

CHAPTER 2

A Greater South Africa: White Power in the Region, 1910–1940

A Christian minister called Laputa was going among the tribes from Durban to the Zambezi as a roving evangelist. His word was "Africa for the Africans," and his chief point was that the natives had had a great empire in the past, and might have a great empire again.

[While spying on Laputa] it was my business to play the fool. . . . I explained that I was fresh from England, and believed in equal rights for all men, white and coloured. God forgive me, but I think I said I hoped to see the day when Africa would belong once more to its rightful masters.

—JOHN BUCHAN,
Prester John

NINETEEN TEN, the year *Prester John* was published, was also the year Britain handed over political authority to the nascent Union of South Africa. The novel's hero, David Crawfurd, wins a treasure in gold and diamonds, just as Haggard's hero in *King Solomon's Mines* did. Even more significantly, Crawfurd prides himself on helping white law and order prevail over the native uprising sparked by Laputa's appeal to the legendary empire of Prester John.

Author John Buchan, who was to become one of the most popular adventure writers of the early twentieth century, had also played a role, as Milner's private secretary, in shaping the framework for the white South African state. And in real life there were those who preached "Africa for the Africans" instead of accepting European rule. Buchan's scenario bore resemblances not only to the Bambatha rebellion in Zululand in 1906 (see chapter 1), but also to the revolt in 1915 led by John Chilembwe in Nyasaland. But the imperialist faith of Buchan and his circle allowed no questioning of a racial hierarchy in which those who ruled the British Empire occupied the highest ranks. The native policies of Rhodes and

Milner, Buchan still maintained in his 1940 autobiography,* represented "an ethical standard, serious and surely not ignoble . . . : the white man's burden."²

In the three decades from the foundation of the Union of South Africa to World War II, Britain increasingly shared that burden of political and economic leadership with the emergent ruling class of South Africa. Different factions contended for position, as lines were drawn between the spheres of influence of the South African state and the colonial powers, between London-based and South African-based capital, between the competing white "races" of Boer and Briton. Behind that variety, however, lay common ground. "Non-Europeans" were excluded from political rights as citizens, assigned instead to the role of anonymous streams of labor power. The more liberal and paternalistic versions of colonial ideology added at best a few qualifying clauses to this general premise.

The Rightful Rulers

The imperial creed, Milner's young men were convinced, went beyond narrow loyalty to the home country. Even the most primitive of peoples might eventually adopt British values after generations of civilizing influence. Already, they thought, Britain should not rule alone. Major responsibility for maintaining world order should fall rather to a combination of Britain, the United States, and the dominions of the white "Commonwealth," a term coined by one of their number, Lionel Curtis. Rhodes's first will extravagantly expressed the ideal—"the furtherance of the British Empire and the bringing of the whole uncivilized world under British rule for the recovery of the United States and for making the Anglo-Saxon race but one Empire."³ A later version of the will established the Rhodes Scholarships to bring young men to Oxford, where they could imbibe this spirit of unity.

The British Commonwealth, Anglo-American cooperation, the League of Nations—these ventures were seen as steps toward world cooperation based on the British tradition of freedom and liberty—for those who qualified. Backward nations, Curtis opined, should be the collective responsibility of the civilized nations, and especially of the British Commonwealth.⁴

* The autobiography, *Pilgrim's Way*, was a favorite book of U.S. President John F. Kennedy.¹

America too should share the responsibility, argued Philip Kerr, another Kindergarten alumnus. Given the threat of Bolshevism, the West should ensure that "the disorders which are likely to follow [World War I] in these backward areas do not go beyond a certain point."⁵

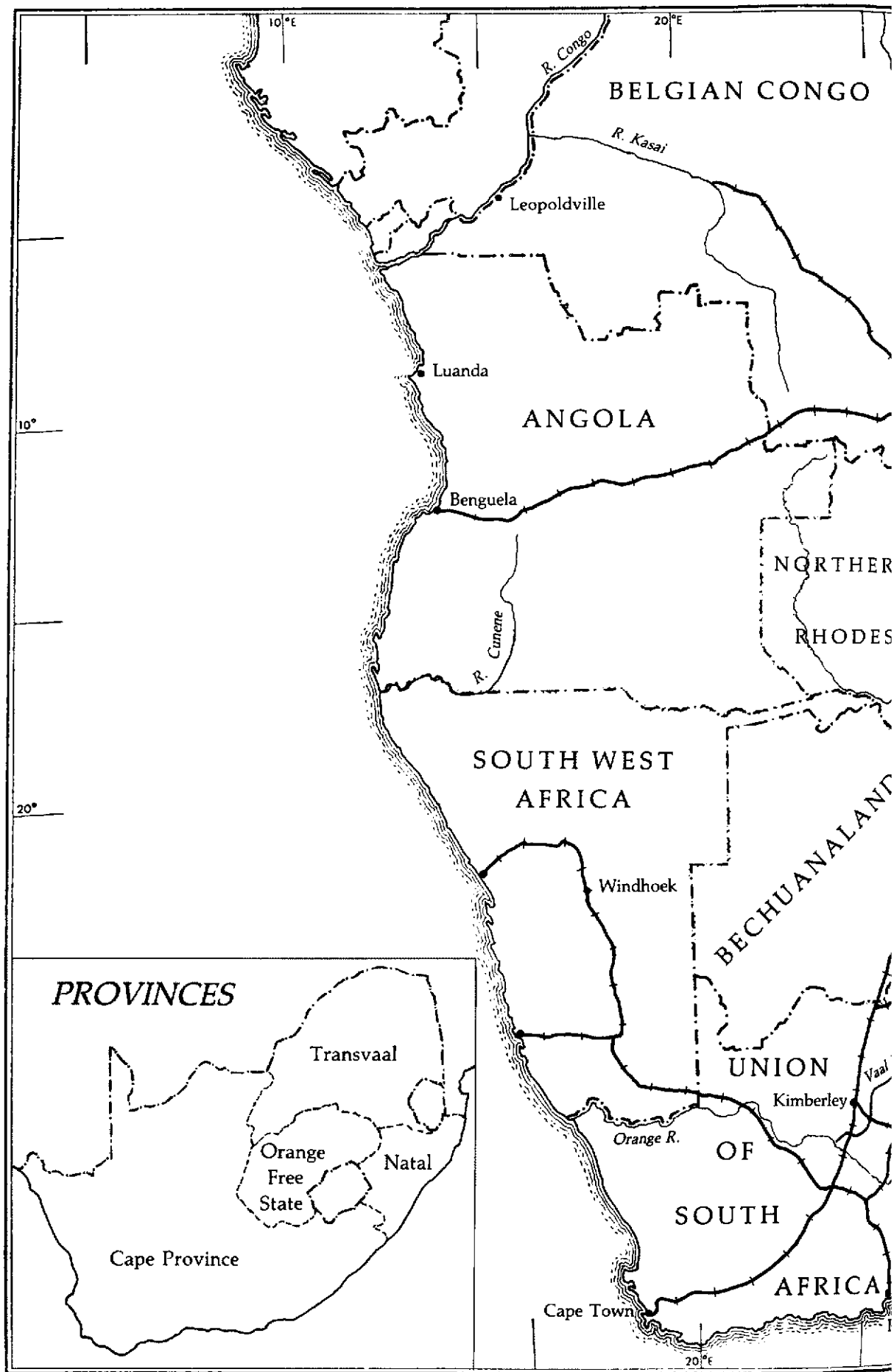
It was within this context that the British developed their plans for South Africa. The Anglo-Boer War had taken far more resources than expected, highlighting Britain's need for allies to maintain world power status. White South Africans were judged ideal for the part. In a series of novels beginning with *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (1915), Buchan followed the adventures of British-born Richard Hannay, who, having "got his pile" as a mining engineer in southern Africa, returned to Europe to play the hero in assorted exploits. Often he was accompanied by his sidekick, Pieter Pienaar, an Afrikaner who had fought on the British side during the Anglo-Boer War.

The spirit of British-Boer collaboration appeared in real life as well. General Jan C. Smuts, who had helped lead the war against Britain, was to become the key link in the ongoing British-South African alliance. Smuts's initial electoral base in the 1906 Transvaal election was the Afrikaner rural population, attached to him by personal loyalties. Yet he came to be "universally recognized as ranking, second perhaps only to Mr. Winston Churchill himself, as one of the outstanding personalities of the British Empire."⁶

Smuts quickly became the leading exponent of a South Africa independent of but loyal to Britain, with a political system built on full cooperation between the leaders and responsible elements of South Africa's two white races. Already in 1906, Generals Botha and Smuts, heading the newly elected Transvaal government, "stepped in and took charge of the machinery of administration created by Milner and his young men, and were much too busy, and what is more, too wise to tear it up root and branch."⁷

In that same year, said a leading official of the Corner House mining group, "I made it my duty to cultivate the new masters, and, in the end, greatly modified the relations. . . . It is amazing what can be done by *discreet action*."⁸ Such discreet ties symbolized the developing bond between the largely English owners of South Africa's mines and industries and the Afrikaner political leaders. In 1920 the Unionist Party, led by English-speaking capitalists, dissolved itself into Smuts's South African Party. Parties representing white workers or holding more uncompromising anti-English Afrikaner nationalist views were forced into opposition.

