South Africa's constitutional and political prospects

Lawrence Schlemmer and David Welsh
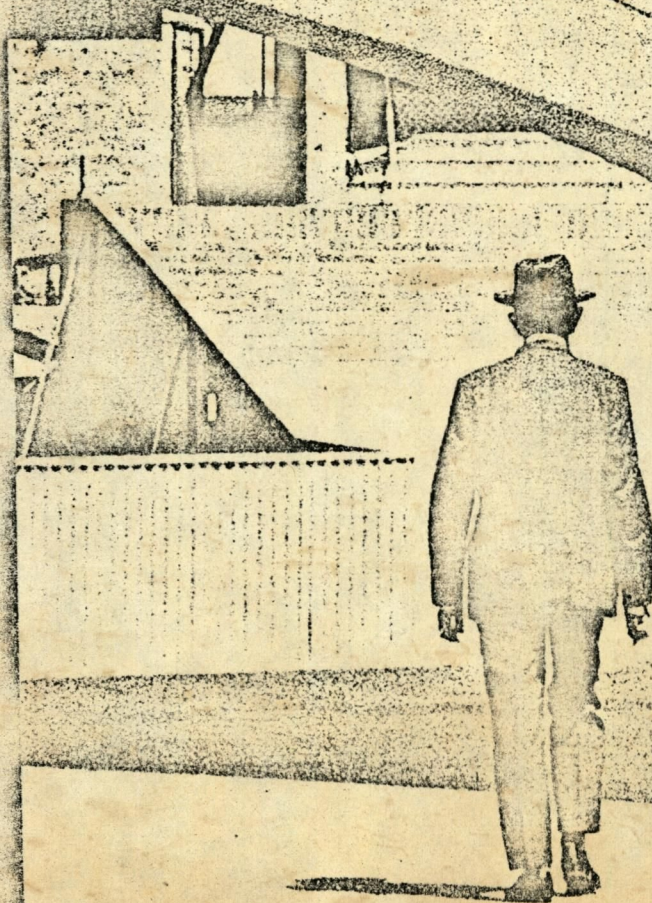
SOUTH AFRICA ENTERED the 1980s in a flurry of debate about new constitutions. The debate has continued to dominate the political scene. In spite of general agreement that the present constitutional structure of South Africa cannot be maintained, there is the widest possible disagreement on what should replace it. The National Party, still firmly in the political saddle, demands as an article of political faith that rights of self-determination for whites be protected under a constitution that will incorporate the coloured ['mixed race'] and Asian groups, but will exclude blacks, who account for 71 per cent of the total population of 'greater' South Africa (that is, the territory which includes the former 'homelands', now purportedly independent, of Bophuthatswana, Ciskei, Venda and Transkei). Increasingly impatient and radical black opinion is demanding, on the other hand, nothing short of majority rule within a unitary political system. Even more widely divergent ideological positions, however, are becoming prominent. At the one extreme, white opposition parties to the right of the government reject even cautious steps towards the incorporation of coloureds and Indians, while the external mission of the African National Congress, operating underground in South Africa, is heavily influenced by its co-operation with the South African Communist Party and the Eastern bloc. There are a number of positions that constitute a middle ground. But the extent of polarisation between white and black has reached such proportions that it could well result in open and continuing racial confrontation.

A factor critical to South Africa's political future is the rise of radical right-wing Afrikaner nationalists. The history of Afrikaner nationalism has been characterised by a protracted and difficult process of achieving and maintaining political unity among Afrikaans-speaking South Africans. Nationalist leaders have long recognised that the key to their continued domination of the country's political system lies in Afrikaner unity; conversely, a split in the ranks could be fatal to their dominance. Memories of the consequences of just such a *volkskeuring* ['rift in the nation'] in 1934, when the faction led by General J.B.M. Hertzog joined General J.C. Smuts to form the United Party while Dr D.F. Malan hived off with his 'purified' nationalists, remain both painful and vivid in the minds of the older generation.

Yet in spite of this emphasis on unity, the National Party is not the monolith that it may seem. Provincial, religious, ideological, economic, class and personal differences, expressed within a formally democratic and federal party constitution, have helped to ensure some degree of internal debate, and even pluralism, within the party. Under highly authoritarian leaders such as Dr H.F. Verwoerd (prime minister and party leader from 1958-1966), internal differences were largely suppressed, but under his successors they emerged once more. In 1969 a small group of right-wingers was driven out of the party, whereupon it formed itself into the *Herstigte Nasionale Party* [Reconstituted National Party], led by Mr Jaap Marais. Many of their fellow-travellers, however, remained, to constitute a troublesome and potentially rebellious faction within the National Party. The right-wingers mainly consisted of members returned by Transvaal constituencies and their spiritual leader was Dr A.P. Treurnicht. A man of impeccable Afrikaner credentials — at one time a provincial rugby player a former *dominee* [clergyman] an editor and a senior official the élite Afrikaner secret socie the *Broederbond*, Dr Treurnic became leader of the Transvaa National Party in 1978. Therea he rose rapidly to cabinet rank albeit with a relatively unimp tant portfolio. His charismatic qualities and implacable stand as an upholder of the Verwoerdian faith — the ideolog of rigid separate developmen taken with his supposed popu larity among National Party members of parliament and strong constituency followin led many observers to believe that he would be Mr P.W. Bot successor as prime minister a leader of the National Party.

From the beginning of his premiership Mr Botha has ha to contend with opposition fr the right wing, whose membe sought to portray him as a de from 'true' doctrines of separ development. Conflict withir party became endemic, altho until recently the strong self-defensive qualities of Afrika nationalism helped to maint uneasy truces. Both wings of party were keenly aware of th trauma that would ensue from split and the immense damag that either side might inflict upon the other. Dr Treurnic continually drew back from brink of a threatened break a seemed willing to hold his fi until Mr Botha retired, at wh time he might have expected prove a strong contender for leadership. He and his follow presumably recognised that, although Mr Botha lacked th moral authority and ascenda over the party caucus that hi predecessors enjoyed, it was highly unlikely that he woul deposed.

For his part, Mr Botha undoubtedly was riled by frequ taunts that he was virtually

paralysed by a right wing that could exert what was tantamount to a veto over policy changes. He was compelled to assume that, as Transvaal leader, Dr Treurnicht had a powerful base in the province that returns more than half the National Party members of parliament. He was aware, also, that he had become prime minister largely through an accident of history; the 'information scandal' of 1978-79, which centred upon misuse of public funds by the department of information, destroyed the political career of the responsible minister, Dr C.P. Mulder, Dr Treurnicht's predecessor as head of the party in the Transvaal and at the time a front-runner for the prime ministership, and led Mr B.J. Vorster to resign as prime minister. In the ordinary course of events the Transvaal's numerical preponderance in the party caucus would have meant that Mr Vorster's successor would probably have been a Transvaler, too. Dr Mulder, however, his reputation tarnished by the scandal, was narrowly defeated by Mr Botha, leader of the party in the Cape and minister of defence.

The simmering dispute between the factions came to a head in February 1982 at a parliamentary caucus meeting. Dr Treurnicht had taken exception to a sentence in a party propaganda magazine which stated, apparently innocuously, that there could only be one government in the country. For Dr Treurnicht this implied that the single government would be racially 'mixed' and that coloured and Asian ministers would therefore share in the government of whites as well as of other groups. He considered this to be a departure from long-established National Party policy, which dictated separate governments for the different population

An idealised J. G. Strijdom (opening pages), first Transvaal politician to head National Party, broods over Pretoria monument that bears his name. His premiership paved way for hard-line apartheid of Prime Minister H. F. Verwoerd, whose uncompromising successors constitute core of newly-formed Conservative Party, led by Dr A. P. Treurnicht (above), present member of parliament for Strijdom's isolated Waterberg constituency

groups, and so completely unacceptable. At issue was the interpretation to be placed upon the constitutional proposals made by the National Party in 1977 (see page 216). The dispute was taken to the prime minister for resolution; he came down firmly in support of the opinion expressed in the magazine and added that the National Party's policy was one of 'healthy power-sharing' among white, coloured and Asian South Africans. The idea of power-sharing — 'healthy' or not — proved anathema to the right-wingers, who saw it as a dangerous precedent which would lead to erosion of white political control, as a violation of ideological orthodoxy and as an essentially liberal concept espoused by the opposition Progressive Federal Party (which does indeed propose power-sharing, and includes blacks in it as well). A further point of difference lay in the right-wingers' persistent attempt to force the prime minister to bind himself even more closely and in greater detail to traditional Nationalist ideological principles. While acknowledging that the ultimate arbiters of party principles are the party congresses, Mr Botha has insisted that there is a distinction between principles and policy, and that as leader he has the right to interpret and apply policy.

At a parliamentary caucus meeting on February 24 1982 a motion was presented calling upon the caucus to express confidence in the prime minister, and unqualified support for his leadership and his interpretation of party policy. Twenty-two members, including Dr Treurnicht and Dr F. Hartzenberg, the cabinet minister responsible for black education, opposed the motion, while 100 members supported it.

