement. However, the boycott was not connected integrally to the planning of the Defiance Campaign. In fact, the ANC went on record to state that before they would participate in any way in the celebrations, the six apartheid Acts of "insult and humiliation" needed to be "removed from the Statute Book".[68]

Direct political action began with the initial attempts by the state and the festival organisers to involve black people in the planned Van Riebeeck festivities. Blacks were being invited to come and participate in the representation of their domination and its depiction as historically inevitable. At civic meetings held in Cape Town, involving the Welcome Estate-Rylands Civic Association, Gleemoor Civic Association, Wetton Ratepayers Association, and the Bloemhof Flats Housing Scheme emphatic decisions were made to boycott the planned festivities. In Langa a history research committee was set up to investigate the proposals made by the NAD. At its report back meeting, held on 27 September 1951, at the Langa Market Hall, a boycott resolution was carried unanimously by a range of organisations which included the National Council of African Women, the Society of Young Africa (SOYA), the Langa Vigilance Association, the ANC branch, the Traders Association and even the Rugby Football Union.[69]

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[68]Dr J S Moroka (President-General) and W M Sisulu to Prime Minister D F Malan, 21/1/52 , Calling for Repeal of Repressive Legislation and Threatening a Defiance Campaign, in T Karis and G Carter, From Protest to Challenge Vol.II, Stanford (1973). The six "unjust acts" were the Pass Laws, Stock Limitation, the Suppression of Communism Act of 1950, the Group Areas Act of 1950, the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951 and the Voters Act of 1951.

[69]The Torch, 18/9,2/10,9/10,16/10,1951; 19/2/52; The Agenda van Vergadering van die Sentrale Kommittee, 29/11/51 provided a report on the Langa meeting: "*Op n volgende vergadering wat*

Teachers also rejected the encroachment of Van Riebeeck into their domain. Principals at 23 schools in Athlone decided, at a meeting of the Athlone Principals' Association, not to allow their pupils to participate in the celebrations. Branches of the Teachers League of South Africa decided to boycott and advised teachers to forbid pupils from buying Van Riebeeck memorabilia.[70] The views expressed in the pages of Torch were very clear:

> No matter what form these celebrations take, no matter how many Non-Whites are bullied or seduced or fooled into taking part, no matter how wonderful the exhibits and processions and concerts and side-shows, nothing can disguise the fact that the Herrenvolk is dancing and revelling upon our enslavement. And only the slaves among us could consciously and voluntarily join them.[71]

The impending festival was seen as an "orgy of Herrenvolkism" and a celebration of "the national oppression and exploitation of the Non-Whites".[72]

As the official opening of the festival drew nearer, the boycott gathered momentum and political organisations became more forthright in their opposition. The central executive of the African Political Organisation, by this time an affiliate of the NEUM, rejected the tercentenary as merely a celebration of the "imposition of white domination". At the conference of the All African Convention held in December 1951 a Van Riebeeck resolution was passed refusing to be party to the celebration. It decided instead to intensify the struggle for liberation by mobilisation and to "redouble their efforts to build a South African nation free from racialism and tyranny". On 18 January 1952, the Unity Movement officially opened its boycott campaign with meetings in Cape Town, and the publication of a series of articles in The Torch dealing with South Africa's history alongside a list of facts and figures about "White Civilization

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betreklik verteenwoordigend was, is daar met n meerderheid besluit om nie deel te neem nie." Box 49 Thom [US].

[70]The Torch, 18/9/, 9/10 1951; The Educational Journal, October 1951.

[71]The Torch, 9/10/51.

[72]Ibid.

and its 'benefits'". [73]

All indications are that the boycott campaign was a resounding success. Cultural groupings, which the festival organisers had attempted to draw into the celebrations, largely rejected participation. One section of the Christmas Choirs bands decided early on in the campaign to boycott, while the Malay Choir Board vacillated under threat of losing a venue for its annual competitions. By February 1952 more than half of the main malay choirs, including the Celtics and the Boarding Boys, had spurned invitations to perform at the Van Riebeeck Stadium. Even the government funded Eoan Group decided to boycott despite one group wanting to "show how good coloureds were". Two jazz bands from Johannesburg, the Manhattan Brothers and the Shantytown Sextet, turned down offers of £400 to perform.[74]

As a result of the boycott campaign, black participation in the festival was paltry. In a festival post-mortem, Die Burger devoted special attention to lamenting the absence of coloureds at the festival. There were no "*Kleurlingkinders om te sing en dans nie, geen Kleurlingvoorstellings of kore nie*". Not only did they miss out on experiencing an "*onverwags groot reserwe van goeie gesindheid*" from whites, but their absence, said Die Burger, left the impression "*dat hulle niks te lewer of te vertoon het nie*". Black attendance at festival events was correspondingly negligible. On certain days the Cape Times estimated black attendance at the festival stadium as only 400, while at the festival fair it was "noticeable that there were not many non-Europeans".[75] The widespread rejection of the festival was aptly expressed in the pages of Drum magazine:

> The year 1952 has seen a change. When the ruling elements said that the celebrations were essentially theirs, but that they would like the non-whites to take part, the reply was an emphatic "Voetsak!" which in the Afrikaner language is usually taken to mean "Go away you rascal dog, I don't like you."[76]

Despite cheaper entrance fees on certain days, enticing a few more blacks to attend, The Torch's estimate of a 90% boycott of

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[73]The Torch, 13/12, 24/12/1951; 29/1/52

[74]The Torch, 9/10, 11/12/1951; 12/2, 26/2, 18/3/1952; Cape Times, 29/3, 31/3/1952.

[75]Die Burger, 10/4/52; Cape Times, 17/3, 1/4/1952.

[76]Drum, June 1952.

the festival activities by blacks does not seem to be an exaggeration. In the words of Drum, "the boomerang [had] struck back!"[77]

Contesting Van Riebeeck's nation.

While the fair and the historical pageant were the main forms for the public creation of Van Riebeeck's nation, the most important instruments for challenging these constructions publically were the mass meeting and newspapers. The scale and spectacle of these resistance mediums were not nearly as grandiose and their capacity to disseminate alternative constructions limited by comparison. Resistance movements did not have the finances, control over space and technology to stage a comparable production. But they hoped that through mass gatherings and the press they would reach as large an audience as possible and that their ideas would find resonance with "Non-Europeans" and local struggles.

From late 1951, with increasing regularity, and in the final weeks before April, every night, meetings were held in every corner of Cape Town. From Cape Town central, District Six and Schotsche Kloof, through Kensington, Vasco and Elsies River, to Kewtown, Grassy Park and Nyanga, people gathered to hear speakers promote the boycott campaign. Speaker after speaker emphasised the need for unity and principled and programmatic struggle. At each meeting, two to three hundred people listened to speeches peppered with slogans, warning about the dangers of "collaborating with the Herrenvolk", and criticising every aspect of the festival. "Let the masters celebrate", exclaimed I B Tabata, founder member of the Unity Movement, vociferously at a meeting in the municipal hall in Lansdowne, "for they will never again be able to celebrate. This is their last supper."[78]

There is evidence to suggest that the Unity Movement was uneasy about this form of meeting, which became characterised by sloganised speeches, fist waving and raucous crowds. "The liberatory movement cannot be built on slogans and mere speeches", it was declared, "it must be built upon a scientific analysis and understanding, upon the hard learnt lessons of the past ...[and] on theories derived from that historical understanding."[79] The public meeting invariably became the public classroom, with the speakers in the role of teachers delivering history lessons to attentive students. In Langa,

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[77]Ibid; Torch, 8/4/52.

[78]The Torch, 5/2, 18/3/1952.

[79]The Torch, 29/4/52.

novelist and linguist A C Jordan cited historical instances of "collaboration", and its inevitable results; in Landsdowne, I B Tabata referred to the history of slavery in Haiti; in Kalk Bay, speakers linked the struggle over the Van Riebeeck to the local history of dispossession, declaring that "the fishermen were being driven off the sea, as other Non-Europeans were being driven off the land". Members of the audience, having given their attention, were encouraged, from time to time, to tell what they had learnt from the meeting. "Van Riebeeck regarded Africans as stinking dogs" declared a member of the audience in Langa. "The invitation [to partake in the Van Riebeeck festivities] was an insult. It was like a guest taking a dog with him to a wedding party", asserted another.[80]

At this time within the ANC there were also those who taught history in political meetings. Probably the foremost among them was S M Molema, the National Treasurer of the ANC and the author of The Bantu - Past and Present (1920) and Chief Moroka (1951). Delivering the opening address at the annual conference of the South African Indian Congress at the beginning of 1952, Molema reminded the audience that "the dominant fact of South African history ...[was] that every monument of the white man perpetuates the memory of the annihilation of some black community". The Van Riebeeck festival, he insisted, was a "frenzy of self adulation [with whites] preparing to embrace each other and shake their bloody hands in commemoration of their three hundred years of rapine and bloodshed".[81]

The momentum of protest meetings culminated in two mass public open-air gatherings in the week that the Van Riebeeck festivities reached their crescendo. On Sunday 30 March 1952, five to six thousand people gathered on The Grand Parade, in front of the City Hall of Cape Town, to listen attentively to speakers from the Unity Movement lecture about the "breakers of the nation" and the "builders of the nation". Presented here was an alternative meaning of South African nationhood in which Van Riebeeck played a destructive role. "For the first time the Non-Europeans were breaking with the slave tradition that had gripped them for three hundred years", declared Dr Goolam Gool. Messages of support for the mass meeting were read out and a resolution was passed reaffirming the boycott of the Van Riebeeck festival. The symbolic meaning of Van Riebeeck as enslaver, divider and strangler of the nation, was propagated through the prominent display of posters with an inverted image of the icon emblazoned

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[80]The Torch, 9/10/51; 5/2, 1/4/1952.