In 1914 Smuts presided over the conquest of South West Africa as part of the British war effort. In 1916 he took charge of the campaign in German East Africa (Tanganyika). From 1917 to 1919 the South African leader was prominent in the British War Cabinet, helping to organize the Royal Air Force and government regulation of war industry, helping to





draft the war aims, and finding a kindred soul in his fellow cabinet minister and former enemy, Lord Milner.

So prominent did Smuts become that numerous supporters encouraged him to make his political career in Britain. His first vision, however, was of a greater future in Africa, in which Briton and Boer would share in the wealth and in the responsibility for civilization. His coalition at home drew in almost all of South Africa's British-oriented business community—mineowners, sugar planters, merchants, and manufacturers—as well as a large proportion of professionals and farmers, Afrikaners as well as English-speakers. Grain farmers in the Transvaal, for example, selling to the mining-dominated urban areas and benefiting from government aid, tended to support Smuts's policies of cooperation with the mineowners. His opponents were mainly "country folk, of whom the most affluent and influential were large exporters of food or wool."⁹ They supported National Party leader Hertzog's persistent agitation for greater independence from Britain.

Smuts's vision of the proper order for South Africa can be seen in a series of events in 1921 and 1922. When white mine workers—many of Afrikaner origin—launched a strike in January 1922 against attempts to keep down white wages and increase the proportion of cheap black labor, Smuts cracked down hard. In what came to be known as the Rand Revolt, more than 150 miners were killed as some seven thousand troops, backed up by aircraft, confronted the workers.

Two even more unequal battles revealed the rough edges of "native policy." In May 1921, an African religious sect "squatting" on common land at Bulhoek suffered 163 dead when armed police attacked. A year later, the Bondelswarts people in South West Africa, resisting a tax on the hunting dogs that were vital to their economy, saw 115 persons killed when their village was bombed by South African aircraft.

Biographers have sought to rescue Smuts's image as a humanitarian philosopher-statesman. South African poet Roy Campbell had a more cynical response, writing a four-line review of a philosophical book by Smuts:

The love of Nature burning in his heart
Our new St. Francis offers us his book
The Saint who fed the birds at Bondelswart
And fattened up the vultures at Bulhoek.¹⁰

Smuts expounded his views of the "native question" in lectures in 1929 at Oxford and Edinburgh. Among the salient points:

"The future in Africa is to those peoples who, like the British and the Dutch, have steadfastly endeavored to be loyal to their racial and cultural ideals as a European community."¹¹

The best hope for civilizing the African is greater white settlement, for by themselves Africans "have not much initiative, and if left to themselves and their own tribal routine they do not respond very well to the stimulus of progress."¹²

The authority of the chiefs must be reinforced, for "if tribal discipline disappears, native society will be dissolved into its human atoms, with possibilities of universal Bolshevism and chaos."¹³

Therefore, in white areas "the system should only allow the residence of males for limited periods, and for purposes of employment among the whites."¹⁴

Already in 1929 Smuts had to react to international criticism of South African policies. In response he appealed for legitimacy not to Afrikaner traditions, but to the creative legacy of Cecil Rhodes. He knew that, despite the critics, there was in English ruling circles a basis for strong sympathy with their South African counterparts.

In 1921, for example, census data show that 76 percent of company directors in South Africa, 69 percent of merchants and business managers, and even 37 percent of civil servants were born overseas—almost all in Great Britain. Most retained family ties in the "home country." And other personal ties to South Africa were common among the British elite. Winston Churchill's father had made fortunate investments in South African gold after a well-publicized trip in 1891. Churchill himself first came to public prominence during the Anglo-Boer War, after a dramatic escape from a Boer prison camp, and later built a close relationship with Smuts while serving in the Colonial Office. Another Boer War hero with fond memories of South Africa and other colonial campaigns was Lord Baden-Powell, whose Boy Scout movement, founded to counter the "deterioration of the British race," preached national unity across class lines, spreading its version of internationalism to the U.S. and beyond.

Most prominent among the defenders in Britain of South Africa's ruling class were the alumni of Milner's Kindergarten, who retained strong feelings of camaraderie and kept in close touch with each other. Several stayed in South Africa: Patrick Duncan became Smuts's lieutenant in the South African Party, and served as Minister of Mines (1933–36) and as Governor-General (1936–43). Richard Feetham and Hugh Wyndham both settled in the Transvaal, the first to become a leading jurist, the other a distinguished breeder of thoroughbred horses.

Most of the group returned to England: Buchan, who was to become Lord Tweedsmuir, the founder of Britain's Ministry of Information and

Governor-General of Canada; Geoffrey Dawson (Robinson), influential editor of *The Times* (1912–18, 1922–41); Philip Kerr (Lord Lothian), prominent among Lloyd George's advisors during World War I and later ambassador to Washington; Dougal Malcolm, president of the British South Africa Company; Robert (Lord) Brand, head of Lazards Bank; Lionel Hitchens of the Cammel Laird shipbuilding firms; Edward Grigg (Lord Altrincham), Conservative MP and Governor of Kenya (1925–31); Lionel Curtis, freelance broker of ideas and power.

Among the Kindergarten's meeting places were All Souls College, Oxford, of which many were fellows, and the Rhodes Trust, administered successively by Grigg, Dawson, and Kerr. They were builders of new institutions, especially their "Prophet," Lionel Curtis, who moved on from the project of South African union to visions of Commonwealth unity (the Round Table movement) and of a responsible British foreign policy (the Royal Institute of International Affairs—Chatham House). Not always agreed on details, but sharing a common perspective, this band of brothers constituted a potent influence on Britain's assumptions about the proper stance toward Africa and the world.

Although reality imposed limits, the Kindergarten often saw their visions at least partially realized. "Commonwealth unity" has formed one of the ideological underpinnings of British policy in this century, although full "imperial federation" was frustrated by the divergent interests of Britain and its dominions. The special Anglo-American relationship, bolstered by like-thinking Americans in Chatham House's sister organization, the Council on Foreign Relations, became a fixture on the diplomatic scene, though the United States failed to take its expected leadership role in the League of Nations.

Their vision of South African rule over the subcontinent was similarly destined for only partial success. In the 1907 Selborne memorandum drafted by Lionel Curtis, the prospect was indeed ambitious: "British territory stretches beyond the Zambezi, far away north to Lake Tanganyika. In whatever degree this great region is a country where white men can work and thrive and multiply, by so much will opportunity for expansion inherited by South Africa through the British Empire be increased."¹⁵ Ironically, it was not in British but in former German territory that the vision of political expansion achieved its greatest success.

After German defeat in World War I, the incorporation of South West Africa by South Africa was virtually a foregone conclusion. Discussion at the Versailles peace conference focused on the terms rather than the basic premise of South African rule. The African National Congress of South Africa urged trusteeship by Britain, or the United States or France, rather than control by South Africa. But the plea received as little attention from

the conference delegates as a Vietnamese nationalist petition presented by Ho Chi Minh (who was shown unceremoniously to the door when trying to give it to President Wilson) or the antiracist resolutions of W. E. B. DuBois's First Pan-African Congress, meeting at the time in Paris.

The relevant debate took place instead between Smuts and U.S. President Woodrow Wilson. A proponent of the mandate system for conquered enemy territory in Europe and the Middle East, Smuts nevertheless wanted to annex South West Africa without international supervision. Wilson and his advisor on colonial matters, Round Table associate George Louis Beer, felt the mandate principle had to be universal. Both agreed, however, on South African control. Under the class "C" mandate adopted, international oversight was in practice reduced to a minimum. South Africa's leaders saw their assumption of responsibility for "the well-being and development" of the people of South West Africa as virtually equivalent to annexation.

Elsewhere the expansion of South Africa's political control was thwarted. Smuts had ambitions of incorporating at least Southern Rhodesia, the High Commission territories, and southern Mozambique. But when the British South Africa Company relinquished government responsibility in Southern Rhodesia, white voters there rejected Smuts's offer and the advice of the British government. Influenced largely by British settlers' fears of increased Afrikaner influence, they voted instead for a separate government by a margin of 8,774 to 5,989.

The British government initially agreed with Smuts that South Africa should incorporate the three small territories of Bechuanaland, Swaziland, and Basutoland, although Africans in these countries and many of their advisers defended the alternative of continued imperial rule. When Smuts lost the 1924 election to Hertzog, the British view shifted. Colonial officials then argued that Britain needed to retain footholds to counterbalance anti-British Afrikaner nationalism. Even Leo Amery, who as Colonial Secretary spoke of South Africa's "great civilizing and creative responsibility towards the whole of Africa northwards,"¹⁶ thought it wisest to delay transfer of the three protectorates.

Mozambique's economic fragmentation and Portuguese weakness made that colony another candidate for incorporation. In any case, the south was practically "one large compound for natives for the Rand."¹⁷ The rest of the country was split between British-dominated chartered companies and the Portuguese state. Still, the Portuguese warded off formal South African control. After 1928, Salazar's new colonial system even managed some degree of success in closing off Portugal's African territories to new foreign (non-Portuguese) capital.

Angola was preserved for Portuguese administration as well. Belgium

not only retained the Congo, but gained a fragment of Germany's empire—Ruanda-Urundi on Congo's eastern border—under a League of Nations mandate. Under the same terms, Tanganyika came under the British sway. Not local white settler governments but colonial bureaucracies—Portuguese, Belgian, and British—were to preside over the political future of most of southern Africa's states.

