

RY, THE BELOVED COUNTRY.



PETER MAGUBANE

THE DREAM FADES

Sampie Terreblanche

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After 40 years of wandering in the wilderness of apartheid, Afrikanerdom and the National Party are today further from their promised land than they were at their point of departure.

Instead of arriving on the banks of the river Jordan, ready to enter the land of Canaan, Afrikanerdom (and the rest of the South African population) finds itself in a desert of disillusion, marooned among its mirages.

During the first half of this century, the relative economic deprivation and lack of effective political power suffered by Afrikaners contributed to an overheated nationalism, with Afrikaner leaders establishing all kinds of parallels between the exile of the

Israelites in Egypt and their own people's humiliation. Afrikaners were susceptible to the idea that they, too, were a select – if not a chosen – people, with a manifest destiny to restore their sovereignty, their national freedom and self-determination. This grew into the ideology that the Afrikaner nation had the right to use political and other measures (not necessarily parliamentary) to eradicate the real and imagined injustices they suffered. The scene was set for a new symbolic Great Trek from Egypt-like “captivity” in a country dominated by the English establishment towards a white promised land governed and controlled by the Afrikaner *volk*.

But even more strongly than the struggle against

Above: In a symbolic action and setting, police intervene outside the Johannesburg Supreme Court to dismantle a banner proclaiming (in Alan Paton's most famous words) a protest by Wits University academics against the General Law Amendment Act of 1962.



LEADERSHIP
FOUR DECADES



HUTMAN POTGIETER

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English-speakers for political and economic hegemony, Afrikaner separatist instincts were fuelled by the fear that whites could be overrun by blacks. During the Twenties and Thirties, poor-white Afrikaners competed with blacks for scarce jobs in the cities. This played a decisive role in transforming tribalism pure and simple into politics, and in the formation of a forceful political party with a dynamic ideology and religious justification for what it was about to do *en route* from its Egypt to its promised land.

Almost immediately after taking office in 1948, the National Party put a three-pronged programme into operation. New discriminatory laws were added to the existing arsenal and also extended to coloureds and Indians; the bureaucracy was systematically enlarged and additional parastatals developed to create lucrative employment mainly for Afrikaners; while a variety of welfare programmes were launched to redistribute wealth and uplift poor-whites, who were largely Afrikaners.

For the greater part of the Fifties, these measures were easily justified as being temporary and necessary to alleviate the undeserved poverty of the Afrikaners. Any moral discomfort that this explanation began to cause towards the end of that decade was assuaged by Dr Verwoerd's ideology of Grand Apartheid, offering separate freedoms and national self-determination for every ethnic group.

During Mr John Vorster's term of office, a variety of reasons were offered to explain why the Verwoerdian dream of a pure white promised land was not attainable and why blacks should be accepted as permanent residents in "white" South Africa. But in spite of the pragmatism of the Vorster era and its attempts to give apartheid a more humane face, the Verwoerdian ideology – though acknowledged to be impracticable – was still unashamedly propagated as the moral justification for apartheid. Thus began the moral hypocrisy that has since become institutionalised.

The Botha government abolished numerous democratic institutions in the name of reform, replacing them with a multitude of new structures (mainly for co-option), while power became concentrated and consolidated in the State President's office. These changes bureaucratised apartheid and created wealth for some whites and some blacks. At the same time Botha's reform "securocratised" apartheid.

During the last 40 years, Malan's parliamentarianism (enacting discrimination and redistribution, the pillars of apartheid) was crowned by Verwoerd's ideological dome of ethnicity (supplying a moral justification). This was shored up by Vorster's scaffolding of pragmatism (to keep the clumsy system going). During the past decade, Botha's bureaucratic and "securocratic" structures have been superimposed on all previous forms of apartheid, great flying buttresses built to keep the crumbling edifice in an upright position.



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The NP – and with it South Africa – is trapped in apartheid's structures. The apparent changes at each stage since the simple apartheid of Malan and Strijdom – the Grand Apartheid of Verwoerd, transmogrifying into the pragmatic apartheid of Vorster, then the bureaucratic, "securocratic" apartheid of Botha – have altered little in the basic underlying structure of apartheid which entrenches white privilege and power, and black deprivation and powerlessness.

