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STRUCTURE AND EXPERIENCE IN THE MAKING OF APARTHEID

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INTERPRETATIONS OF RACISM/SEGREGATION/APARTHEID IN SOUTH AFRICAN HISTORIOGRAPHY

INTRODUCTION

Evita Bezuidenhout's New Year message for South Africa entering the 1990s concluded, 'Yes, South Africa, the future is certain. It's the past that is unpredictable'.[1] South African historiography is stunning proof of this point. The wide variety and fundamentally different interpretations of the South African past could direct one to Keegan's point that 'history is and always has been a political weapon'.[2] It is true that 'South African historians inhabit a present that makes the comprehension of the past seem particularly important', but this has been true of South Africa's successive presents.[3] One of the major issues that has concerned historians over the years has been, according to Shula Marks, the issue of domination and subordination, particularly with regard to the racial polity.[4] Racism, segregation, and Apartheid, have absorbed the presents of consecutive historians and there have been different emphases put on it and very different explanations given of it. These varying interpretations reflect very different paradigms which, to an extent, mirror the political positions and divisions within the country, as well as the political and economic and the historiographical context within which they arose.

This essay examines the very different interpretations given to racism/segregation/Apartheid in South African historiography. In doing so a brief thumbnail sketch will be given of the diverse traditions within South African historiography. The sketch will place the historians within their context and outline the political framework within which they operate, so illuminating their particular explanations of a subject so politically charged and so economically motivated.

AFRIKANER NATIONALIST HISTORIOGRAPHY

The first fundamental divide in South African historiography can be seen to be the divide between English and Afrikaner historiography which, as Bundy notes, 'is no mere linguistic divide but bears also upon methodology, subject matter and ideology'[5]

Afrikaner Nationalist historiography, which is largely characterised as one monolithic tradition, represented by such scholars as Muller, Thom and Uys, embraces strongly nationalistic history.[6] Herman Giliomee and Andre du Toit wrote of the extent of the Afrikaner Nationalist appropriation of Afrikaner history, 'everything that does not fit the nationalist paradigm is excised from Afrikaner history as such. Since Afrikaner history is defined in nationalist terms that which does not fit the latter does not belong to the former.'[7]

This has meant that the history of other groups has been peripheral to the central history of the Afrikaner people and these have only been mentioned in as much as they impinged on the fate of the Afrikaner nation.[8] At first the emphasis lay on the struggles of the Afrikaner against British Imperialism. 'The word racialism seldom, if ever, referred to the colour question.'[9] In the 1960s however, Afrikaner Nationalist historians, following the easy election victory of 1958 and the increased fear of rising popular resistance among blacks, became more conciliatory towards the English and turned their attention towards the black/white divide.[10]

Africans were generally so peripheral to this history that one well known Afrikaner Nationalist historian relegated them to the appendix.[11] Afrikaner Nationalist history both gloried in the victories of the Afrikaner people over hostile African tribes and treated Africans as 'probleme wat deur die blankes opgelos moet word'.[12] As far as interpreting racism and explaining segregation and Apartheid, this was done within the paradigm of Afrikaner Nationalism. Afrikaner theorists of Apartheid adopted the ideological concept of segregation from its early liberal advocates and strengthened it with concepts of ethnic identity and national self-determination. Afrikaner Nationalist historians played a vital role in disseminating this ideology, according to which, 'God has willed separate nations and peoples and has given each one its particular vocation'.[13]

Segregation and Apartheid were explained as being the result of differences in culture which had existed from pre-colonial times and were justified as being a humane way of ensuring the 'development of different cultures along lines of their natural advance', while preserving white supremacy.[14] Thus Van Jaarsveld could write, 'die tuisgebiede van die Bantoe ... bestaan gebiede wat almal min of meer soos na die Difaquane tydperk die kernstreke van oorspronk-like bewoning deur die verskillende Bantoevolke uitmaak' [15], and Joubert could write, 'separate development ... would be a system they had always understood'.[16]

In the 1980s Afrikaner Nationalist history underwent a crisis which reflected the crisis of Apartheid, largely a result of the effect of international sanctions and the challenge posed by an increasingly vocal black majority. Certain well-known Afrikaner historians called for a more relevant history, more in line with the new Nationalist reformist vision embodied in the New Constitution. This meant giving more attention to other groups in history. They also called for greater use of social and economic analysis.[17]

However, a critic responded that 'Afrikaner Nationalist history would never be able to embrace social history because its central concerns are fundamentally opposed to the tenets of modern social history with its emphasis on class conflict and "history from below"'.[18] The central concerns of Afrikaner Nationalism ensured that Afrikaner Nationalist history was a 'politieke geskiedenis ... wat om die Afrikaner wentel'.[19] Economic analysis was largely avoided and very little attention was given to industrialisation in the early twentieth century. Blacks were relegated to a sideshow and where racial policies were mentioned, they were explained as just the reinforcement of already existing cultural and ethnic divides. Racial domination was explained in terms of inherent racial superiority, a concept which had origins in social Darwinism with its concerns about racial purity and the innate superiority and intelligence of different races.

EARLY LIBERAL HISTORIOGRAPHY

Within English historiography in South Africa there has been a far greater concern to explain racism, segregation and Apartheid. Macmillan was the first historian to attempt to analyse racism in South Africa.[20] Both he and De Kiewiet, the founders of the liberal tradition, were very concerned about contemporary racial policies and looked to the past in an attempt to explain these.[21]

The liberal 'vision' informed the work of these scholars. They were intensely hostile to Afrikaner Nationalism. They were apologists for British Imperialism.[22] They were united in a common paternalistic sympathy for the Africans and in common concern for the values of human rights, egalitarianism and freedom of speech.[23]

The context within which these liberals wrote also informed their work. Hertzog's increasingly repressive 'native' policy made it clear that segregation was being rationalised to buttress the political and economic hegemony of whites. Liberals as a result were 'forced to reassess their political and ideological standpoint'.[24] The rapid proletarianisation of Africans on the Witwatersrand and the very dramatic increase in black urban resistance after 1917 also had an impact on the work of the early liberal historians.