Colonial officials were no more ready than white settlers to envisage independence for African states in the foreseeable future. Nor did the absence of formal control prevent South Africa from exerting significant informal influence throughout the subcontinent. In every territory, also, settlers were a potent lobby. But the tally of independent states in the mid-1970s—with the core of white-minority rule reduced to South Africa, Rhodesia, and Namibia—indicated that this early failure of South African expansionism had significant consequences.

Capital's Dominion

Politically, southern Africa was fragmented. Nevertheless British capitalists, both those based in the home country and the local South African variety, were able to operate throughout the region. In spite of the need to accommodate a variety of local authorities and competitors, the British and the pro-British retained the dominant role during this period bounded by two world wars.

Indeed, British strategists gave new emphasis to the imperial domains following World War I. Prior to the war, fully one-fifth of Britain's overseas investments were concentrated in the United States. The bulk of these assets were sold to pay for the war; the share of British foreign investments in the United States was reduced to one-twentieth of the total by 1930. Over the same period the proportion in the British Empire increased from 47 percent to 59 percent. The trend was similar for trade. Foreign trade in general might be in trouble, as Britain found it harder to compete in industrialized markets. In the Empire-Commonwealth, the ties of 'kith and kin,' decisions by colonial officials, and the beginnings of imperial tariff preferences gave the edge to British entrepreneurs.

British Africa participated in the general growth of the Empire connection. Exports to the British Empire from the United Kingdom jumped almost 80 percent between 1909 and 1929. To South Africa the increase was only 58 percent, but to the rest of British Africa some 200 percent. Together the two areas took over one-sixth of British exports to the Empire.

Imports from South Africa and from the rest of British Africa both increased at rates exceeding the Empire average. Of new overseas investment from London, the percentage going to Africa fluctuated around 5 percent in the decade preceding the war, then jumped to 16 percent for 1919 to 1929. In some sectors, the African connection was especially critical. Her African territories enabled Britain, with the United States, to control fully three-quarters of the world's mineral production between the wars.

TAKING ROOT: THE LOCALIZATION OF MINING CAPITAL

Within the British sphere of influence, however, there was a significant shift occurring. Surprisingly, British cumulative investments in South Africa declined from 1913 to 1930, both absolutely (from £370 million to £263 million) and in relative terms (from 9.8 percent of total overseas investment to 7.1 percent). The reason was that much of the new African investment was going to territories less heavily capitalized than South Africa, while in South Africa, locally based capitalists were taking advantage of British weakness to obtain a greater share of control for themselves.

This process of localization took place within the context of continued close cooperation with London-based finance. Others might highlight the opposing interests of South Africa and Britain—not so the mining capitalist, whose industry was often attacked as disloyal to South Africa's national interest. London continued to play a leading role in financial decisions; only after World War II did most mining houses transfer their head offices to Johannesburg. Even today annual reports show that many members of boards of directors of South African companies are British citizens.

Increasingly, however, with a decisive acceleration between the two world wars, the base for many mining capitalists shifted from the "home country" to South Africa. Prior to the 1930s, most experts believed that the gold mines had a limited future, with exploitable ore soon to be exhausted—a view justifying only limited commitments from investors. The boom in that decade, together with technological advances that made possible more efficient and deeper mining, reinforced those who opted for putting down permanent roots in the country. The industry developed a local research and development capacity, handled more of its finances on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, and further increased a network of intraindustry cooperation through complex interlocks and through the Chamber of Mines.

"The local community was financially strong enough and wide awake enough," notes a mining executive, "to take advantage of the situation

created by the two world wars to repurchase control of its own economy from Britain."¹⁸

Among the most successful of such entrepreneurs was Ernest Oppenheimer, who after a stint in the diamond trade in London, arrived in Kimberley in 1902 as an agent for the family firm, Dunkelsbuhlers. Making a reputation as a shrewd businessman, he also entered politics, serving first on the City Council and, from 1912 to 1915, as mayor of Kimberley. The First World War interrupted his political career as feelings surfaced against those of German origin. But it also presented new economic opportunities.

In 1917, sent to Johannesburg to dispose of Dunkelsbuhlers' gold interests, he instead opted for expansion, raising the scarce capital through American contacts. Mining engineer William Honnold, who had worked in South Africa from 1902 to 1915, put Oppenheimer in touch with his colleague Herbert Hoover, the future U.S. president, who in turn helped set up the subscription of shares through J. P. Morgan & Co. and its British affiliate, Morgan Grenfell. Ever attentive to the need for good political contacts, Oppenheimer involved H. C. Hull, a former Minister of Finance who was close to Smuts, in the negotiations with Hoover. Smuts, Oppenheimer noted after meeting with him in London, welcomed the idea of American financiers taking an interest in South African development. The new firm formed in 1917 was called the Anglo American Corporation of South Africa.

Oppenheimer's political contacts also paid off in his effort to assume Rhodes's mantle in monopoly control of diamonds. After a tip from Hull, he was able to gain ownership of the formerly German-controlled mines in South West Africa. Using this leverage, combined with investments in other 'outside producers' and access to Anglo American's capital, he eventually achieved financial preeminence and a favored position with South African government authorities. In a victory for locally based producer capital over those in the marketing side of the industry, he ousted the Diamond Syndicate from leadership in De Beers in 1929, establishing himself, in effect, "in sole command of the international diamond trade."¹⁹

In gold, also, the trend was toward increased local control, although much more slowly. Between the wars the proportion of capital held in South Africa rose substantially over the estimated 14 percent before the war—some 40 percent of dividends were paid out in South Africa in the late 1930s. Foreign investment was still dominant, however, and Anglo American, like the other mining houses, raised capital from a variety of sources. While not at first among the industry leaders, it concentrated its investments in southern Africa. Others, such as Gold Fields or Central

Mining, stressed diversification into American and European investments.

Anglo's strategy was rewarded handsomely in the gold-mining boom of the 1930s. While the Great Depression hit European and African economies hard, gold provided a counterbalance for South Africa. After the country abandoned the gold standard in 1932, the price of gold rose in relation to other commodities, more low-grade ores became profitable, and gold-mining dividends doubled. Anglo American, pursuing an ambitious exploration policy, established a strong position in the Orange Free State gold fields. These were to come into production after World War II, leading another wave of expansion.

The range of Oppenheimer's interests is also reflected in the case of a third mineral—copper. The first major copper producer in the region was in Katanga, where Belgium's powerful Société Générale controlled the Union Minière, with British participation channeled through Robert Williams's Tanganyika Concessions Company (Tanks). Much later, in 1952, Tanks became part of the Anglo American group, but it was in Northern Rhodesia that Oppenheimer began his copper venture.

Before the 1920s, Northern Rhodesian mines played only a small role in the expanding world copper trade, which was dominated by U.S. concerns. Each of the two Rhodesian producers had a U.S. connection—Anglo with Newmont Mining, a Morgan firm; and Chester Beatty's Selection Trust with the American Metal Company (later AMAX). When prices collapsed in the 1929 depression, the American Metal group sought to take the dominant position in the Northern Rhodesian fields. Oppenheimer, arguing his claims as an Empire loyalist, gained support from a variety of British sources to keep the Americans from gaining control and to get the leading role for Anglo instead. In 1932, a Commonwealth agreement in Ottawa imposed duties on non-Empire copper, giving Northern Rhodesia privileged access to the British market and setting the stage for steady expansion of the fields.

Anglo's copper venture, which drew in British, American, and South African investors, illustrates Oppenheimer's skill as a financier. It also is a useful reminder that his importance lay not just as head of a burgeoning financial empire of his own, but as a particularly prominent example of the complex interlinking typical of capitalism in southern Africa.

INDUSTRIAL BEGINNINGS

Oppenheimer was also a pioneer in responding to the demands of the manufacturing sector, which organized a growing clamor for home-based industry. In the early part of the century manufacturers often faced oppo-

sition from mining capital, which was committed to established channels of imports from Britain. The mineowners generally lined up with import merchants on the side of 'free trade' and against 'inefficient' local production. Smuts, with his ties to English-speaking mineowners, was seen as opposed to development of this national industrial capacity.

Hertzog's Pact government, which replaced Smuts in 1924, took vigorous action to promote manufacturing—new tariffs benefiting the woolen textile industry, the formation of an iron and steel corporation (ISCOR) in which the state played the leading role. From 1925 to 1929, manufacturing output grew at the rapid pace of 39 percent. Some analysts, stressing the Pact government's role, have portrayed South African industrialization as a project by "national" anti-British capital.

The disagreements between Smuts and Hertzog can be overstressed, however. Many of the English-speaking capitalists who backed Smuts also supported industrial development in South Africa. It was the First World War that initially gave new opportunities to South African manufacturers to compete with a weakened British industrial sector. It was Smuts's government that founded the state-owned Electricity Supply Commission (ESCOM), two years before Hertzog's election victory.

Those who took advantage of the new economic opportunities in industrialization were almost all English-speaking, many with strong links to mining. Mining capital too played a role in industrialization. The largest manufacturing enterprise was Anglo American's AE & CI, which produced explosives for the mines and fertilizers for farmers. In spite of the Afrikaner role in government, Afrikaner entrepreneurs in this period still played a minor role. Gold continued the leading sector of the economy. The Chamber of Mines might lag back from support of tariffs to protect manufacturers, but increasingly the interests of mineowners were interlocked with other sectors of the business community, in the Federated Chamber of Industries and the Associated Chambers of Commerce.

