

or deserve the respect of others, if he acquiesces in the humiliation of human beings on the grounds of colour or race. This is true in Southern Africa, where white people are oppressing non-white peoples. It is true also in the rest of Africa, and in the Caribbean, where power is held by non-white peoples. Whoever imposes it, however large or small the number of victims, and however understandable the feelings of fear or revenge which promote it, racial discrimination is the mother of war, and suffering, and loss of freedom for everyone. For if men cannot live as men they will die as men.

This Congress will be discussing questions affecting the liberation of men who have suffered, or are suffering, by virtue of their blackness, and their African ancestry. But men cannot become free by enslaving other men. Therefore, the Congress will be discussing matters affecting the liberation of mankind.

This means that many items are on the agenda of the Congress dealing with oppression and exploitation over most parts of the globe. But this Congress is not the Organization of African Unity, nor the Non-Aligned Conference, nor a gathering of the Group of 77, and it would be a serious mistake for us to act as if it were. Instead I hope that we shall concentrate on those matters to which we, as members of a group, and as individuals, can make a positive contribution wherever we live, whatever our religion or political beliefs, and whatever our nationality. For we are not only men linked to Africa by birth and history. We are also citizens of our own nations; we are also Christians or Moslems, socialists, conservatives, capitalists or communists. And these other things are more truly a reflection of ourselves than is our colour or ancestry. That we inherit and cannot change even if we wish to. These others are matters of choice and decision, thus reflecting what we really are as individuals. It is by the manner in which we carry out our responsibilities to the cause of justice in groups unrelated to our parentage that we shall show the practical meaning of this Pan-African Congress. For one thing is very important. If this Congress issues declarations of support for the liberation movements of Africa, those declarations must be supported by a commitment to action in future months and years. The words must be backed by political and material support as the struggle continues. And if this Congress recognizes the need for unity in the Third World in order to overcome the economic injustice from which so many people now suffer, this too must be followed by work to that end. The same is true for any demand for an end to racialism; it must be followed by individual and group actions against racialism of any kind, and anywhere.

Our tasks are clear. We have to play our full part as world citizens in the development of humanity; to do that we have to shake off the mental effects upon ourselves of colonialism and discrimination. We have to fight colour prejudice and discrimination everywhere; and we have to assert and, where possible, promote the rights of all the world's citizens for an equal share of the world's resources.

The Myth of the White Working Class in South Africa

HOWARD SIMSON*

It is commonly asserted in the literature on South Africa that the working class is comprised of an aristocratic or elite white section and an oppressed black section. This contention is false, and arose on the basis of both arbitrary bourgeois class concepts and 'economistic' communist class theory. By analysing the historically determined social production system in the light of Marx's scientific class theory, we are able to penetrate the prevailing confusion with respect to the determination of the working class in South Africa and explode the myth of the white working class.

MARXIST CLASS THEORY

The final chapter of Marx's *Capital* was to have dealt with "Classes" but unfortunately it was not completed. However, the problem of class is present throughout his work, making it possible for latter-day Marxists to reconstruct the "theory of class" which his analysis imply. Two interpretations of Marxist class theory, differing primarily in breadth, confront the student today. The first is the narrow "economistic" conception of class; the second is more broadly based. Both theories agree that the social classes are defined by their position in the production process, i.e., by their place in the economic sphere. The economistic theory stresses the exclusiveness of the economic sphere in determining social classes. Whereas the broader theory acknowledges that:

The economic place of the social agents has a *principal* role in determining social classes. But from that we cannot conclude that this economic place is sufficient to determine social classes. Marxism states that the economic does indeed have the determinant role in a mode of production or a social formation; but the political and the ideological (the superstructure) also have an important role. For whenever Marx, Engels, Lenin¹ and Mao analyse social classes, far from limiting themselves to the economic criteria alone, they make explicit reference to political and ideological criteria. We

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¹ V. I. Lenin, "A Great Beginning—1919," *Collected Works*, Vol. 29, p. 421. "Classes are large groups of people differing from each other by the place they occupy in a historically determined system of social production, by the relation (in most cases fixed and formulated in law) to the means of production, by their role in the social organization of labour and, consequently, by dimensions of the share of social wealth of which they dispose and the mode of acquiring it. Classes are groups of people one of which can appropriate the labour of another owing to the different places they occupy in a definite system of social economy." This is a 'broad' view of classes, notably taking into account the "role in the social organization of labour".

