

# Against Apartheid Culture

---

## ANC's document \*

The battle of progressive humanity for the total and final elimination of the vile and preposterous system of colonialism in Africa has entered its final stage. The inevitability of victory has moved the people on the last barricades of struggle — from the Horn of Africa to the southern most shores of the continent — to acts of unprecedented heroism. In South Africa our people, after more than three centuries of brutal national oppression, are asserting their wish to be free with inspiring bravery.

Despite its inevitability, we are under no illusion that victory will come easily. It is not the first time that our heroic people have confronted shot and shell of the oppressor, and the African National Congress has repeatedly declared that repression and mass murder are the essence of the apartheid system.

Apartheid, we all know, is the reactionary force directed by the White racist minority against the Black majority. To justify national oppression of the Black people and their control by fascist methods, the white colonial regime upholds a false racist philosophy which seeks to disguise murderous practices with a mantle of divine inspiration and natural law. By means of State power and spurious theorising and philosophising, the racists attempt to justify the pernicious system of apartheid.

Attempting to give a spiritual and cultural rationalisation for their racism, the « thinkers » and propagandists of the white minority must dig their own intellectual graves. A document produced by the State Information Department, Pretoria, called « Multi-National Development in South Africa: The Reality » gives what the racists consider to be the theoretical and cultural basis for apartheid.

It states: « The domination of White over Black is justified by the regimes through right to this land on the strength of three historical realities: purposeful and uninterrupted occupation and habitation, effective and sustained economic development, and effective and continuous political control ».

For the purposes of the international community, the whites merely « arrived » in South Africa. The wars of conquest against indigenous peoples should be forgotten; such laws as the Land Act of 1913, by which the whites appropriated 87 per cent of the territory, should be ignored; as well as the realities of black presence in South Africa,

---

\* Document submitted by the ANC of South Africa to the Lisbon World Conference Against Apartheid, Racism and Colonialism in Southern Africa, June 1977, and published in *Sechaba* Vol. 11 fourth quarter 1977, pp. 33-39.

their participation in « sustained economic development » and the denial to them of « effective and continuous political control ».

The key to understanding the social and political structure of South Africa, we are told, lies in a « balanced appraisal of the unique diversity of cultures... and the differing levels of socio-economic and political sophistication ». These differing levels, it seems, are the choice of the black people, not the result of the apparatus which denies them the right to attain any higher level. Was it not Verwoerd who said, « When I have control of native education I will reform it so that natives will be taught from childhood to realise that equality with Europeans is not for them » ?

But contemptuous of other people's ability to question their claims, the South African authorities do not hesitate to boast that the whites are « culturally the most homogeneous and politically and socio-economically the most sophisticated and most developed of the four major groups. » The inference is that this sophistication and development are natural to the white people and has nothing to do with their assumption of all the power in the country.

Thus « black South Africans are not a single, homogenous, integrated group ». They are « politically, economically and educationally the least advanced of the four major demographic divisions » and to emphasise the alleged natural superiority of the whites, « history placed the white nation of the Republic in a position of guardianship over these black peoples ».

The white racists greatly fear the homogeneity of the oppressed black people. Unity of the oppressed, politically, economically and culturally, is the nightmare that haunts white supremacy, and among its first projects were those designed to prevent any attempt at national unity.

A spurious cultural theory tries to justify the policy of divide and rule, by equating outmoded tribal and ethnic groups with distinct nations. Tribal differences are conveniently classified as cultural differences and everybody has been pigeon-holed into geometrically defined areas called « homelands » irrespective of historical realities which show the large numbers of black people long inhabited regions now defined as « white areas ».

The white rulers insist that each ethnic group is « desirous of maintaining its separate identity ». But at no time were the African people, for that matter Coloured or Asiatic people, consulted about this. Blacks were not present in the first legislatures to decide upon their future, nor are they represented today.

In fact this divisive scheme was emphatically rejected when representatives of the tribal groups gathered in 1912 to unite their people in what was to become the African National Congress. The most astonishing feature of that conference was the number of tribes who sent representatives. There were Zulus, Xhosas, Tswana, Sothos, Vendas, Shangaans, Tongas and others... The ANC realised from the outset that the problem of forging unity among Africans was the key to our freedom struggle. The formation of the ANC therefore marked the

birth of a nation whose foundation was laid in the stirring call by Dr P.I. Seme when in 1911 he declared : « The demon of racialism, the aberrations of Xhosa-Fingo feuds, the animosity that exists between Zulus and the Tongas, between the Basuto and every other native, must be buried and forgotten. We are one people ».

The struggle of the African majority of South Africa to overthrow the pernicious apartheid regime and white supremacy as a whole, therefore represents the dynamic cultural unity of the people aspiring to genuine nationhood.

In the words of the late Amilcar Cabral : « The exercise of imperialist domination demands cultural oppression and the attempt at direct or indirect liquidation of what is essential in the subject people's culture. But this people is able to create and develop a liberation movement only because it keeps its culture alive in the teeth of permanent and organised repression of its cultural life — only because, its politico-military resistance being destroyed, it continues to resist culturally. And it is cultural resistance which, at a given moment, may take on new forms (political, economic, armed) to confront foreign domination ».