After 1934, political "fusion" brought Smuts and Hertzog together in an uneasy coalition. An economic boom, based above all on higher gold prices, resulted in even greater manufacturing growth—108 percent in gross output from 1933 to 1939. Buoyed by prosperity, the diverse sectors of South African and foreign capital were able to construct workable and mutually profitable arrangements among themselves and with the South African state. As in the political sphere the transition from Empire to Commonwealth represented both separation and collaboration between Britain and South Africa, so in the economic sphere local industrial growth took place within the context of continued close ties to Britain.

WORKERS FOR MINE, FARM, AND FACTORY

The capitalist class emerging from mining, industrial, and commercial sectors had to share the resources of land and labor with the less-integrated agricultural sector as well. The means of controlling the necessary flow of labor, especially to the greedy mines and farms, varied both in South Africa and in the region with the changing balance of demands from different employers.

In South Africa the pattern of control over labor continued to be that of segregation and its variants as defined earlier in the century. Black workers, impelled by taxes, land shortage, or lack of other opportunities in peripheral areas, came in ever larger numbers to South Africa's mines—81,000 in 1906; 219,000 in 1916; 203,000 in 1926; 318,000 in 1936. In the 1930s the recruitment area was expanded to include Nyasaland and other territories north of the 22nd parallel. Workers from these areas had been excluded from South Africa after early experiments showed dramatic and unprofitable mortality rates, but a new pneumonia vaccine made possible a shift in policy. The system of migratory labor therefore affected not only South Africa's rural areas and the immediately adjacent countries, but the whole region.

In the copper areas of Northern Rhodesia and Katanga, however, there also emerged new variants of labor mobilization. The most radical contrast with South Africa was in Katanga, which until 1925 followed the South African pattern, recruiting its workers from rural areas in the Congo and neighboring countries. In 1926 the mines introduced a labor stabilization scheme aimed at creating a long-term work force of resident married workers, with a low percentage of foreign recruits or short-term migrants. The reasons included the sparse population in the immediate area and fear of dependence on a labor supply subject to British colonial authorities, who naturally gave priority to labor needs of employers in their own territories. Being unable to duplicate South Africa's elaborately controlled and wide-ranging recruitment system, Union Minière opted instead for strict paternalistic control over a resident work force. Among the side advantages—which would have been politically impossible to carry through in South Africa—was a reduction in the ratio of highly paid white workers to Africans from one to nine in 1931 to one to eighteen in 1939. The experiment proved successful both in improving productivity and in keeping wages and costs per worker low. Although a precise comparison is difficult, a contemporary study estimated that in South Africa average earnings of African gold miners were higher than those of copper miners in

the north, although the cost of "services" was somewhat higher in the copper mines.

The mines of Northern Rhodesia and Southern Rhodesia formed intermediate stages between the Katangan and South African models in terms of the migratory pattern. As one moved south, one found lower percentages of African miners living on the mines with their families, and a higher proportion of white workers. In spite of the variations, however, in each case expenses on the African work force were kept as low as possible, and the most skilled positions then (as today) were filled by whites. Even with some improvements in health and working conditions, the work environment was brutal for the black miners. Even the planners of Katanga's stabilization schemes still saw the rural areas as responsible for social security functions: in the 1929 depression, some eleven thousand of Union Minière's sixteen thousand workers were forcibly "repatriated."

By the 1930s, mines and other industrial enterprises in southern Africa were having little trouble with "labor shortages." Corresponding to their success was the underdevelopment of African rural economies, reduced in area and depleted by the flow of migrant labor, which could rarely provide opportunities even as attractive as the terrible conditions in the mining compounds.

Even with the mining sector's demand for labor, there might have developed a significant sector of African peasant production. That was the common pattern under colonial rule in west Africa, where cash crops for export—palm oil, peanuts, cocoa, and others—were grown largely by independent African proprietors. This pattern resulted in its own form of dependence—on large trading companies, on colonial government policies, and on uncertain world markets. But in southern Africa even this limited autonomy for African peasants was systematically obstructed at the behest of white farmers.

For some time in the second half of the nineteenth century, Africans were taking advantage of opportunities to grow crops for the new markets, encouraged by merchants and missionaries who saw in the successful peasant a market for consumer goods and a convert to Western civilization. But those Africans who did succeed soon met with a powerful white counterattack, in which the demands of the mines for labor were joined by the protests of white farmers at "unfair competition." White opinion leaders reached a consensus that Africans might better acquire civilization by wage labor than by independent proprietorship.

In a number of areas African farmers succeeded in spite of obstacles placed in their path. But the general pattern was one that blocked off their commercial opportunities.

Subsidies to white agriculture were accompanied not only by unequal

rights to ownership of land, but by attacks on other means Africans might use to gain some degree of independence. The 1913 Native Land Act not only condemned the peasantry of the limited reserve areas to progressive impoverishment, but it took other measures to restrict African farmers "squatting" on white-owned land. As capitalist agriculture developed in the twentieth century, such Africans found one alternative after another eliminated. Sharecroppers were victims of the 1913 Act, as thousands faced the choice of becoming farm servants or moving out, losing their flocks in either case. Tenants paying rent to absentee landlords—including many involved in the mining industry—survived that act. But they were the object of continuing pressure from farmers, who demanded that all rural Africans become wage laborers or be obliged as tenants to supply labor to the farm owner. Rent payers ("squatters") should be "ejected, denied entry to the towns and forced into labour on white farms," the white farmers demanded.²⁰ Many even objected to the reserves as providing too much independence for Africans.

Mining capital alone might have found it most efficient to develop an African peasant sector to supply food to the urban areas. Certainly Chamber of Mines representatives often complained of the high costs of subsidizing inefficient white agriculture, lamenting the unfair tax burden placed on their industry. More important, however, were the facts that both mining and agrarian capital profited from the land taken from the Africans, and that both demanded the cheap labor of Africans deprived of other opportunities. There was wide consensus among South Africa's rulers that Africans should not be so independent as to interfere with the supply of labor to white employers.

In Southern Rhodesia, the pattern was similar. As a result, the percentage of African earnings derived from the sale of agricultural produce decreased from some 70 percent in 1903 to less than 20 percent by 1932. Although the white population was small in comparison to South Africa's, in 1925 they had thirty-one million acres of land reserved for them, fourteen million of it unoccupied. Overcrowding already plagued the African reserves.

Peripheral areas, whether inside or outside the boundaries of the Union of South Africa, found their interests subordinated to the dominant pattern, though each case had its particular characteristics. In Swaziland, white settlers and companies acquired more than half the land area. Peasant production on the remaining acreage made some progress in the 1920s, but in the wake of the depression suffered a dramatic collapse. More and more families became dependent on income from some ten thousand migrants a year working in South Africa. From Nyasaland, labor flowed to the Rhodesias and South Africa, while efforts to promote local

agriculture took second place. Even the local white settlers were unable to prevent mortgaging of the government budget for railway projects that were of benefit primarily to British capital in neighboring Mozambique.

In Belgian and Portuguese territories, other means of mobilizing African labor for agricultural enterprises prevailed. In the Congo the 750,000 hectares of plantations of Huileries du Congo Belge (a subsidiary of the Anglo-Dutch Unilever) supplied palm kernels and palm oil to European markets and, together with a handful of Belgian financial groups, dominated both the agricultural and mining sectors of the economy. Other Africans, not forced into cultivation on plantations or work in the mines, were required to grow cotton. Altogether some 700,000 African cultivators were mobilized to serve Belgium's textile industry, and the Congo's share in Belgium's cotton imports rose from 5.7 percent in 1929 to 23.5 percent in 1934.

Similar measures were imposed in Portugal's colonies, in conjunction with an elaborate legal and administrative system of forced labor. Less "developed" than the British territories, Angola and Mozambique retained into the mid-twentieth century administrative measures that elsewhere had been superseded by partial proletarianization of the work force. Laws proclaimed "idleness" illegal. Africans farming on their own, counted as "idle," were supplied not only to South Africa's mines, but to giant plantations such as British-owned Sena Sugar in Mozambique's Zambezi region, or to the coffee farms of northern Angola. In yet other areas—northern Mozambique and Angola's Cassange—cultivation of set quotas of cotton supplied the needs of Portugal's industry, often at the cost of African subsistence food production.

Throughout the region, with many local variations, the *modus vivendi* reached by mining and agrarian capital—whether owned overseas or in the hands of local capitalists—excluded most opportunities for African advancement. Politics within the colonial states reflected this subordinate role for Africans, placed as nonowners of capital, objects rather than subjects of political decision making. In the Union of South Africa, with its incipient industrial development and large European population, defining the political arena was further complicated by a greater diversity of white class interests.

Drawing the Lines: White Nations and Classes

Concluding a 1920 *Round Table* article, Kindergarten member Robert Brand noted that the financial leaders of all countries, as "the only people who understand what is happening to the world," have the duty "to show

the politicians and the public the way to sanity and international goodwill."²¹ Men like Smuts and Oppenheimer, prominent symbols of finance capital, were not, however, free simply to impose their views. Africans, as we shall see, found other forms of resistance, though they had been defeated militarily. Even among the financial leaders, agreement on the broad lines of the southern African system did not imply unanimity on how to administer Africans or direct their labor. In South Africa the white public that had to be taken into account included a range of classes from small farmers to skilled workers and even destitute unemployed. Many were Afrikaner nationalists and fervent opponents of British imperialism.