So far there has been no evidence to suggest that the split was deliberately engineered by the party leadership. Neither did Dr Treurnicht anticipate what happened. By all accounts he was playing his customary rôle of firing warning shots across the bows of the leadership, at the same time not wanting to go so far as to provoke a serious confrontation. Tempers, however, flared and hard words were exchanged, with the result that the Treurnicht faction was driven into a corner from which it could not extricate itself other than by its members' leaving the caucus

and spurning Mr Botha's offer of a week's grace in which to reconsider their position.

The National Party is federally structured, and each provincial party has extensive power to conduct its own affairs within the general framework of party principles. Nearly all the dissidents were Transvalers, and the focus of the conflict therefore turned to the Transvaal party. Its head committee, consisting of members of parliament, members of the provincial council and senior party branch office-bearers, met three days later. The meeting was attended by the prime minister, by invitation; it resulted in a massive defeat for Dr Treurnicht's followers, all of whom were subsequently forced out of the party. Ultimately the dissidents' numbers dwindled to 17, leaving the National Party still with 125 representatives in parliament and an overwhelming majority of 74 over all the other parties combined. Only five members of the Nationalist caucus in the Transvaal Provincial Council elected to follow Dr Treurnicht.

It would be unrealistic to suppose that Mr Botha, having eliminated his rightist incubus, will now embark upon far-reaching reform. Indeed, he has never contemplated such a programme, even at the beginning of his premiership when his ringing calls to whites to 'adapt or perish' heightened expectations that a fundamental attack on racial discrimination was at last in train. In no sense is Mr Botha a thwarted liberal. He is, rather, a conservative Afrikaner nationalist whose primary aims are to maintain Afrikaner unity and hegemony and to ensure that white South Africans retain their 'self-determination', which is a euphemism for white domination. The fury of the recent

conflict possibly exaggerated the real extent of the ideological differences between him and Dr Treurnicht. Their rivalry may simply have been part of a power struggle in which differing ideological nuances and strategic views were invoked as weapons to belabour the opponent. Whatever the truth of the matter, the conflict erupted as a fundamental issue. The immediate future holds out the prospect of only limited political changes, which, far from abolishing white supremacy, will be aimed at securing it more firmly.

Following the expulsion of the Treurnicht faction, Mr Botha will have to face even stiffer competition from parties to the right of the National Party. Subsequent to the split, Treurnicht's followers have formed the Conservative Party, which incorporates a few other rightist groups, including Dr Connie Mulder's National Conservative Party. It was, however, not possible for the rightists to achieve full unity, as the Herstigte Nasionale Party declined to merge, thereby creating the possibility of a murderous struggle for support on the right. The prospect of 'ethnic outbidding' is likely to have a markedly restraining effect on Mr Botha. In the past, troubles with the right wing have tended to inhibit the party leadership, which is reluctant to allow itself to be portrayed as departing from established ideological orthodoxy. A further source of restraint is that possibly as many as 20 Nationalist members of parliament, while they did not come out in support of the dissidents, nevertheless remain at root sympathetic to Dr Treurnicht's ideas.

It is still too early to assess with any accuracy how much damage the split has caused the National Party. It seems likely that the new

Conservative Party will pick up considerable support in the rural areas of the Transvaal, in particular from groups of lower-paid workers, especially those on the mines. Just as the Herstigte Nasionale Party has done in the past, the Conservatives will try to exploit class differences between Afrikaners; and with a business recession beginning to affect South Africa, they may make substantial inroads. Mr Botha, however, has ruled out the possibility of an early election, which would be an accurate gauge of the extent of right-wing support.

An opinion poll conducted for an Afrikaans newspaper in April showed that the Conservative Party had the support of 18,3 per cent of the electorate, while the National Party's support had dropped from 48,1 per cent in January 1982 to 43 per cent. A nation-wide survey of white voters conducted during March and April of this year by Professor Schlemmer, in collaboration with Mark-en-menings Opnames Pty Limited, shows that two thirds of National Party supporters are prepared to accept a form of power sharing which includes not only white, coloured and Indian South Africans but 'homeland' and urban-dwelling blacks as well. This acceptance is based upon the assumption that the form of the power sharing would eliminate the possibility of group domination; in other words, a consociational form of accommodation is envisaged. The same survey suggested that if Mr Botha were to move dynamically in a reformist direction, support for his party would increase from 43 per cent to approximately 50 per cent. These results were accompanied by others which show that the National Party support-group in the electorate has now been purged of those more conservative supporters

who would not countenance significant deviations from the status quo.

One major theatre of battle will be inside the Afrikaner 'establishment', an interlocking network of cultural, educational, press and religious organisations that are in principle co-ordinated by the *Broederbond* and traditionally have acted as ancillaries to the National Party. Historically, the *Broederbond* has sought to prevent or overcome conflict within the Afrikaner nationalist movement as a whole; but, as happened in previous severe conflicts, the present one, which finds members of the *Bond* on opposing sides, is likely to prove too intense and too enduring for this reconciling function to have much chance of success. While it is certainly true that the repercussions of the split will be felt in virtually every Afrikaner organisation in the country, at this stage the outcome cannot be predicted.

Such a survey of the conflicts within Afrikaner nationalism leads to the conclusion that the National Party will entertain no constitutional proposals that are likely to exacerbate tensions and thereby possibly weaken its popular support. Further, whatever plans it does adopt will be unable to meet the primary requirement of a constitution: that it should create a framework within which political conflict can be effectively regulated.

In 1977 the National Party produced proposals for a three-chamber system, involving white, Asian and coloured 'parliaments', which were later embodied in a bill that was presented as the National Party's evidence to the Schlebusch Commission (a parliamentary commission of inquiry on the constitution chaired by Mr A.L. Schlebusch, then minister of justice and of the interior, and one of those instrumental in having Mr Botha elected to the premiership). The commission reported in 1980 and recommended that South Africa's Westminster system of government did not provide a solution for its constitutional problems and that, in designing future constitutional structures, there should be the widest possible consultation and deliberation with, and among, all population groups in an attempt to raise the level of acceptability of any proposals. It also recommended the establishment of a president's council composed of 'nationally acknowledged experts in their respective disciplines and persons recognised by their respective communities as leaders' from among white, coloured and Asian groups. It envisaged a separate body for blacks that could liaise with the council.

The controversy that arose over the report, and the subsequent embodiment of its recommendations in legislation, centred on the exclusion of blacks from the council. Even relatively moderate coloured and Asian organisations joined the opposition Progressive Federal Party in condemnation. In the face of opposition from black 'homeland' leaders also, the government summarily dropped the proposal for a separate body for blacks, who nevertheless remained excluded from the council, ostensibly because their presence on it would make it impossible to reach consensus on a new constitution. It has been rumoured that some members of the cabinet wanted blacks to be included, but that this idea was completely unacceptable to the rightists.

The right wing is not, it would seem, representative of attitudes among the electorate at large. The findings of numerous studies indicate that the weight of rank and file white voter opinion has moved towards an acceptance of reform, including the possibility of limited power-sharing between whites and blacks. An opinion poll conducted for an Afrikaans newspaper and published in October 1981 showed that 57 per cent of the sample (including a majority of National Party members polled) favoured the inclusion on the president's council of representatives of the urban black population, while only 20 per cent opposed it. Such findings suggest that with strong, determined leadership and a readiness to confront the right-wingers inside and outside the National Party, the government could be notably more venturesome in embarking upon reforms that went beyond minor tinkerings with the apparatus of structural racial inequality. The emergence of a vociferous right wing does not contradict this tendency; although still a formidable political force — despite its persistently harking back to obsolete values — demographically the right is shrinking. Previously it had lodged within the protective fold of the governing party; but Mr Botha's initiatives temporarily moved the weight of the party toward the centre, and the right wing, thus exposed, appeared at first glance more significant. The comparatively small size of the group that was prepared fully to support Dr Treurnicht, however, showed that beliefs about the extent of the right wing's influence within the party were somewhat exaggerated. Nevertheless, a move further to the left by the prime minister would exacerbate an already serious decline of Afrikaner unity and therefore would be unacceptable to the party hierarchy.

The president's council was duly established in 1980, and

since then its constitutional committee has been heavily involved in the task of producing recommendations for local and regional government structures and for a constitution to encompass the white, Asian and coloured groups. In theory it is completely unfettered, but in practice its independence is likely to be circumscribed. Mr Botha has laid down in unambiguous terms what is, and what is not, acceptable to his party: he has ruled out a unitary system based upon universal franchise, a 'consociational' system, or a federation in any form. He has also categorically rejected the possibility of common roll representation of coloured voters along with whites, and he has declared that, should the president's council recommend that blacks living permanently outside their 'homelands' or 'national states' be incorporated into a constitutional accommodation with the other racial groups, the government would reject the recommendation. Another senior minister has emphasised that the only approach acceptable to his party is one that makes the 'ethnic group' the foundation for a new constitutional dispensation.