[81]S M Molema, "Opening Address", 25/1/52 in Karis and Carter, From Protest to Challenge, vol II, pp477-80; Karis and Carter, vol IV (1977), pp 94-5.

with a cross of disapproval defacing its facade.[82]

A week later, on the same spot, the ANC launched its Defiance Campaign. While the Cape Town defiance gathering was not the central meeting of the campaign, its significance lies in its coinciding, almost to the minute, with the climax of the Van Riebeeck festival: the solemn laying of wreaths at the base of the Van Riebeeck column at the entrance to the festival stadium. The previous day, of course, in a ceremony overflowing with symbolic meaning, Van Riebeeck (Andre Huguenet) had landed at Granger Bay. On 6 April 1952, in an almost exaggerated display of contrasts, crowds gathered to "free South Africa from tyranny and achieve democracy for all", while close by, guards of honour, permanent force and air force bands and a "procession of high dignitaries" paid homage to their ancestral totem symbol.[83]

In the speeches on the Parade, reference was made to the nearby festival. Cissie Gool, Cape Town City Councillor and sister-in-law of Goolam Gool, said the Van Riebeeck festival was merely "gilded hypocrisy and distorted history". The festival was about "the history and wealth of the white man, but one float was missing, and that was the Float of Truth". At the main defiance gathering at Freedom Square, in Fordsburg Johannesburg, a plan of action was announced to select volunteers in all parts of the country and to embark upon mass defiance of unjust laws. Dr Yusuf Dadoo asserted that the days of Van Riebeeck were gone: "We say to Dr Malan, we will not allow fascism in South Africa." Dr Moroka, the president of the ANC, draped in a black, green and gold "Mantle of Freedom", declared to a hushed crowd, that Van Riebeeck's landing at the Cape was being celebrated "with great pomp and ceremony, but entirely ignoring the role of the Non-Europeans in South Africa." In the face of Van Riebeeck, he called for unity and proclaimed confidently, "We fear nothing. We have nothing to hide".[84]

Newspapers created spaces for much more systematic and formal public historical challenges to Van Riebeeck. These took place in the pages of The Torch, the newspaper of the Unity Movement, and the Guardian, which was supportive of the Congress movement. Specific historical representations of the festival were subjected to public critique and reassessment. In the process, writers like Eddie Roux, Hosea Jaffe and Ben Kies, sometimes writing under pseudonyms, began to develop alternative historical

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[82]Cape Times, 31/3/52; The Torch, 4/11/51, 1/4/52; See photographs of the platform, the speakers and the crowd, taken and distributed by The Torch in 1952.

[83]Cape Times, 7/4/52; Official Festival Programme, p 89.

[84]Cape Times, 7/4/52; Guardian, 10/4/52; Spark, 11/4/52.

emphases and public conceptions of the South African past.

Two elements of the festival were especially criticised: the depictions of Sheik Yusuf and "malay history", and the public display of human beings as animal-like, strange and exotic. The attempt to create malay stereotypes with Sheik Yusuf as an icon of malay ethnic history, alongside khalifas, the new moon and the Kramat, was turned on its head. In Java, the Sheik had fought against the Dutch, who in turn had persecuted and banished him to the Cape. For The Torch, Sheik Yusuf was a resister, who believed in non-collaboration. "Sheik Yusuf belongs to us and not the Herrenvolk", it asserted. A modern strategy was transposed three hundred years back in time in order to create a history which justified the present form of political struggle. Sheik Yusuf, the guerilla fighter and social bandit, was projected as an icon of resistance.[85]

The response to the human exhibits in the SWA pavilion was that the display was an "outrage against humanity". As with Sheik Yusuf, the representations of the bushmen were inverted by The Torch and the Guardian. The "wild and primitive people" were turned into the world's "greatest hunters", communal owners of land, artistic geniuses, inventive craftsmen and ecologically aware hunter-gatherers. Naturally, The Torch turned the "Batwa" into instinctive practitioners of non-collaboration. "Not once did they negotiate for peace. The Batwa ... preferred to die on their feet than live on their knees." The Guardian, on the other hand, was impressed by a report in the Cape Argus that the bushmen thought of the white onlookers as curious wild animals. The exhibitionary relationship between the viewer and the display was inverted by according the bushmen power of representation. A cartoon in the Guardian depicted the bushmen gazing at the long-necked, short-limbed, white "baboons", clamouring for attention, while the bushmen remarked, "I believe if you annoy Baboons they're quite dangerous". The Guardian reporter remarked that the Bushmen, "in their human wisdom, [had] had the last laugh, and their description of the gaping white crowds as baboons will be remembered in Africa for a long while".[86]