The conflict between allegiance to Britain and Afrikaner nationalism is one of the major themes of twentieth-century South African history. But it would be a mistake to conclude that ideologically motivated racism actually replaced the political economy of imperial ties, or that Afrikaner preachers, farmers, and white workers replaced capitalists as South Africa's dominant class. The challenge mounted by these forces, and their political victories in 1924 and 1948, took place within the context of an expanding South African capitalist system. Afrikaner nationalists aimed at getting into that system, not replacing it. Their anti-imperialism and anti-capitalism, however strong rhetorically, was limited by the imperative of cooperation in exploiting Africa's material and human resources.

To clarify this point, it is necessary to get beyond the myth of a unified Afrikanerdom promoted both by the Afrikaner nationalists and their opponents. While Afrikaners have consistently made up a majority of South Africa's white electorate, the support for a separatist "anti-English" strategy has been highly variable. By no means an automatic outgrowth of primordial ethnic feelings, it had to be carefully fostered by a leadership group with its own interests.

In the period before 1948, a government formed by the National Party held power only from 1924 to 1933. Its actions against English-speaking capitalists were very limited, however, and by 1933, Smuts and Hertzog were together again in a coalition government. It was this United Party regime that shaped the 1936 "Native Bills," the most significant legislation against African rights between the wars.

The National Party began in 1913, after Hertzog broke with Smuts in an impassioned speech proclaiming that South Africa's interests must, in any conflict, take priority over those of the British Empire. The Afrikaners, he contended, must keep their separate identity. If assimilated into "one stream," as Smuts wished, they would inevitably be subordinate to English-speakers, whose loyalty to South Africa was suspect.

Afrikaner nationalism was built, it is common to note, on the sufferings of Afrikaner farmers—the concentration camps and destruction of the

Anglo-Boer War, the continuing difficulties of small farmers in the aftermath. Hertzog prudently did not join the futile Afrikaner rebellion against entry into World War I. But politically he used the anti-British resentment it stirred, particularly after the execution of ringleader Japie Fourie. A sense of common national oppression mobilized small farmers, "poor whites," and the incipient Afrikaner working class, groups who often provided the crucial votes in elections. But it was the better-off minority, frustrated at the lack of greater opportunities they thought should be theirs, who carried the torch of nationalism most enthusiastically.

Larger farmers and professionals took the lead in Hertzog's party, as well as financial leaders such as the group in the Western Cape behind the Sanlam and Santam insurance companies. The Afrikaner Broederbond, which from its founding in 1918 was to move step by step into the vanguard of Afrikanerdom, was almost exclusively a petit-bourgeois organization, confined to the well-educated and the "financially sound." Such men confronted a society in which both business and the civil service—the urban arena in general—were dominated by English-speakers.

In practice Hertzog's aims and achievements represented no radical break with the order presided over by Smuts. His economic policies differed in degree, not kind, from those of governments before 1924 or after 1933. Protective tariffs, for example, were no higher than those imposed in the same period in Australia, a British dominion without the particular national ideology of South Africa's Boers. South Africa stayed within Britain's sterling monetary zone. The South African Reserve Bank had been created in 1920. Still, according to Nationalist economist A. J. Bruwer, who headed the Board of Trade and Industries in the period, financial policy was subordinate to the interests of the "imperial" banks (Standard and Barclays) and responsive to British financial planners.²²

The Hertzog government promoted the use of the Afrikaans language in education and the civil service, provoking cries of outrage from British Empire loyalists. Still, in 1925 almost four thousand of the thirteen thousand government officials were unilingual in English. The percentage of Afrikaans-speakers, especially at the higher levels, increased only gradually. Hertzog's most important victories were symbolic—a new flag, a new national anthem, guaranteed constitutional rights for dominions within the Commonwealth. The 1926 Balfour Declaration stated that "Great Britain and the self-governing Dominions are autonomous communities of equal status united by the common bond of the Crown."²³

This, Hertzog's supporters contended, was a complete victory and a reversal of the nation's defeat in the Anglo-Boer War. But the outcome was also sufficiently moderate that even arch-imperialists such as Leo Amery could accept it. Touring South Africa the year after the conference, Amery

lauded the conclusions, repeatedly affirming that "the true Imperialist is also the best South African."²⁴

If the anti-imperialist thrust of the Pact government was limited, so was its presumed opposition to "big-money" interests. Hertzog built his election victory on appeals to Afrikaner workers and poor whites, and his party formed an alliance with the largely English-speaking Labour party. The new government's concern for employing poor whites and for protecting white labor with color bars against black competition provides a temptation to characterize it as a 'white worker's government.' Such a description, however, would be misleading.

There was a significant social base for white opposition to British-oriented big business. The small Afrikaner farmer, deprived of land by the workings of competitive capitalism and natural calamity, provided a constantly renewed stratum of "poor whites." Some began to replace white immigrant workers in the mines and factories. By 1926 Afrikaners, with 23 percent of the white urban labor force, provided 60 percent of the white unskilled laborers and 53 percent of the mineworkers. Many "found practically no opening in our existing system of labor,"²⁵ subsisting on relief in the countryside or towns.

Already at the turn of the century, comments a leading South African historian, there had gathered at the base of white society, "like a sediment, a race of men so abject in their poverty, so wanting in resourcefulness, that they stood dangerously close to the natives themselves."²⁶ In 1932 the Carnegie Commission on the Poor White Problem estimated that more than 300,000 whites, almost one-fifth of the total, lived in "dire poverty."

This "abject race," however, was less a self-directed political force than the object of concern of preachers and politicians and the subject of government and private investigations. They were a persistent "problem" solved only in part by government measures, aided eventually by boom conditions in the 1930s and after World War II. In 1932, after eight years of Hertzog's government, the Carnegie Commission still noted the need for restricting competition between "the unskilled non-European and the poor white" in order to counteract demoralizing conditions of white poverty.²⁷ As the Carnegie Commission's sponsorship—the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Union Department of Mines and Industries, and the Dutch Reformed Church—shows, the 'poor white' problem was not just a National Party concern.

White workers also had their grievances. After Smuts suppressed the Rand Revolt in 1922, mining capitalists had won most of their immediate objectives. White trade-union membership dropped from 108,000 to 82,000, and the entire next decade saw a marked decline in strike activity. Not only were the numbers of whites working in the mines reduced, but

wage rates in both mining and manufacturing were slashed by as much as 25 percent. Many restrictions were lifted on job restructuring that could replace whites with cheaper black workers.

After Smuts lost to the National-Labour coalition in 1924, the new government sought jobs for unemployed whites with its "civilized labor" policy (preferential hiring for whites in government employment, including the railways), encouraged industrial expansion, and introduced the Job Reservation Act of 1926. That act was designed to prevent future erosion of white jobs, but made no basic changes in the industrial-relations system which had been agreed upon between Smuts, the mineowners, and other businessmen.

The mineowners had not intended to eliminate the color bar as such, but simply to make it more flexible. White miners, more limited in numbers, were set largely in supervisory positions. In recognition of the potential power of white workers, the pre-Hertzog Industrial Conciliation Act (1924) provided an industrial relations system. Africans were excluded from the legal definition of "employees," who were allowed to form recognized unions. White unions were permitted, but carefully hedged about with restrictions.

The Pact government did not roll back the restructuring that had already taken place, nor did it back white miners' demands for higher wages. By 1928 the weakened Labour party had split over continued support for Hertzog. When Hertzog joined Smuts in forming the United Party in 1934, representatives of labor played only a minimal role in party councils.

It was the United Party—not Hertzog's followers alone—that took the next step in disenfranchisement of Africans. The "Native Bills" of 1936–37, which were adopted by overwhelming majorities, eliminated the Cape franchise, which permitted some Africans to vote in one of South Africa's provinces, and replaced it with a system of white representatives chosen by the African electorate—a total of four white senators at the national level. A Native Representative Council was also created, so devoid of real power that the representatives soon came to be known as "toy telephones." And while additional land was promised for African occupation, in theory upping the percentage to some 13 percent of South Africa's land area, implementation lagged. At the same time, new restrictions were imposed on Africans who remained on "white" land, and a parallel bill tightened up control over movement of Africans into the urban areas.

While in opposition, Smuts had opposed earlier formulations of the Native Bills. No longer needing the support of Cape African voters, he gave his support to the 1936 version. Oswald Pirow, who piloted the 1936 legislation through parliament, commented that Smuts "was as little interested in the political rights of natives as the Man in the Moon."²⁸

Some of the impetus for new repressive legislation came from whites who were in one way or another marginal to the dominant South African capitalist class—Afrikaner nationalists among farmers or professionals, spokesmen for poor whites or for white workers. Their demands, however, were within the parameters already set by the economic power of white capitalists and fitted within the state structure established in 1910 under imperial auspices. The new legislation, moreover, was also a rational effort at “native administration” in the common interest of white employers. Just as in 1910 the British government and the constitutional convention in South Africa could agree on essentials, disregarding African interests, so could the diverse forces grouped in the United Party.

For a sense of the opposition that did exist to the basic structure of South Africa’s political and economic order, one has to shift the focus to the disenfranchised themselves. Their struggles—prolonged and various—were repressed, defeated, and diverted. But by their emerging consciousness we can chart the limitations of the white-ruling-class consensus, even of its strand of liberalism with an expressed concern for African welfare.

African Resistance and the Liberal Connection

The British-South African alliance in southern Africa sharply limited the scope even for development of African elites as buffers against mass protest. While African resistance was as advanced in southern Africa as anywhere in the continent, the response tilted insistently toward repression rather than accommodation. Political compromise that had “decolonization” as its logical outcome, however distant, was a live option only in areas peripheral to the core of white settlement.