The government's strategy aims to create a 'non-black' bloc that is structured in such a way as not to endanger white — in particular, Afrikaner — hegemony. It is considered essential to widen the whites' power base by associating with them the 2,5 million coloured people who, the Nationalists fear, might ally themselves even more strongly with blacks. When questioned in parliament in August 1981, the prime minister acknowledged, as had his predecessor, that whites would ultimately control whatever new constitutional system was adopted. Traditional Nationalist principles, apart from

Claims of increasing role of military in South African government (page 214, Prime Minister P. W. Botha accompanied at public ceremony by Chief of Defence Force, General Constand Viljoen) come from both ends of political spectrum, most vocally from right-wing Herstigte Nasionale Party (election poster, above)

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the political ones mentioned earlier, embrace also the right of the whites to separate residential areas and educational systems. All these principles have been declared 'non-negotiable', with the inescapable implication that current policy excludes much fundamental change in the existing social order; certainly, if race or colour are to remain as fundamental criteria, it is logically inescapable that the Population Registration Act, which provides for the 'racial' classification of all people, must remain in force.

The recommendations of the president's council constitutional committee were published in May 1982. Predictably, they largely concern constitutional relations between the white, Asian and coloured groups. The committee maintains that the conflict of interests between whites and blacks is too great to be accommodated within any type of democratic system. Accordingly, although it does not exclude the possibility of blacks coming within the dispensation at some future time, it endorses the direction of official policy towards blacks, which it describes as partition, and the principle of a confederal relationship with the black 'states'. The committee argues for a fair and negotiated partition, accompanied by 'appropriate measures of consolidation' of each black territory.

As far as the white, Asian and coloured groups are concerned, the committee advocates a 'consociational' democracy, involving executive government by a coalition of representatives of the three groups and the avoidance of simple majority voting in the legislative process. Each of the groups will share power in matters of common concern, but will control its own affairs in terms of the consociational principle of 'segmental

autonomy'. How, at a national level, an adequate distinction is to be drawn between matters of common concern and those pertaining to particular groups is not discussed.

The recommendations favour a non-parliamentary executive, headed by an indirectly elected president who would preside over a single cabinet composed, initially, of a premier and of ministers appointed by the president after consultation with the premier. It is envisaged that the executive is to be 'as supra-ethnic as possible', a circumstance which, so it is claimed, will be facilitated through the president's being elected by an electoral college consisting of white, coloured and Asian members of the legislature. All executive offices will be open to members of the three ethnic groups, although at this stage no ethnic ratios or cabinet appointments are prescribed. The president will be elected for a seven-year term, and he will have the right to dissolve the legislature and to submit issues to the test of a referendum.

The committee makes no detailed recommendations about the structure and composition of the legislature or about the legislative process, but it stipulates that the representation should be on an 'an-ethnic' or group basis. Serious reservations are expressed about the earlier proposals for three parliaments, and it is noted that they evoked widespread criticism from coloured and Asian spokesmen.

So much for the proposals. But 'group' representation within a single system, however structured, may well aggravate conflict between the white, coloured and Asian groups. When minority groups are represented as groups, they are likely to assess their participation in terms of the possibility of their acquiring

power. The coloured and Asian groups may, therefore, come to resemble parties with permanent minority status, with no prospect of gaining access to initiating powers, whether by electoral process or through coalition. The effect of this limitation could well transform coloured and Asian representatives into a discontented and frustrated group.

Although the National Party's attitude to these recommendations was not immediately made known, it would seem that they do not significantly depart from its declared principles; which is hardly surprising since a clear-cut majority of members of the president's council have a National Party background. The prime minister has frequently stated that should there be any significant departures, the issues would be put to the electorate in a referendum. Although legislative provision has been made for a referendum among white, coloured and Asian communities, it is unclear whether Mr Botha would run the risk of a humiliating defeat, which he might sustain in view of the rejection of the proposals by the rightist parties and the serious reservations expressed by the Progressive Federal Party, and the opposition among coloured and Asian people to any constitutional proposals that exclude blacks. The Buthelezi commission survey in 1981 found that nine out of ten Asian and coloured South Africans in Natal feared the consequences that such measures might have in antagonising blacks. A further imponderable is the possibility that these recommendations, limited though they are, could be unacceptable to a number of Nationalists, who remain vulnerable to rightist propaganda against any form of 'mixed' government.

If implemented, the constitutional committee's recommendations are more likely to exacerbate than to resolve South Africa's problems. Excluding blacks from an attempt to reach an accommodation through democratic power-sharing and confining them to a confederal relationship invites confrontation. The presumption that the conflict of interests between whites and blacks is too great to be accommodated within a single political system is presented without supporting argument or evidence. Nor is any attempt made to deal with the argument that a fair and negotiated partition is in practice likely to pose even more intractable conflicts of interests. The equitable allocation of land and natural resources, which would be central to any negotiation for partition, would constitute issues which are inherently the least amenable to bargaining. Our subsequent analysis will show that confederation offers little hope for durable accommodation between white and black.

The report of its constitutional committee confirmed earlier opinions that the president's council is an inadequate instrument for achieving reform. From its inception the council has suffered from a serious lack of credibility in all political quarters outside the National Party — and even within the party there were sceptics on the right who opposed joint white-Asian-coloured deliberations and who were suspicious that the council might serve as a vehicle for Mr Botha's putative 'liberal' proclivities. Much of coloured and Asian opinion was uniformly hostile to the council, and those who became members hardly rate as 'persons recognised by their respective communities as leaders'; on the contrary, whatever standing they may have

enjoyed among their communities was reduced through the simple fact of their acceptance of an appointment on it.

In any case, the government's relations with these groups have been deteriorating rapidly. The coloured persons' representative council, an earlier device for offering the coloured community some — circumscribed — degree of political participation, came to an end in 1980 as the result of perpetual deadlock between its elected members and the government; and in November 1981, elections for the South African Indian council, a body which likewise enjoys only minimal powers, produced only a ten per cent poll, which suggested widespread lack of interest among Indians.

Probably in an effort to acquire some standing among the Asian and coloured communities, the president's council recommended to the government that the suburbs of Pageview in Johannesburg and District Six in Cape Town should revert to their former legal residential status by being 're-zoned', respectively for Asian and coloured communities.

By the end of 1981 four 'national states', Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda and Ciskei, had received 'independence' from South Africa, although none was internationally recognised as independent. It is not known whether any other 'homelands' will seek independence, although the largest of them, KwaZulu, has categorically rejected the possibility (see *Optima*, Volume 30 Number Three). Since the middle of 1979 the South African government has been committed to a confederal relationship with

these 'independent' states and any others that might want such an association. The limits of confederation have been carefully defined, the essence of the scheme being that it is a loose form of association, requiring the consent of all member states for any joint action. Mr Botha has emphasised that for blacks, at least, confederation is as far as his government will go. The association will have at its apex a council of states, embodying common consultation structures and secretariats; but this will not be, in Mr Botha's phrase, a 'super body' exercising collective control over member states. The idea is not new in National Party circles: substantially similar proposals were made by Dr Verwoerd almost two decades ago. What is new in the recent proposals is the recognition that, to quote the minister of co-operation and development, 'exclusively separate economies for the different population groups or even for different geographical areas cannot be developed'. It was once an article of faith among Nationalists that an integrated economy 'inevitably' led to political integration between black and white. This has now been jettisoned, along with the hopes once cherished by Dr Verwoerd that by 1978 the flow of blacks from the 'homelands' to the towns would reverse itself.

The emphasis in recent government thinking has been on decentralisation or 'de-concentration' of the South African economy. It is pointed out that more than 80 per cent of South Africa's industrial output is produced in four large metropolitan areas, among which the Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereeniging region is dominant. As little as 13 to 18 per cent of black income is generated in the 'national states', which each year can pro-

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vide employment for only 28 per cent of their new entrants to the labour market. This state of affairs produces pressure on the governments of the 'national states' to improve living standards for their people, and a strong motivation for black workseekers to seek employment in the so-called 'white' areas. Accordingly, to balance the present over-concentration the government intends to create regional 'growth poles', envisaging, according to the prime minister, planning zones that may cut across the boundaries both of 'white' provinces and black 'states'. Such an arrangement could have significant constitutional implications, if and when there is acceptance by the government that political and economic realities cannot be separated.

The reasoning underlying this initiative may be in part an attempt to camouflage the fact that the long-standing National Party policy of consolidating the black 'states' into less fragmented land areas is now recognised as an impossibility. Consolidation proposals were published in 1975, but were predicated on handing over to the black 'states' only that limited amount of additional land provided for in terms of legislation passed in 1936. In any case these proposals would not create single units for all the territories: KwaZulu, the most egregious case, would still consist of ten discrete areas of land. Analyses carried out by the central consolidation committee of the commission for co-operation and development, under the chairmanship of Mr H.J.D. van der Walt, have shown that full geographic consolidation would require the addition to the 'homelands' of three million hectares of predominantly agricultural land at a cost of R6 000 million over the next ten years.

Aside from this high order of expenditure, the committee doubted whether the extra land would increase the economic potential of the black territories by more than half of one per cent. Faced with these facts, the government has acknowledged that it is impossible to consolidate each black territory in such a way as to make it viable. Consolidation, on the basis of the 1975 proposals at least and perhaps more, will still proceed, but it will be within the broad context of the economic interdependence of the different population groups.