De Kiewiet, as a result, was to suggest that black/white relations were 'much more significant than the relations of English and Dutch colonists'.[25] Both Macmillan and De Kiewiet attempted to explain the former relationship. They suggested that contemporary racial policies were the result of irrational prejudice which dated back to racial attitudes formed on the frontier.[26] According to De Kiewiet racial policies represented 'the Great Trek coming out of exile and avenging itself'.[27] Inherent, particularly in Macmillan's work was a strong dualism whereby South Africa's history was drawn as a war between the forces of freedom, represented by Britain, and the forces of repression, represented by the Boer republics.[28] Repression took the form of Herzogian racial policies.

These historians were concerned about the effects of racial domination on African lives and expressed the need for 'the predicament of the natives to be taken into account'.[29] Although they wrote far more about Africans than past historians had, Africans were nevertheless treated as passive victims in their history. A reviewer noted of one of De Kiewiet's books, 'the natives are pawns and suffer as such'.[30] Liberals envisaged themselves as representatives for Africans who were the objects of the policies of the white man. This of course informed their view of segregationist policies which were seen to be imposed from above on passive victims who had no influence whatsoever as to the shape these laws took.

Segregation was understood in terms of an original state of distance between Africans and Europeans in cultural, economic and political arenas, according to the liberal 'dual economy' theory. The decline of the subsistence sector, which was seen to be largely a result of backward farming techniques, explained for the liberals, the large numbers of Africans on the labour market and the racially based cheapness of their labour.[31] According to the 'dual economy' theory the capitalist economy was considered to be a rationalising force and the growth of the capitalist sector of the economy, which facilitated close economic association between groups, would eventually mean that divisions according to race and culture would be replaced by divisions according to possession and authority.[32] These liberals advocated that irrational racial prejudices in the form of Afrikaner Nationalism were temporarily hindering the inevitable process of incorporation and rationalisation.[33] However, writing with an anticipation of the positive effect of the growth of secondary industrialisation, De Kiewiet suggested that this racial prejudice would be overcome.

Saunders noted of the early liberal historians, '[they] did not conceptualise class, or its relationship to race or to the state, nor did they identify it as a factor (let alone the major factor) in South African history'.[34] Although Macmillan and De Kiewiet did recognise class and did utilise social and economic analysis in their work, they basically explained segregation and contemporary racial policies in terms of racial differences and racial prejudices.[35]

The revisionists of the 1970s were to challenge the liberal historians for overplaying the continuities between the frontier period and the contemporary period, for not recognising the important changes brought about by the mineral revolution, and, above all, for not seeing

any intrinsic relationship between forms of segregation and the capitalistic economy. Colin Bundy wrote that, 'De Kiewiet assumed that economic development (that is, the growth of the modern sector of a dual economy) has served and serves still to minimise social conflict and to ameliorate social and economic disabilities. This approach posits a fundamental dissonance between racism and economic growth'.[36] These criticisms were at the heart of the point of departure of the early Marxist work.

EARLY AMATEUR AFRICANIST HISTORY

Over the period 1918 - 1945 when the liberal tradition was being established, a number of histories were written outside the professional fold. The main purpose of many of these works was to address the contemporary problems of segregationism and to describe the African experience.[37] These mission-educated Africans writing in the 1920s and 30s wrote histories of their people out of the conviction that, 'however sympathetic and good a European may be, he cannot undertake such a task with the minute knowledge and enthusiasm that can belong only to the native African, who must himself be the victim of the untoward circumstances under discussion'.[38]

Among these writers were S. M. Molema, J. H Soga, Clements Kadalie and Sol T. Plaatje, many of whom were actively involved in fighting for the rights of Africans, whether as leaders in the ANC, participants in black trade unions or in other political groups.[39] Although many of these works were written in the Christian liberal humanist tradition and were restricted by their Eurocentric sources, they did give another dimension to an understanding of segregation, in terms of explaining how it was experienced by Africans living under it. Sol Plaatjes' descriptions of the repercussions of the Natives' Land Act (1913) on the lives of Africans living in the Orange Free State is a superb example of such work.[40] These histories have of late become a valuable source for the recent Marxist 'history from below'.

LIBERAL HISTORIOGRAPHY AFTER 1945

The liberal historians writing after 1945 wrote in a very different vein to the earlier liberals, Macmillan and De Kiewiet. They hardly touched on the African experience. Social and economic themes hardly featured in their work and class a concept was ignored altogether. They instead produced narrow political narratives which emphasised policy-making and constitutionalism and which focused on the contribution of individuals in shaping historical processes.[41]

The work of the post 1945 liberals was constituted partly in response to the victory of the Nationalists in 1948 and the intensification of racist policies. They invented a 'wistful, hypothetical, "if only" consensus, a history of what might have been'.[42] They looked to the past to establish where the mistakes had been made that resulted in the rise to power of Afrikaner Nationalism.[43] Old Imperial agents became the scapegoat and liberals concentrated on such events as the Jameson Raid, the Wars, and the formation of Union (1895 - 1910), as the times which encouraged the exclusion of Africans from participation in the polity, and which encouraged the rise of Afrikaner Nationalism.[44] Afrikaner Nationalism was seen to harbour the 'irrational racial prejudices', and was considered responsible for the racist state of affairs in South Africa. It was regarded as the brake on what would otherwise have been the inevitable reforming process.[45]

Where the works all revealed a strong antagonism toward Afrikaner Nationalism, there was also consensus as to the positive contribution of the British. Punctuating these works at frequent intervals are statements such as Le May's on British Supremacy that, 'Campbell Bannerman gave to white politics in South Africa nearly half a century of moderation'.[46]