In South Africa the pattern is already clear in the years preceding World War II. National organizations of Africans, Coloureds, and Indians protested ever-increasing restrictions upon their rights, while South African liberals proved no more consistent in will or ability to protect them than had the imperial humanitarians.

Shortly after the formation of the Union of South Africa, the futility of appeal to London was shown by African mobilization against the Native Land Act of 1913. This act had severe consequences precisely for that stratum of Africans who were achieving some measure of economic success. The South African Native National Congress (later the African National Congress—ANC), grouping an emerging elite of intellectuals with some traditional chiefs, launched a public campaign against the Act. They

sent a delegation to England to lobby for a veto and to explain that the land division was overwhelmingly opposed by African and Coloured opinion, though it was portrayed as "protecting" them. ANC Secretary-General Solomon Plaatje toured the Union describing the hardships imposed on evicted tenants.

These protests, though phrased in conciliatory terms, met with little encouragement. Governor-General Lord Gladstone, representing British authority in South Africa, advised the delegation to stay home and await the report of the Beaumont Commission, which was considering increased allocation of reserve land under the Act. In London Lord Harcourt, the secretary of state for the colonies, gave the group a perfunctory brush-off, saying that such issues were obviously the prerogative of local authorities.

More surprising, perhaps, is the response of the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines' Protection Society, generally recognized as the leading British lobby of the time for "native" interests. The society's leadership under J. H. Harris told Lord Harcourt it supported General Botha's segregation policy, "even though, as you know, the natives are against it."²⁹ Plaatje, over Harris's strong opposition, stayed in England to speak against the Act, and succeeded in publishing his book *Native Life in South Africa*. A few dissidents from the Society supported him, but the majority argued that Africans should place their hope in the secure land of the reserves and refrain from challenging the Botha-Smuts government. It was, after all, a loyal British ally, and would surely prove responsible in its treatment of Africans.

The campaign against the Land Act is only one example of a long series of protests against the segregation system. In the same year as the Land Act, 1913, hundreds of women in the Orange Free State were arrested for protesting the extension of pass laws to women and were successful in delaying the measure, which was eventually implemented only in the 1950s. The ANC itself organized passive resistance against the pass laws after World War I and supported a number of strikes. In 1920, police action against a strike in Port Elizabeth resulted in the death of nineteen Africans. The same year, African miners on the Rand downed their tools and shocked the government with the effectiveness of their organization, but the mine compounds were eventually isolated and the miners forced back to work.

Indians and Coloureds as well contributed to the tradition of black protest. Gandhi employed passive resistance against new restrictions on the Indian population before leaving South Africa in 1914. His successors in Indian organizations repeatedly appealed to the British government of India for protection. Although the results were limited and ultimately ineffective, the appeals were the early forerunners of later resort to

international public opinion. Coloured leaders like Dr. A. Abdurahman of the African People's Organization joined with African leaders in repeated petitions against segregation laws. In the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU), Coloured and African workers together lent their support to a mass movement that gained some one hundred thousand members at its peak in 1927, and was regarded by the authorities as a serious threat.

Led by Clements Kadalie, from Nyasaland, the ICU went from an initial successful strike in Cape Town in 1920 to organize throughout South Africa and even in Southern Rhodesia. It encompassed not only industrial and commercial workers, but also tenants expelled from their land and other rural Africans. The government response included the Native Administration Act (1927), which made it an offense to disseminate "certain doctrines among natives, to say or write anything intended to promote hostility between the races." This and other legislation, such as the Riotous Assembly Act of 1930, were used against the ICU, the ANC, and the Communist Party of South Africa, which had reversed in the 1920s its earlier focus on white workers.

Although African opposition was weakened both by repression and internal conflicts (the ICU, for example, had virtually collapsed by 1930), a coalition All African Convention met in 1935 to oppose the Hertzog bills. Expressing the unanimity of African opinion against the measures, the AAC's protests were nonetheless ineffective against the virtual consensus of the white power structure.

The appeals of South Africa's black leaders were not, for the most part, revolutionary in character. A man like Plaatje was ready to cooperate with De Beers in providing an alternative to "Black Bolshevism," advising workers in the diamond mines against extreme actions. In defending the Cape franchise, the African elite by and large accepted the corollary assumption that only a "civilized" minority would be eligible for the vote, leaving the majority voteless and the essentials of white domination intact. Kadalie, with his broader mass appeal, still sought to build a trade-union movement that would operate on moderate lines rather than aim at a revolutionary transformation of society. He was willing to allay the suspicions of white liberals by barring communist membership in the ICU. It would have been possible to go a long way toward satisfying black grievances as expressed by black leaders without interfering with the basic interests of British or South African capitalists.

Why, then, the weakness and ineffectiveness of the liberal impulse for accommodation with a black elite? Why not defuse black protests by a judicious application of the carrot as well as the stick? If adamant Boer

opponents of the pro-British rulers could be accommodated and even subsidized out of mining profits, why not a few blacks?

The alliances made by the ruling class cannot be directly derived in abstract terms from the needs of the capitalist system in South Africa. But neither were they the results of a purely irrational racial ideology. The common assumption of priority for "white" interests made good strategic sense. The primary beneficiaries of the system—the propertied classes in Britain and South Africa—could not rule alone. They could not channel and direct the labor of masses of Africans without collaborators and intermediaries. Abstractly, one might think that black allies could be chosen as well as whites. But the presence of large numbers of whites severely constrained ruling-class responsiveness to black demands. Once certain strategic choices were made and ideological assumptions accepted, they were not easily changed. The character of these limits is particularly apparent if one looks more carefully at the ambiguities of the "liberal" option itself.

This current in South Africa, which found expression in such organizations as the Joint Councils of Europeans and Natives and the South African Institute of Race Relations, built in part on the Cape Liberalism of an earlier era. Faith in the eventual impact of civilization and the desirability of a color-blind franchise joined with protest against the most obvious abuses of the segregation system. Merchants and missionaries retained their hopes for development of "progressive" Africans, who would be both consumers of material goods and adherents of Christian values. Individuals among the liberals shared the outrage felt by blacks at the pass laws and at the Hertzog bills, which eliminated even the theoretical potential of African electoral equality. But most commonly among the activists, and even more strongly among English-speaking ruling circles that vaguely accepted some liberal views, the priority was the preservation of order and the essentials of the existing society—not the removal of injustice. The assumption reigned that adequate opportunity for African advancement could be supplied without a frontal challenge to its white opponents.

This was the perspective of Ray Phillips, for example, an American missionary who worked in Johannesburg and was among the leading lights of the Joint Council movement (founded in 1921). Phillips proposed recognition of unions for Africans, social welfare measures, more land, "legitimate avenues of endeavor for black and white alike."³⁰ In his book *The Bantu Are Coming*, Phillips makes it clear that his purpose was to provide a "buffer between whites and blacks" and to discourage the growth of more radical views or radical actions such as strikes.

South African Native Affairs Commissioner C. T. Loram, a prominent liberal who later became professor of education at Yale, lauded Phillips for

rescuing young native intellectuals from "scheming agitators," saving them "from foolish and hasty action, and South Africa so far from any serious outbreak of racial trouble."³¹

In the liberal ideology one finds a persistent trust in the paternal responsibility of the propertied and well-educated, a group which, while theoretically open to Afrikaners or blacks, continued to be recruited primarily among English-speaking whites. In liberal circles, concern for African conditions faded imperceptibly into a focus on management and preservation of the existing order. Leading figures such as Howard Pim and Alfred Hoernle, for example, could help to trace the outlines of segregation or explore various alternate "native policies" as possible outgrowths of the "liberal spirit." One may view such positions as evidence of a realistic adjustment to the possibilities at hand or of the failure of the liberals to break away from ruling-class and racial prejudice. Either way, the gap between them and even black-elite opinion is clearly visible.

And it was true that the South African liberal camp was often in close contact with the mining magnates whose patronage they received. The Chamber of Mines subsidy for the Joint Councils was no secret. Being little inclined to question the role of the mining industry and its part in shaping South Africa's political economy, the liberal critique could hardly probe very deep.

The liberals were reluctant to acknowledge real conflicts of interest. Enlightened policymakers could promote the adjustment of competing claims and prejudices, they thought. What was needed, concluded L. Barnes in *Caliban in Africa*, was to substitute government by reason for the crude racial animosities of the mob.³² Thus attention was focused on the blatant racism of the Afrikaner nationalist or the white worker, easily ignoring those who in fact derived even more profit from the workings of the system.

Prominent in the development of a view that held to the hope for incorporation of an African elite was historian W. M. Macmillan, an active participant in liberal circles in Johannesburg before leaving South Africa for England in 1932. His analyses of nineteenth-century South African history posed the conflict between the "frontier" tradition and the humanitarian idealism of missionary John Philip. His empirical studies documented the plight of "poor whites" (before 1920) and of Africans (in the 1920s). "Civilization knows no color bar," argued Macmillan. The Cape system should be preserved and extended. "A very few thousand [natives] are in any way self-conscious, a mere handful to be reckoned with in the body politic. The danger would be were these few, who are still eager and willing to be led—content with a humble place in the One South African

Society—to be driven into increasingly bitter racial opposition. . . . Given rights [of citizenship] they may easily be led and won.”³³

Macmillan, one of the first Rhodes scholars, kept in close touch with the Milner Kindergarten group at Oxford, and secured Rhodes Trust support for his later studies of British colonial policy. Macmillan was one of the more consistent and outspoken in the defense of traditional liberal values and of the potential for African advance. But still his perspectives confined him to a conception of the body politic as, *de facto*, overwhelmingly white.