The creation of institutional structures for the regional development programme announced by Mr Botha is still in an embryonic stage, but certain guidelines have been laid down by government spokesmen. Planning zones are being identified in terms of their complementary resources, common developmental problems and needs, and dependence for industrial growth on the same regional 'cores'. In each zone an advisory committee is to be established to ensure that local interest groups have a voice in the planning process. Where a zone cuts across the boundaries of black 'states' the committees on either side, it is expected, will liaise with one another. It has been emphasised, however, that these advisory committees will have no negotiating or executive powers. Planning power will be vested in the central government and where zones include black territories, decisions will be taken through the confederal structure. It has also been laid down that the political and fiscal sovereignty of the 'independent' black states must in no way be jeopardised. The scheme is being promoted as a way of enabling the different groups in southern Africa to

achieve effective political independence by giving them the necessary underpinning of an economic power-base. At the same time, however, the government is careful to warn that the proposals do not mean the transfer of unlimited financial and other support to developing communities and states.

The emphasis in the decentralisation programme is on private enterprise, with the state's rôle being limited, as far as possible, to the provision of infrastructures and collective services and to the creation of an appropriate climate for the private sector's operations. At this stage, however, one must presume that this separation of functions is tentative. Broadly conceived, the hope is that South Africa's dynamic central economy will stimulate less developed areas, on the argument that this approach has a better chance of success than reliance on ever increasing financial aid and other direct forms of assistance.

Firmer proposals for the decentralisation programme were announced by the prime minister in November 1981. He said that South Africa was to be divided into eight development regions within which 20 development points were to be identified in the 'white' areas, while it was foreseen that a further 27 points might be identified within the 'homelands' and 'independent' black states. He announced also that the government was to offer incentives, costing the exchequer about R600 million, to induce businessmen to move out of the big cities and to invest in the decentralised regions.

One of the key agencies in the plan is the Development Bank of Southern Africa, which the government sees as a major catalyst for development in the subcontinent as a whole. Progress in
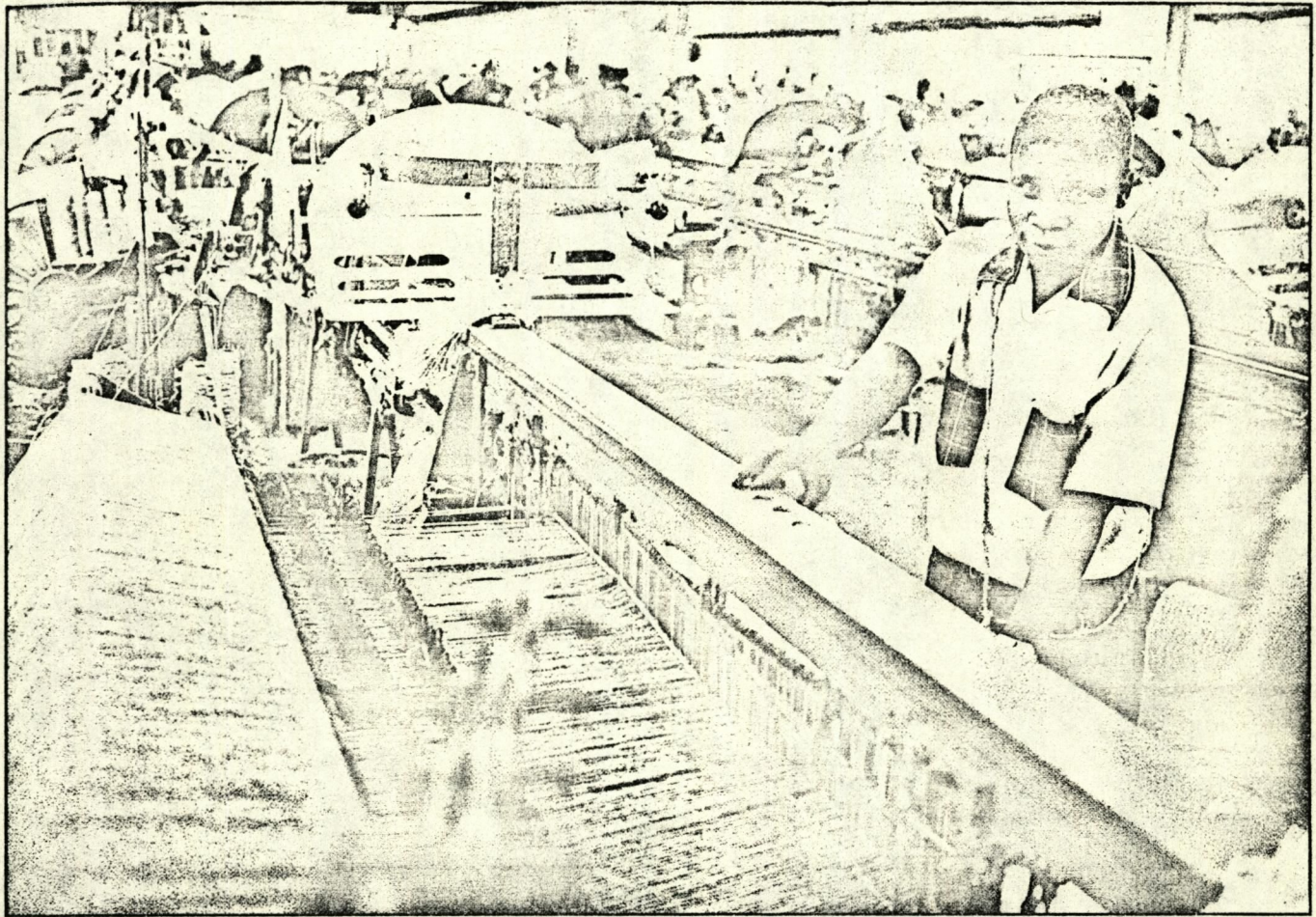
setting up the bank has been slow, however, due to disagreements within the National Party and resistance to the concept within the bureaucracy. Apparently the more conservative section of the party is suspicious of the entire strategy on the grounds that it is a covert means of watering down the policy of granting 'independence' to the black 'states'. Economic co-operation across state boundaries perforce will involve joint decision making, which the conservatives fear is the thin end of a wedge that eventually will lead to political power-sharing between whites and blacks. Another serious disagreement, not yet resolved, has centred on whether black 'states' that are not 'independent' should be eligible for membership of the bank. KwaZulu, the most populous homeland, does not accept proposals that it and other non-independent homelands should have a secondary status in the membership structure of the bank.

In assessing the prospects for the confederal scheme it must be emphasised that a confederation is fundamentally different from a federation, a system in which the central government is directly elected by all federal citizens and has powers that are independent of its regional or provincial governments. Confederation is a loose grouping from which a member state can withdraw at any time. Confederal agencies have no binding power, apart from that specifically granted by all the member states. In theory — and the prime minister has repeatedly emphasised this — all member states of a confederation are equal in status. But in

Key aspect of government's decentralisation plans is development of economic growth points, which straddle existing boundaries of 'national states'. Textile factory in Transkei (above) is outcome of earlier planning schemes, closely determined by such boundaries

practice, equality among states of such disparate economic strength as those of southern Africa is a myth; there can be no real equality in a situation such as that which obtains at present, in which the South African government subvents the 'independent black states' to the extent of some 80 per cent of their total revenues. It is difficult to see how this dependency can be overcome, even in the medium to long term. In its analysis of independence for Ciskei, the report of the Ciskei Commission, under the chairmanship of Professor G.P. Quail, of 1980 stated:

With respect to the resident population, the homeland economy lacks virtually all the attributes of a viable economy. It cannot grow sufficient food, not even the basic carbohydrates, to feed its population. It cannot provide employment for all its resident population. It does not have control over the collection of four-fifths of its own public revenue. For all these economic inputs it is dependent on South Africa. Moreover, it has no port and, apart from a short coastline, it is completely surrounded by South Africa. Its prospects for both agricultural and industrial growth are very modest. It has no proven mineral resources. It is argued that for a territory with a *per capita* income of under R250 such an extremely high degree of dependence on a single country is incongruent with true political independence.

Although Ciskei is poorer than most of the black territories, the profile of dependence and under-development it presents is not untypical of all of them. 'Independence' from South Africa, although it may bring larger subventions, does nothing to alter this condition. Inherently

the relationship between South Africa and such progeny must be one of patron and client, the client captive and incapable of mobilising any significant countervailing power with which to deal with its patron on a more equal basis. Furthermore, the acceptance of 'independence' necessarily involves the citizens of the black state's foregoing their claims to an authoritative voice in the allocation of South Africa's wealth, not to speak of its strengthening white hegemony in the remaining area of the country, just as Dr Verwoerd used to argue in the 1960s.

When a black territory receives its 'independence' from Pretoria it confers its own citizenship and its inhabitants, whether or not domiciled within the territory, lose their South African citizenship. Apart from the symbolic hurt of such action, it increases the personal insecurity within South Africa of citizens of the black 'state': all these 'states' suffer from chronic unemployment, and thousands of their inhabitants are prepared to evade South Africa's stringent influx control laws in an attempt to find employment in towns in the 'white' areas — a squatter population of more than one million has arisen near the major cities. In dealing with this problem in Cape Town the government invoked a provision in South Africa's aliens legislation to deport more than 3 000 Transkeian squatters during 1981; a summary method that could not have been employed against blacks who were still South African citizens.

