



History and Ideology in South Africa

# THE INTELLECTUALS AND THE STRUGGLE FOR EQUALITY

# WHY IS SOUTH AFRICAN HISTORY IMPORTANT?



- ✘ Fascinating microcosm that may hold answers to global problems related to racism, xenophobia, and conflict resolution
- ✘ Importance for the whole of Southern Africa and promising exemplar of South-South co-operation
- ✘ Possible success for western civilization, modernization, and political human rights in a third world region
- ✘ Western competition over trade, aid, and a growing middle class market

## MORE REASONS TO STUDY THE SOUTH AFRICAN SITUATION



- ✘ People have taken their destiny in their own hands through self-mobilising popular movements
- ✘ Revealing the possibilities and limitations of social revolution and revolutionary socialism
- ✘ Strings to international solidarity in the North
- ✘ Historians/intellectuals had an important part to play in the attempt to heal a divided nation
- ✘ Competitive academic environment offering classical cases of structural social studies

# WHY THE HISTORIOGRAPHICAL ANGLE?

- ✘ Comparative research reveals different overall understandings of how the apartheid society functioned...
- ✘ ..and combines this with an investigation of how leading social scientists and intellectuals have committed and tried to change it
- ✘ Possible self-reflection on the historian's societal role





## WHY THIS OBSESSION WITH AN OUTDATED DEBATE?

- ✘ If the historical debate between left and right has ended, why do issues from the debate keep cropping up all the time?
- ✘ Were socialist notions really defeated once and for all at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century?
- ✘ Were left-wing historians idealistic utopians, while the liberals were the useful realists?

## FURTHER IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH IN QUESTION

- ✘ Could the way in which opinion-forming scholars involved themselves in the classical liberal-radical debate be a continuing source of inspiration?
- ✘ Was the dispute unimportant? Did it promote or undermine the quality of research?
- ✘ Why did the South African “miracle” turn out to be more of a neo-liberal victory than the national democratic revolution expected by many?

## REALHISTORY: SOUTH AFRICAN POLITICAL HISTORY

- ✘ 1910 - 1924: English alliance with Afrikaner bourgeoisie; early segregation period
- ✘ 1924 - 1933: Pact-government co-opt white workers and boer farmers; segregation
- ✘ 1933 - 1939: Party merger (Fusion); limited liberal influence; late segregation period
- ✘ 1939 - 1948: Allied war participation stimulates liberal tendencies and polarisation
- ✘ 1948 - 1960: National Party implements apartheid
- ✘ 1960 - 1973: Boer police state with fascist features; separate development
- ✘ 1973 - 1987: Slow, reluctant late apartheid reforms; grand apartheid continued
- ✘ 1990 - 1994: Real breakdown of apartheid; negotiations;
- ✘ 1994 - democratisation; transformation, and neo-liberal influences

## REAL HISTORY: TRADITION OF REVOLT

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- ✘ Last armed tribal uprisings 1876/1907
- ✘ 1912 Founding of the ANC
- ✘ 1920s ICU social movement against land/labour laws
- ✘ 1940s CNETU industrial unions, strike waves
- ✘ 1946 African mineworkers strike subdued
- ✘ 1955 Congress Alliance Freedom Charter
- ✘ 1950s Defiance campaigns, bantustan risings
- ✘ 1960 Nationwide protests after Sharpeville
- ✘ 1960s Exile organisations, sabotage





# REALHISTORY: REVOLUTION/TRANSFORMATION

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- ✘ 1973 Durban strikes, new independent trade unions
- ✘ 1976 Soweto uprising nationwide, Black Consciousness Movement
- ✘ 1985 Stay at homes, state of emergencies,  
- 90 ungovernable country
- ✘ 1990 Third force violence, democracy  
- 94 demonstrations, the negotiated national democratic revolution



# CHANGING VIEWS OF HISTORY

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- ✘ English-imperial (Anglo-imperialist, colonial)
- ✘ Settler (early nationalist, conservative)
- ✘ Afrikaner nationalist (republican, Afrikanerdom)
- ✘ Liberal (early segregationist, progressive, Africanist)
- ✘ Progressive (popular, communist, ANC, black nationalist)
- ✘ Radical (neo-Marxist, revisionist, new school, structuralist, non-structuralist social history, feminist)
- ✘ Postmodern (post-structural, post-colonial, anti-positivist, new cultural history)
- ✘ Rainbowism (truth and reconciliation, Mandelaism)
- ✘ New Patriotism (Mbeki's African renaissance)