After 40 years of NP government, the following



ought to be obvious to an objective observer of the South African scene:

- ☐ A white promised land is not, and never was, attainable, although supporters of the extreme right wing are still following false prophets who discern pillars of cloud and of fire on some mental horizon.
- ☐ The transition to a non-racial South Africa is impossible as long as the NP remains in power. The NP will probably remain in office for a considerable time despite its paralysis and inability

either to identify the full dimensions of the mounting crisis or to do something truly effective about it.

- ☐ Consequently, South Africa is doomed to remain an apartheid society for the foreseeable future. It will become more isolated and more divided. Its government will become more autocratic and the country much poorer with increasingly unhappy and still separated societies.

Above: Commando of National Party supporters escorting Dr Verwoerd, leader of the party, into the celebrations of the party's fiftieth anniversary, De Wildt, October 1964.





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Above: Sophie Williams, Rahima Moosa, Helen Joseph and Lilian Ngoyi at the head of a procession of an estimated 20 000 women who marched to the Union Buildings in 1956 to protest against the extension of the Pass Laws to women. "Strike the women, you strike a rock," they sang as they dispersed, as peacefully as they had come.

The fact that the mirage of the promised land never materialised never threatened the NP government because it used its parliamentary power to create and expand lucrative oases in the desert of apartheid. But to what extent are the oases the result of the initiative, entrepreneurship, ingenuity, frugality and "sweat equity" of whites alone? To what extent did blacks contribute to their making?

If we consider the comprehensive discriminatory measures under which they have laboured, the inequality of opportunity and restrictions on their freedom of movement, it seems reasonable to say that white oases were created largely by blacks.

Recent increases in government spending on blacks are only the first settlements of a longstanding debt. It will be many years before the apartheid account is settled.

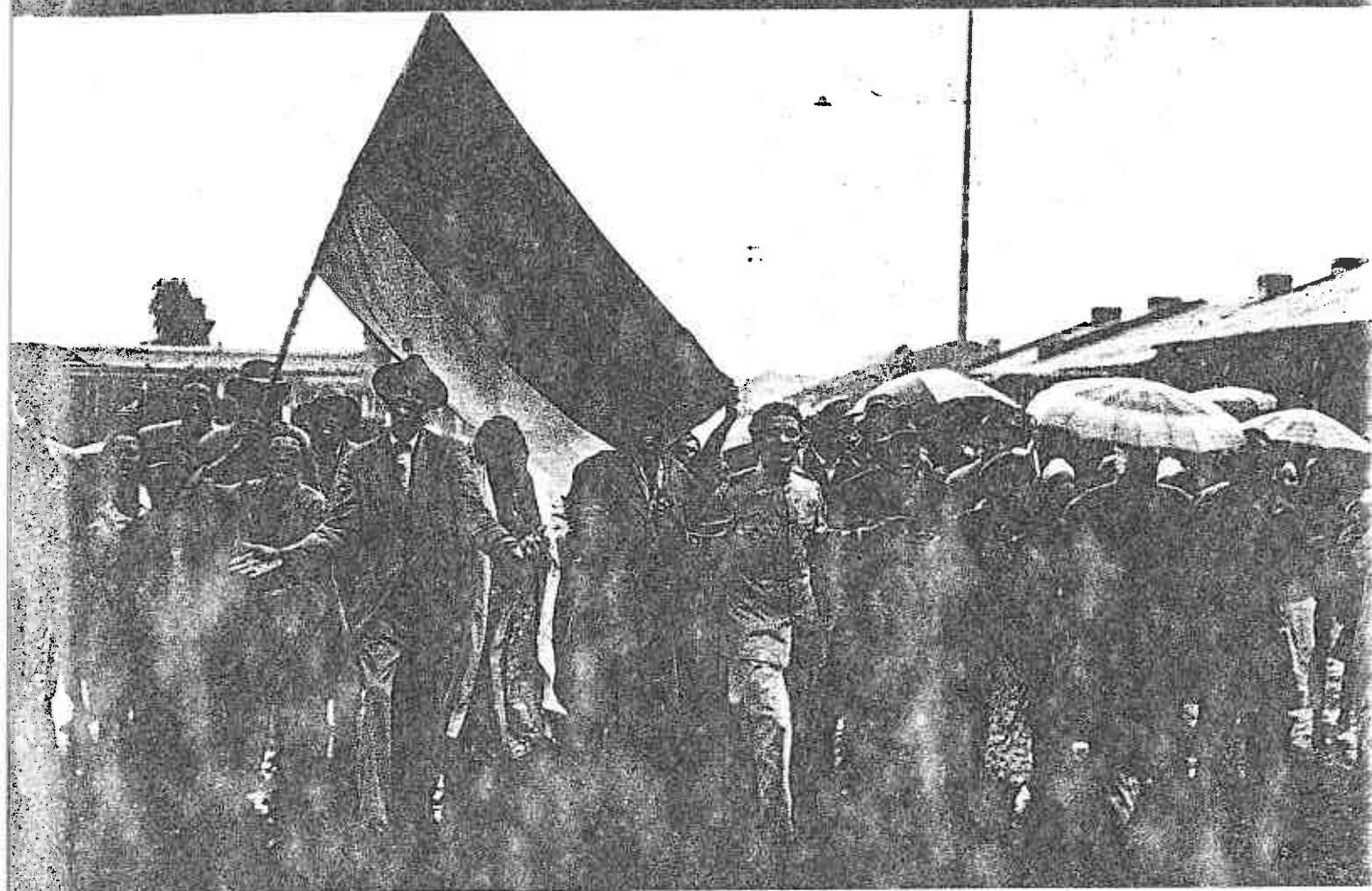
For the Afrikaners particularly, the sojourn in these oases has been most advantageous. While their per capita income was less than half that of their

