

The Political Economy
of Race and Class in
South Africa

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The Problem and Its Matrix: Theoretical and Methodological Issues

Our hypothesis is that racial exploitation and race prejudice developed among Europeans with the rise of capitalism, and that because of the worldwide ramifications of capitalism, all racial antagonisms can be traced back to the policies and attitudes of the leading capitalist people, the white people of Europe and North America.

—Oliver C. Cox

The scientific study of racial inequality and oppression in the world in general and South Africa in particular has yet to transcend the state of idealist improvisation. To study the evolution of racially based inequalities is not exclusively of academic interest, for without a proper conception of the history of racism in the modern world, it is difficult to see how strategies can be devised that will solve this burning question. The plight of the black people of South Africa is intimately bound up with the history of white settlement in their lands, and the South African social formation itself represents a stage in the evolution of the world capitalist system. In order to undertake an analysis of racial inequality and exploitation in South Africa, we must know its historical roots.

In South Africa, a pyramid of wealth and social power exists as a fact of daily experience. Whites, who constitute less than 20 percent of the nation's population, consume more than 60 per-

cent of its income, have legal occupancy rights to 87 percent of its land, and fill most of its skilled and semi-skilled occupations. Inequality of revenue and wealth is not only an economic fact; it implies inequality of life chances. Infant mortality statistics for Africans in South Africa have not been available since 1957, but it is estimated that the rate is five times that for whites and three times that for Asians. Estimates range from 200 to 450 infant deaths per 1000 live births.¹ A 1966 survey reported that "half the children born in a typical African reserve in South Africa died before reaching the age of five years." None of this is surprising given the distribution of physicians for the different "races": in 1972 there were 1:400 for Whites; 1:900 for Asians; 1:6,200 for Coloureds; and 1:44,000 for Africans.²

Every country is unique, but South Africa is so unique that it almost defies imagination. Despite the proclaimed policy of separate development, the African is everywhere: in the fields, in the factories, in the mines, in the shops, and in the offices. Every white person, no matter how poor he or she may be, keeps an African servant. The whites have reserved for Africans those hard and dirty tasks that they have refused to mechanize. South Africa's achievement in economic development, sports, or any other field of endeavor cannot be conceived of without the existence of the forced labor of Africans.

How, then, do we conceptualize inequality in South Africa? Racial inequality similar to that existing in South Africa has been the fate of other people in the so-called Third World. To understand the social inequality in South Africa, we must take into account the inequality between a small handful of advanced capitalist countries (considered thus from the point of view of capital accumulation and industrialization) and the so-called underdeveloped (colonial and semi-colonial) countries, where the majority of humanity lives. Not only are different economic functions assigned to different people within countries, but they are also assigned to the countries themselves within the world system. These inequalities are perpetuated by the principal social and legal institutions of the epoch.

Thus, although there are many ways to define and study racial

inequality, in this book we shall conceptualize it as an aspect of imperialism and colonialism, concepts that will be used analytically to refer roughly to the same phenomena: the economic, political, and cultural domination of the African people by the white settlers. We will use the term imperialism to refer to the specific relation between a subjugated society and its alien rulers, and colonialism to refer to the social structures created within the colonized society by imperialist relationships.³ While colonialism has an ancient history, the colonialism of the last five centuries is closely associated with the birth and maturation of the capitalist socioeconomic system. The pursuit and acquisition of colonies, their political and economic domination, accompanied the mercantile revolution and the founding of capitalism.⁴ To study the development of capitalism is thus the best way to study race inequality, for to do so places socioeconomic relationships at the heart of the problem, and shows how underdevelopment and racial inequalities developed together. The economic, political, and ideological motives that have structured capitalist relations of production in the modern world cannot be separated. Capitalism required an expansionist policy of conquest and exploitation which set off a cumulative process that produced its own ideology: this ideology in turn became a force capable of orienting choices and determining decisions. The ideology of racism, called into life and fed by the expansionist and exploitative socioeconomic relations of capitalist imperialism, became a permanent stimulus for the ordering of unequal and exploitative relations of production along "racial" lines, and further demanded justification of these relations. The seemingly "autonomous" existence of racism today does not lessen the fact that it was initiated by the needs of capitalist development or that these needs remain the dominant factor in racist societies.