can thus say that a social class is defined by its *place* in the ensemble of social practices, i.e. by its place in the ensemble of the division of labour which includes political and ideological relations. This place corresponds to the *structural determination* of classes, i.e. the manner in which determination by the structure (relations of production, politico-ideological domination/subordination) operates on class practices—for classes have existence only in the class struggle.²

Poulantzas, furthermore, draws attention to the fact that: "While every worker is a wage earner, not every wage earner is a worker, since not every wage earner is necessarily a productive worker, i.e., one who produces surplus value (commodities)."³ But the concept of the "productive worker" is by itself a narrow view that excludes the political and ideological levels.

The determination of classes depends on the relations of production, which relate directly to the social division of labour and the politico-ideological superstructure, not to the data of any 'technical process' as such. *The technical division of labour is dominated by the social division.* So we do not define productive labour as consisting of those who take part in production understood in a technical sense, but as consisting of those who produce surplus-value and who are thus exploited as a class in a determinate manner, i.e. those who occupy a determinate place in the social division of labour.⁴

The importance of the distinction between the technical division of labour and the social division becomes apparent in the example Poulantzas gives of the structural determination of the 'technician and engineering' group's class.

While economic criteria alone are sufficient to exclude wage-earners in commerce, banks, etc., from the working class, they provide us with no answer to our question concerning the technicians and engineers. For that, we have to refer to the social division of labour as a whole. When we do this, we see that the ensemble of technicians and engineers occupies a *contradictory* position; from the economic-technical point of view it increasingly contributes to the production of surplus-value; but at the same time it is entrusted with a special authority in overseeing the labour process and its despotic organization. It is thus placed 'alongside' intellectual labour in its maintenance of the monopoly of knowledge. It can be suggested that, up to now at least, this latter aspect of its situation outweighs the former in determining its class: so that as a *whole*, engineers and technicians cannot be considered as belonging to the working class.⁵

Thus, Poulantzas refers to politico-ideological criteria, the "special authority in overseeing the labour process and its despotic organization", in the structural determination of the technicians' class. Poulantzas has the best precedent for his insistence on the importance of the politico-ideological criteria, namely, Marx's principal work *Capital*, to which we now refer.

The labour of supervision and management is naturally required wherever the direct process of production assumes the form of a combined social process,

2 Nicos Poulantzas, "Marxism and Social Classes," *New Left Review*, No. 78 (March-April 1973), pp. 27-28.

3 *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 32.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 35.

and not of the isolated labour of independent producers. However, it has a double nature.

On the one hand, all labour in which many individuals co-operate necessarily requires a commanding will to co-ordinate and unify the process, and functions which apply not to partial operations but to the total activity of the workshop, much as that of an orchestra conductor. This is a productive job, which must be performed in every combined mode of production.

On the other hand—quite apart from any commercial department—this supervision work necessarily arises in all modes of production based on the antithesis between the labourer, as the direct producer, and the owner of the means of production. The greater this antagonism, the greater the role played by supervision. Hence it reaches its peak in the slave system. But it is indispensable also in the capitalist mode of production, since the production process in it is simultaneously a process by which the capitalist consumes labour-power.⁶

The directing motive, the end and aim of capitalist production, is to extract the greatest possible surplus-value, and consequently to exploit labour-power to the greatest possible extent. As the number of the co-operating labourers increases, so too does their resistance to the domination of capital, and with it, the necessity of capital to overcome this resistance by counterpressure. The control exercised by the capitalist is not only a special function, due to the nature of the social labour-process, and peculiar to that process, but it is, at the same time, a function of the exploitation of a social labour-process, and consequently rooted in the unavoidable antagonism between the exploiter and the living and labouring raw material, he exploits. . . . If, then, the control of the capitalist is in substance two-fold by reason of the two-fold nature of the process of production itself,—which, on the one hand, is a social process for producing use-values, on the other, a process for creating surplus-value—in form, that control is despotic. As co-operation extends its scale, this despotism takes forms peculiar to itself. Just as at first the capitalist is released from actual labour so soon as his capital has reached that minimum amount with which capitalist production, as such, begins, so now, he hands over the work of direct and constant supervision of the individual workmen, and groups of workmen, to a special kind of wage-labourer. An industrial army of workmen, under the command of a capitalist, requires, like a real army, officers (managers); and sergeants (foremen, overlookers), who, while the work is being done, command in the name of the capitalist. The work of supervision becomes their established and exclusive function.⁷