English-speaking compatriots in 1948, it has risen to 75% of English-speakers' (now much higher) income.

For the Israelites the years in the wilderness represented purification, making them worthy to enter their promised land. Their occasional relapses, when they worshipped golden calves, cost them dearly and prolonged their desert journey.

Forty years in the oases has not only enriched whites but has also spoiled them and inculcated in them strong materialistic and bourgeois attitudes. Many whites have become worshippers of golden calves. Initially these calves were fattened mainly in the capitalistic stables of the largely English-speaking private sector. Lately many of them may be found in a multitude of Afrikaner-controlled and bureaucratic stables!

In retrospect it is quite fortunate that there has never been a white promised land. As a spoiled people and now as idolaters, Afrikaners are today



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far less worthy of entering such a land than they were 40 years ago.

For the same reasons, tragically, neither Afrikaners nor their English-speaking compatriots are today spiritually prepared to make those sacrifices without which structural reform cannot succeed.

Gorbachev showed a profound insight into the nature of reform when he wrote that "everyone will probably have to make sacrifices at the first stage of perestroika, but some will have to give up for good the privileges... they do not deserve".

As long as whites refuse to slaughter their golden calves, they will wander in the wasteland of apartheid. And until they relinquish some of their misguided beliefs – their holy cows – reform will fail.

But can't we expect government to take the initiative and get rid of these golden calves and holy cows? I fear not. As long as this government remains committed to the status quo and the bureaucracy, it will not even go so far as to allow the painful and messy business of calf and cow slaughtering by non-governmental reform processes. It has too high a stake in these sacred animals, which ironically may die from lack of fodder in a declining economy.

In the first three decades after its accession to power the NP used a double strategy to mobilise party political support: it conducted propaganda campaigns to strengthen Afrikaners' racial and tribal prejudices,

and used its power to shower its mainly Afrikaner supporters with all kinds of favours. These games were played harder and harder to attract growing party political support – at least until the Seventies.

The propaganda strategy was based on closely integrated programmes. Firstly, whites' (and especially Afrikaners') racial fear of blacks was fanned. At the same time, more and more apartheid laws and structures were enacted and introduced to allay these fears. Whites were further placated by the ideology of a white promised land.

Secondly, Afrikaners' tribal prejudices were stimulated (at least until South Africa became a Republic) by the careful cultivation of a mistrust of English-speakers, and by emphasising the perceived injustices inflicted on Afrikaners and their culture by British colonialism and capitalism.