What is important, then, is to explain the phenomenon of racism, to clarify its manifestations in capitalist society, with all that this involves with regard to local variations. The essence of modern capitalism is the ruthless transfer of wealth from the colonized to the colonizer, from black to white, from worker to

capitalist. An economic system must not only produce and transfer wealth, however, but must produce political and ideological systems that facilitate this transfer. As Louis Ruchames writes:

During the Middle Ages and extending into the early modern period, racial thought was used to explain differences between economic and social classes, especially between the peasantry and the nobility. Some thinkers regarded the peasants as descended from Ham, the accursed son of Noah, and the knights from the Trojan Heroes, who had presumably settled in England, Germany, and France after their defeat. In the seventeenth century Count de Boulainvilliers, a spokesman for the French nobility, declared the nobles to be descended from their Germanic conquerers and the masses of the people from the subject Celts and Normans.⁵

As capitalism expanded, "racial" thought was applied to the people in the colonies. To quote Ruchames again:

With the increase in slavery and the slave trade, and more numerous encounters of Europeans with Indians and Negroes, European scholars began to give greater attention to race and racial difference. It is interesting to note that it was only during the modern period that the term "race" came into use. The English term was first used at the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Italian *razza*, the Portuguese *raca*, and the French *race* were first used in the fifteenth century.⁶

The history of colonialism and imperialism is the history of the development of cultural institutions and of ideas of class and/or racial inequality in the newly created societies. Almost without exception, the gross inequalities in white settler societies came to be explained by the assertion that the colonized are biologically and culturally inferior. *Everyman's Encyclopedia* describes this process as follows:

The growth of modern racialist theories that hold that there are inherent differences between "superior" and "inferior" races is very recent. It seems to date from the days of slavery in America, when it was necessary to produce reasons for the continued subjection of economically valuable slaves. Much the same is true of South Africa today, where Calvinist doctrines have given such scientifically false beliefs added support. It is noticeable that in many Catholic countries there has been little racialism, since their

doctrine has held to the inherent equality of all men. This fact adds support to the view that "race" relations are essentially economic and social, and that "race" as such has little to do with the real situation.⁷

Though the growth of ideas of racial inequality reflects a real process in capitalist society, it must not be understood as a simple or mechanical reflection. The structures of inequality acquire meaning only through human definition, and this can include a wide range of mediations and individual perceptions. The study of racial inequality therefore calls for the analysis of a multitude of processes, some historical, some psychological, others religious and philosophical; this in turn necessitates the use of concepts grounded in history and the rejection of those based on idealistic assumptions about human nature. Ruchames writes of the early stages of these beliefs:

One of the important events in the history of racial thought took place in 1550 and 1551 at Valladolid, Spain, in a debate between Juan Genes de Sepulveda and Las Casas on the question of whether the Aristotelian theory, that some men are slaves by nature, could be applied to the Indians. Sepulveda argued that the Indians were rude and inferior beings by nature, with no capacity for political life, whose inferiority required that the superior Spaniards rule over them. Las Casas argued that the Indians were rational beings, superior to many ancient peoples, even the Greeks and Romans, and therefore worthy of freedom. Neither contestant gained a clear-cut victory. Although Lewis Hanke argues that Las Casas' publicly stated view strengthened those who believed "that all the people of the world are human beings" and represented "one more painful and faltering step . . . along the road of justice for all races," he admits that during the seventeenth century the Aristotelian view of race "reigned almost supreme in Europe and America."⁸

Translated, the Aristotelian theory states that society consists of people who differ not only in skin color but in ability. Members of certain races are masters because their achievements re-echo across the world; others are capable of nothing. They can serve, at best, as fertilizers for history, tilling the soil, digging the mines, and doing other chores for the European bourgeois

civilization. W. E. B. DuBois, witness to the rise of imperialism, concluded in 1915:

Most persons have accepted the tacit but clear modern philosophy which assigns to the white race alone the hegemony of the world and assumes that other races, and particularly the Negro race, will either be content to serve the interests of whites or die out before the all-conquering march. This philosophy is the child of the African slave trade and the expansion of Europe during the nineteenth century.⁹

Conceptually and theoretically, the meaning of this development is clear. The structures of racial inequality that developed during the nineteenth century were attempts to define relations between black and white in the era of capitalist hegemony. In *Black Reconstruction*, DuBois described the world order imperialism was creating and the role assigned to black, brown, and yellow labor:

That dark and vast sea of human labor in China and India, the South Seas and all Africa; in the West Indies and Central America and in the United States—that great majority of mankind, on whose bent and broken backs rest today the founding stones of modern industry—shares a common destiny; it is despised and rejected by race and color; paid a wage below the level of decent living; driven, beaten, prisoned and enslaved in all but name; spawning the world's raw material and luxury—cotton, wool, coffee, tea, cocoa, palm oil, fibers, spices, rubber, silks, lumber, copper, gold, diamonds, leather—how shall we end the list and where? All these are gathered up at prices lowest of the low, manufactured, transformed and transported at fabulous gain; and the resultant wealth is distributed and displayed and made the basis of world power and universal dominion and armed arrogance in London and Paris, Berlin and Rome, New York and Rio de Janeiro.¹⁰

A theory of racially based inequality must first grasp the general character of the epoch opened by the so-called voyages of discovery during the mercantile order. But beyond this, each society so touched exhibits a particular blend of diverse "racial" groups, a particular mix of their activities, and a particular

patterning of their socioeconomic relationships. The ideological instant of racism reflects the specificity of each society as an historical entity. The concrete differences between one country and another within the same political epoch must, therefore, be taken into account and explained. Instead of employing timeless categories to house social phenomena of different epochs, we must understand the dynamics of racism under specific conditions. The purpose of this book is thus to integrate sociological, economic, historical, and political approaches in an effort to comprehend the development of inequality and racism during South Africa's tragic and complex history. The approach is dictated by the belief that explanation is a statement of process and its historical determinations. "Every sociology worthy of the name," wrote C. Wright Mills, "is historical sociology."¹¹

The South Africa Case

Given the complexity of South African history, the scope of this inquiry must be severely limited, and I will concentrate on what Perry Anderson has called the key events—those that appear to have the most explanatory value as far as the development of South Africa's socioeconomic order is concerned. These are: (1) the settlement by the Dutch in the seventeenth century and by the English in the nineteenth century; (2) the subsequent conquest and incorporation of the African into the evolving settler society, first into agriculture and then into mining; (3) the national struggles of the Africans, both before and after conquest; (4) the discovery of diamonds in 1867 and gold in 1886, and the role of the gold industry in the capitalist monetary system; (5) the reorganization of agriculture, which resulted in the depopulation of the countryside and the creation of the "poor whites"; (6) the growth of urban-based industry and the competition which ensued between the black and white proletariat; (7) Britain's granting of political power to the white settlers in 1910; and (8) the role assigned to South Africa in the

imperialist division of labor. By examining the interaction among these events, I hope to demonstrate the coherence of South African economics, politics, religion, and culture.

The history of the white settler colonies in South Africa, as distinguished from their ideology, clearly illustrates the connection between the imperative of colonization—the desire to take land—and that of capitalism—the desire to exploit black labor. Because of its climate, South Africa, like the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, was to become a settler state. Africans were to be tolerated only if they would minister to the needs of whites; otherwise there was no need to spare their lives. The development of forced labor in South Africa could thus take place only after conquest. Karl Marx has explained what happens when a people is conquered:

A conquering people divides the land among the conquerors, establishing thereby a certain division and form of landed property and determining the character of production, or it turns the conquered people into slaves and thus makes slave labour the basis of production. . . . Or legislation perpetuates land ownership in large families or distributes labour as a hereditary privilege and thus fixes it in castes.¹²

And just before the turn of the nineteenth century, J. A. Hobson, looking back at the history of the colonization movement, commented:

Whenever superior races settle on lands where lower races can be profitably used for manual labour in agriculture, mining and domestic work, the latter do not tend to die out, but to form a servile class. This is the case, not only in tropical countries where white men cannot form real colonies, working and rearing families with safety and efficiency, and where hard manual work, if done at all, must be done by "coloured men," but even in countries where white men can settle, as in part of South Africa and of the southern portion of the United States.¹³

British imperialism developed a peculiar relationship to its colonies. The "white" dominions represented colonial settlements in the old Roman sense, a set of economies dependent on, and complementary to, that of Britain itself. Each colony was to

exchange those primary products suitable to its geographical location: wool for Australia, meat and dairy products for New Zealand, wheat and beef for Canada, and gold and diamonds for South Africa.¹⁴ Thus the South African economy of the last quarter of the nineteenth century was made to conform to the dictates of a world economy then dominated by Great Britain. Until recently, South Africa's development was largely conditioned by the objective circumstances of its dependence on gold mining, an industry controlled by British imperialist interests and described by one writer as a "state within a state." From an analytical point of view, one aim of this book is to determine the expression of this dependence on foreign capital in the internal organization of the country, and, more concretely, to analyze the articulation of the system of production and the resulting class relations.