Marx has revealed the contradictory nature of the labour of supervision, which in the capitalist mode of production is identified with the supremacy of capital over labour. He acknowledges the productive aspect of supervisory labour, while clearly stating that the politico-ideological factor, authority and direction, is dominant in the determination of the class of this "special kind of wage labourer". Reasoning along the same lines, Poulantzas has maintained that "as a 'whole' engineers and technicians cannot be considered as belonging to the working class." And to this nonworking class group we can obviously add all foremen, overseers or 'gangers' who command on behalf of capital on the production front. The question then arises as to which class this group belongs. Poulantzas would regard it as a fraction of the "new"

6 Karl Marx, *Capital* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1971), Vol. 3, pp. 383-4.

7 *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, pp. 313-4.

middle class,⁸ whereas Therborn would consider it a part of the "intermediate strata".⁹ Of one fact we can be certain, that this group of technicians and foremen do not constitute a labour aristocracy, which is a stratum of the working class itself.¹⁰ With these theoretical tools in mind we can now turn to an analysis of the so-called 'white working class' in South Africa.

CAPITALIST PRODUCTION RELATIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA

The specific economic form, in which unpaid surplus-labour is pumped out of direct producers, determines the relationship of rulers and ruled, as it grows directly out of production itself and, in turn, reacts upon it as a determining element. Upon this, however, is founded the entire formation of the economic community which grows up out of the production relations themselves, thereby simultaneously its specific political form. It is always the direct relationship of the owners of the conditions of production to the direct producers—a relationship always naturally corresponding to a definite stage in the development of the methods of labour and thereby its social productivity—which reveals the innermost secret, the hidden basis of the entire social structure, and with it the political form of the relation of sovereignty and dependence, in short, the corresponding specific form of the state. This does not prevent the same economic base—the same from the standpoint of its main condition—due to innumerable different empirical circumstances, natural environment, racial relations, external historical influences, etc., from showing infinite variations and gradations in appearance, which can be ascertained only by analysis of the empirically given circumstances.¹¹

Mining Production Relations

The rise of British imperialism in the last quarter of the nineteenth century coincided with the discoveries of rich diamond and gold deposits in South Africa.¹² Vast amounts of metropolitan capital (mainly British) were poured into the mining industry and infrastructure,¹³ transplanting pure capitalist production relations to an economically undeveloped country. Thus, South

8 Poulantzas, "Marxism and Social Classes," op. cit., pp. 37-39.
 9 Göran Therborn, "Det svenska klassamhället 1930-1970," *Zenit*, 1973, pp. 27-28.
 10 Poulantzas, op. cit., pp. 35-37.
 11 Marx, op. cit., Vol. 3, pp. 791-2.
 12 At the time of the diamond (1867) and gold (1886) discoveries, South Africa was comprised of four territories, the Cape and Natal were British colonies, and the Orange Free State and Transvaal were Boer Republics.

European Population (in 000's)*

	Cape	Natal	O.F.S.	Transvaal
1854	112	7.6	15	25
1873	236	18.6	27	40
1892	377	47	78	119

*R. Robinson, J. Gallagher and A. Denny, *Africa and the Victorians* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1961), p. 57.

13 Robinson, et. al., op. cit., p. 6 and p. 211.

British Economic Expansion in South Africa

(Trade figures in quinquennial annual averages and millions of pounds sterling, emigrants in thousands, investments as notional in millions of pds.)

Imports	1865-69: 3	1880-84: 6	1890-94: 11	1909-13: 19
Exports	1865-69: 2	1880-84: 6	1890-94: 8	1909-13: 16
Investment	1870: —	1885: 34	1900: 200?	1911: 351
Emigration	1870: —	1885: 3	1891-95: 10	1911: 31

Africa was thrust on to the same economic basis as the relatively developed capitalist metropolis. Without any doubt, the crucial empirical circumstance affecting the appearance of the capitalist exploitation system in South Africa, was the presence of a large body of tribal Africans with great potentiality as a very cheap supply of labour for the mines.¹⁴

Now according to Marx (above), in order to reveal the "hidden basis of the entire social structure" of a specific society, we must analyse "the direct relationship of the owners of the conditions of production to the direct producers", i.e., the production relations. In South Africa, large-scale capitalist production was first established in the mining industry in the late 1800s, and since the economy remained primarily engaged in the production of gold and other minerals up until the 1940s, mining production relations determined all other industrial production relations, as well as the specific form of the State. Therefore, it is necessary to analyse the relations of production which the mining capitalists found to be most suitable for pumping surplus-value out of labour, given the special South African circumstances. We refer to the Interim Report of the Low Grade Mines Commission, 1919, for a detailed description of production relations in the gold mines.