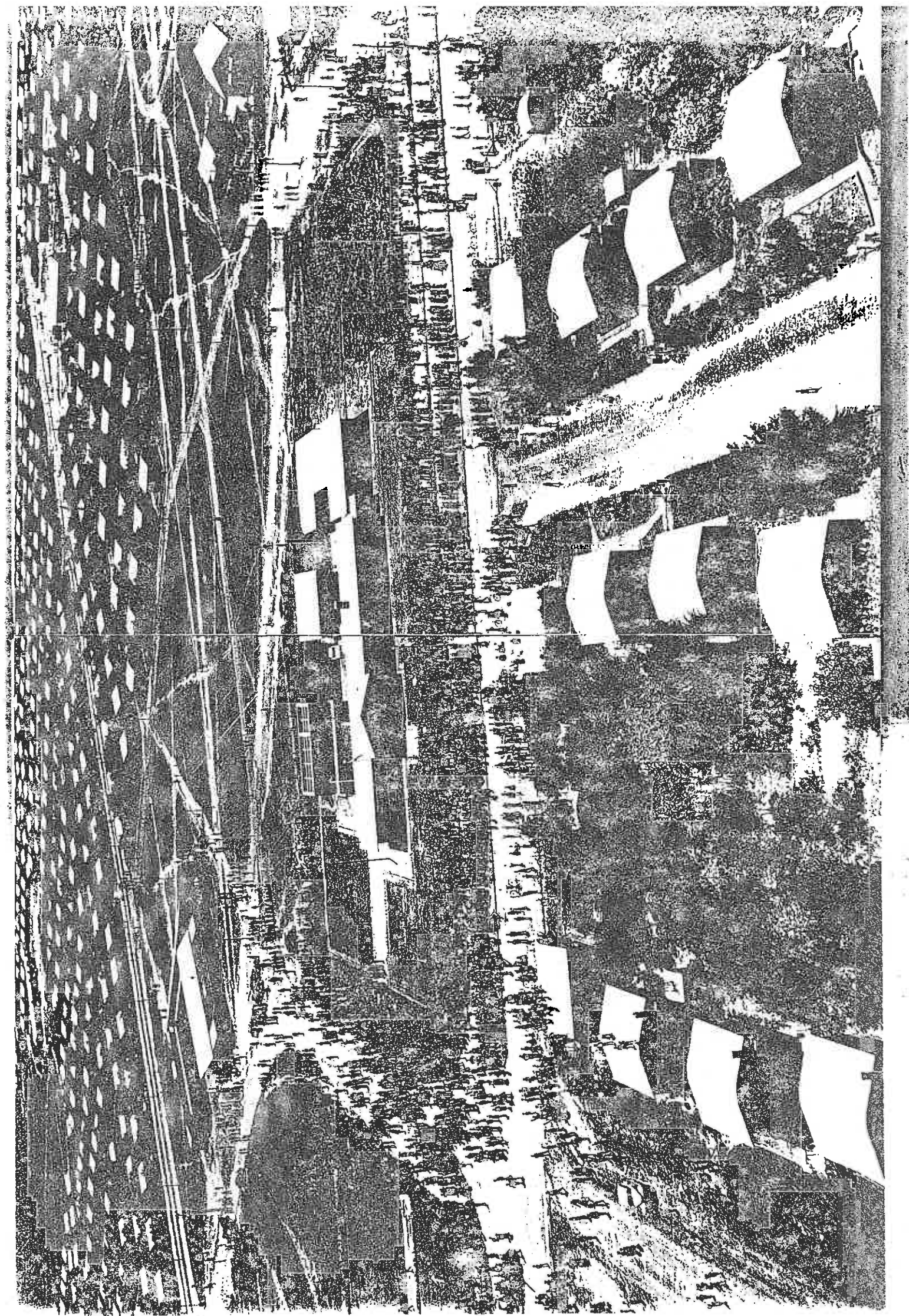
Thirdly, NP propaganda was at its most destructive in casting suspicion on all white political parties to its left, stigmatising them as "Boerehaters", "jingos", "kaffir-boeties", "white sell-outs", "liberals" and "radicals". These accusations played an important role in the humiliation and subsequent destruction of the United Party and also undermined the viability of the PFP. To paint a liberal free-enterprise party like the PFP pink – even red – and to blame it for almost all the radical trends in South Africa is of course ridiculous, but the smears stick.

