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The Struggle for South Africa: A Reference Guide to Movements, Organizations and Institutions

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Davies, Rob, D. O'Meara; S. Dlamini. The Struggle for South Africa: A Reference Guide to Movements, Organizations and Institutions. Vols, I & II. London: Zed Press, 1984.

Except for its tendentious treatment of the major African nationalist organisations in South Africa, this work is profoundly analytical, informative, well-organized, and highly readable. Using the method of dialectical and historical materialism, the authors of The Struggle For South Africa provide the reader with an accessible guide to the major organisations, movements, and institutions of the principal class forces engaged in the struggle for South Africa. Furthermore, they seek "to make clear how these different organisations fit into the overall pattern of the struggle and what strategic and tactical positions they are following...at the present time" (p.42).

Perhaps the only short-coming of this work is its selective treatment of the two historic African liberation organisations—the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC)—whose respective approaches to their struggle epitomise the two patriotic tendencies in the internal South African resistance movement today. While the authors are eager to expose what they regard as PAC's weaknesses, they seem to wish away the existence of problems in the ANC. This contradicts the dialectical method along which the rest of this work proceeds.

The authors' unsympathetic portrayal of some of the South African patriotic organisations such as the PAC, leads them to even obvious factual errors (besides their many misleading simplifications of the PAC and Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) positions. They claim that, among other things, the PAC split from the ANC in 1959 because they "were violently opposed to the formation of the Congress alliance, alleging that whites and Indians had taken over the direction of the struggle and that these aliens were interested only in preventing the indigenous African majority from gaining their rightful control of 'Azania' (as they termed South Africa)" (p.298). Whereas there may be some argument about other issues here, there is no argument about the fact that the PAC started using "Azania" for South Africa only after its 1965 Tsakana conference in which this name was adopted and proposed by other patriotic organisations using South Africa. During the split with ANC in 1959, PAC was in South Africa. Now, which PAC are the authors paraphrasing here?

An even more transparent manifestation of the authors' bias is when they portray the PAC's 1960 anti-pass campaign that led to the Sharpeville massacre and marked a watershed in the African liberation struggle, as a campaign in which PAC only sought "to put a stop to the terms Boys and Girls" and was based on that "in shops we will demand our status as customers" (p.298). This not only questions the intelligence of the Africans who led the PAC; it belittles the cause for which many lost their lives in 1960. Besides, if it were true that PAC was so moderate and shallow - because "its major campaign was the campaign for status" (p.299) one wonders why Pretoria allowed PAC to exist legally for only eleven months (April 6, 1959 - March 30, 1960) whereas the ANC existed legally for 48 years and was outlawed in 1960 only after the first paralyzing campaign launched by PAC.

Be that as it may, this work also has unquestionable strengths and should not be dismissed. After all, the authors are South African partisans who are likely to embrace one tendency over the other. We may only hope that as the enemy repression intensifies against the masses in South Africa, all liberation organisations there will begin to emphasise aspects on which they agree and play down points of disagreement. This is not only important for the present painful struggle against the settler minority regime of Pretoria; it is more important for a future South Africa and Africa as a whole.

The Struggle For South Africa does not just answer the "whats" of the South African situation, it explains the "whys" and "hows" thereof. This way the reader is better able to understand the political developments, institutions and power blocs that define the oppressor and the oppressed there. To illustrate this, we consider how the authors analyse the factors behind the rise, rule, and present crisis of the apartheid regime. The authors explain that the national Party's 1948 victory was based on the use of Afrikaner nationalism and the winning of support from four central groups which were welded into a cohesive class alliance. The first of these was agricultural capital. Given the post World War II economic collapse of the African reservations as subsidisers of migrant labor, Africans flocked to the cities in search of jobs thus leaving an acute shortage of labor for white farmers. (Reservations collapsed because the 13% of land allocated to Africans by the 1913 and 1936 Land Acts led to overcrowding.) By 1939 it was estimated that 85% of agricultural capital was controlled by Afrikaner capitalists. So when the Fagan commission, which was appointed by the United Party, whose government was dominated by the manufacturing sector interests, which benefited from a stable urban African labor pool, recommended making Africans permanent urban dwellers, the alternative party of apartheid: National Party, won the support of Afrikaner dominated

agricultural capital by promising to implement rigid pass laws, meant to re-channel African labor back to the overcrowded reservations, and thus force them to farm labor and mining as "migrant laborers." This way, agricultural capital became the first ally of the NP.

The second element was the specific strata of white workers, particularly in the mining metal building industries. The NP rewarded these by intensifying job-reservation acts to protect white workers from African competition, and also by destroying the African working class organisations.

The third element in the Nationalist alliance was the Afrikaner petty bourgeoisie. And "this class force had been the principal base of the Nationalist Party since its 'purification' in 1934" (p. 19). This class had been "threatened by rising mass struggles, the economic advances of the African proletariat, the political demands of integration etc." Thus "it gave its support to ever more exclusive racist policies" and "it was the moving organisational force in the NP and in the formation of its apartheid policies for the 1948 election" (p. 19). To reward this class, the National Party enacted several additional racist measures and removed the threat of displacement by a black petty bourgeoisie. For instance, immediately on taking office "the Nationalist regime ...removed Asian traders from a number of areas where they were competing with Afrikaner shop keepers." And "the Group Areas Act provided for the progressive implementation of a comprehensive system of racial zoning" (p. 25) to protect white businesses and residential areas. Other measures like the "Immorality Amendment Act" of 1950, the removal of "Coloured" voters from the common votes roll, the replacement of top military commanders with Afrikaner pro-Nat petty bourgeoisie bureaucrats, passing of more repressive laws such as "detention without trial" (180 days) laws and the 1950 Suppression of Communism etc., were all to please this class.