David Welsh gave a different but nevertheless related explanation of contemporary racial policies. He did not see Afrikaner Nationalist thought as the central force behind segregation, instead he blamed the British for segregationist policies such as the development of the reserves, the establishment of chiefs answerable to the State, amongst others, which, he argued, were first introduced by Shepstone in Natal.[47]

The post-war liberals wrote within the context of the early period of the Cold War, and having come through a long period of economic growth both in South Africa and internationally, they believed strongly that economic growth implied stability and political democracy. They endorsed the modernisation thesis, believing, as the early liberals had, that the rational demands of the market would finally destroy the racial polity.[48] Even the more Africanist of the liberal interpretations expressed these ideas. The Oxford History was described by Lonsdale as the 'high point in modernisation theory'.[49] The liberal views were underlined by the classical liberal economists, such as Horwitz and Houghton, who also suggested that political factors were hindering the development of capitalism toward perfect equilibrium.[50]

AN EARLY CHALLENGE

Over the years when liberal historiography was establishing its hegemony over historical thought at English universities, a few scholars were to challenge the liberal interpretation of South Africa's racial polity. Scholars like Leo Marquard, Eddie Roux, Dora Taylor and Hosea Jaffe by no means constituted a united group. They wrote from very different theoretical positions among these being, communists, neo Marxists, Trotskyists, ANC Nationalists, and others. Their attacks on the liberal thesis came from many different angles and touched on different points.

These scholars gave an alternative view of the racial polity and segregationism. Many of these writers described events from the African experience and in doing so revealed that segregation was not a policy imposed on 'dark acquiescent hosts' but was actively resisted.[51] Certainly the enormous expansion of the African working class from the early 1940s as well as the increase in African political protest had an influence on the work of scholars like Roux, Jaffe and Taylor.[52]

Certain of these scholars argued also that it was economic interests and not solely racial prejudice which lay behind contemporary racial policies. Both Jaffe and Taylor highlighted the centrality of capitalism in explaining South Africa's racial polity. Leo Marquard's book (1943) argued that 'one motive above all is seen to dominate our Native policy - the maintenance of that cheap labour supply on which the profits of mine owners, industrialists and farmers depend'.[53] These scholars did not equate economic advance with political democracy rather they envisaged increasing economic enslavement.[54] Although certain communist party intellectuals did attempt to explain the racial polity as essentially a class struggle, class was not used very systematically in many of these works.[55]

Liberals took little notice of the challenges posed by these early 'radical' writers. However, in the 1960s, the stage was being set for a greater challenge. South African liberalism faced the Government's increasing commitment to exclusive nationalism, and the heavily repressive nature of that nationalism following Sharpeville and the ANC and PAC bannings. Smith argued that 'the stance of defending western civilisation became untenable in a world being increasingly influenced by the non-western Afro-Asian bloc organisations'.[56] Liberalism was faced also with a strong anti-Imperialist movement which emerged after Vietnam, as well as the rise of black consciousness. Following the disbanding of the Liberal Party in 1968, liberalism, having lost its political base, dissolved into rhetoric and ritual.[57] The decline of liberalism in the political arena threw liberal historiography into crisis as the challenges to its weakened position grew.

THE CHALLENGE

An early challenge came in the form of Jack and Ray Simon's book *Class and Colour* (1969) which examined organised resistance in South Africa and which saw the economy in Marxist terms as a capitalist mode of production. Nevertheless, although the Simon's did attempt to trace the relationship between race and class oppression in South Africa, class analysis was not treated at all systematically and race remained the dominant concept.[58] The Simon's had not departed far from the liberal interpretation of the racial polity in their argument that, South Africa was a good example of how the superstructure, from a previous mode of production, can maintain itself and exercise enormous influence in a society in which the economic base has radically altered. They suggested that this 'white oligarchy which uses fascist techniques to enforce racial totalitarianism' and 'perpetuate pre-industrial social rigidities' was acting as a fetter on 'the dynamic potential of a multi-racial labour force'.[59] Although the Simon's work was influential on the thought of the revisionist scholars, it was criticised by Legassick and Wolpe because 'it did not locate the problem at the heart of capitalism. It exonerated capitalism from the whole issue and therefore, it wasn't an adequate critique of the liberal thesis.'[60]

THE EARLY MARXISTS

A new radical generation of scholars emerged in the 1970s who were to pose a greater challenge to liberalism. These scholars were influenced by Vietnam, the anti-Imperialist movement, and the rise of Black consciousness. Many were studying in Europe and in America in the late 1960s and early 1970s and were influenced by the revival of Marxism in Europe to which the Annales school, French Marxism, and the British Marxist historians contributed. The underdevelopment debate, as well as the swing in Africanist work towards economic analyses, following increasing disillusion with African poverty after independence, were also important developments at the time.[61] Genovese's new sophisticated analysis of race and class had also recently emerged.[62]

The early generation of South African Marxists, among them, Marks, Wolpe and Legassick, had been radicalised by the increasingly repressive events in South Africa. They were witness to the Sharpeville massacre and the ANC and PAC bannings. nevertheless they were very conscious of the mass popular resistance in the 1950s. They left South Africa before the State appeared as totally monolithic and before the resistance movement lost its impetus. This was reflected in their work. As Shula Marks noted of Legassick and Trapido, and it could also be said of herself, 'they left room in their work for the resistance they themselves experienced in the 1950s'.[63]

The development of Marxist thought in South Africa was given impetus by the regular gathering of academics at the Southern African Studies Seminars held by Shula Marks at the University of London where current work on Southern Africa was discussed. The main issue on the agenda was the nature of the political economy of contemporary South Africa.[64] The scholars attending those seminars were intensely aware of the substantial contradiction to the liberal thesis - the existence of massive economic growth and equally massive state repression. Legassick wrote at the time, 'South African economic growth since 1948 has proceeded apace - exceeded in the 1960s only by that of Japan - while the system of racial discrimination becomes more effective and pervasive'.[65] Apartheid was reaching its hiatus with the implementation of 'homeland' rule in the 1960s and early 1970s. It was becoming increasingly clear to these scholars that 'no coherent and satisfactory analysis of South African society is available'.[66]