In the case of Ciskei's 'independence', the enabling legislation passed by the South African parliament was accompanied by a convention or treaty between the Ciskeian and South African authorities which declares that

after 'independence' Ciskeian citizens should continue to enjoy their existing rights and privileges in South Africa, as well as rights and privileges relating to South African nationality, although the latter provision is merely a device to overcome the difficulties of foreign travel encountered by Ciskeians, whose passports are not internationally recognised, and does not confer South African nationality. Further provisions of the convention stipulate that Ciskeians will not be regarded as aliens for purposes of employment and will retain residential rights. The terms of the convention are to be incorporated in legislation, and the South African government has undertaken to conclude similar conventions with the other black 'independent states'. *Prima facie,* the convention overcomes some of the difficulties caused by the loss of citizenship, but a number of issues remain in doubt. It is still not certain, for example, that citizens of Ciskei or the other 'independent states', if they were born after the date of 'independence', possess rights to remain within 'white' urban areas or to inherit houses acquired under existing leasehold legislation. The incorporation of the convention into law will undoubtedly give it a more binding effect, but the fact remains that such a law at any time could be modified or repealed, with adverse consequences for non-citizens of South Africa.

Perhaps the most critical issue in the government's constitutional programme is the way in which the 9,5 million blacks within 'white' South Africa are to be accommodated. Many have lost their ties with rural 'homelands' or are uninterested in preserving them. In recent years official policy has somewhat

modified the traditional principle that all urban blacks are 'temporary sojourners' within 'white' South Africa, and it has now been recognised that some blacks at least are permanently urbanised. Nevertheless, the government continues to assert, against all the evidence, that most urban blacks have 'homeland' ties and wish to channel their political aspirations through their 'national states'; its aim is to grant urban blacks what the prime minister has termed a 'higher degree of local government, which is higher than municipal government', presumably through bodies that could be given some kind of voice in the council of states of the putative confederation. As with much of the institutional framework of the confederation, no details of this proposal have been published, but legislation to establish this 'higher degree of local government' will probably be enacted in 1982.

It is virtually certain that any dispensation along these lines would be rejected by the large majority of urban blacks, whose militancy and impatience with the status quo is greater than any other category of the black population. As the Schlebusch Commission itself implied, the acid test of a constitution is its level of acceptance among the populace governed under its provisions, and its capacity to contain and regulate conflict. On these criteria there can be little doubt that the government's constitutional thinking, as so far revealed, is inadequate. There can be no hope of attaining the goal of 'peaceful co-existence' (the Schlebusch Commission's phrase) if the government seeks at the same time to maintain a more covert form of white hegemony under the guise of safeguarding the whites' right to 'self-determination'; but one must

Increasing urbanisation of blacks (see graph, page 226) is matched by their steadily advancing economic power, as both workers and consumers. Total black spending is expected to outstrip white by 1985, despite blacks' lower individual incomes

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Report of Buthelezi Commission, enquiring into requirements for stability and development in Natal and kwaZulu (initiated by Chief Gatsha Buthelezi, chief minister of kwaZulu, above), revealed increasing impatience and hostility towards present dispensation. Failing significant changes in their social and political circumstances during next decade, nine out of ten blacks believe in inevitability of insurrection

beg leave to doubt whether any other interpretation can be placed upon the government's intention.

Is the scene, then, set for inevitable and prolonged racial confrontation? There are some disquieting indications that it may be. At least 4 000 young blacks left South Africa, many of them for guerrilla training camps, during the country-wide disturbances of 1976 and 1977. Acts of sabotage and terrorism, carried out with increasing sophistication, have become more frequent. A survey of black opinion conducted in 1981 for the Buthelezi Commission, established by Chief Gatsha Buthelezi, chief minister of KwaZulu, to investigate the future of Natal and KwaZulu (see *Optima,* Volume 30 Number Three), one of several in which Professor Schlemmer has participated on behalf of the Commission or by way of earlier research, suggested that there was overwhelming support for black organisations that categorically reject separate development. On the Witwatersrand nearly 40 per cent of respondents said they supported the proscribed African National Congress (ANC), which confirms other signs of a resurgence in its popularity. Another poll for the Buthelezi Commission showed that nearly 50 per cent of black people in Natal, rural or urban, believed that many or most people would co-operate with, or shelter, ANC insurgents if asked to do so discreetly.

The last figure is only one of the unsettling results of the research conducted on behalf of the Buthelezi Commission during 1981, which also helped to confirm that the level of black discontent has been rising steadily since 1976. In repeated controlled quota samples of black men on the Witwatersrand, the proportion responding to carefully prepared and tested

questions by declaring themselves to be 'angry and impatient' with life increased from 39 per cent in 1977 to 44 per cent in 1979 and 56 per cent in 1981. The basic question may over- or under-estimate political anger. What is significant, however, is the trend. Discontent is increasing and, moreover, is not concentrated among young people: the 'angriest' (60 per cent) are in the age group 25-49. Nor is it limited to Soweto — feelings run higher on the east Rand — or the more sophisticated urban people, because 56 per cent of migrant workers are also militantly discontented.

For migrant workers, in particular, the effects of the government's adoption of the proposals put forward by the Commission of Inquiry under the chairmanship of Dr P.J. Riekert (The Riekert Commission) into legislation affecting the utilisation of manpower, for reducing recruitment from the more remote rural areas, has produced a survival threat, aggravated by a steady increase in the size of the rural population, forced resettlement in areas with no employment and the accompanying phenomenon of increasing landlessness among younger migrant workers. This last, with the consequent relegation of former landowners to the status of rent-paying tenants, is markedly increasing anxiety among an increasing number of migrant workers, whose morale can no longer be sustained by the security of a rural land-holding. Year after year, government measures are increasing the potential for stress-reaction and instability among migrants.

Comparative studies conducted since 1972 have shown a marked shift in the political thinking of rank and file blacks, both urban and rural. In 1972 the dominant political sentiment was one of apathy. The white power structure seemed massive, rock-like and immovable, and the main response to it, among all except the better-educated minority, was of helpless acquiescence. Ten years later the mood has changed. Whereas in 1972 blacks were far less concerned with politics in daily affairs than were whites, today they are significantly more politically conscious than any other racial group. At that time, although they sought improvements in their circumstances, they were not particularly concerned with comparing themselves to whites. Now, equality with whites takes pride of place. When faced with a choice between a higher material gain with continued inequality or a lower gain coupled with equality between black and white, seven or eight out of ten opt for the latter. The most significant change, however, is that black people no longer see the white system as immutable. Perceiving possibilities and opportunities, they are no longer apathetic; there is much more determination and confidence, albeit often concealed.

There seem to be four reasons for this. First, the removal of the minority régimes that governed Angola, Moçambique and Rhodesia [now Zimbabwe] has shown that 'white' power can be broken down. Second, the school boycotts that swept the country during the latter part of the 1970s have tested and defined for blacks the limits and capacity of South Africa's internal security system. Third, the 'independence' of Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Ciskei and Venda produced legal disadvantages — or the threat of them — for migrant workers and blacks in 'white' urban areas, and revealed a need for action to counter the steady erosion of black rights. Fourth, the symbolic effect of the increasing amount of sabotage within South Africa has proved as potent as it has in, for example, Northern Ireland; the minister of defence has admitted that there was a 200 per cent increase in incidents of sabotage in the first six months of 1981 over the last six months of 1980 and has warned that the next five years would be decisive for South Africa.
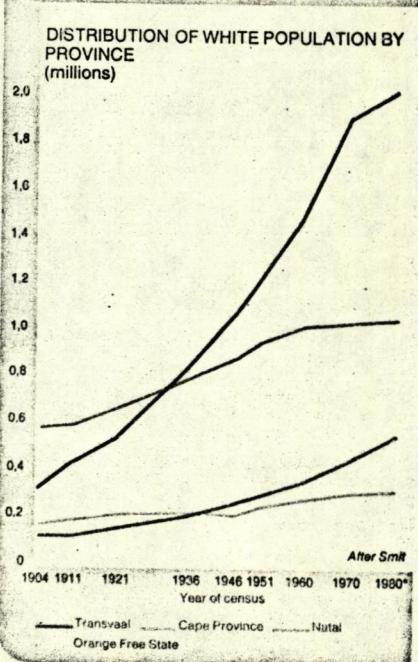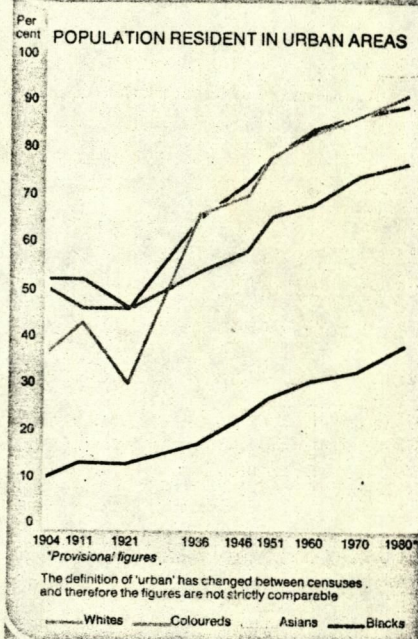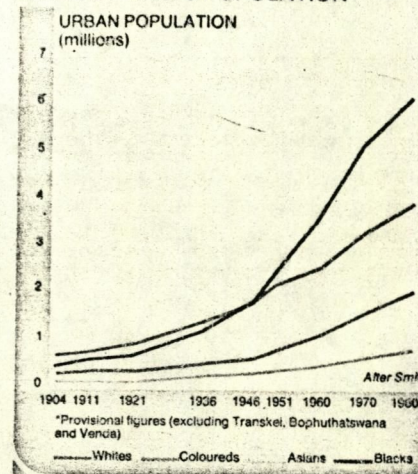
There are, however, some indications that South Africa has not yet reached a stage of pre-revolutionary political tension, although such an assertion must be anything but confident. In some areas, such as Natal, the situation would have become much worse were it not for strong, moderate leaders who, despite the many obstacles, are attempting to win some time for peaceful change. Even so, roughly two-thirds of black people in Natal and the Witwatersrand, including those who are highly discontented, hold firm to consistently non-violent attitudes. Generally, blacks still believe in 'dialogue' and place their hope in a form of leadership which will be able to engage in negotiation with the white authorities; they are very cautious about the value of current initiatives but their basic approach is constructive and conciliatory. This could, however, prove a very transitory state of affairs. It might be shattered in Natal, for example, if Chief Buthelezi were to be moved to say publicly that peaceful change was impossible; and similar considerations may apply in the Transvaal and the eastern and western Cape Province. Furthermore, we should pause to consider the stark fact that the roughly one-third of people holding consistently militant attitudes contains a core of many hundreds of thousands of poten-