The fourth source of National Party support in 1948 was the small Afrikaner finance commercial, and manufacturing capital. This group was particularly important to Afrikaner nationalists who resented that Afrikaner capital was only significant in agriculture which was 85%. Through the National Party (and their secret organisation Afrikaner Broederbond) the Afrikaners sought to reverse their weak position in other fields of the economy. For instance the share of Afrikaner owned concerns (by 1939 estimates) in the turnover of other sectors ranged from 1% in mining, 3% in manufacturing, 5% in finance to 8% in commerce" and the rest of the economy was dominated by English (and Jewish) capital (p. 25). To advance the interests of Afrikaner industrialists and financiers, the Nats did several things including "handing over 'plum' government contracts to Afrikaner firms;

transferring the bank accounts of government departments, local authorities, and state corporations to Afrikaner financial institutions...(p.23). Perhaps the greatest success of the Nats in rewarding its power bases lies in how it helped Afrikaner capital to grow into major monopolies chief among which are: SANLAM, Rembrandt, and Volkskas--these are respectively the second, fourth and fifth largest of eight conglomerates dominating the South African economy today.

Based on these four elements of Nationalist support, the authors categorise the now thirty eight years National Party rule in to three phases. In each phase we see how the interaction of the oppressor and the oppressed classes on one hand, and the dialectical interpenetration of the four elements that originally constituted the NP power base--on the other hand. In their analysis, the state of the economy is placed in the centre of how and why things happened as they did. Using this method, the authors consequently illuminate the present political situation very well. We are shown how monopoly capital (now including Afrikaner capital unlike in 1948) and the top echelons of the military have become the dominant elements in the NP alliance. The rise of these two elements is explained as dictated by the state of the economy today. As the apartheid economy developed a sophisticated manufacturing sector, the need for a correspondingly sophisticated internal market increased. With that, the need for a stable skilled labor force became acute. Thus arises the need for the Botha regime to rethink the status of urban blacks who are needed by the dominant manufacturing sector that needs more skilled manpower. Both these structural needs are thwarted by some aspects of apartheid which are not necessarily essential in the maintenance of white supremacy. It took the political shock of June 16, 1976 uprisings and the doomed Angolan adventure of 1975 as well as concerted ir-repressable black labor struggles for monopoly capital and the military (from which Botha comes) to coalesce into a powerful alliance that forced B.J. Vorster out of power in 1978, and with him, the NP alliance dominated by Afrikaner petty bourgeoisie and white labor. Instead, monopolies such as Anglo-American and SANLAM supported the idea developed from the military which then became Botha's policy: TOTAL STRATEGY. This policy is supposed to help Botha solve apartheid's structural crisis by introducing reforms that do not jeopardise white supremacy but enlist black support for capitalism. However, Botha's main problem is to retain the electoral support and understanding of the more numerous but now less important elements of the NP alliance. These are the Afrikaner petty bourgeoisie and white workers whose security depends on white pigmentation.

In addition to its analysis of past, and illumination of present South Africa, this work is informative, well

organised, and highly readable. It is not an exaggeration perhaps to say that no such unique, broad, yet substantive work has been published on the South African struggle before. In two volumes, the authors classify a vast amount of information on each political (including trade unions), economic, cultural and community organisations and institutions of the oppressor and the oppressed. These are given in a context of an elaborate yet incisive background analysis of circumstances out of which each entity arose. Included, are many tables and an impressive supply of statistics on both sides of the conflict. By and large, if the reader only understands that on PAC and BCM this series is misleading, the rest of the work is an indispensable-guide to South African politics.

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Comaroff, Jean, Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance. The Culture and History of a South African People. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985. pp. 296.

Jean Comaroff's book has much to recommend, while at the same time it has serious flaws. It provides insight into the Zionist Independent Church Movement as expressed amongst the Tshidi of Botswana and South Africa as well as intriguing--but to my mind suspect--interpretations of the conjuncture between traditional Tshidi praxis and the "world system" expressed in Christianity, the migrant labor system, and apartheid in general. Reflecting the influence of French scholars such as Foucault, Baudrillard, and Bourdieu, as well as the annalist historians, she attempts to incorporate event history with symbolic analysis of the body, gender, physical space, and ritual practice. The work is ambitious in scope and the author deserves credit for her familiarity with the current literature, but her all too ready use of jargon makes it difficult reading.

The book is divided into three parts. The first part has separate chapters devoted to event history, the structure of the precolonial sociocultural system, and precolonial cosmology and ritual (especially initiation ritual). The second part deals with the relationship between culture, ideology and consciousness. The last part describes the origin of the American Zionist sect in Chicago, its development in South Africa, and its particular manifestation amongst believers in Mafeking in 1969-70. Her major conclusion is that Zionism exemplifies a process in which precolonial