The early Marxist work was given form and definition on the one hand, by Marxist theories which directed attention to 'the systemic processes which generate social, political and economic power and their relationship to the operative definitions' [67]; and on the other, by its establishment in relation to the liberal paradigm, as well as in relation to the liberation theories, the influence of which did not allow the concept of race to be entirely subordinated to that of class. Deacon has suggested that the context in which the radical approach emerged serves to explain the 'ambiguities and internal contradictions of the early approach' for in challenging the liberal approach the early Marxists had to remain 'to some extent on the conceptual terrain and within "problematic" of that analysis'.[68]

Legassick debunked the idea central to the liberal thesis that contemporary racism was a carry over from the 18C and the frontier by showing firstly, that the frontier was a place of the greatest interaction, and secondly, that race relations were not identical over space and time (as the new works on slavery in America had revealed), and that racial domination had intensified and taken on a different form under conditions of industrialisation.[69] He was to suggest that segregation was not 'a policy produced by the imposition of earlier social attitudes on the new conditions of South African industrialisation' but was rather closely connected to the industrialisation process itself.[70] The early Marxists began to consider the relationship of racism and racist policies to the capitalist economy.

They believed that the pre-occupation with race concealed more fundamental relations and they challenged the liberal suggestion that the main contradiction within the country lay between the Afrikaner and African Nationalisms. They were to argue that it was necessary to go outside of racial groups and definitions, 'for although the very obviousness of race on the South African situation seems to justify the explanatory salience accorded it ... this is an instance where the very obvious is that which stands in one's way'.[71] Legassick suggested a relocation of focus away from race relations to class relations.[72] These early Marxists argued that it was necessary to take account of the structural position of groups. Wolpe

suggested that, 'it is only by ignoring the structural position of groups that it is possible to contend that the economy tends to act out of some kind of formal abstracted rationality'.[73]

Johnstone used the mining industry to define the economic interests of the groups in conflict. The early Marxists became pre-occupied with the mining industry which they believed marked the emergence of modern economic South Africa. They saw the capitalist economy as being essentially coercive and exploitative, and governed by the needs of this industry. The only means of the mining industry for obtaining profit was through cheapening labour power. Johnstone argued that the mining magnates found an easy solution in the racial conditions already existing in South Africa. They capitalised on the fact that 'non-whiteness equalled rightlessness equalled powerlessness equalled cheapness', and tried to ensure that blacks remained politically and economically powerless.[74] Johnstone's work established that class relations were the fundamental relations and that racial discrimination was functional to the interests of capital accumulation.

These Marxists threw out the liberal concept of dysfunctionality between the political and the economic and embraced the Althusserian concept of functionality.[75] Wolpe took the idea one step further when he suggested that the system of segregation, in the form of the reserves, served to subsidise the labour costs of the mining industry by providing, 'a portion of the means of reproduction of the migrant labour force'.[76] Capitalism was therefore seen to conserve the elements of segregation that were instrumental to its logic of accumulating profit. Racial segregation proved to be not only very useful in facilitating exploitation for the capitalist sector, but this was seen to be almost the very reason for its existence.[77]

Legassick, Wolpe and Johnstone attempted to deal with the relationship of race and class. They believed that class relations were the most important determinant of group interests but acknowledged that 'the specific form of these (class) relationships is defined by the content of Apartheid'.[78] In other words South Africa was seen to have racially structured capitalism which was manifest in what they saw to be 'the main contradiction in South Africa ... the relation of production between the white capitalist class and the non-white working class'.[79]

White workers were not seen to be guided by racial prejudice as the liberals had suggested but were driven by a basic class interest, which was to protect their privileged position as a 'labour aristocracy'. The single colour bar which the liberals believed was the result of white worker racism was seen, by these early Marxists, as a class colour bar. Racial discrimination was seen, in a historical sense, in terms of various class colour bars serving different class interest.[80] Wolpe suggested that 'Apartheid can be viewed predominantly as an attempt to order the non-white working class in terms of the specific demands of different classes and sectors of class'.[81] Racial exploitation and discrimination was therefore explained in terms of underlying class relations.

Despite their emphasis on relations of production, the early Marxists, for reasons outlined earlier could not escape from the salient concept of race. Deacon noted that 'in fact the concept of race retained a remarkable degree of autonomy upon the terrain of the early Marxist approach'.[82] In terms of racial exploitation Johnstone, wrote that cheapness was a result of powerlessness, which he assumed stemmed from original colonial relations. He also wrote: 'capitalist class interests were not to be maximised with impunity, other white interests were to be safeguarded and secured; and in exchange for marginal constraints on their particular interests the different white classes could continue to reap the benefits deriving to them from their collective colonial domination over the non-white population'.[83]

In terms of resistance to racial domination Wolpe wrote, 'non-white sectors of other classes which operate within a different set of class relationships from the non-white working class may have their situation ordered in terms of Apartheid. This creates within limits an identity of interests between the non-white sectors of different classes'.[84] These references to colonial/racial relations of domination are relatively scarce and are often mediated by such comments as: 'the interests of different classes within a particular racial group tend to become contradictory and the outcome at any time depends on the changing power situation'.[85] Nevertheless, these references to race reveal that the early Marxist work had not managed to constitute itself completely as an alternative paradigm.