# CLASSICAL LIBERAL ATTITUDES

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- ✘ Macmillan; Kiewiet; Walker; Frankel; ...
- ✘ Unifying, universal implications
- ✘ Compassion, empathy, personal happiness
- ✘ Development optimism
- ✘ Unification process towards shared economy
- ✘ Frontier theory explains racism
- ✘ Racism as irrational social psychology
- ✘ Co-responsible for early “protective” segregation
- ✘ Limited rights for Africans until civilised

# LIBERAL MODERNISATION THEORY

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- ✘ Traditional life-expressions modernised/harmonised
- ✘ Active rational participation in economy/society
- ✘ Fixed positions of status replaced by contracts
- ✘ Impersonal conditions of appointment/employment
- ✘ Personal wealth determined by own contribution
- ✘ Anonymous power relations
- ✘ Financial and social mobility maximised and determined by individual skills
- ✘ Superstition and racial prejudices become outdated



# O'DOWD'S PHASE THEORY (BASED ON ROSTOW)

## Economy:

- 1. Phase: Pre-take-off, undeveloped infrastructure**
- 2. Phase: First industrialisation stage, slow growth, high capital concentration. Bad living conditions**
- 3. Phase: Second stage of industrialisation. Rapid growth**
- 4. Phase: Third industrialisation stage. Slower growth, weight on research**

## Politics:

- 1. Phase: Political instability, irrationality, possibilities for revolution**
- 2. Phase: Undemocratic and authoritarian regimes secures stability, people unsatisfied**
- 3. Phase: Reform governments and growing, but limited democratisation**
- 4. Phase: Steady development of modern welfare state**

# LIBERAL RESERVATIONS TOWARDS APARTHEID

- ✘ Colour-bar job reservation ignored qualifications
- ✘ Market price on labour was regulated/distorted
- ✘ Competitiveness and productivity were subordinated to favour stability among white workers
- ✘ Influx control curbed workers mobility
- ✘ Ultra low wages reduced domestic market
- ✘ Big state and closed administrative apparatus lead to misuse of resources



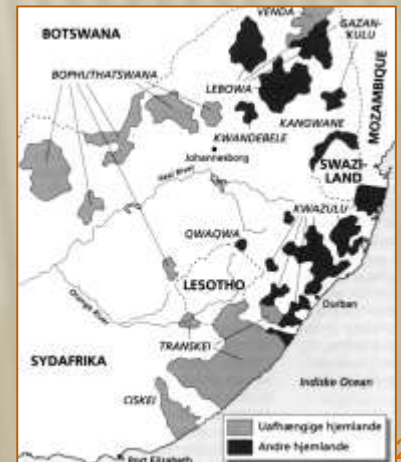
# LIBERAL REASONS FOR CHANGE

- ✘ Owners of capital want to realise their resources in a free and rational way
- ✘ Trained/educated manpower needed
- ✘ Contacts between white and black workers will necessarily become normalised
- ✘ Race prejudice will be undermined
- ✘ Living standards of whites are threatened without liberalisation
- ✘ The whites will decide for economic growth



# LIBERAL CONCLUSIONS

- ✘ Market economy and segregation /apartheid are antagonisms
- ✘ Conflict exists between modern capitalism and Afrikanerdom
- ✘ Colour-blind capitalism will destroy systematic racism





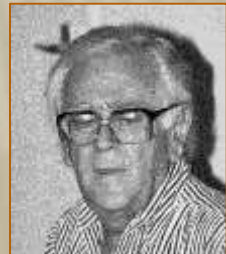
# ANC/POPULAR VIEWS OF BLACK HISTORY

- ✘ Alternative history; peoples history; popular history
- ✘ Early literary history, autobiography, and African journalism
- ✘ Political party functionary-like history
- ✘ Liberatory history; African nationalism; victorious history
- ✘ Post-1961 defence of limited use of armed struggle
- ✘ Theory supports liberation strategy on four pillars:..
- ✘ ...political education and information; armed struggle; international solidarity; underground organisation inside South Africa