The most prominent political hopeful for the liberals in the interwar years was Jan H. Hofmeyr, who came to be regarded as Smuts's natural successor. Although a cabinet minister, Hofmeyr broke ranks in 1936 to vote against the Hertzog bills. For him as well, however, the body politic—the South African nation—was essentially composed of whites; Africans were the object of policy (the “Native problem”). In a 1930 book, Hofmeyr rejected the two “extreme” policies of repression and equality in favor of “constructive segregation,” and opportunity for economic advancement for those for whom there was no room in the reserves. White ascendancy, he argued, could be preserved by a policy of “strengthening the white man rather than holding down the black man.”³⁴

Philanthropic foundations and leading outside liberals gave their support to such constructive white paternalism. The Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Phelps Stokes Fund were active backers of the South African Institute of Race Relations and the Joint Councils. The same foundations exercised considerable influence on African education, promoting the model of the segregated schools they backed in the U.S. South. Macmillan's research was supported by the Rhodes Trust, and he was brought in as a leading spokesman on South Africa by the International Missionary Council.

At the intersection of these currents—in close touch with the Milner group around the Rhodes Trust and yet aware of the critiques leveled at South Africa—was missionary statesman J. H. Oldham. In 1924, in *Christianity and the Race Problem*, Oldham condemned vehemently doctrines of racial domination and traced racial prejudice to economic and political causes. Yet his proposals for the future of such societies as South Africa or the southern United States were vague and drastically restricted by his conviction that any solution had to be acceptable both to oppressor and oppressed.

In 1930 Oldham wrote a critical review of Smuts's Rhodes lectures, but still called for sympathetic understanding of the problems of both races. Advocating caution, he cited Reconstruction in the U.S. South as an object lesson in “premature” advance toward political equality:

American experience proves that the bestowal of political rights cannot confer the power to exercise them on those who do not possess the capacity. The enfranchisement of the Negro population became a dead letter because those enfranchised were not capable of governing. . . . By rough and rude methods power was restored to the hands of those who were alone capable of using it to create the conditions of an ordered social life.³⁵

Some critics associated with the British Labour Party—Lord Olivier and others—were more vigorous in their critiques than Oldham, more willing to target vested economic interests as well as irrational prejudices. Macmillan himself for his moderate critiques was refused the opportunity to direct Chatham House's mammoth *African Survey*, for fear his appointment might offend white South African opinion. But none of the respectable critics, moderate or more radical, was willing to challenge the basic assumption that power and trusteeship belonged rightfully to the European or settler governments.

Among international political currents only the Pan-African movement (with leaders such as DuBois, Padmore, James, and Garvey) and the Communist International were willing to give more unequivocal support to the claims for equality by South Africa's blacks. Pan-African ideas filtered through to South Africa by means of continuing contacts with U.S. and West Indian blacks, finding expression in both religious and political forms. The Communist Party of South Africa supported African rights and won a base of support in African nationalist and working-class circles, in spite of its initial white background. Marxist study groups centered in the Cape's Coloured community added another strand to the theoretical arsenal of resistance. To the ruling classes of South Africa and the Anglo-Saxon world, the views of such radicals were beyond the bounds of serious consideration.

Varieties of Colonial Rule

Outside the Union of South Africa the pressure from the presence of a local white population was less severe, and there was more scope for colonial authorities to pursue their own ideas. Within the British sphere, at least, it was common to assert that colonial rule should lead to the progress of the indigenous population. Lord Lugard's *Dual Mandate*, which became a virtual Bible for colonial rule after its publication in 1922, stressed the simultaneous needs to exploit Africa's wealth on behalf of the outside

world and promote the welfare of the colonial subjects.³⁶ In 1923 a White Paper on Kenya noted that the interests of the African natives must be paramount, a thesis defended in following years by colonial officials, who sought to limit South African and settler influence in that part of Africa.

This mandate, however, was almost always accompanied by conditions, whether explicit or implicit, which implied a gulf between theory and reality. The colonial state's defense of African interests was embedded in the context of colonial capitalism, and carried on without the aid of African political participation. Settlers failed to win full power north of the Zambezi, but positive payoffs for the African people were incidental. Africans in each territory did protest. But those who spoke out were ignored or suppressed by unresponsive colonial officials.

In Nyasaland, for example, where Scottish missions began early to produce a stratum of educated Africans, the number of white settlers was small—less than two thousand. But even here there was no room for African advancement into positions of responsibility. Many Nyasas, like Clements Kadalie, found jobs in countries to the south as “clerks” or “boss boys.” Others formed “native associations” whose decorous protests against racial discrimination and requests for government expenditures on infrastructure fell on deaf ears. “Natives,” wrote one such group in 1919, “should have free access to the Residents [colonial officials] . . . without threats of *cikoti* [a hippopotamus-hide whip] or imprisonment before the man states what he has come for.”³⁷ Still others expressed their protest by joining breakaway Christian churches—some of which proclaimed apocalyptic visions in which the injustices of colonial rule would be abolished, the whites expelled, and black rule established.

Among them was John Chilembwe, who absorbed such an egalitarian vision from British missionary Joseph Booth. After spending three years in the United States, he returned to Nyasaland in 1900. In 1914, after Africans were drafted in large numbers as porters for the East African campaign against the Germans, adding to the burdens already imposed by labor for white estate owners, Chilembwe and several hundred followers took up arms, targeting several of the most notoriously brutal planters. Historians think he intended a symbolic protest, hardly expecting to win and deliberately courting martyrdom. Chilembwe was killed; his chief lieutenants were captured and summarily hanged. Significantly, though an official inquiry recommended amelioration of the harsh conditions suffered by African workers on the estates, the colonial administration failed to implement reforms.

The possibility of real change was limited not only by the racial prejudice and insensitivity of colonial authorities and settlers, but also by a basic fiscal principle of colonial administration: each colony should pay its own

way. Income in such a peripheral territory as Nyasaland was limited—though its workers made their contribution to mining profits throughout the region. Although government revenue was derived in large part from hut taxes on Africans, expenditures for welfare sectors such as health and education were minimal. Still, the budget was often in deficit. “The local administration was caught in a situation in which it did all it could for the European settlers in the country, in the hope that they would one day strike it rich and provide the country with a sound economic base [while] it neglected the Africans, except to force them to work for the settlers.”³⁸

A similar neglect was apparent in the case of the High Commission territories—Swaziland, Basutoland, and Bechuanaland. There, more than anywhere else in southern Africa, Lugard’s principle of indirect rule by close cooperation with African traditional rulers was put into effect. In this bargain the chiefs gained control over land rights in at least part of their territories, reinforcing and exacerbating class divisions within the African communities. But more ambitious ventures, such as Khama’s royal trading company, were blocked by white competition and colonial regulation. Taxation combined with lack of opportunities at home forced thousands into regular migrant labor in South Africa. In the 1930s a series of reports by Sir Alan Pim, commissioned by the British government, exposed the economic stagnation of the territories and the absence of welfare and development programs. In spite of his recommendations, few funds were released for development before the 1950s.

Also peripheral were the territories controlled by Portugal and Belgium, with their distinctive styles of colonial paternalism. In both areas observers often noted the absence of British-style racism, a Latin willingness to mix with the natives in a way impossible for the more distant British or the Afrikaners with their rigid racial doctrines. In both areas also the colonial administration aimed at centralized decision making, with little participation by local white settlers. Neither Portugal’s assimilation ideology nor Belgium’s constructive paternalism, however, provided more than a thin façade over regimes based on brutal exploitation and the assumption that Africans had no right to rule their own destinies.

From 1928 António Salazar reorganized Portugal’s colonial empire as part of his project of reconstructing Portugal along fascist lines. Mechanisms of forced labor were retained and elaborated. He refurbished the theory that the colonies were not colonies at all, but integral parts of Portugal (provinces). As in Portugal, any opposition or ideas of democracy were forcibly suppressed. In 1923, DuBois’s Pan-African Congress had been hosted in Lisbon by a newly formed *Liga Africana*. But after Salazar took power, such incipient nationalist groups virtually disappeared for decades. There were organizations of the minuscule percentage of Africans

who attained the status of "assimilado" in Angola and Mozambique. These, in the words of Mozambican nationalist Eduardo Mondlane, were "at best simply bourgeois social clubs, often called upon to shout their part in the militarized chorus of allegiance to Salazar."³⁹ Not until the 1960s were the voices of Angolan and Mozambican nationalists to reach the ears of the outside world, at the beginning of more than a decade of wars of liberation.

Historians are now recovering some of the "silent" voices of the earlier years. In Mozambique, for example, there was the Barue rebellion of 1917. Precipitated in part, like Chilembwe's revolt, by conscription of Africans for World War I, the rebellion brought together people from a wide variety of ethnic groups in the Zambezi Valley, with considerable military success against the Portuguese for almost a year. It was eventually contained with the aid of the British and of African mercenary troops. The spirit of resistance appeared as well in less dramatic form, as in protest songs like this one from the area of the British-owned Sena Sugar Estates:

I'm being tied up, ay!
I'm being tied up far from home!
Tax, Tax!
*My heart is angry.*⁴⁰

Such cries, however, found no hearing within the colonial system.

