

5. [1962] A.C. 220.
6. *Kneller Publishing, Printing and Promotions Limited et al v. D.P.P.*, [1972] 2 All E.R. 898 (H.L.).
7. [1972] A.C. 60 at 79 (H.L.).
8. [1972] 3 All E.R. 999 at 1004.
9. R.P. MacKinnon, *Criminal Conspiracy in Canada*, LL.M. thesis, University of Saskatchewan, (1975), p. 59.
10. Criminal Code R.S.C. (1970), c. C.-34.
11. D.C. Masters, *The Winnipeg General Strike* (Toronto, 1950).

## **COUNTERREVOLUTIONARY STRATEGY IN PLURAL SOCIETIES: SOUTH AFRICA'S "RACIALLY PRISMATIC" APPROACH**

*by*

*Calvin A. Woodward*

### **Introduction**

Revolutions in plural societies are inevitably affected by the domestic configuration and dynamics of communal relations. Thus in the Russian Revolution, the "national question" influenced Bolshevik strategy before and after the overthrow of the Czarist regime: in China, regional and ethnic-related proclivities have historically made it difficult for both revolutionary movements and incumbents to mobilize national political power. In a large number of emergent states where revolution occurred in the form of a protracted internal war, insurgents were variously helped and frustrated by tensions and divisions between ethnic groups coexistent within the revolutionary arena. Similar dynamics were involved in the majority of contemporary colonialist revolutions. Generally, these transfers of power were preceded by a period during which an imperial force held sway by employing the well-known strategy of "divide and rule"; what independence movements had primarily to achieve before they could effectively confront the colonial power was the construction of an alliance between those ethnic groups which had been politically divided.

These dialectics of revolution in communally plural societies are naturally complex; also, they may be mainly case-specific. However, from the vantage of counterrevolutionary strategy, the central task is nearly always to prevent the forces of revolution from securing and coordinating a substantial inter-ethnic opposition to the incumbent. Traditionally, two techniques have been used in this regard. One has involved the purposeful application of reform to develop a common base of interests on the part of an incumbent elite and the vanguards of

other corporate communities. From this is supposed to emerge an association of forces which not only shares a common cultural outlook, but which also has a stake in political stability. Another way has been to underwrite the separate identities and loyalties of ethnic groups so as to obstruct their mobilization by dissidents under the banner of a collective and potentially overarching ideology.

The effectiveness of these counterrevolutionary techniques has varied greatly from case to case. In Malaya where Chinese insurgents instigated a revolutionary war in the 1950's, communal orientations were successfully exploited by the government forces in their defeat of the insurgents. In Rhodesia, on the other hand, tribal tensions failed to prevent the formation of a united revolutionary front against the white incumbent. And in colonial situations, the attainment of independence symbolized the ultimate failure of a policy of "divide and rule".

Why these counterrevolutionary techniques work in some cases and fail in others is not clear. There are many intervening variables, such as the nature and extent of foreign interference, the comparative quality of political leadership, sundry historical, geopolitical and other similarly important dynamics. But it can be said that generally these counterrevolutionary techniques have worked better in situations where the incumbent power was an ethnic majority, and less so in those where a minority community was in charge.

### **Revolution in South Africa**

An appreciation of these demographic imperatives and dynamics of revolution in plural societies is essential for an understanding of the counterrevolutionary strategy being applied by the white minority government in South Africa. Historically, the Afrikaner and white English-speaking population there, which together comprise less than one-fifth of the total, have considered and debated the alternative employment of the traditional counterrevolutionary techniques alluded to above. Even before the advent of Union in 1910, however, the dominant approach was that based on a recognition of the separate cultural identities of peoples in South Africa, and on the related segregation of racial communities to which that perception almost automatically gave rise. Originally, this involved placing the bulk of the native population on reserves in a way similar to the territorial dispensation accorded to Indians in North America. The policy was never fully, uniformly and consistently enforced, however, and it was not until the National Party came to power in 1948 that the principle of territorial segregation along tribal lines was systematically developed as a means to ensure permanent white rule in the rich lands of South Africa. The Tomlinson Commission, which was appointed in the early 1950's to draw up a blueprint for Bantustans, as the black homelands were then called, concluded that the alternative to political separation was eventual Black domination; in 1961 when Prime Minister H.F. Verwoerd decided to create the Bantustans, he spoke of the scheme as a "form of fragmentation" designed to buy "the white man his freedom and his right to retain domination in what is his country".<sup>1</sup>

When the policy was conceived, the homelands were only projected to be self-governing enclaves within South Africa. It was Prime Minister B.J. Vorster who in 1970 established the right of the homelands to opt for early independence. The first to do so was the Transkei in 1976; since then two others, Venda

and Bophuthatswana, have achieved statehood, and one, the Ciskei, has voted to become independent.