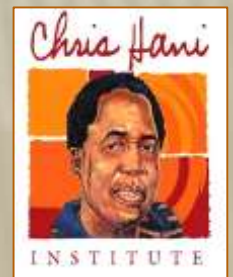
# ORTHODOX MARXISM AND REVOLUTIONARY STRATEGY

- ✘ Communist party: CPSA 1921 - 1950; SACP 1953 -
- ✘ Theory of two-stage revolution: democratic/socialist
- ✘ Popular front strategy and organisational influence
- ✘ Theory of Colonialism of a Special Type, 1962
- ✘ Theory of history leads to political strategy...
- ✘ ...combination of: popular campaign for democracy; anti-colonial armed liberation struggle; and social revolution



# WHO WERE THE LEFT INTELLECTUALS?

- ✘ The educated worker as organic intellectual (Gramsci)
- ✘ Independent, but loyal to the struggle (O'Meara)
- ✘ Part of the organisation, moving it slowly, living the dream in a holistic way (Wolpe)
- ✘ Alternatively educated; organisations as collectives (Suttner)
- ✘ All articulated activists in civil society (Nzimande)
- ✘ ANC/SACP affiliation harmful to critical thinking (Morris)
- ✘ University employees are dependent of prevailing academic power relations (Hoffman)
- ✘ Total intellectual autonomy is possible (Nash)



# THE RADICAL-REVISIONIST VIEW ON APARTHEID I

- ✘ Political mechanism for economic exploitation and labour control
- ✘ Functioned mostly as a rational system for the ruling classes
- ✘ Special kind of internal colonialism exploiting traditional societies
- ✘ Whites kept their privileges through a class breaking alliance
- ✘ Forms of racial suppression changed in agreement with the needs of capital





# THE RADICAL VIEW ON APARTHEID II

- ✘ Capitalist development and racial discrimination were complementary elements
- ✘ Afrikaner nationalism was created by Boer small capital, white farmers, and labour aristocracy
- ✘ English mineowners accepted redistribution through higher white wages to split workers and gain stability
- ✘ Capitalist economic growth sustained white supremacy for a long time
- ✘ Long-lasting aversion against reforms from employers, politicians, and white voters
- ✘ Progressive research supported the democratic movement



# LEFT DIFFERENCES OF HISTORICAL OPINION I (THE NON-STRUCTURALISTS' CRITIQUE)

- ✘ Early structuralists were marked by functionalist-reductionist self-restrictions (Posel's critique)
- ✘ Early structuralists defined a predetermined capitalism with a "black box" state (O'Meara's self-critique)
- ✘ And they predetermined a working class with an ideal-typical consciousness (Bozzoli's critique)

# LEFT DIFFERENCES OF HISTORICAL OPINION II (THE NON-STRUCTURALISTS' APPROACH/METHOD)

- ✘ Empirical social history made Marxism opportune at university level
- ✘ Left academics were Africanists in principle, but uneasy with African nationalism
- ✘ Claim to represent totality of social and political relations

# LEFT DIFFERENCES OF HISTORICAL OPINION III (THE ORGANISED SOCIALIST, ANC-MARXIST VIEW)

- ✘ Historical materialism as a starting point
- ✘ Practical use of theory for strategy and tactics
- ✘ Firm alliance with the black popular movements
- ✘ "Western Marxism" never provided a real alternative
- ✘ Neo-Marxists were unreliable and career fixated
- ✘ Late SACP-break with Soviet-Marxism





# THE INTELLECTUALS' POST-APARTHEID INVOLVEMENT

- ✘ Disappearance of socialist alternative meant scattering of the revolutionaries
- ✘ From anti-state struggle to nationbuilding assistance
- ✘ From non-profit idealism to career professionalism, competitiveness, and pragmatic influence
- ✘ From anonymous local attachment to media visibility
- ✘ ANC's social democratism looks like a strange mix of neo-liberalism and Brezhnevism



## BIG QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

- ✘ Is it possible to imagine an alternative, fundamentally different development path for South Africa?
- ✘ Which factors are the most important for the emergence of racial discrimination?
- ✘ Who was responsible for oppression and exploitation? Should agents of history apologize, pay reparations, be condemned, punished, or forgiven?
- ✘ Can we recognise any of the South African patterns in modern “global apartheid”? Are we doing the same?
- ✘ Have ethnic nationalism and religious extremism grown stronger because socialism has been weakened?
- ✘ Should we forget the past?

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# **THE INTELLECTUALS AND THE DEMOCRATIC STRUGGLE**