Of course, the major point of contestation was the meaning of 1652 and Van Riebeeck for South African history. "1652 and All That" was the title of the Guardian's alternative history, published in the early months of 1952, and written by Eddie Roux. For Roux, 1652 did not represent the birth of a new nation. It marked a different turning point, that of eventual landgrabbing and "a social and economic system based on slavery". The Torch's history series, by "Boycott", was entitled "The True Story of Jan

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[85]The Torch, 12/2, 4/3/1952.

[86]The Torch, 18/3/52; Guardian 14/2, 27/3/1952.

van Riebeeck". In The Torch Van Riebeeck was described as a "mediocre surgeon", a "black market racketeer," and a "demoted, disgraced, sacked thief, begging and whining for a job, no matter how mean, how small, how degrading". By contrast, the "*Strandlopers*" were ennobled as an African people who "fought against Van Riebeeck to win back the land from the Dutch pirates". The Guardian, in the same vein, reported on a speech in parliament by the Native Representative for Cape Western, Sam Kahn, who referred to Van Riebeeck's career as "checkered and doubtful". He was a "minor official" who "left Batavia under a cloud".[87]

The upside down image of Van Riebeeck on the Grand Parade was replicated in the pages of the resistance press. All aspects of the festival's historical representations were inverted publically. Van Riebeeck was now imbued with immoral qualities: the once petty criminal, who turned his attention to larger booty and stole the land. The point of departure of these histories constructed around the boycott was, however, the same as the festival histories. Van Riebeeck remained the shaper of the South African past, and conflicts were reduced to an assessment of his moral qualities and his legacy. The debate moved little beyond whether Van Riebeeck was saint or sinner, superhero or criminal. This discourse became a part of popular culture and was immortalised in the "coon" carnival ditty, "*Van Riebeeck se ding is vim*".

Van Riebeeck's legacy

The ideological frenzy in the centre of Cape Town in 1952 resurrected Van Riebeeck from obscurity and historical amnesia. The construction of the Van Riebeeck icon by the festival was not the work of an Afrikaner nationalist conspiracy. Here was an attempt to establish a symbol of settler domination, the founding father of white civilisation on the southern tip of Africa. Emerging apartheid needed to be justified through notions of 'civilisation', 'primitiveness' and tutelage. In the pageantry on the streets, the fairground on the foreshore, and the glistening white sands of Granger Bay, the Van Riebeeck festival proclaimed apartheid South Africa's position as a modern, sophisticated industrial society.

But Van Riebeeck was also made on the Grand Parade and in resistance newspapers. The forms of opposition which emerged were an integral part of the making of the festival and the Van Riebeeck icon. In the conflict which played itself out in 1952, ironically there was a consensus about the meaning of Van Riebeeck's landing in 1652. In the narrative which was constructed, both by those seeking to establish apartheid and

[87]Guardian, 14/2, 28/2; The Torch, 29/1, 5/2, 19/2/1952.

those who sought to challenge it, Van Riebeeck represented the spirit of apartheid and the beginnings of white domination.

Recent popular historical products, which at times draw upon radical historiography, are also located in this tradition. In the Reader's Digest Illustrated History of South Africa: The Real Story, the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck, the first settler, remains integral to the periodisation of South African history. In the text the landing is a central marker and the pre-Van Riebeeck past is treated merely in "'flashback' form".[88] Similarly the famous mid-nineteenth century painting by Charles Davidson Bell of Van Riebeeck's landing, commonly used on covers of school history texts, is parodied on the front cover of recent South African Communist Party publication, Understanding History.[89] Intended for use in political education it is Van Riebeeck that is set up as the embodiment of apartheid history.

In 1952, Jan van Riebeeck became the lead actor on South Africa's public history stage. It still occupies this position in virtually all expressions of South African public history and has not, as yet, been written out of the script. For the moment, from its current location in Adderley Street, where it was joined by the wife Maria in the 1960s, Van Riebeeck continues to watch over South Africa, its future and its uncertain past. The question is, how long will it maintain its vigil?

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[88]L Witz and C Hamilton, "Reaping the Whirlwind" The Reader's Digest Illustrated History of South Africa and Changing Popular Perceptions of History", South African Historical Journal, 24 (1991), p 199.

[89]South African Communist Party, Understanding History, Johannesburg (1991).