The idea of purposefully developing a cultural bond between the empowered whites and excluded racial groups by implementing reforms directed to the uplifting of native peoples in South Africa has also been steadily proposed. In 1929 at the Rhodes Memorial Lectures at Oxford, General Smuts, for example, advocated the integration into white society of civilized, "detrIALIZED" natives who should also, he believed, be allowed "to exercise their political rights along with the Whites".<sup>2</sup> What Smuts implied was the gradual extension of political rights to urbanized and educated natives; to the so-called "responsible class of Natives", to use the words of Sir de Villiers Graaff, Leader of the Opposition during the period when the policy of the Bantustans was being introduced in parliament. De Villiers argued that the only way that whites could ensure their future in South Africa was to share power with this "responsible class" of non-whites. The maintenance of white leadership, he told the House of Assembly in 1959, "will depend on a sincere willingness and desire to share the fruits of [white] civilization with those non-whites who develop the capacity for accepting and carrying the joint responsibility for our future well-being on this sub-continent".<sup>3</sup>

For the most part, this banner of reform in South Africa has been carried by English oriented parties, such as the United Party, Liberal Party, Progressive Party and the Progressive Federal Party, the latter of which today is the principal party in opposition to the Nationalists. Thus it was highly significant when the National Party recently committed itself to reform as a way of securing a politically stable future. This change in policy outlook was first manifest in the government's appointment of the Theron Commission in the early 1970's whose task was to look into ways and means for the uplifting of the coloured population group in South Africa. A few years later, the Wiehahn Commission, whose job in effect was to recommend policy changes for the betterment of urban blacks, explicitly made known its acceptance of reform as a counter-revolutionary device. In its report it said that it "accepted the premise that full involvement, participation and sharing in the system of free enterprise by all population groups with as little Government intervention as possible would not only give all groups a stake in the system but would also ensure a common loyalty to both the system and the country".<sup>4</sup>

What this more positive attitude toward reform on the part of the Afrikaner establishment reflected was the recognition that a territorial solution by itself was neither an efficient nor a realistic means to arrest a revolutionary trend. The main problem always with the homeland concept was that Blacks were vital to the South African economy, primarily as a source of labor on farms, in mines and in factories. There is also now a critical and urgent need to develop a skilled black work force to meet the growing demands of industry. Moreover, there are some 5 to 6 million Blacks resident in metropolitan areas in the Republic, most of whom are detrIALIZED, well-off by comparison with rural Blacks, and whose financial input is essential to South Africa's expanding market economy.<sup>5</sup>

These and related economic requisites have caused a significant number of Afrikaner intellectuals, such as J.A. Lombard of the University of Pretoria and

W.B. Vosloo, until recently Professor of Political Science at Stellenbosch, to press for reforms. However, few of the academic advisors to the government, and on the whole, not many liberals in South Africa, consider reform by itself to be a sufficient vent for revolutionary pressure. The burden of uplifting is too heavy, the number of people involved is overwhelming and the gap between races is too great to be narrowed within a reasonable length of time. And there are many who feel that reform is counterproductive. Referring to the "J-curve" theory of revolution, for example, a professor at the University of Witwatersrand has argued that it is "precisely a policy of reform which produces a sense of relative deprivation, which in turn gives rise to revolutionary sentiments and thence to revolution".<sup>6</sup>

The foregoing debate goes on publicly in South Africa but what counts is the position taken on the matter by the ruling National Party whose incumbency is effectively unchallenged. Opposing factions within the party have formed on the issue and it cannot be said confidently what course will be pursued by the Nationalist Government. However, in 1977 the party adopted a "new constitutional dispensation" which from the vantage of counterrevolutionary strategy represents a blending of the two techniques currently in debate. What this and the subsequent implementation of policy suggest is the existence of a racially prismatic approach which employs a series of pluralist devices designed to enable the government to respond appropriately to the various revolutionary pressures emanating from different racial sectors of society.

### **Racially Prismatic Pluralism**

The architect of the government's counterrevolutionary policy is Professor P. Roelf Botha whose "plan for the future" has the articulate support of the *verligte* (enlightened) wing of the National Party and probably also the covert backing of Prime Minister P.W. Botha and most of his cabinet. Furthermore, the plan has been set in motion to the point that there may be no turning back without incurring a worsening of the very revolutionary situation which the government is trying to avoid. What the plan involves is the patterned application of territorial, institutional and open pluralism, related counterrevolutionary techniques which can best be explained by analysing their application with reference to the three non-white groups to which they pertain — Blacks, Coloureds, and Indians:-