The White miner is the first to enter his working place in the morning. His last act on the previous shift was to light up his fuses for blasting, and it is now his duty to see that the place is safe enough for his gang to work in before letting them commence their tasks. He enters with a few natives, dresses down pieces of rock which might fall and endanger life and limb, and generally makes the place secure. . . . He then admits the remainder of the natives, points out the position and direction of the holes to be drilled, assists in the rigging up of machine drills, and gets the work well underway. . .

Notional Figures of Investment in Southern Africa: 1880-1913 (including Rhodesia and in millions of pounds sterling)

	Public Debt	Diamond Mining	Gold Mines (Wits.)	Total British listed capital
1875	3.9			
1880	12.5	2.5		
1881		10.5		34
1885	25.3			
1887		23.4		
1890	30.8		22.6	
1895	34.5		41.9	
1900			77.4	230
1905	100.0		104.3	
1913				370.2

14 Arghiri Emmanuel, *Unequal Exchange: A Study of the Imperialism of Trade* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972), p. 371. "Among Britain's five colonies of settlement, there is a notable exception: South Africa. With resources just as rich and a climate just as healthy as the other four, with settlers of the same stock, linked with the same source of capital and same financial and commercial networks, South Africa has only succeeded in becoming a semi-developed country. One factor alone was different here, namely the fate to which the native inhabitants were subjected. Instead of being exterminated, as happened in other colonies, they were relegated to the ghettos of Apartheid, while still being employed as workers. The result has been that, despite the high wages of the white workers, the average rate of wages in South Africa has remained far below that prevailing in other colonies of settlement."

When he feels he can safely leave the natives to continue their tasks, he proceeds to the place where his explosives are stored, prepares his cartridges, fuse and detonators for blasting, returns to the working place to see the finish of the process of drilling, fetches his explosives, sends the natives out, charges up his holes, places guards to prevent persons entering by mistake, lights up his fuses, either in person or by means of natives acting under his immediate eye, and proceeds up the shaft to be hoisted to the surface. The natives in his gang will have rigged up the machine drills, done the drilling and shovelled the rock, broken by the previous day's blast, to the bottom of the slope to be transferred to the trucks, and generally done all or nearly all the manual work required. . . .

The white trammer, waste packer and timberman, similarly will do the supervision of the native's work, lending a hand where required and being generally responsible for the safety of the native. . . . There is a good deal of elasticity in the extent to which native labour is utilized in the actual operations to be carried out. One white man will do a good deal of the manual work himself, where another would content himself with directing.

One principle is, however, practically universally observed and that is that every native or coloured person has to work under the supervision of a White man who is not an official. A shift boss, for example, is not permitted to set a half-a-dozen natives on any job, such as tramping or shovelling, but must place them in charge of some White man, who is responsible for their safety and for the due performance of their work. This restriction is due primarily to custom and partly to mining regulations which, although primarily intended for the preservation of safety, have in course of time come to be regarded by White workers as their bulwark against the demand of the natives to be allowed to do work now only entrusted to whites. Those regulations and customary restrictions constitute what is generally known as the 'colour bar'. . . .¹⁵ (Author's emphasis.)

Commenting on the role of white labour in the gold-mines, de Kiewiet writes that: "They [white miners] did not become miners in the Australian or Canadian sense of the word, but a group of highly paid overseers superintending a great mass of unskilled and low-paid black labour."¹⁶ And after a short visit to South Africa in 1899, J. A. Hobson concluded that: "The fact is, that South Africa is not in any true sense a white man's country, for though white men live there, they do not work there save in the capacity of overseers of serf labour."¹⁷ In short, the production relations in the mining industry are characterized by capitalist ownership (control) of the means of

15 Ralph Horwitz, *The Political Economy of South Africa* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967), pp. 179-180.