The early Marxist work, with its recognition of national racial oppression as well as class oppression, may well have been influenced by the liberation theories of the day, for within this work, there is implicit support for the concept of two stage revolution involving firstly, a national democratic struggle and secondly, a socialist struggle in attempts to overcome the Apartheid State.[86]

Wolpe went further than the others in attempting to demonstrate that segregation was a product of capitalist development, and not just a racist intensification of segregation, behind which lay the colonial relations of domination. He did so be referring to the articulation between the dominant capitalist and the subordinate pre-capitalist modes of production, through which capital ensured a cheap way of reproducing its labour power. He referred to the change from the articulation between different modes of production to the articulation within capitalism itself and suggested that Apartheid was a response to the decline in the labour reproductive function of the reserves. According to Wolpe, Apartheid could best be understood as 'the mechanism specific to South Africa in a period of secondary industrialisation of maintaining a high rate of capitalist exploitation through a system which guarantees a cheap and controlled labour force, under circumstances in which the conditions of reproduction of that labour force is rapidly disintegrating'.[87] Apartheid was thus explained as the political expression of capitalist development in South Africa.

This leads directly on to how the early Marxists viewed the State. As is obvious from Wolpe's definition of Apartheid above, the State was seen to be an instrument of the capitalist class functioning to secure and promote the interests of capital in general. The whole social system was described as a 'labour repressive' system in which the State played its part in ensuring that the conditions of production were maintained and reproduced.[88] The State therefore was seen to act in the interests of capital in implementing racist policies.

The early Marxists were rather ambiguous as to when the capitalist mode became dominant. As a result of this, they could not explain racial discrimination wholly in terms of the logic of capitalism, they either had to make some reference to colonial relations of domination, or do what Wolpe did, and refer to the articulation of the two modes of production as a form of internal colonialism which explained segregation and Apartheid.

SECOND GENERATION MARXISTS

The early Marxists were challenged in their ambiguity about when capitalism was established by the second generation Marxists, in particular Williams and Morris, who insisted that capitalism was established as early on as the discovery of gold mining. These Marxists suggested that segregation could only be understood in terms of the inner logic of capitalism.

The new generation of scholars, Morris, Williams, Kaplan, Davies, Fransman, many of whom were not historians, were to expand on the initial insights of the early Marxists. They launched themselves from the base established by the early Marxists and went further than these scholars in their rejection of the liberal thesis. As Morris noted, 'the political task (for us) was to struggle against liberalism ... we were very political in that regard but political in the realm of theoretical questions, not political in the sense of struggles that were going on on the ground'.[89]

Morris noted that at the time, in September 1972, 'the working class hadn't arisen, there wasn't a popular movement'.[90] According to Shula Marks: 'Morris, Kaplan and Davies were the generation of the 1960s. The State was at its most monolithic. They could talk about subordinated classes. There was very little room in their work for resistance'.[91] These Marxists focused on the nature of the State and on the battle for hegemony between fractions of capital. They paid very little attention to class struggle. The rise of Black consciousness and the establishment of SASO left the young white radicals alienated from black radicalism on the one hand and liberalism on the other. They found a niche for themselves in the theory of Marxism.[91]

The major political struggle for these Marxists was, as Morris portrayed it, 'in the realm of ideas'.[92] They were influenced by the rise of French Marxism which injected a new life force into Marxism. The main concern of French Marxism was the theory of the State. The Poulantzian debate with Miliband had just taken place around the question of the State. Morris described the concerns of these second generation South African Marxists: 'We were very passionate about locating the problems within a Marxist framework ... what struck us was two things. The one was the question of capitalism ... [and the other was in] understanding racism in terms of State policy and State interventions over the historical period'.[93]

These Marxists firstly insisted that capitalism became the dominant mode of production as early as the creation of the mining industry. Secondly they insisted that the capitalist mode of production determined completely the relationship between the two modes of production.[94] They even went as far as to say that capitalism in fact destroyed the pre-capitalist mode of production and replaced it with a 'travesty' which existed only for the benefit of capitalism.[95] For these theorists Apartheid could only be explained in terms of the logic of the capitalist mode of production. The reasons for both the origins and the perpetuation of segregation and Apartheid were to be found wholly within the inner logic of capitalism.

Segregation, in the form of the reserves, was explained in terms of its labour reproductive function, as the only means open to the mining industry, which had no control over the production and so the price of the commodities upon which labour relied.[96] Apartheid was explained as being the result of changes in the structure of capitalism. Morris and Williams saw Apartheid as the product of the rise to hegemony of the manufacturing sector of capital after 1945 which made particular demands on the labour market, which were satisfied by State policies in the form of Apartheid policies such as influx control.[97] Wolpe and Legassick, in line with the second generation Marxists, believed Apartheid to be the result of

attempts by the State to control and manage the industrial reserve army, which they understood to be largely generated by the rising organic composition of capital.[98] These studies related Apartheid to the logic of 'total social capital'.[99] Apartheid was seen to be not only functional to capital but its very existence was related to the demands of capital accumulation.

Having asserted the dominance of the capitalist mode of production, it was natural to assume, that all struggle was within that mode, in the relations of production. The concept of colonial/racial domination was erased and race was subordinated to the concept class. The liberation theory of two stages of revolution was discarded by these scholars in favour of socialist struggle as the means of overcoming Apartheid.

The second generation Marxists, in general however, paid very little attention to class struggle. Davies, Kaplan, O'Meara and Morris were pre-occupied with attempting to understand racism in terms of State policy and State interventions over the historical period.[100] Inspired by Poulantzas they argued that State policies could only be understood in terms of the interests of different fractions of capital and which fraction had hegemony at any particular time. Their work tended to be politicist. It did not relate the economic to the political adequately and it tended to ignore the struggle between capital and labour.[101] In fact according to Marks the black dominated classes were 'as much dominated in the structuralist texts as their authors saw them in reality'.[102]

Racial policies were explained in terms of which fraction of capital had hegemony at any particular time. These scholars explained the racial laws and changes to them in terms of: a dominance of foreign (mining) capital in the early 1900s; the seizure of hegemony by National capital (manufacturing or agriculture) in alliance with the white workers in 1924 (an alliance which explained the statutory protection of white labour); the loss of agricultural capital's hegemony in 1939; and the victory of an alliance of white labour, agriculture and the petty bourgeoisie in the National Party victory of 1948. [103] Although in theory the State was relatively autonomous, it was seen to act in the interests of capital and particularly that fraction which was dominant, Apartheid, according to this view, was a policy imposed from above.