Having had to suspend the armed struggle in the 19th century as a result of superior firepower of the colonialists and uncoordinated and divided opposition by the various tribes, the African people had to consider new forms of struggle. This gave rise to the modern struggle against white supremacy led and developed by the African National Congress.

Faced with the growing movement for national liberation, the racists have been doing everything in their power to implement the Bantustan policy in the hope that this would satisfy the national and cultural aspirations of the people. John E. Fobes of UNESCO stated correctly, « South Africa has made much of her protection of separate cultures. What does this amount to ? We have in South Africa a government — imposed « traditionalism » — in fact the use of traditional culture to maintain the legitimacy of a culture of domination. The Republic's protection of culture means for Africans the external trappings of once-great cultures reduced to the folkloric and to caricature ».

It must be pointed out again that race discrimination is not the sole invention of the present rulers of South Africa. Successive governments in the hands of the minority population have contributed to the construction of the monster which bestrides our country. Having achieved power the present government set out to consolidate the racist structure whose tentacles penetrate all spheres of life : political, economic, social, residential, educational, enforcing their policy by means of a vast police and military machinery to back up the administrative.

Culture and social contact between black and white are hampered by the rigorous application of the apartheid policy. Africans, Coloureds (mixed descent) and Asiatics go into the « white » areas

only to work in industry and commerce, or as domestic servants, or to purchase goods. Non-Africans may not visit an African township without a special permit.

Apartheid determines the location of each racial group, what kind of education they must receive, within what group they may marry, what type of trade or profession they may adopt, under which circumstances members of different communities may meet. The Population Registration Act categorises each member of South African society, black and white. Under the Group Areas Act, homes, schools, churches have been lost to various communities.

Halls, theatres, sportsfields are segregated and the best amenities being situated in « white » areas, permission is required by blacks to use them, which permission is usually refused. The law allows no artists of different races to perform together or mixed audiences to attend a theatre or cinema.

While it is difficult to prevent radio programmes being available to the general population, the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) has special « Bantu » programmes and « Coloured » programmes. It is typical of the regime's « separate development » policy that when two Black children tried to enter for the SABC's Beethoven Centenary competition, they were debarred for the reason that Beethoven was a white man and the blacks should concentrate on their own music ! Recently single-channel television was introduced, strictly controlled by the apartheid authorities, and without the broadcasting of « liberal nonsense » and, in the words of the then Minister of National Education, Senator Van der Spuy, in 1971, with the spirit of healthy conservatism in the English-speaking and Afrikaans-speaking communities. Attempting to insulate their own and the rest of the population from any progressive influences, thousands of books from abroad have been banned under the Publications and Entertainment Act, the Customs and Excise Act, and the Suppression of Communism Act. Dissemination of news is controlled by laws and open threats.

In order for the racist state to last, the minds of the population must be controlled from an early age. Basically, education in South Africa is designed according to the tenets of « Christian National Education » as initiated by F.A.K. (Federation of Afrikaans Cultural organisations). The programme of education is totalitarian in character and founded on outmoded precepts and geared to enforce the views of a minority of the whole population.

In general terms all white children should be educated according to the view of life of their parents, in terms of Afrikaner nationalism divisions of the past must be perpetuated — despite the « homogeneous » character of the whites. As illustrated in the words of Dr W. Nicol, Administrator of the Transvaal in 1951, dualism in the family, religion or love is to be condemned, and in education « it is cruelty to a child's mind and spirit ».

In terms of the blacks there is first of all the Bantu Education Act. The education for Africans has been summed up by Verwoerd,

introducing the Act in 1953, when Minister of Native Affairs. « When my department controls native education it will know for what class of higher education a native is fitted and whether he will have a chance in life to use his knowledge ». And claiming South Africa to be a white country: « There is no place for him (the African) in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour ».

While the government attempts to whitewash its racist policy by claiming that it assists the African to develop his « own culture » the facts show that less and less black people are achieving adequate education.

All teaching is done in vernacular languages up to and including the first form, and it is intended that this should continue up to matriculation. The result is that when the switch to English, for example, is made in secondary schools it is found that having learned only the simplest form of that language, the percentage of passes is disastrous. The student's « Bantu » qualification in any event, makes him only eligible to enter a « tribal » university and nowhere else. In addition the government has been pursuing a programme of Afrikanerising education, curtailing education still further (and not only for blacks) by teaching in the narrow and localised Afrikaans language used only in South Africa.

The Soweto uprising of June 1976 was triggered off by the attempt to force Africans to study certain subjects in Afrikaans, but it was more than that. It was also a protest against the whole Bantu Education policy, and a protest against the denial of all human rights.

The racist government often boasts that it is today spending more on African education than ever before, and that the percentage of African pupils is steadily rising. What is overlooked is that in education, as in all South African life, the gap between white and black is also steadily increasing. In 1964 the amount spent by the government on each white pupil was 10 times that spent on each African, and by 1974 it was an average of 15 times as much, in Natal province 20 times as much.