tial revolutionaries. But it is important to note that, even as an ideal, the possibility of black majority rule with the exclusion of whites is slightly less favourably endorsed by Zulus generally than are the various power-sharing options. When questioned about various political alternatives, roughly 70 per cent of blacks say they are prepared to accept certain second-best *political* options provided they constitute an improvement in the provision of basic needs and services, represent a movement towards equality of opportunity, involve black leaders in decision-making and — perhaps above all — improve access to the labour market.

Trade unions at present embrace only about six per cent of the total black labour force, but the proportion is sure to grow. Turbulence certainly can be expected on the labour front, as unions for blacks increasingly flex their muscles. Nevertheless, the white South African employer, like the authorities, is fortunate in that the basic values and attitudes of blacks are moderate and very compatible with key aspects of the South African institutional system (excluding apartheid, obviously). For example, on some questions relating to economic issues, a clear majority of 70 per cent of black people value the private enterprise system more than socialist alternatives. This attitude is rooted in most blacks' high regard for small-scale informal entrepreneurship, and their dislike of regimentation. These findings emerge not only in the context of questions about South Africa; a preference for individual enterprise holds firm even when black people were asked to give prefences in the context of nations in Africa under majority rule.

Needless to say, neither South Africa's pattern of highly controlled public administration for blacks nor its tendency to monopoly capitalism does much to create a bond between the popular black private enterprise ethic and 'white' institutions; indeed, the value system of black people may offer much common ground that the white power structure at present is actively ignoring. But the government has departed from its past policy far enough to accept the recognition of black unions, which may now be registered and participate in the industrial council system. Carefully circumscribed rights to strike have also been granted, although virtually all of the strikes by black workers in recent years have been technically illegal. This apparent liberalisation has been induced partly by a recognition of the need for effective industrial negotiation which the committee system favoured earlier by the government did not allow; partly by international pressures; and partly by the government's belief that the extensive supervisory powers that accompany a trade union's registration would provide a more effective form of control than would non-recognition. A number of black unions have refused registration, for that reason and also because of the government's reluctance to countenance 'non-racial' unions.

This serves to emphasise that the greatest underlying problem affecting labour relations in South Africa is a lack of trust. Not so long ago, most managers saw black unions collectively as a 'fifth column' making for disruption, and only now are they realising that, when incorporated fully into the industrial process, trade unions, unless their actions are aggravated by factors external to the industrial environment, are essentially stabilising and con-

GROWTH AND MOVEMENT OF SOUTH AFRICA'S POPULATION

URBAN POPULATION
(millions)

After Smit

1904 1911 1921 1936 1946 1951 1960 1970 1980*
*Provisional figures (excluding Transkei, Bophuthatswana and Venda)

Whites ——— Coloureds ——— Asians ——— Blacks

POPULATION RESIDENT IN URBAN AREAS
Per cent

1904 1911 1921 1936 1946 1951 1960 1970 1980*
*Provisional figures
The definition of 'urban' has changed between censuses and therefore the figures are not strictly comparable

Whites ——— Coloureds ——— Asians ——— Blacks

DISTRIBUTION OF WHITE POPULATION BY PROVINCE
(millions)

After Smit

1904 1911 1921 1936 1946 1951 1960 1970 1980*
Year of census

Transvaal ——— Cape Province ——— Natal
Orange Free State

servative forces, especially in an economy with sustained levels of growth sufficient to allow scope for the minimum reforms in labour conditions that the unions require.

For their part, black people live day by day with what they perceive, understandably enough, to be a hostile, indeed malevolent, bureaucracy. This fundamentally suspicious attitude is all too easily transferred to business management, and is greatly exacerbated when decisions are taken without the very painstaking process of consultation required in the South African situation. An example is the recent emphatic, even militant, rejection of compulsory pension funds and proposed pensions regulations by substantial numbers of blacks employed in industrial areas in Natal and the eastern Cape; a circumstance that is replete with lack of trust and the failure of reciprocity. It is, however, within the power of existing black leadership, black unions, management and organised business interests to build the lines of communication that will create a climate of mutual trust.

The fact that no political rights have accompanied the limited extension of collective bargaining rights makes it virtually certain that blacks will attempt to use their unions for political as well as economic purposes, however much the government may try to stop them from doing so. South Africa's chronic shortage of skilled workers and the government's acceptance of the need to abolish occupational colour bars and provide increasing training facilities for blacks means that powerful bargaining resources are being placed in black hands. The skilled or semi-skilled worker is not an easily replaceable 'labour unit', nor is he likely to become

politically more quiescent as he climbs the occupational ladder. Survey evidence from 1981 and earlier shows a close correlation between support for more radical organisations and higher occupational status, a finding that casts considerable doubt on the belief entertained in some circles that upward occupational mobility would, by giving black people a 'stake in the system', diminish whatever militant proclivities they might have entertained. It also undermines the government's apparent strategy of attempting to co-opt permanently urbanised blacks into the existing structure of South Africa by giving them greater economic rights and other concessions, though not effective political rights. What Mr H.F. Oppenheimer, chairman of Anglo American Corporation and De Beers, has described as 'half-hearted reforms', offering a degree of relief from some forms of discrimination while maintaining intact the full weight of discrimination in the political and social spheres, are likely to have an inflammatory effect on popular attitudes rather than the reverse. It is a well attested finding in the sociology of revolutionary behaviour that people tend to become revolutionary not when oppression is at its worst, but rather when the oppressive order begins to show signs of cracking and subordinate classes discern that their chances of a better life are still being frustrated in important respects. This is not to suggest that South Africa is on the brink of revolution, or even that its established order could possibly be overthrown by revolutionary means (which indeed seems highly doubtful). The point is rather that the government's fumbling and inadequate programme of limited reform may well irritate South Africa's already intense level of conflict

rather than soothe it. It needs to be stated immediately, however, that any reversal of the reform programme at this stage would have an even greater destabilising effect.

Projections for population growth, urbanisation and manpower requirements have had a marked effect on political debates in recent times, and it may be hoped that the revelations contained in them will act as a spur to real political reform. In formulating its decisions the South African government increasingly has come to rely on technocrats of all kinds, including demographers, economists, planners and political scientists, and the cumulative weight of their findings is bound to have an impact on politicians' flights of ideological fancy. Projections show that the black population of South Africa will double within the next 26 years, and within 50 years will number almost 84 million. The birth rate among blacks has risen to the dangerously high figure of some 40 births per 1 000, while the figure for whites has steadily declined to 17 per 1 000. Uncontrolled population expansion is invariably associated with socio-economic factors such as poverty, lack of education and migrancy, but in South Africa there is an aggravating factor in the widespread belief among blacks, fuelled by irresponsible statements from some white politicians and other leaders, that birth control is being encouraged for blacks but discouraged for whites. Estimates produced by the government-funded Human Sciences Research Council suggest that whites will account for only 13 per cent of the total South African population by 2000.
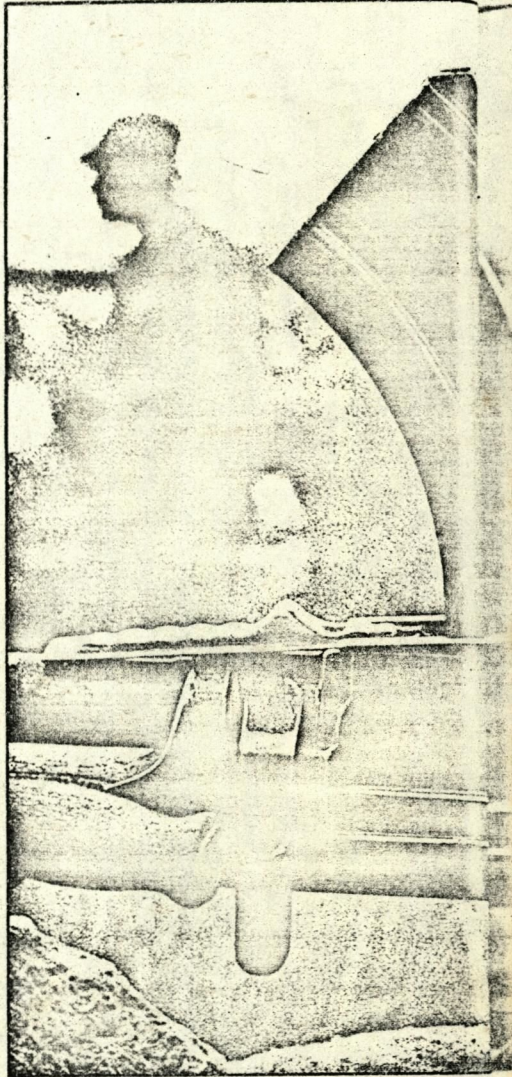
In common with other rapidly developing societies, South Africa is experiencing an increasing rate