A very heavy and bitter ideological debate took place in academic circles in England in the late 1970s between the French structuralists and the Capital logicians, which resulted in the disintegration of the French structural analysis. Morris noted the effect this had on the small group at Sussex, 'it resulted in a retreat on the part of some of us because there was no internal coherence - there was no centre that could maintain a tradition. So once we left, Sussex disappeared'.[104]

The Capital logicians, among whom were Simon-Clarke, Duncan Innes and Martin Plaut, challenged the fractionalists by arguing that 'class relations are prior to the specific economic, ideological and political forms taken by those relations'.[105] They rejected the concept of an alliance between white labour and agricultural capital and argued instead that the State's racial policies were a result of the response of capital to the white worker revolt in 1922. The State's racial policies were seen to be an attack on the working class in general for, in giving concessions to the white workers, the capitalists were attempting to contain white working class anger and at the same time prevent the threat of black and white working class unity.[106] Racial policies were essentially explained in terms of the 'totality of the relations of production'.

The great increase in trade union organisation and activity from 1973 must have been largely responsible for the increasing centrality given to the working class in Marxist work in the mid to late 1970s. The capital logicians brought the concept of class struggle to the fore and as these Marxists re-defined the white working class as a supervisory petty bourgeoisie, which enabled them to explain white workers' support for racist policies without reference to racial prejudice, so the stage began to be set for the placing of the black working class at the centre of analysis.

The State theorists conceived of segregation and Apartheid in terms of their Marxist paradigm. It was explained largely in terms of being functional to the inner logic of capitalism. This was seen to be the reason for both its origin and its continued existence. Racial policies were implemented by the State which was acting in the interests of capital or particular fractions of capital. As far as the fractionalists were concerned class struggle hardly featured in their analysis which concentrated on the party political level, on the struggles between fractions of capital. The capital relationists did relate everything to class struggle, however, this was at the theoretical level and the actual struggles of the working class, on the ground, were not considered.

THE FOURTH HISTORIOGRAPHICAL GENERATION

As the South African structuralists retreated from the highly charged debate within British Marxist circles, and as their centre disintegrated when they left Sussex, another group of scholars whom Lonsdale called 'the fourth historiographical generation' - the humanist materialists, began to consolidate and advance.[107] This perspective had been in existence from the time Leggassick and his peers first set up a challenge to the liberal thesis, however it only really came into its own in the late 1970s.

SOAS, at the University of London, with Shula Marks at the helm, provided a strong thread on continuity and a stable base. Scholars like Phil Bonner, Jeff Guy, Peter Delius, William Beinart, Colin Bundy and Charles van Onselen, amongst others, had connections with this centre in one way or another, whether it was through attending the Institute of Commonwealth Studies Societies of Southern Africa Seminar, studying there, or having contact with Shula Marks while researching in England.[108]

The advance of the humanist materialist perspective was given impetus by a number of different factors, apart from the structural continuity of SOAS and the influence of Shula Marks, who, herself, had been strongly influenced by Legassick. The new direction in Africanist work which: stressed the importance of pre-colonial African history; encouraged the use of all sources available; and used 'political economy' analysis as well as new comparative approaches, including resistance studies and peasant studies, had an impact on the work of these scholars. They were also influenced by the French Marxist anthropologists Meillasoux, Rey and Terray.[109] The vicious critiques of functionalism and structuralism within British Marxist circles made these Marxists more perceptive to the limitations of the work of the State theorists. At the same time there was an increasing sensitivity to currents in Marxist social history and the work of such scholars as E. P. Thompson, Hobsbawn and Gareth Stedman-Jones. The Ruskin History Workshop formed a part of this current. The emergence of New Left scholarship in America in the 1960s and 1970s, with its scholars Genovese and Barrington-Moore, was also reflected in the new concerns of Marxists in South Africa. Marxist historiography in South Africa was to reflect these changes in European and American scholarship.

Events within the country also influenced the direction Marxist work took. The late 1970s and early 1980s was marked by the return of many Marxist scholars to South Africa. This return was closely followed by a move to decolonise South African history, a move which was strongly embodied in the establishment of the History Workshop at the University of the Witwatersrand. Peter Delius explained this development: 'I suppose living in South Africa, teaching in a South African University in the 1980s with the kind of interests I have. One cannot help being increasingly sensitised to a wider context, the processes which are taking place, the demands and aspirations. The History Workshop has basically been a vehicle for that'.[110] In the mid 1970s South Africa was a very different place to that of the 1960s. It was characterised by a massive increase in labour unrest and trade union struggles as well as the wider upsurge of popular resistance. The image of a monolithic State was destroyed as, in the face of increasing resistance, it began to show signs of weakness and irresoluteness. Apartheid too began to appear to be dysfunctional both to political stability and to capital growth. These developments impacted on the Marxist work of the late 1970s and 1980s.