16 C. W. de Kiewiet, *A History of South Africa* (Oxford University Press, 1957), p. 212.

17 J. A. Hobson, *The War in South Africa* (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1900), p. 294. On page 293 he writes that: "We must look forward to a continuance of present absolute social cleavage between blacks and whites, and to the maintenance of existing divisions of economic functions. Manual work has become a badge of shame for white men, because it puts them on a level with the Kaffir (African): wherever working conditions are such that white must co-operate with black, the former is soon seen to have shifted what is arduous, monotonous, or disagreeable onto the back of the latter, and to have made a 'servant' of him. Some skilled manual labour in mining, building or manufacturing trades is done by whites, but all told it amounts to very little, and most of it which lies outside the range of Zulus, Fingoes, and other more educable Kaffirs, is shifted on to Cape boys and other 'coloured' or half-breed men."

production, and a small group of white foremen and skilled wage labourers who oversee a great mass of unskilled and semi-skilled African workers. Applying the theoretical tools developed in the earlier section, we can immediately recognize the contradictory role played by the white wage labourers in the production process.¹⁸ White skilled labourers and foremen command in the name of 'white' capital, and this special function within production places them in a special position with respect to the African workers they supervise. Marx (above) says that by uncovering the relation of production we reveal the "innermost" secret of a society, since "the entire formation of the economic community . . . grows up out of the production relations themselves [and] simultaneously its specific political form". The production relations in South Africa were in essence exploitation of black labour-power by 'white' capital assisted by a special squad of white wage earning supervisors. And it is this inter-relationship which has been the basis of the entire South African social structure since the advent of large-scale capitalist production in the late nineteenth century.

Class Relations

An understanding of the class struggle requires careful study of relations of production. Given the particular relations of production in the South African mining industry, we can objectively define the classes of the three interacting groups. We have the comprador bourgeoisie representing foreign monopoly capital, directly antagonistic to the African working class, and a group of non-working class, white, wage labourers with a special role in the production process. This last group, commonly and falsely referred to as the "white working class", is the focal point of our investigation. An investigation of the white foreman requires an analysis of this group's relationship to 'white' capital and black labour on an economic, political and ideological plane. And since the capitalist controls the production process and its corresponding political and ideological aspects, we shall begin with an analysis of the *capitalist-supervisor* relationship.

The goal of the capitalist was simply to exploit the vast gold deposits by means of the subjugated African's labour-power, and the missing element in the South African exploitation scheme was the intermediate group of skilled workers. This group was conveniently recruited in Britain with the promise of high wages from the South African Eldorado. But the use of British immigrant mining engineers and artisans fulfilled more than one goal for the capitalists: the purely functional purpose, as a ready supply of necessary skilled labour, and the strategic purpose, as a pro-British (jingo) pressure group against the Boer Republican Government that administered the gold-

18 H. J. and R. E. Simons, *Class and Colour in South Africa, 1850-1950* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), pp. 276-7. They write that "A closer analysis might have persuaded them [the white communists] that his interests [the white worker's] and those of the African [worker] were incompatible, or contradictory in the Marxist sense. The social basis of class consciousness was smaller in white workers than the communists supposed. White miners were both contractors and wage earners, exploiters as well as exploited."

rich Transvaal; and to increase the white:black population ratio. The mining capitalists had hoped to keep their white, skilled labourers in a 'vulnerable' position so as to ensure their absolute control over production. This meant that the white wage-earners' organizations were not initially recognized by the capitalists, and those who attempted to form trade unions were victimized. But British, immigrant, skilled labourers had brought their class consciousness to South Africa and all capitalist efforts to prevent their trade unionization failed. However, it took the white labourers until the early 1920s to consolidate their position as a permanent and protected group of skilled labourers and supervisors in South African mining production.¹⁹ The mining capitalists recognized the importance of a group of 'satisfied' white supervisors who would command the African workers on their behalf. But they tried to keep their "sergeants" in a weak position so that in times of crisis they could reduce their wages, dismiss the 'inefficient' and force the remainder to supervise a larger number of African workers per man.²⁰ It was against this 'vulnerability' that the white supervisors fought, successfully entrenching their role as unassailable supervisors of black labour and obtaining legal recognition of the 'colour bar' in the Mines and Works Amendment Act of 1926. It is of crucial importance to note that at no time did the ruling capitalist class ever consider even the partial replacement of their white supervisors with cheaper black supervisors, i.e., the formation of a multi-racial group of skilled labourers and supervisors. The maintenance of a whites-only supervisory group was fundamental to the colonial structure of exploitation, which aimed to keep the black working class in a state of permanent submission.²¹ Most of all, the capitalists feared the development of class consciousness amongst their mentally and physically enslaved African workers. And, only by walling-off the African proletariat from the white supervisors, could they retard the growth of African class consciousness and trade unionism which so greatly threatened the exploitation system.