of urbanisation. It mainly affects blacks, because the other population groups are already highly urbanised. At present only 38 per cent of the black population lives in urban areas, but by 2000 the figure will have risen to 75 per cent, with the great majority of the newly-urbanised flocking to the four existing major metropolitan areas of 'white' South Africa. This implies that the urban black population will be some 20 million by 2000, outnumbering the combined white, Asian and coloured population of South Africa by at least two to one. Equally striking are the projections for the growth of the labour force: in 1980 blacks made up just under 70 per cent of the total force but by 2000 that figure will have risen to over 80 per cent. Other projections suggest that by 2000 eight out of ten skilled and trained workers will be black. Mr G.W.H. Relly, deputy chairman of Anglo American Corporation, has said that it is possible that by the turn of the century as many as two out of three managerial positions will be filled by blacks (see supplement to *Optima*, Volume 30, Number Three). The consumer power of blacks is also increasing. It has been estimated that by 1985 they will account for 47 per cent of total private consumer spending, compared with the whites' 40 per cent. Black education will advance dramatically: by 2000 there will be nearly two million black pupils in secondary schools, compared with some 300 000 whites. In considering these indices of projected black advancement it must be borne in mind that many, perhaps most, of the blacks in the white-controlled area will be permanently domiciled there, yet in terms of the present policy will be citizens of foreign countries. It is a delusion to suppose that the forces unleashed by this

development could be contained by constitutional proposals that in essence seek continued white political hegemony.

The formal response to the situation from the white power structure is such as to discourage any belief among blacks in the possibility of moderate or evolutionary options. Apart from labour legislation, some wage policies, industrial training and a few rather peripheral social opportunities, the overall effect of current government policy is to increase, not reduce, constraints upon blacks; especially significant in this is what appears to be a quiet but determined tightening of influx control administration — although its effectiveness is dubious. It is, however, fair to say that expert opinion, outside party politics and the 'core' bureaucracies at least, seems to be achieving more effective consensus about rational and necessary reform, as witnessed by various commissions of enquiry, including those into labour legislation under the chairmanship of Professor N.E. Wiehahn, the coloured population group (Professor Erika Theron), education (Professor J.P. de Lange) and the consolidation of KwaZulu (Professor J.A. Lombard). Behind the scenes, of course, there is equally cogent evidence of a growing common view among planners. Very little seems to penetrate to a policy level, but the question must be asked as to whether or not, or for how long, any government in a society as complex as South Africa's can ignore or shrug off the opinion of established, legitimate and dispassionate experts.

Very broadly, and in the sense of *theoretical* possibilities, one may conclude that there is fairly substantial overlap or common ground between blacks and whites and there are theoretical possibilities of compromise and

negotiated reform, even at a constitutional level. A theoretical possibility, admittedly, means little unless it is put into practice. There is, however, an ever-present, even if remote, possibility that from within the business and professional sectors of the white group a reformist lobby could emerge as a counterbalance to pressure from the political right, which has its base in social quarters enjoying less general esteem (the right wing is mainly rooted in various kinds of 'cultural' institutions which have more symbolic or nostalgic power than real leverage in public life; their main influence lies in their hold on party workers).

Leadership among blacks is a
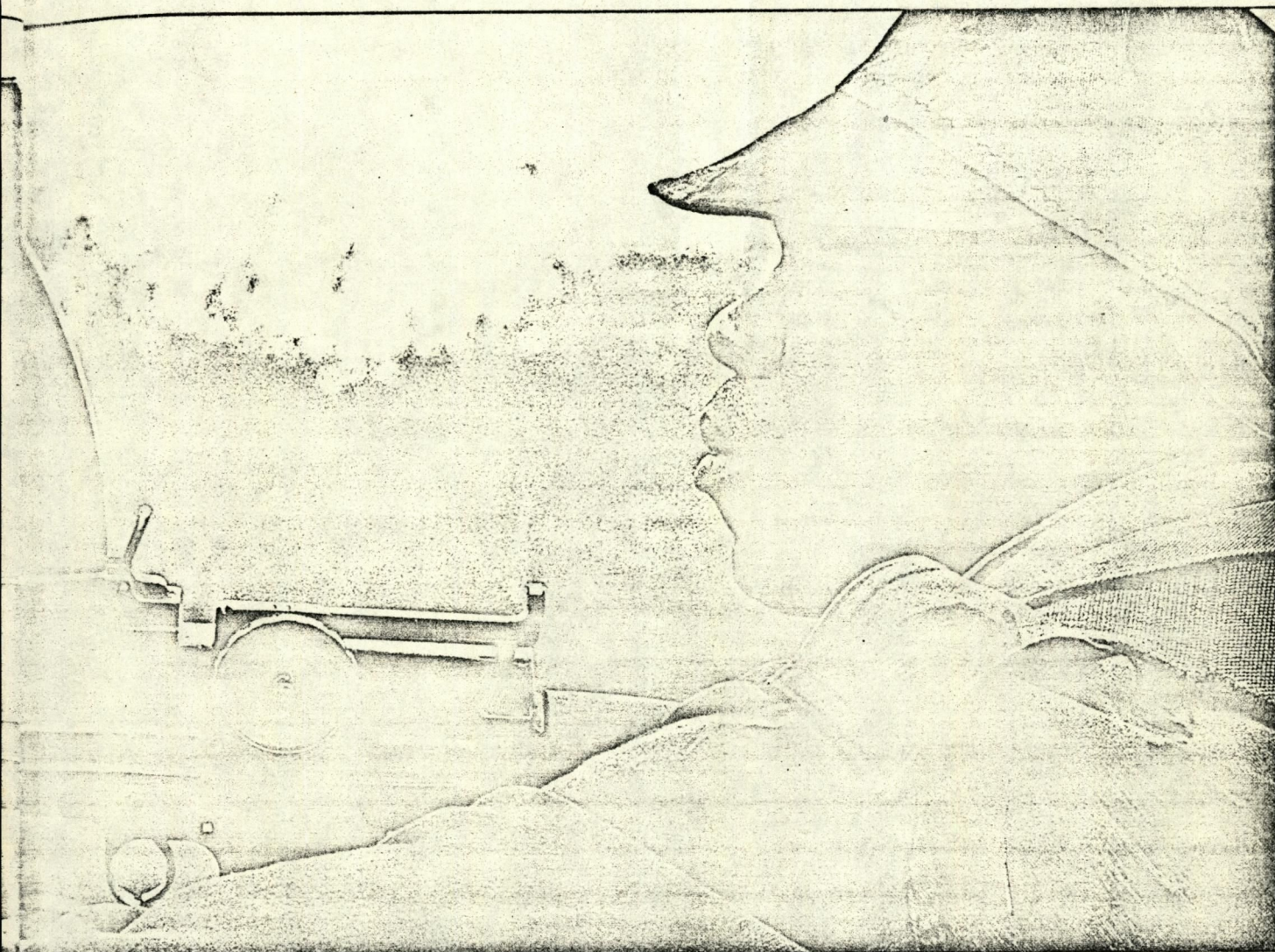
complex problem. Some black leaders have opted for withdrawal into the very small but secure arenas of power in the 'national states', thereby effectively removing themselves from influence within South Africa proper. Others do the same, although in a less obvious way: their withdrawal takes the form of a rejection of involvement in the apartheid system and by so doing they may leave many foreigners in general and blacks in South Africa with the impression that only externally-based insurgency movements are capable of bringing about real change. There are, however, black leaders such as Chief Buthelezi, and others not associated with 'homeland'

politics, who are involved in the mobilisation of mass-membership or community groups. Given the inevitability of polarisation in South African society, this form of leadership represents the only way the country can move towards a process of negotiated reform, but it risks a great deal in legitimacy because it is working within, or at least close to, 'the system'.