As Britain gradually lost its hegemony, every major South African nonferrous-metal mining company, as well as those mining diamonds, came to be penetrated by foreign capital—if not British, then French or German. Most important, however, the mining industry sets the standard for the exploitation of African labor. This must be emphasized because the theory of South African race relations is cursed by a narrow focus on the character and experiences of the Afrikaner, rather than on those systemic aspects of imperialism that foster inequality and racism. Before Afrikaner racism acquired a structure and a consciousness of itself, the social processes that it would take advantage of were already in operation.

The first step in formulating a theory of inequality and racism in South Africa is thus to recover a sense of Britain's colonial legacy, against which to compare the thrust of contemporary development. Without knowing what British imperialism left behind, we lose sight of how the current system developed. Deliberately structured by racial laws and socioeconomic arrangements, and propelled by past and present exploitation, the system continues almost inexorably to reproduce racial inequality.

African labor was exploited in a constantly changing environment as the development of mines and farms, of secondary

industries and towns changed the methods by which the conquerors secured their surplus. The mountain of labor legislation, beginning with the master and slave codes, is an indispensable raw material for understanding the politics of racial inequality in these changing circumstances. But if explanation is the goal, then a discussion of the statutes cannot be limited to description and cataloguing: a particular piece of legislation can only be understood in the light of changing forms of labor appropriation, from the appropriation of surplus labor in slave-owning societies, to the appropriation of the surplus product under feudalism, to the appropriation of surplus value under capitalism. The nineteenth-century colonial wars in South Africa were not intended to "clean the lands" of the original inhabitants, as happened in the United States. Instead, they gave the white settlers the best lands and a considerable measure of control over African labor. Herein lies the origin of the historic contradiction of South Africa today: caught between wanting to exploit African labor, but not wanting the physical presence of Africans, apartheid has emerged not merely as an ideology, but as a myth that whites have a prior claim to parts of the land.

The practice of using Africans as cheap labor was openly encouraged by the British prior to 1910. In the 1880s, Earl Grey, secretary of state for war and colonies, told the mineowners that the "natives" had to be induced to seek employment in the mines, and to work willingly for long periods of more or less continuous service.¹⁵ This was not an isolated recommendation. In a memo to General Smuts entitled "Notes on a Suggested Policy Towards Coloured People and Natives," Lord Selborne, high commissioner for South Africa and governor of the Transvaal and Orange River Colony from 1905 to 1910, discussed how to establish a hierarchical structure that would ensure a cheap labor supply:

Coloured people. Our object should be to teach the Coloured people to give their loyal support to the white population. It seems to me sheer folly to classify them with Natives, and by treating them as Natives to force them away from their natural allegiance to the whites and into making common cause with the Natives. If they are so forced, in the time of trouble they will furnish exactly those

leaders which the Natives could not furnish for themselves. It is, therefore, in my opinion, unwise to think of treating them as Natives; and it would be as unjust as unwise. There are many Coloured people who are quite white inside, though they may be coloured outside. There are some, indeed, who are quite white outside also. The problem of the treatment of the Coloured people is, indeed, sadly complicated by the fact that they vary in every shade of character and colour from pure white inside and outside to pure black inside and outside.

I suggest that the wise policy is to give them the benefit of their white blood—not to lay the stress on the black blood, but to lay the stress on the white blood, and to make any differentiation of treatment between them and whites the exception and not the rule. A case for such differentiation would only arise when a Coloured man showed by his manner of living, e.g., by the practice of polygamy, that he had reverted to the tribal type.