Fourthly, the NP was unabashed in the favouritism it showed its mainly Afrikaner supporters. Such

Above: Sophiatown, 1956: residents of the vibrant Johannesburg township which was to become the white suburb of Triomf protest their impending forced removal under the ANC flag. Sophiatown lives on in new plays and new collections of old photographs, but the hope which seems to characterise this protest march has given way to the desperation and conflict of contemporary protest.

Overleaf: Just before noon on March 21, 1960 this crowd of blacks had gathered outside the Sharpeville police station (centre) after a call by the Pan Africanist Congress to leave their passes at home, march to the nearest police station and risk arrest. That afternoon, police opened fire. Sixty-nine people died, 180 were injured by bullets, and the name Sharpeville became part of South African history. Photograph: The Star





tribal patronage may have had merit when many Afrikaners were still poor-whites. But it continued until the early Eighties when it had to be curtailed because of the decline in the country's fiscal capacity and the growth of its bureaucracy.

This pro-Afrikaner strategy of propaganda-cum-favouritism has been to the NP's political advantage for three decades, but it has caused irreparable long-term damage to South Africa. It has intensified the potential (and subsequently also the actual) group conflict endemic to our situation.

During the first half of the century and especially during the prosperous Forties, centripetal forces gained momentum and succeeded in creating an economic melting pot, with various cross-cutting cleavages. But the apartheid policy, tribal and racial propaganda and Afrikaner favouritism put this process into reverse gear.

Only during the affluent Sixties and early Seventies did the process of economic interdependence of all groups start to assert itself again. This undeniable economic integration caused the NP to scale down its divisive tribal and racial propaganda in the Seventies. And deteriorating economic and fiscal conditions in the early Eighties have forced the NP to cut back on its hand-outs to supporters, especially farmers. These two shifts in strategy led directly to the growth of the extreme right. The NP should be the last to complain about the extreme right wing's propaganda methods or their popularity. A governing party that has maintained its position for so long by sowing the dragon's teeth of intolerance, prejudice and sectional patronage deserves to reap the ugly monsters of racial hate and tribal obsession. This harvest is the bitter legacy it bequeaths all South Africans.

From 1961 to 1981 between 85% and 90% of Afrikaners voted for the NP. In 1987 only 50% voted NP. Almost 60% of the English-speakers' votes went to the NP. Yet the NP has done nothing to acknowledge its changed constituency. This is not surprising. The current wisdom in the NP holds that it cannot trust English-speakers and that it cannot build an Afrikaner castle on shifting English loyalties. Afrikaner tribalism is still alive and well in the NP caucus.

Imagine what would have happened to the Israelites if one of the tribes had consolidated its power and used a divisive strategy of propaganda-cum-patronage to promote only its own journey towards the promised land. The people of Israel would in all probability still be wandering around the Sinai desert...

The old two-pronged approach has been superseded to some extent by a "total strategy" to justify government's actions in the face of a "total onslaught". The decline in government's legitimacy necessitated the development of this new theory to justify its actions.

Since the beginning of the Seventies, P W Botha and his generals have strengthened the defence lobby by emphasising the dangers of the "total onslaught". It is seen as a conspiracy against South Africa, organised and orchestrated mainly from Moscow, with the sole purpose of undermining South Africa's Christian, Western, white civilisation and replacing it with a communist regime. More recently, certain liberal and radical elements and sanctioners in the West have come to be regarded as key organisers of, and co-conspirators in the onslaught. And of course internal opposition has also been subtly presented as part of this onslaught.

The NP has adopted a "total interpretation". Everything that can be branded as negative or hostile from government's (and especially the NP's) point of view, is propagandistically portrayed as part of the onslaught and used to justify additional counter-measures.