There is also the growing realisation by our people that education opens no doors. « What » asked Verwoerd, « is the use of teaching a Bantu child mathematics when he cannot use it in practice?... It is therefore necessary that native education should be controlled in such a way that it should be in accordance with the policy of the state ». Those Africans who attain a higher education diploma or degree might still find themselves in dead-end jobs or in the unemployment lines.

The Nazi-like conception of the master race must inevitably erode the character of the white community itself, driving it more and more into isolation from the rest of humankind, into the narrow confines of intolerance even towards its own racial group.

« Intending immigrants are asked to state their religion.. and « The Nasionale Jeugbond (Nationalist Youth) expressed fear that the large number of immigrants threatened the identity of the Afrikaner, calling for a policy of immigration which will not endanger the future

of the Afrikaner nation ». Likewise a delegate to a Transvaal National Party congress protested, Coloured people cannot marry my daughter, but when she is 21, a Portuguese can ».

However among the white people themselves, far-seeing elements are no longer prepared to live in the cultural desert which apartheid is making of South Africa. Writers, academics, artists and students are growing more and more restless and starting to identify with the anti-racist struggle. No longer able to rationalise their policy to the South African people and the world, the racist regime is resorting more and more to terror, murder and the rule of the gun. This has become the scientific and cultural basis of apartheid today. At the height of the Soweto events last year, with black bodies lying in the streets of South Africa's ghettos, Minister of Justice Kruger declared : « If the Bantu does not know his place, I will show him his place ».

Similarly are the minority Coloured and Asiatic people victims of apartheid. Denied the fulfilment of their aspirations, discriminated against in social, educational, economic and political life, herded into Group Areas, these people form an important part of the united front for liberation of the black oppressed.

Attempting to separate the oppressed minorities from the African majority, the white supremacists claim that like themselves, these minorities will be swamped in the event of black freedom and will, like the whites, lose their cultural identities. The racists have nothing to offer the oppressed minorities but apartheid and continued oppression. In contrast, the Freedom Charter, the programme of the African National Congress and all elements of the revolutionary democratic movement, states : « South Africa belongs to all who live in it, Black and White. The African people as the indigenous owners of the country have accepted that all who have made South Africa and helped build it up, are components of its multi-national population, are and will be in a democratic South Africa one people inhabiting their common home ».

The ANC programme states : « All National Groups shall have equal rights... For all the non-white groups — Africans, Indians and Coloured the situation is one of humiliation and oppression... The culture of the African, Indian and Coloured people is barely tolerated. In fact everything is done to smash and obliterate the genuine cultural heritage of our people. If there is reference to culture by the oppressors it is for the purpose of using it as an instrument to maintain our people in backwardness and ignorance... A democratic government of the people will ensure that all national groups have equal rights, as such, to achieve their destiny in a united South Africa. There shall be equal status... for the African, Indian, Coloured and Whites as far as their national rights are concerned. All people shall have equal rights to use their own languages, and to develop their own folk culture and customs ; all national groups shall be protected by laws against insults to their race and national pride... all laws and practises based on apartheid or racial discrimination shall be set aside ».

## RÉSUMÉ

Dans cet article, l'auteur stigmatise la duplicité de la politique coloniale d'apartheid de la minorité blanche sud-africaine.

En effet, pour se donner une conscience tranquille, assurer sa permanence et faire face à la colère toujours montante de l'humanité éprise de paix, de liberté et de justice, les tenants et penseurs de l'apartheid ont développé une théorie culturelle tendant à faire croire, vainement, que la supériorité culturelle, et par conséquent politique et économique, de la minorité blanche sud-africaine, est chose naturelle et non un produit de l'appropriation et de l'exercice du pouvoir total à son bénéfice exclusif ; que les différences tribales des populations noires sud-africaines constituent des différences culturelles faisant de ces populations des groupes disparates, culturellement non intégrés, donc non homogènes ; que ces populations désirent maintenir, au niveau de chaque groupe ethnique, leur identité culturelle, et partant, leur identité politique. Qu'une telle théorie et la politique odieuse qui en découle, l'apartheid, la bantoustanisation et la main-mise sur l'éducation des noirs sud-africains, exposent la peur qu'a la minorité blanche de l'unité des peuples noirs d'Afrique du Sud est évident. Ainsi rien n'est dit ni sur les droits des populations indigènes sur les terres confisquées et occupées par les blancs sud-africains, ni sur l'unité de ces populations maintes fois affirmée et démontrée depuis la conférence de 1912 qui avait réuni les représentants de toutes les ethnies noires sud-africaines et cristallisée par l'ANC. La lutte que mène depuis longtemps, sous la direction de l'ANC, la majorité de la population d'Afrique du Sud pour recouvrer ses droits légitimes constitue, d'après l'auteur, un facteur culturel éminemment déterminant dans le processus de renforcement de l'unité des populations de couleur d'Afrique du Sud.