**Blacks.** The major aspect of this counterrevolutionary strategy being applied to Blacks is territorial pluralism which, for the greater part, foresees the ultimate excision from South Africa of ten homeland states. If the present dispensation, which is still open to negotiation, is retained these states will comprise about 13% of the territory of South Africa and will embrace approximately two thirds of its population (See Table 1). There is little doubt that these states will remain economically dependent upon South Africa and the current plan is to reattach them politically to the Republic in some form of confederation or constellation of states in Southern Africa. While this policy of territorial pluralism is basically a modification of the traditional separatist solution, greater attention is now given as well to the allied need for reform and development. South Africa

Table I  
HOMELAND POPULATIONS

| <i>Territory</i> | <i>Population</i> |
|------------------|-------------------|
| Bophuthatswana   | 2 219 600         |
| Ciskei           | 1 023 200         |
| Gazankulu        | 858 900           |
| KaNgwane         | 622 300           |
| KwaZulu          | 5 304 500         |
| Lebowa           | 2 121 200         |
| QwaQwa           | 1 791 700         |
| Transkei         | 4 142 800         |
| Venda            | 473 200           |
| Other*           | 1 072 600         |
| <hr/>            |                   |
| Total            | 19 630 000        |
| <hr/>            |                   |

\* Includes North and South Ndebele, foreign Africans and Africans whose home language is English or Afrikaans. Source: Bureau for Economic Research.

plainly recognizes that it is in its own interests to make these states as economically viable as possible, and there are plans for significant development assistance. At ceremonies celebrating the independence of Venda in September 1979, for instance, Prime Minister Botha said that the only way to counter revolution was to give the "black nations" of South Africa "the right to self-determination on their own land", and then to develop these areas "as speedily as possible".<sup>8</sup>

If this overall plan is carried out as now envisaged, the principle of territorial pluralism is also to be applied with respect to the remaining 5 or 6 million Blacks in the Republic; those scattered on farms and in small towns, and those concentrated in great urban complexes like Soweto and the Langa-Crossroads area near Cape Town. These and other residential areas are to be kept, others are to be created and all are to be developed and designed for optimal internal efficiency in regard to public transportation, schools, business centers and community services. There has already been a large infusion into these areas of both private and public funds for development, the results of which are seen especially in Soweto which has become the showcase of the government's commitment to the uplifting of urban Blacks.

In regard to the economic and social accommodation of urban Blacks, the government seems to be placing greater stress on open plural-

ism. The restrictive system of job reservation is being phased out, trade union rights have been granted to Blacks, technical training facilities are being provided to develop a skilled work force, obstacles in the way of Black entrepreneurship are being removed, and an effort is being put to create more favourable employment opportunities for Blacks in their homelands, residential areas and cities. In regard to their social accommodation, P.R. Botha insists that the best alternative is "the principle of open pluralism, in terms of which social intercourse both within and among the various ethnic groups is left to the principle of ethnicity functioning freely".<sup>9</sup> His belief is that the associations of most people are ethnically determined and that in response to this, provision has to be made for separate facilities, such as schools and residential areas. But he wants mixed environments as well so that there will "be no obstacle in the way of the minority seeking contact across the social or ethnic divides".<sup>10</sup>

However troublesome may be the realization of these economic and social aspects of open pluralism, it is nothing compared to the impediments in the way of a political accommodation of Blacks in South Africa. The main issue now, as always, relates to the fear that, given the chance, the non-white population would use political power to suppress the white minority. According to the plan now being considered, this would be averted by directing the political expression of most Africans into government institutions in the homeland states. There is, as of now, no guarantee that Blacks remaining in South Africa after partition will have any national political rights in the Republic. However, institutional pluralism will most likely be applied at local, municipal and regional levels as these relate to Black residential areas in South Africa, and there is the distinct possibility that *in time ethnically crosscutting metropolitan councils* will emerge to manage community affairs. There is even the chance that eventually the powers of self-government will be granted to such "city-states" as Soweto.

**Coloureds and Indians.** According to population estimates made by the Department of Statistics in Pretoria, there were about 2.7 million coloureds and 800,000 Indians in South Africa in 1980. Regarding the Indians, approximately 83 percent reside in Natal, almost all of which are located in the Durban-Pietermaritzburg complex. Of the coloured population group, 87.3% reside in Cape Province, more than half of which are concentrated in the south-west region pivoting on Cape Town. Despite these concentrations, no serious consideration has been given to the creation of politically separate states for these ethnic groups, primarily because their spatial configuration is not suitable to a neat excision and because it would involve massive population transfers. While, for example, over 1 million coloureds live in the Boland area of the southwestern Cape, over one half a million whites do also. Moreover, segregation has never been fully enforced with respect to these ethnic minorities, and residentially they live back to back with whites in a patchwork pattern.