But is there a worldwide onslaught or conspiracy against South Africa? It would be more correct to describe it as a widespread onslaught against apartheid, against other undemocratic and unjust measures, and against government's defiant attitude towards the outside world. To present the external and internal campaigns opposing the maintenance of apartheid as a total onslaught against civilisation in South Africa can only be called a total misinterpretation.

This is not to deny that many of the measures designed to demonstrate opposition to apartheid are harming South Africa, and could in the long run be devastating.

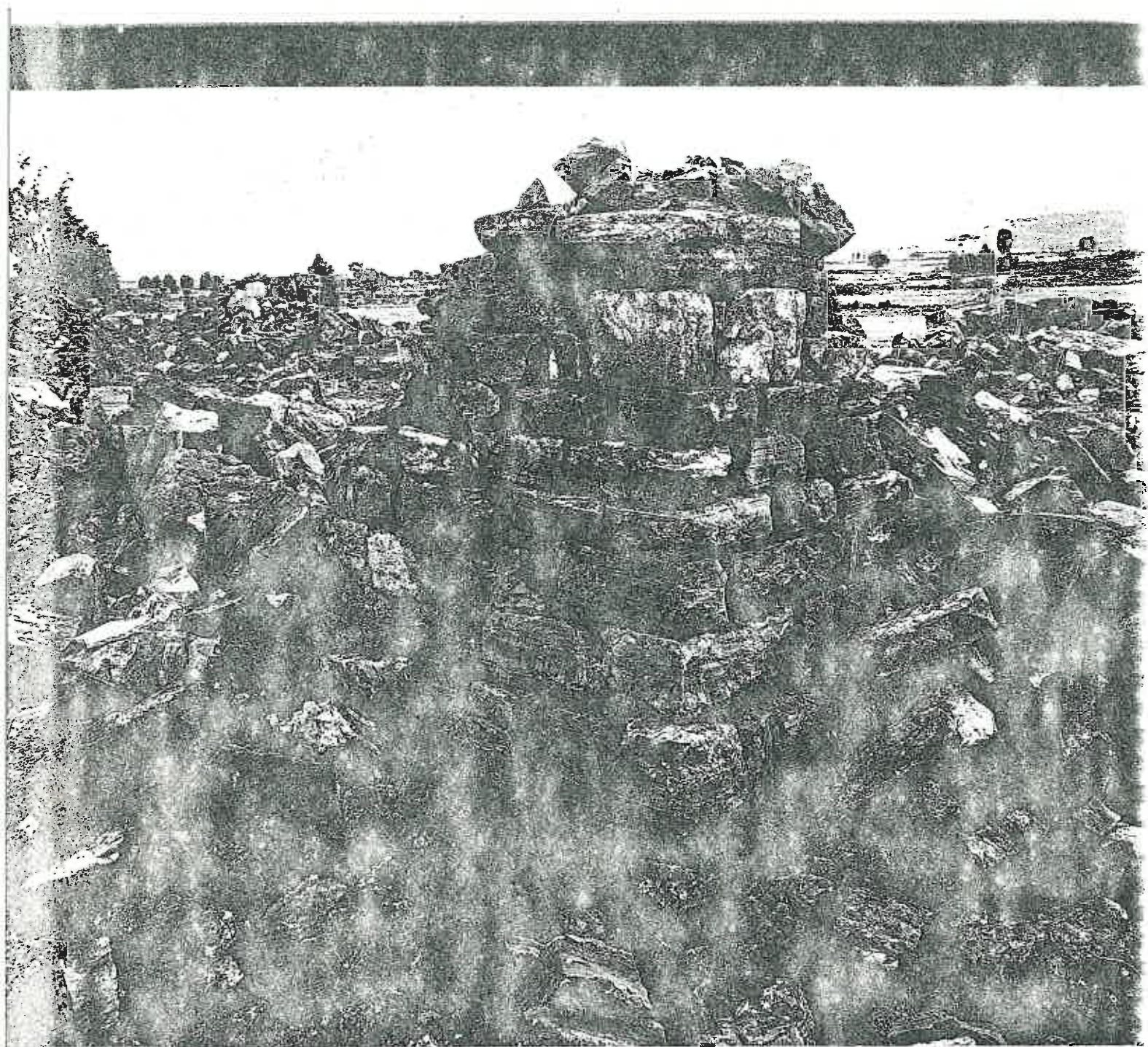
It is also no doubt true that the Soviet Union and revolutionary groups are trying to exploit South Africa's vulnerable position.