Natives. The objects which the Government must have in their Native policy are: (i) to preserve the peace of the country, for nothing is so demoralizing or injurious to its true welfare as a native war; (ii) to ensure the gradual destruction of the tribal civilization among the Natives; (iii) to ensure the gradual destruction of the tribal system, which is incompatible with civilization. An important feature of this policy will be teaching the Natives to work. A large proportion of them do work now, but mostly in a desultory and inefficient manner. The object must be to teach them to work as continually and effectively as the whites are supposed to but do not always do.¹⁶

Once the exploitative capitalist structure had been installed, it continued to develop, accentuating its typical features. Perry Anderson has described the imperial political style:

Imperialism automatically sets a premium on a patrician political style: as a pure system of alien domination, it always, within the limits of safety, seeks to maximize the existential difference between the ruling and the ruled race, to create a magical and impossible gulf between two fixed essences. This need everywhere produces a distinctive colonial ceremonial and a colonial vice-regency. Domestic domination can be realized with a "popular" and "egalitarian" appearance, alien domination never.¹⁷

The ideological argument for the installation of a white su-

premacist state was admirably summed up by Lord Selborne at a degree-giving day at the University of Cape Town in 1908:

It is impossible for us, who once sprung from races which were in contact with the Roman Civilization before the Christian Era, to look to the question from the same point of view as the Bantu races who are totally different. So far as we can form an opinion, our forefathers, 2,000 years ago . . . were distinctly less barbarous than were the Bantu races when they came into contact with white men less than 100 years ago. Nor has the Bantu hitherto evinced any capacity from their first contact with it. . . . Speaking generally so far as we can foresee, the Bantu can never catch up with the Europeans, whether in intellect or in strength of character. As a race, the white race has received a superior intellect and mental endowment. The white man is the racial adult, the black man is the racial child.¹⁸

The political history of South Africa in the decade prior to the formation of the Union demonstrates quite clearly that "race," while remaining a biological category, under exploitative conditions becomes a social category and an important element in the functioning of the socioeconomic formation. The structures of racial inequality in South Africa were the creation of people who systematically and deliberately fashioned conditions to separate blacks from whites in order to exploit the former. The architects of the Constitution of the Union of South Africa decided that political, economic, and social power was to be an exclusive European preserve, a decision that foreclosed the possibility of building a nonracial society based on cooperation between the races.

The creation of South Africa as a white dominion had another aspect: it provided a safety valve for growing class contradictions within England itself. Lenin quotes Cecil Rhodes as saying in 1895:

I was in the East End of London [a working-class quarter] yesterday and attended a meeting of the unemployed. I listened to the wild speeches, which were just a cry for "bread, bread!" and on my way home, I pondered over the scene and I became more than ever convinced of the importance of imperialism. . . . My cherished idea is a solution for the social problem, i.e., in order to

save the 40,000,000 inhabitants of the United Kingdom from a bloody civil war, we colonial statesmen must acquire new lands to settle the surplus population, to provide new markets for the goods produced in the factories and mines. The Empire, as I have always said, is a bread and butter question. If you want to avoid civil war, you must become imperialists.¹⁹

Although a surfeit of population and capital needed an international outlet, and although South Africa provided such an arena, the British were only able to establish their domination because of historical and social circumstances. The Africans were conquered by force and then faced with a formidable battery of cultural symbols and weapons with which the conquerors justified their superiority and mystified their victims. Karl Liebknecht discussed the role of the monopolization of power by the colonizer:

The deciding factor in every social relation of power is, in the last resort, the superiority of physical force, which, as a social phenomenon, does not appear in the form of the greater physical strength of some individuals. . . . On an average, one human being equals another, and a purely numerical proportion decides who is in the majority. . . .

Economic superiority helps directly to displace and to confuse the numerical proportion, because economic pressure not only influences the height of the intellectual and moral stage and, thereby, the recognition of class interest, but also produces a tendency to act in conformity with more or less well understood class principles. *That the political machinery of the governing class lends its increased power to "correct" the numerical proportion in favor of the ruling group of interests is taught us by all the well-known institutions such as: the police, justice, schools, and the church which must also be included here.* These institutions are set up through the political machinery and employed in an administrative capacity. The first two work chiefly by threats, intimidation and violence; the schools chiefly by blocking up all those channels by which class-consciousness might reach the brain and the heart; the church most effectively by blinding the people to present evils and awakening their desire for the joys of a future life, and by terrifying them with threats of the torture chambers in hell.²⁰

The inheritors of the colonial state used their power to de-

prive the Africans of those economic, political, and cultural attributes that whites provide for themselves. The oppressed "racial" groups and classes were denied the chance of development and then cursed for being backward and primitive. As Africans nonetheless made advances, the legislation of inequality assumed ever more dramatic, if ridiculous, dimensions. General Smuts described the situation facing whites in South Africa bluntly:

Though the problem of mixed populations is not a new one in history, it nevertheless presents certain novel aspects in South Africa and the rest of the continent. Normally, it takes the form of a minority living in the midst of an overwhelming mass of other people, often under conditions of some disability. Here in South Africa, however, the small minority of whites lives not under the normal conditions of sufferance, but actually rule the majority with an iron hand. They have retained in their possession full initiative insofar as tactical power and intellectual advantage is concerned and they have clung aggressively to what they consider their rights in wealth and leadership.²¹

The white settlers never created a sense of "legitimacy," but only exercised dominance. The tendency of those who do this is to occupy an ever larger place in society, their insecurity propelling them to build their "security" upon a barrage of laws. Domination and coercion are the means whereby imperial capital violates those from whose labor it is derived. Racial laws are the means by which potentially violent class relations are contained and masked. Not only was a belief in racial inferiority indispensable to the superexploitation of black labor, but the social degradation embodied in the inequities of social, political, and economic impoverishment made racism imperative. Frantz Fanon showed that a colonial society functions because the colonists monopolize coercive violence to facilitate the exploitation and submission of the colonized. The use of violence aims to keep the "natives" enslaved and at arm's length; it seeks to dehumanize them.

The form of racial violence in South Africa was in part dictated by the fact that the white settlers formed a minority. The

growth of the state's military apparatus is directly related to the escalating class and national struggles of the African people. How the war between two groups claiming the same territory and means of production, and bound together so intimately in the capitalist economy, will be resolved is a question of far-reaching theoretical and practical importance. To the extent that bourgeois theories of racial oppression neglect or minimize the role of force in general, and its structural and systemic implications for the exploitation and oppression of the African in particular, they must be judged inadequate.

South African society has posed a theoretical challenge to those social scientists interested in racial inequality. For some, the challenge has been to identify the key factor distinguishing race and class; for some, it has been to seek the underlying causes of racism, often seen as a "moral dilemma" that cries out for a solution, preferably one that does not apportion blame. Others have tried to show the sequence of events that has led to the present impasse, in correct order and sufficient, even exhausting, detail; often every "factor" becomes of equal importance. Still others prefer to find a suprahistorical category that will catch, in a snapshot, the structural relationships of South African society.

But racism is not an abstraction; nor is it its own justification. The racial structure of South African society arose from the severest exploitation and contempt, guaranteed by power. Anyone who wants to change the structure of racial oppression must understand its fundamental nature, its historical formation, and its manipulation by the rulers. Racial oppression and class exploitation are inextricably intertwined in the modern world; they cannot be neatly separated for the sake of theoretical purity. Kwame Nkrumah has described the dialectic between race and class with clarity and accuracy:

Each historical situation develops its own dynamics. The close links between class and race developed in Africa alongside capitalist exploitation. Slavery, the master-servant relationship, and cheap labour were basic to it. The classic example is South Africa, where Africans experience a double exploitation—both on the ground of

colour and of class. Similar conditions exist in the U.S.A., the Caribbean, in Latin America, and in other parts of the world where the nature of the development of productive forces has resulted in a racist class structure. In these areas, even shades of colour count—the degree of blackness being a yardstick by which social status is measured.²²

While a racist social structure is not inherent in the colonial situation, it is inseparable from capitalist economic development. In a racist-capitalist power structure, capitalist exploitation and race oppression are inextricably linked; the removal of one ensures the removal of the other.

We must thus seek the foundation of racism and not select those symptoms and phases of its manifestation that suit our ideological predisposition. The concept of class is useful not because it is "true," but because it correctly identifies the basis of exploitation in capitalist society; it directs our inquiry to the fundamentals of racism as an instrument for extracting surplus value from the laborer and of keeping the working people divided. The divisions in South Africa may appear racial in form, but their economic content is characteristic of all capitalist and settler societies—Ireland should suffice as an example. A class, or a coalition of classes with some common interest, stands in partial or complete antagonism to the nonpossessing classes. This is true in South Africa whether we look at ownership of land, industry, and commerce, or at the distribution of income between blacks and whites. The coalition of socially and politically dominant classes uses its power to preserve and extend the mode of production on which its income depends. And while for the white rulers Africans exist only as labor power, for the white workers Africans are considered (rightly or wrongly) a threat to their economic security, because it is in part derived from and guaranteed by the superexploitation of Africans. Racism as an ideological system had to be cultivated by the politically conscious classes to subvert class unity between black and white labor.