The only way that territorial pluralism may here apply is in regard to residential areas and perhaps also with respect to some towns. While the



principle of "group areas" is likely to be maintained, the plan now is also to develop open residential areas where various ethnic groups will be free to mix. Given the opposition of the Afrikaner right wing to any kind of integration, permission to establish open residential areas will probably be granted to local authorities so that it can be realized in the Cape and Natal where it is wanted, and prevented in the Transvaal where it is not desired by most whites. In regard to the social and economic accommodation of coloureds and Indians, open pluralism would also apply, though as in the case of the urban Blacks, some provision will be made for separate facilities. For the most part, these pluralist devices can be used without encountering the stiff resistance of conservative whites, because the areas where Indians and coloureds reside are inhabited by those who are liberally inclined.

If the current plan is carried out, the political accommodation of Indians and coloureds in South Africa will result from institutional pluralism. The constitutional plan of the National Party calls for the creation of separate white, coloured, and Indian parliaments, and for the establishment of a joint executive which would deal with matters of common concern. There are alternative proposals, like that of Professor E.E. van der Ross who advocates one parliament in which each ethnic group would exercise a veto on matters of vital concern to itself.<sup>11</sup>

However, while these and other schemes being seriously considered by whites in South Africa today may differ in some technical respects, almost all of them are based on the concurrent majority principle. The main reason is not only that no constitutional arrangement based on a system of one man one vote is acceptable to whites. The Afrikaner is equally, if not more, concerned that the English not be given an edge in a new constitutional dispensation. What he particularly wants to prevent is the foundation of a political system in which the white English-speaker can forge an alliance with non-whites at the expense of the Afrikaner. One reflection of this was the very strong reaction of Afrikaner voters in the recent general election to the thought of including non-whites on the common voters' roll and of creating a multiracial parliament.<sup>12</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The great advantage of this racially prismatic approach, of course, as seen from the perspective of countering a revolutionary trend, is that the strategies being enforced are mutually complementary. The separation of tribal segments of Black society into homeland states reduces to more manageable proportions the population whose upliftment is required for reform to work. At the same time, the related acculturation of the urban Black imposes a wedge between the rural elements located in homeland states and their more sophisticated racial cousins in the city. The tribalization of the Black majority in South Africa also acts against the mobilization of a unified revolutionary force and further, it sets up an array of client power structures which revolutionaries have to deal with before they can initiate large scale action against the white establishment in South Africa.

The question is — will the strategy work? The danger from the white point of

view is first that it will not be carried out. The faction opposed to reforms in the ruling National Party is strong, and the results of the recent general election demonstrated the increasing conservative tendency of the Afrikaner electorate. It is conceivable that the Nationalist Government will refuse or be unable to implement the pluralist measures essential to the effectiveness of its counter-revolutionary strategy.

It is also questionable whether the non-white population of South Africa will respond appropriately to the strategic requirements of the emergent pluralism. Much depends on whether non-white elements will think of themselves as Black or whether they will think instead in terms of the tribal relationships being underscored by the policy of the government. So far ethnicity has shown itself to be a vital force sufficient to stem the tide of Black consciousness which is being promoted by the African National Congress, the Pan-Africanist Congress and other proscribed revolutionary organizations. Even the urban Blacks are ethnically divided and subject to the competitive manipulation of rival political factions. But the very success of the government's policy of reform and acculturation could ultimately be its undoing. The more the urban Black becomes an identifiable and self-conscious force, the more he will tend to act as a politically cohesive group. The question then will be whether reforms have been adequate enough to instill in urban Blacks a conservative disposition, or whether they have been just enough to arouse that sense of relative deprivation that we know is a root cause of revolution.

#### Footnotes

1. Quoted in Barbara Rogers, *Divide and Rule: South Africa's Bantustans* (London, 1976), p. 8.
2. Quoted in D.W. Kruger (ed), *South African Parties and Policies 1910-1960* (Cape Town, 1960), p. 461.
3. Quoted Kruger, p. 454.
4. *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Labour Legislation*, p. 4.
5. J.A. Lombard, *Freedom, Welfare and Order* (Pretoria, 1978).
6. M.T.W. Arnheim, *South Africa After Vorster* (Cape Town, 1979), p. 92.
7. P. Roelf Botha, *South Africa: Plan for the Future* (Johannesburg, 1978).
8. *To the Point*, September 14, 1979.
9. Botha, p. 192.
10. Botha, p. 191.
11. R.E. van der Ross, *Myths and Attitudes* (Cape Town, 1979).
12. Calvin Woodward, "The South African General Election of 1981", in *The Round Table*, Issue 284 (October 1981). See also his "Reform or Revolution in South Africa", in *The Round Table*, Issue 282 (April 1981), pp. 101-115.