Portugal won little respect from its fellow powers for its colonial policies. Belgium, in contrast, after the initial horrors of the Congo Free State, acquired the reputation of an admirable colonial power. It won particular praise from observers for its policy of training Africans in industrial and mechanical skills. Nevertheless, power was highly concentrated in the hands of the colonial administration, the large companies, and the Catholic hierarchy. As late as 1958, the foreign minority, only 1 percent of the population, controlled 95 percent of the Congo's assets and 42 percent of the national income (including subsistence crops).⁴¹ Secondary and higher education for Africans was discouraged. Independence was hardly considered even a future prospect until 1955, only five years before a belated and accelerated transition helped provoke the chaos and poverty that have since plagued that country (now named Zaire).

The years before World War II saw few signs of active political consciousness among the Congo's African population, but the spirit of rejection found an outlet in sects such as the movement of Simon Kimbangu. Kimbangu and his immediate followers were not advocates of violence, but by preaching a Christ whose new prophet was Kimbangu, a black man, they posed a challenge to colonial authority. Many refused to pay taxes or to submit to forced labor. Kimbangu was arrested in 1921 and died, still in

prison, in 1951. The main group of his followers, though officially suppressed, remained peaceful, to reemerge after independence as one of Zaire's major Christian denominations. Others in the same tradition did resort to violence. In reaction to increased taxes and economic hardship after the depression, for example, revolts broke out in 1931 and 1932 in Kasai and other provinces. Some reports indicate that hundreds of villagers were killed by machine-gun fire.⁴²

In the territories of more substantial white settlement under British rule—Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia, Kenya—the common picture is of lines drawn between the settlers and British imperial interests, the former pushing for a white man's Africa and achieving varying degrees of success, only to be checked in Kenya. This conflict, though real, is more accurately seen as marginal to the basic alliance of settler and imperial interests, which were engaged in a joint venture to exploit African labor and resources. Colonial planners who shared the conviction that African self-rule was unthinkable for many generations made extensive concessions to settler power. Disagreements took place within an ideological context so taken for granted that it easily disappeared from view.

In Southern Rhodesia only two serious possibilities were considered as rule by the British South Africa Company was phased out. Both implied white-minority rule. "Most Africans and most of the missionaries who assumed the responsibility of speaking for Africans knew what they would have *liked* to succeed company rule—direct British colonial administration," notes historian Terence Ranger.⁴³ That was excluded, as was the virtually apocalyptic hope of a recovery of African independence. The two remaining choices were union with South Africa (and thus control by its white ruling class) or "responsible government" under a franchise excluding all but a minuscule fraction of Africans. While establishment opinion in Britain favored the first option, J. H. Harris of the Aborigines' Protection Society argued that a bargain should be struck with the advocates of settler government, who won the referendum. Reluctantly persuaded, the small minority of missionaries who did speak out against abuses of African rights went along. African elite groups such as the Rhodesian Bantu Voters Association prepared to work within the context of a virtually all-white electorate. Neither this moderate strategy nor more radical resistance and protest were any more successful in Rhodesia than in South Africa.

Thus the Land Apportionment Act of 1930 was approved by the British Labour government with little debate, though African opinion regarded it as grossly inequitable. The less-fertile half of the land was allocated for Africans, while the small European minority held exclusive rights to the other half. Those who had accepted segregation in order to argue for a better deal for Africans within its confines were disillusioned. But the

dominant view in Southern Rhodesia and in British ruling circles was that the allocation was quite generous to African interests, a plausible judgment only by comparison with neighboring South Africa.

Nor was any outcry raised in England, even by the Labour Party, at the routine suppression of occasional strikes in Rhodesian mine compounds, such as at Wankie in 1912 and 1923 and at Shamva in 1927. The options for African resistance were repeatedly reduced to desertion from the worst working conditions or to other strategies for individual survival within the colonial context.

In Northern Rhodesia, British authorities deemed it inappropriate for the few thousand white settlers to gain "responsible government," though they did dominate commercial farming and monopolized skilled jobs in the mines. There was no handover to settler rule as in Southern Rhodesia, but it was settlers, not Africans, who were represented in the Legislative Council the British set up.

As late as 1946 African spokesmen in a token Representative Council were advocating in vain that the three Europeans selected to represent African interests on the Legislative Council should be elected rather than appointed. Massive strikes on the copper mines in 1935 and 1940, protesting tax increases and the color bar against African advancement, led to commissions of inquiry. Six strikers had been killed by police in 1935, and seventeen in 1940. But in 1935 the commission judged African grievances to be without foundation, while after 1940 reforms such as limited wage increases still excluded the key demand for placement of Africans in more skilled jobs.

The attitude taken even by reformers is well expressed in a study on the copperbelt carried out by the International Missionary Council and published two years before the first major strike in 1935. J. Merle Davis's *Modern Industry and the African* emphasized the process of "race adjustment" and gradual adaptation of the African to modern civilization. The modification of white attitudes was seen to depend on the African proving himself. The missionary, Davis advised, "should never appeal to outside public opinion for the righting of what he considers to be a public wrong until he has first brought the matter privately to the attention of the responsible authorities and exhausted every means of inducing them to set things right."⁴⁴ Davis seemed hardly to recognize that the "responsible authorities" themselves, whether in the mining companies or the government, might themselves be responsible for public wrongs.

Davis's assumptions reflect those of other "moderate" critics of the settler influence in Africa, who were reluctant to challenge vested interests. And just as earlier in the century the Congo and Angola attracted humanitarian attention far more than the major centers of mining wealth, so

controversy in the interwar years was focused on an area peripheral to “white man’s Africa”—Kenya.

In Kenya, Oldham and others frustrated the settlers’ demands for power in government commensurate with that of their counterparts in Southern Rhodesia. There were more radical critics—the eloquent Norman Leys, spokesmen of the Indian community in Kenya, Harry Thuku’s Young Kikuyu Association. But it was Oldham who, in close cooperation with leaders of opinion in England and as member of the Hilton Young Commission (1928–29), most influenced the consensus in favor of continued imperial rule. The imperial government, Oldham believed, should serve as impartial arbiter between the interests of the different races, informed by the research of missions, government, and scholars.

In practice, even in this Kenyan exception, established colonial patterns were allowed to prevail: subsidies to white agriculture, indifference to African land shortage while land was reserved to whites, neglect of African education, and pass laws to control African workers. “An elaborate system of economic discrimination,” notes Colin Leys, ensured that “Africans paid the bulk of taxation, while the Europeans received virtually the entire benefit of government services—railways, roads, schools, hospitals, extension services and so forth.”⁴⁵

In the sphere of education, for example, the influential Phelps Stokes Commission on education in East Africa (1925), with which Oldham was closely associated, accommodated its recommendations to settler prejudices. “The things I should like to see done for the native population,” Oldham wrote to the governor of Kenya in 1924, “must, I am fully convinced, be done with the assent and cooperation of the European community.”⁴⁶

Accompanying this reluctance to offend white interests was the premise that Africans could not speak for themselves. Those who advocated African political rights or protested vigorously against injustice were dismissed as agitators or subversives, by both the mainstream and the reformist wing of the British colonial establishment. African representation in the legislative councils of East and Central Africa, it was assumed, could only be entrusted to sympathetic and impartial white missionaries or colonial officials.

This colonial ideology of administrative benevolence was enshrined in the massive *African Survey* (1,837 pages) produced in 1938 by the Royal Institute of International Affairs. This influential volume resulted from suggestions by Jan Smuts and J. C. Oldham for a “scientific” approach to the development of Africa. A committee headed by Philip Kerr (Lord Lothian), with the financial support of the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Rhodes Trust, entrusted the task to retired Indian civil ser-

vant Lord Hailey. He painstakingly compiled comparative data for what became the standard reference source on colonial policy for policymakers and scholars alike. South Africa was included on a parallel status with the other colonial powers (Britain, France, Belgium, Portugal). Mild criticism of its policies was so buried and qualified by the objective style that no one could possibly be offended.

Throughout the book, problems are considered as administrative rather than political. Protest, voices of dissent, or even the voices of any African at all are carefully excluded. Of some 215 persons and organizations acknowledged for their contributions—supplying drafts, memoranda, answers to queries, or comments on chapters in draft form—not one is African. Not even any of the more vigorous of Labour Party critics, such as Norman Leys, Lord Olivier, or Leonard Woolf, was mentioned. Prominent Pan-Africanists, such as the West Indian George Padmore or W. E. B. DuBois from the United States, are equally conspicuous by their absence.

This bias is perhaps not surprising. But the common rationalization—that there were no other points of view available at the time—simply will not work. For those who considered themselves responsible, alternatives may have been unthinkable. But they were there. Submerged, ignored, or repressed, contrary perspectives were systematically and deliberately blocked out of the ruling-class consensus.

Throughout the region, outside as well as inside South Africa, the idea that essential decision-making power should remain in the hands of white capitalists and officials was virtually axiomatic. It was also agreed that the mass of Africans should contribute to development by accepting their assigned role as labor units. Non-ruling-class whites, it was generally acknowledged in English-speaking territories, had some rights: to be involved in “democratic” institutions and to be protected from “falling to the level of the natives.”

On the appropriate role of the black elite there was more disagreement. Reformers argued that such men should at least have the opportunity for economic and political advancement. But an additional proviso, a “catch-22,” doomed in advance the liberal alternative. For reformers also assumed that such advances must take place without offending vested interests or risking the mobilization of the African masses.