This, however, provides no justification for the claim that Soviet imperialism, in conjunction with international pressure against apartheid, is part of an integrated total conspiracy against Western civilisation in South Africa. Such a misinterpretation must seriously undermine government's ability to distinguish between dangerous and less dangerous, between real and imaginary threats to South Africa.

There is ample reason to fear that government's misreading of the situation has already led it to act in ways that seriously weaken the country. It is extremely important that the real culprit, and the real target of action against South Africa, should be correctly identified. But, given government's attachment to its own misinterpretations, the real issues are clearly beyond its grasp.

During the NP's 40 uninterrupted years in office, so many conceptual blockages and stereotyped prejudices have fossilised in the party's thought processes that it is perhaps unreasonable to expect from it new and creative problem-identification. Too much ideological and propagandistic capital has been invested in its policy approaches to expect the party to abandon it for something more relevant and nearer the truth.

Government flatters itself by describing its policy



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as a total strategy. Such a term implies a master-plan that will contribute – at least in the long-term – to a solution of South Africa's problems, especially the problems connected with apartheid. Yet such policy measures are conspicuously absent from the "total strategy" which is, in fact, nothing but a tactic to maintain the internal status quo (and the position of the "privilegentsia") while South Africa's international relations deteriorate.

An important aim of government's "onslaught" propaganda is to convince the white electorate that South Africa's problems originated almost entirely outside the country. If this great delusion is swallowed by the electorate – and there are disturbing indications that it has been – voters will accept government's argument that it can hardly be expected to do anything. South Africa's problems have been neatly exported.

There are, alas, indications that government is inclined to swallow its own propaganda on this score. There is virtually no other explanation for its lack of action on our growing international isolation, or its defiance towards the rest of the world.

Given the destructive nature of sanctions and boycotts, all South Africans have reason for moral indignation against those who apply them. But do the sanctioneers and boycotters have alternative, less destructive methods at their disposal to communicate their strong moral opposition to government's continuation of apartheid? Is government not complicating the situation by claiming to be the true and only bastion of Christian and Western values in South Africa, while simultaneously persisting with apartheid – and accusing foreign critics of hypocrisy?

I ask these questions to give an indication of the kind of moral dilemma in which ordinary South

Above: The Methodist Church, Magopa, western Transvaal: in pursuance of apartheid and the removal of a "black spot" government forcibly removed the people of Magopa from their village in February 1984, and then destroyed their buildings.





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Soweto, 1976.

Africans find themselves. They have become part of the South African crisis.

The South African problem has become internationalised to such an extent that, unless we abolish apartheid and institutionalise adequate black representation in central Parliament, we will remain trapped in a vicious circle of growing international isolation, aggravating poverty, escalating urban violence and a shrinking capability to institute adequate socio-economic and constitutional reform.

South Africa's growth since 1973 has been very poor. Between 1960 and 1973 per capita income increased by 3% annually. It was an excellent performance. But since 1973 per capita income has declined by 0,6% annually. We are in the grip of a relentless process of impoverishment, due in large measure to our growing international isolation. The recent curtailment of our "overheated" economy at an annual

growth rate of only 2,5% bears testimony to a bleak future for the country and emphasises our dependence on foreign capital.

Given this poor growth and, therefore, the decline in tax capacity, the country can hardly afford to abolish apartheid and institutionalise effective parliamentary bargaining power for blacks. Such steps would, in all probability, lead to further and disastrous overstraining of our already seriously weakened seige economy. The NP has manoeuvred us into an almost inextricable Catch-22.

Many South Africans still display a naïve optimism about economic and political prospects. The severely restricted flow of information which has kept them in the dark about the real nature and causes of the crisis perhaps partly explains their optimism. But some apparently base their positive outlook on the belief that if whites (and especially Afrikaners) really get stuck, manna will descend from heaven, as it did for the Israelites.