Such an analysis runs counter to that of the social and cultural pluralists, who see the economy not as a leading factor in the historical process but as one among many of its elements. The

pluralist assumption inevitably leads to subjectivism, as social scientists arbitrarily select those factors which they believe to be pertinent to a given case.

South Africa is not a plural society; it is a society with a dual labor market: a primary (white) market of relatively secure, well-paid jobs, and a secondary (black) market of insecure, filthy, low-paid jobs. African workers are confined to a marginal, yet indispensable, role by fraud, violence, and a system of institutionalized racism that protects "the white masters of the world."²³ The evolution of racism in South Africa covers six qualitatively distinct phases, which can be distinguished even though they cannot be separated in fact. The first phase extended from 1652 to 1806, and was the period of rule by the Dutch East India Company. Cattle and land provided the only important resources for both white and black pastoralists, and racism expressed itself in genocidal struggle over their possession. The second period ran from 1806 to the discovery of gold in the Witwatersrand in 1884. It was characterized by the insatiable need of British capitalism for markets and raw materials, including mineral wealth. Britain subsidized white settlers on the plantations, and Africans were progressively dispossessed of their best lands and incorporated as instruments of labor for the settlers.

The third phase (the final colonial phase) was reached in the last quarter of the nineteenth century when, as the other capitalist nations caught up with Britain, the world began to be divided among the European powers. The era of modern imperialism was ushered in. To consolidate its rule, Britain was forced to launch a series of wars of conquest, ending with the constitution of South Africa as a British dominion in 1910. The fourth phase, which lasted until 1948, was the one in which the new dominion tried to find its identity. It was characterized not only by two world wars, but also by the consolidation of white supremacy and the ascendancy of Afrikaner political and economic power, the full-blown exploitation of the country's mineral wealth, and the development of secondary industries.

The fifth phase began with the coming to political power of the Afrikaner government in 1948, and saw it begin the process

of shaping the capitalist economy in its favor. The emancipation of colonies elsewhere in Africa from alien rule aroused great fears among the white settlers and led them to adopt increasingly oppressive forms of rule. It was during this period that the armed struggle for national liberation began. Thus the character and content of Afrikaner rule was significantly influenced by the international climate and by the Africans' struggle for their own political emancipation.

The sixth phase takes us into the present; it began with the demise of Portuguese rule in Angola and Mozambique, the consequences of which are still unfolding.

The aim of this book is to begin the study of the economic, political, and social variables that have defined South African social history and that have been ignored or played down in most studies of South Africa's racism. It suffers from the shortcomings of work done with a sense of urgency and in not altogether favorable circumstances. It also suffers from a lack of first-hand documentary research on my part. Nevertheless, I am convinced that the kind of work that I have attempted is long overdue: we cannot wait until there is "enough" empirical research or until our circumstances improve. Further, in studying South Africa, one does not begin from nothing. There is a wealth of existing empirical knowledge and theoretical interpretation that must be examined from a different angle. The known facts can be interpreted with hitherto avoided theoretical tools.

The book is divided into seven sections: the first (chapters 2 and 3) deals in a synoptic way with the values and ideals of the societies that were in South Africa and with those that established their presence there in the seventeenth century, and with the social meaning of conquest and defeat; the second (chapters 4 and 5) deals with the political economy of the gold-mining industry, and with the migrant labor and "native reserve" systems; the third (chapters 5 and 6) discusses urbanization and the growth of manufacturing and commerce; the fourth (chapter 8) deals with the role of imperialism in the political economy of South Africa; the fifth (chapter 9) with apartheid and the class nature of Afrikaner nationalism; and the sixth (chapter 10) with African nationalism. The seventh (chapter 11) deals with the

national and class struggles that characterize the period since 1948. At each point I concentrate on the demand for African labor in the developing capitalist system of production. The various sections are in a sense autonomous and there are thus inevitably some repeated arguments and restated assumptions, although in different contexts. The chapters, written polemically, are directed against the thoughtless apologists for South Africa whose interpretations are widespread in the works of liberal scholars.