Labour Studies

The increasing interest in labour struggles and organisations followed the rise of trade union activity in the 1970s and was expressed in the number of labour conferences held by academics, the three main ones being: the Social and Economic History Conference in Oxford in 1974; the Labour Conference organised by Phil Bonner at Wits in 1976; and the first Wits History Workshop *Labour Township and Protest* in 1978. Although the State theorists, in particular the Capital Logicians, had emphasised the centrality of class struggle, this remained at the level of a 'fleshless abstraction' and was subject to a functionalist approach.[111] The focus of labour studies began to change from broad theoretical accounts, to the examination of historically specific struggles with emphasis on resistance. Charles van Onselen was among the first to spearhead this approach in his study *Chibaro* (1976). He argued, as earlier Marxists had done, that, 'it was the intense exploitation of cheap African labour throughout the history of the industry that made the greatest contribution to establishing its profitability'.[112] However, unlike the State theorists he emphasised the bitter resistance of the African mine labourers. The form many of the labour histories have taken has largely been a concentration of significant events in labour history, with a focus of resistance, such as strikes, stayaways and protests.[113] Racial policies were therefore seen to be activity resisted and not just impositions from above on the 'dominated' class.

Social History

The concentration of interest remained on the Witwatersrand and on labour history as was obvious in the theme of the first History Workshop (1978). However there was a shift in interest towards township and the non-mining classes, almost in an effort to compensate for the previous intense concentration on the mining industry which had predominated in the 1970s. This coincided with a shift towards examining people's experiences. As Bozzoli noted, 'while the historical past may be governed by abstract and objective tendencies, those who live that history, and those who are living its continuation today, experience it subjectively'.[114] Van Onselen's *Studies* examined how people's lives were affected by the changes consequent upon the discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand. He argued that 'during these formative decades, the ruling classes gradually came to assert their control over the

subordinated classes on the Rand and exercised a powerful influence over where they lived, how they spent their non-working hours, how domestic labour was allocated within their homes and how they were to endure periods of unemployment'.[115] Van Onselen and the other Marxist social historians have given a great deal of attention to examining Africans' experiences of racism, segregation and Apartheid.

The History Workshop's second conference *Town and Countryside in the Transvaal* revealed the increasing move toward a regional focus which exposed the particularities of different areas and the varied processes of struggle and incorporation. This of course informed the interpretations of segregation and Apartheid, the effects of which, and the implementation of which, were seen to vary from region to region. The theme of countryside also reflected the growing interest in the nature of African societies and their incorporation into Colonial society, and the interest in trying to understand what the implications of that encounter were.[116] The proliferation of books written in the early 1980s is an expression of this interest in rural history which had begun to develop in the late 1970s and into the early 1980s (Guy 1980, Peires 1981, Beinart 1982, Ross 1983, Bonner 1983 and Delius 1983).[117]

Africanist History

These studies, which examined the internal dynamics of African societies and the processes of their transformation, challenged the structural work which gave 'too determinant a role to capital the State'.[118] They were interested in the implications of the encounter between capitalist and pre-capitalist modes of production, and their emphasis on agency led them to the conclusion that 'dominated groups contributed to shaping not only their own local world but also the wider society of which they were becoming part'.[119] These historians proceeded to give alternative explanations of segregation and Apartheid, in which African societies were seen to have had some influence on the way in which racial policies developed.

Patrick Harries, for instance, revealed that labour migrancy, which had been explained as being the result of the need of capital for cheap labour, actually pre-dated this period in the form of labour emigration to satisfy the needs of the numzane and the chiefs.[120] Peter Delius revealed a similar pattern among the Pedi.[121] William Beinart showed how the Mpondo chiefs actually gave their support to the 1913 Land Act in an attempt to secure their control over land.[122] These scholars wrote of struggles by African societies to retain control over land and resources. William Beinart concluded that the implementation of segregation was given its shape in many respects by the manner in which rural Africans on the periphery fought to retain control over their resources, both material and cultural.[123] Shula Marks wrote that, in South Africa, capitalism had to come to terms not with the fragmented cultures of slaves, but with, in many instances the still pulsating remains of powerful African kingdoms. The structures and social relationships of African pre-capitalist societies profoundly shaped the struggles that actually crystallised in policies of segregation.[124] She advocated a far more complex understanding of segregation, suggesting that the contests over the form and pace of proletarianisation took place at a bewildering number of levels: between capital and labour, between and within branches of the State, between different capitalist interests, and between all of these and the pre-colonial ruling class of chiefs and headmen in the countryside, as well as between the latter and their subjects'.[125]

The Agrarian Question - Transition to Capitalism?

Social history, Africanist history, and Agrarian studies all fed into each other in South African Marxist studies, with no clear dividing line between them. The Beinart, Bonner, Delius studies impacted on the Agrarian question in South African historiography and it is in the Agrarian debate that the fundamental difference between the structuralists, in particular Morris, and the social historians are revealed. Although both sides are clearly Marxist, the central issue dividing them is the question about when the capitalist mode of production became dominant in the countryside and the answer to this informs their views about segregation. Morris, making parallels between the transition to capitalism in South Africa and the transition in Europe, saw South Africa's rural history taking the Prussian Path to capitalism and concluded that South African agriculture was entirely capitalist by 1920.[126] From these conclusions segregation and racial policies in the countryside could be explained entirely in terms of the demands of capital accumulation. He went on to challenge the scholars whom Bradford calls the 'bittereinders', whose essential thesis proposed that the transition to capitalism lasted well into the 1900s and even to the present period.[127] This, he exclaimed, has very important political implications, for, 'if farmers were not capitalist until the 1960s, then how does one escape the old liberal explanation of racism/segregation/Apartheid as the ideology of backward pre-capitalist farmers?'[128] He followed his argument through, suggesting that 'it is totally misleading to see Apartheid as the return of a feudal system of extra-economic coercion in the countryside. On the contrary as the outcome of determinate class struggle it signalled the victory of the capitalist farmers over the direct producers (labour tenants)'.[129]