In considering the prospects of a resolution of political conflict, it must be remembered that white South Africans harbour within themselves deep ambiguities. On the one hand, as members of one of the most privileged groups in the world, they are reluctant to step into the unknown of a non-

discriminatory society in which power is shared among all races; on the other, many feel a deep disquiet at the isolation forced upon them as a pariah group in a world that regards institutional-ised racial discrimination as an outrageous abnegation of humanity. The moral conviction that accompanied the advocacy of apartheid and separate development in the days of Dr Verwoerd has disappeared from many spheres of Afrikanerdom: yet it remains difficult, if not impossible, to convince the doubters of the merits of a com-mon society in which power is shared. The advocates of the latter state of affairs cannot, of course, guarantee that it will
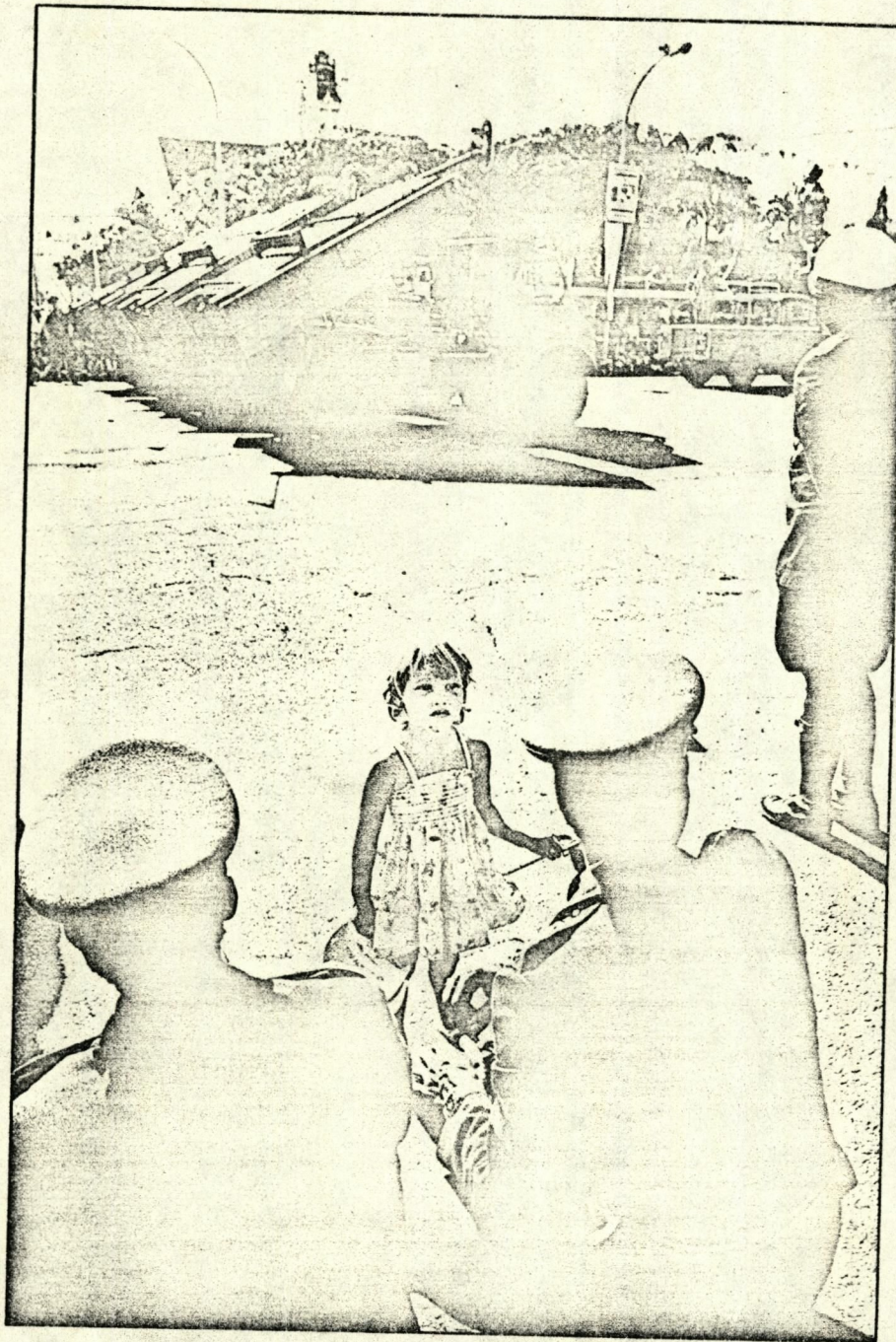
South African government has stepped up recruitment into defence force (preceding page, black infantrymen under training), as part of 'total strategy' to meet perceived 'total onslaught' against the country. 'Strategy' includes enhancing public consciousness of embattled state (above, Republic Day parade, Durban)

manifest itself as a just and democratic political system in which minority rights are respected. This is not a failing peculiar to them, but merely a re-statement of the obvious point that no person or party can guarantee in advance that a particular programme will succeed. Yet it remains true that, even if these undertakings cannot be given, the chance of a reasonable accommodation within the framework of a common, non-discriminatory society is surely an option preferable to the certain disaster that will ensue from continuing on the present course. Unless warped by 'survival anxiety', or a consistent sense of having nothing to lose, the knee-jerk political reflex of most blacks is like that of most whites: essentially conservative. Given the slightest opportunity, black people are willing to support the rules of a game which offers fair reward and expanding opportunity, rather than attempting to replace it with some unknown and idealistic option. The best proof of this was the responses of the urban black people in Rhodesia who, until literally days before the transfer of power to a black majority government, for the most part remained an orderly, stable and solid labour force. It was those to whom the system offered nothing who, understandably enough, switched allegiance to the armed revolutionary forces.

White South Africans fail to comprehend, and to take advantage of, the tendency toward self-stabilisation that exists in their society, as it does in all. They do not even remotely appreciate why democracy works — or does not work — in Africa, to the understanding of which race is irrelevant. Minds cluttered and confused by all sorts of homespun 'wisdom' in the shape of racial

myths and stereotypes simply aggravate the problem. Many blacks labour under similar misapprehensions; for example, too many black spokesmen see social change in terms of a simple alternative between moral conversion of whites on the one hand and brute force on the other. They would be more effective if they understood change in terms analogous to, say, market forces: whites will make concessions when administration and control of the present system become too costly, or seem likely to become so in the short term; blacks, if mobilised in constituency positions or community movements, may well be able to demonstrate such potential costs in peaceful ways. In this sense, political reform can be seen as a process of 'trade-off'.

Perhaps the greatest impediment to resolving the conflicts is that politically South Africa is an unsophisticated society compared with, for example, Europe. South African conservatives erroneously perceive liberals as dangerous idealists. They do not realise that outside a narrowly political context, in respect of major economic and bureaucratic institutions, most 'liberals' take a conservative stance. The end-consequence of many liberal policies would be to strengthen established institutions by the inclusion of those who might otherwise oppose them.

But a cynical saying has it that rational action may be considered when all other possibilities have been eliminated. South Africa may well have to endure many travails while the illusions of separate development are successively demolished, and the spur to more rational behaviour may be the rising costs of enforcing the status quo. These costs are both tangible and intangible. It is not really possible to quantify them, or the extent to which they will increase, but few would dispute that they are vast and that collectively they constitute a gigantic premium that every South African has to pay for an illusory insurance policy. For the time being, the white individual scarcely notices the premium: possibly it is as little as five or ten per cent of the annual tax payment. But what would happen if conflict intensified and maintaining the social order required ever-increasing expenditure on defence, security and other essentially non-productive measures? When the premium reaches, say, 30 per cent and begins visibly to erode white living standards, and when all the other discomforts and hazards of life inside a society in crisis begin to take their emotional toll; is it not reasonable to suppose that the bulk of the white population would then acquiesce in a recognition by their rulers that real negotiations about a new dispensation would have to be initiated, and with authentic black leaders?

In retrospect, a flow of events broadly comparable with that in South Africa can be discerned in the process in Rhodesia that finally brought Mr Ian Smith's white government party, the Rhodesian Front, to the negotiating table with the Patriotic Front guerrilla group. South Africa, one profoundly hopes, will learn some lessons from its neighbour's experience. If the Rhodesian government had begun negotiating sooner rather than later, some of the devastation of war could have been avoided and in all probability the minority white community could have ensured for itself better long-run prospects.

There are significant differences between the two societies. The size and strength of South Africa's white population, relatively so much stronger than that of Rhodesia, make it unlikely that it could be overthrown by violence, so the assumption in some radical circles of 'inevitable' revolution and a black take-over is difficult to accept. A more credible scenario is for South Africa's conflict to develop into a state of deadlock in which neither side can achieve an outright victory. When this 'no-win' stage has been reached, it might be that both sides, mindful of their essential inter-dependence, would find it in their interest to seek an accommodation. No ruling groups ever surrender their privileges easily, and that in South Africa is unlikely to be different. But there are limits to the degree of conflict that they can accept before the human and physical costs reach intolerable levels. Heady statements of the kind that 'whites will fight to the last drop of blood' must be treated with great caution.

The short- to medium-run prognosis for South Africa is hardly cheering. The next decade (or perhaps even two) will be decisive in determining whether its society can be transformed into a stable and reasonably open one. Historically, few societies have been fortunate enough to undergo massive structural transformations without turbulence or violence and there is little reason to suppose that South Africa will prove an exception. Nevertheless, there are some grounds for qualified optimism. South Africa's inherent economic strength and dynamism give it a resilience that may enable it to ride out the storm without sustaining too much devastation. Neither side in the conflict would wish to see the bases of the country's wealth destroyed. This, combined with the inter-dependence of the different racial groups, may impose limits to the scale and duration of the conflict.   ○