Apart from the fact that Morris' conclusions have been challenged and proved wrong on empirical grounds, [130] (a fact which, to the social historians like Keegan, is very important, because it proves the need for 'detailed innovative empirical work ... on which macro-explanation can proceed', [131] and not the sort of history advocated by Morris, which sees empirical work in a secondary supporting role to theoretical work) his comparison has been challenged too. Keegan voiced the views of a number of historians when he challenged Morris' 'colonised' history in which he compared the development of capitalism in Europe with that of the colonial world. Keegan noted that 'the problem with an overly reductionist definition of capitalism is that it is incapable of apprehending conceptually the substantial difference between the historical dynamics of rural South Africa in the colonial nineteenth century and feudal Europe'. Basically he suggested that capitalism in the colonial world did not develop 'in the womb' but developed initially as a 'subsidiary form of capital on the margins, more typically of a mercantile of speculative character - a process of primitive accumulation which also implied the creation of an incipient working class through processes of dispossession and impoverishment'.[132] Lonsdale has pointed to a key question in South African historiography, that being the question of the causal connections between conquest, capital, and racial and class repression, in other words, how far have South Africa's original relations of conquest shaped her subsequent relations of production?'[133] Keegan, who places himself clearly within the arena of Marxist social history, gave his view of the situation, 'if we accept the analytical priority of the larger processes of accumulation, dispossession and struggle, and accept that the dominance of capital is compatible with a wide range of agrarian productive relations, we can avoid the futile exercise of trying to fit enormously ambiguous and contradictory transitional relations and struggles into the mould of either the quasi-feudal or the proletarian model. To seek points of transition, to seek to define precisely at what point tenancy changes from being a feudal to a predominantly capitalist relationship (as Morris does) is to do violence to the real historical processes involved'.[134]

These social historians have moved away from the structuralist assumption that the racial polity of South Africa was calculatedly and intentionally structured to cater to the needs of capital towards an attempt to understand racism/segregation/Apartheid as a 'real historical process ... a more complex, ambiguous, multi-faceted process of change'.[135]

This inevitably meant that the main theoretical concept of class was understood in a more complex way. According to Bozzoli, 'there may well have been a tendency to treat (classes) as (economic abstractions) in a great deal of South African scholarship. Time and time again it emerged in discussions that the economic identification of classes is not the last word, but merely the first and that it is the political, social, cultural and ideological character of classes that renders them real and recognisable social categories'.[136] In other words concepts of race and ethnicity are not seen as mere 'false consciousness' but are seen as 'real recognisable social categories'.

This development has been in part a response to the findings on empirical investigation, that ethnic forces are used in resistance to segregationist policies, and in part, a response to certain crises in the contemporary period such as the violence around the Inkatha movement and the UDF. Iain Edwards noted how historians were becoming more aware of the way people were using ethnicity. 'It was now so typically apparent that the legacy Apartheid was going to leave to post-Apartheid society was going to be quite devastatingly apparent, and quite bloody, and the enormity of that issue struck people'. It spurred a small group of Natal academics to begin to write a history of the Natal Zululand region 'from the bottom up'.[137]

The attempt to escape from the economism and instrumentalism of the Marxist work in the 1970s, as was expressed in Bozzoli's reconceptualisation of class has led some scholars into difficulty. Greenberg, for instance, has contradicted himself, in suggesting, on the one hand, that rural exploitation 'is essentially a class phenomenon,' and on the other hand, that race or ethnicity 'has an ontological status of its own'.[138] Deacon made the point that Marxism is a monist conception of history, and attempts to overcome the inhibitions of a single essential determinant simply lead to an unfruitful dualism'.[139]

As far as political strategy is concerned, Marxist social history, with its attempts to understand real historical processes, and its studies of townships, squatter movements and ethnic struggles, does give implicit recognition to the concept of national democratic struggle associated with UDF political strategies. Although there is an assumption of an essential class struggle, Marxist social history recognises the existence of other struggles as being 'real and recognisable'.

Recent Marxist work has adopted the 'agency' position in what Perry Anderson has seen as the central problem in Marxism 'the nature of the relationship between structure and subject'.[140] This new work has constituted itself in relation to the earlier structuralist work. Certain critics have commented that it may have gone too far to the extent of becoming almost apolitical - placing too much emphasis on experience to the detriment of rigorous class analysis. Shula Marks has noted that as far as South Africa is concerned 'it is perhaps more difficult than elsewhere to ignore the realities of power and domination'.[141] However, lately, even Keegan has voiced his concern, as have many others: 'We must guard against the creeping empiricism that is one of the dangers of "history from below" ... Historians must not forget how to ask large scale questions. We need to give shape and meaning to the smaller historical enquiries that we are involved in, to bring theoretical expertise and comparative insights to bear, so that our new history does not become (or remain) disparate, fragmentary, momentary, incidental or contingent.[142]

Of course this concern has fed back into a central question in South African historiography - the explanation of racism, segregation and Apartheid, and hence today, after a recognition of the potential dangers inherent in social history (pointed to by Morris and recognised by many others), the theme of the latest History Workshop, the largest gathering of historically-minded academics in the country: *Structure and Experience in the Making of Apartheid.*

CONCLUSION

The Afrikaner Nationalists explained racism/segregation/Apartheid in terms of race and ethnicity. The liberals explained it in racial terms, emphasising the contradiction between irrational political factors and rational economic factors. Johnstone and Legassick's early work explained segregation in terms of the contradiction between white colonial capitalism and cheap exploited black labour, Wolpe explained it in terms of the articulation between different modes of production. Morris and Williams explained it in terms of the inner logic of capitalism and imposed by a strong State acting in the interests of a dominant fraction of capital. Marxist social historians explained it in terms of 'agency' and 'real historical processes' while remaining essentially committed to a Marxist analysis of the political economy. Historians have interpreted racism and its institutional forms very differently over the years. These differences need to be viewed in terms of the wider context of historians' work: the economic and political developments within the country; developments in European and American scholarship; the existing historiographical traditions in relation to which the newer work is constituted; as well as the different political frameworks within which the various historians have operated.

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141. S. Marks 'South African Studies since World War Two' p.189

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