The *white supervisor-black worker* relationship can only be understood if seen in the shadow of the capitalist ruling class in which it stood. As we have stated, the capitalists had placed the white wage-earners in a functionally contradictory position in the production process. They both contributed to the production of surplus-value and acted as supervisors of the exploited

19 Ibid., pp. 200 and 327.

20 Horwitz, *The Political Economy of South Africa*, op. cit., p. 182. The white miners' strike in 1922 was a direct consequence of the Chamber of Mines' attempt to modify the "Status Quo Agreement" on the ratio of black to white workers.

21 Endre Sik, *The History of Black Africa* (Budapest: Akademiai Kiado, 1966), Vol 2, pp. 146-7. Referring to the 1922 period, he writes that: "They [the mine owners] were very well aware that they had no way of making any substantial changes in the existing 'colour bar' system without destroying the ground work of their political domination—the compromise between British big capital and Boer big landowners based upon the super-exploitation of the African masses in both industry and agriculture. Suppression of the 'colour bar' would have meant freeing the way for Africans to skilled and semi-skilled jobs, that is, starting the transition of industry from the system of exploitation based on servile labour to the 'free' capitalist system of the hiring of manpower, and this transition in turn would, of necessity, have shattered the agricultural system of exploitation of African labour resting on veiled slavery."

African proletariat, the latter aspect of their function was determinate with respect to their class, i.e., they were not a part of the working class. It is not surprising, therefore, that in the period of white labour's struggle to consolidate their elite position, (1880s-1920s), they did not regard African workers as class comrades, but rather as their worst enemies, presenting a constant 'threat' to their supervisory and technical monopoly.²² This 'threat' was skilfully manipulated by the ruling capitalists, whose interests principally coincided with the white labourers' i.e., to maintain the colonial structure, but who also wanted to exercise control over both white wage labourers and black working class. Thus, the 'vulnerable' whites were, in times of low profitability, threatened with a reduction of their numbers relative to the number of Africans employed. Nor are we surprised to find that the representatives of African opinion viewed the white wage labourers as the greatest obstacle to African industrial advancement.²³ This too was manipulated by the ruling class, who tried to appear as the benevolent employer whose good intentions towards the Africans were being hamstrung by the rebellious, reactionary white labourers.

Distribution Relations

The so-called distribution relations, then, correspond to and arise from historically determined specific social forms of the process of production and mutual relations entered into by men in the reproduction process of human life. The historical character of these distribution relations, is the historical character of production relations, of which they express merely one aspect.²⁴

We shall now look at the distribution of social wealth which essentially coincides with the production relations in the South African mining industry. The lion's share of the wealth, of course, went to the ruling capitalists,²⁵ but of particular interest is the distribution of wages between the special white, wage-earning functionaries of capital and the African working class. The exceptionally wide wage spread between skilled and unskilled labour initially established in the mines, had its basis in the historically different 'values of labour power' for skilled immigrant whites and unskilled tribal Africans.²⁶ However, this wage relationship, which was historically determined, became rigid on account of the rigidification of the underlying production relations,

22 Simons, *Class and Colour in South Africa*, op. cit., p. 173.

23 Ibid., p. 317.

24 Marx, *Capital*, op. cit., Vol. 3, p. 883.

25 Horwitz, *The Political Economy of South Africa*, op. cit., p. 214. "Broadly speaking... the Rand [gold-mines] absorbed some £200,000,000 of capital until the end of 1932... The total value of gold output for the same period, 1887 to 1932, was £1,145,000,000 with a total dividend payment for the period of £225,000,000."

26 Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1, pp. 167-168. "... the value of labour power is the value of the means of subsistence necessary for the maintenance of the labourer... the number and extent of his so-called necessary wants, as also the modes of satisfying them, are themselves the product of historical development, and depend therefore to a great extent on the degree of civilization of a country, more particularly on the conditions under which, and consequently on the habits and degree of comfort in which, the class of free labourers has been formed. In contradistinction therefore to the case of other commodities, there enters into the determination of the value of labour-power a historical and moral element."

i.e., the colour bar. In 1911, there were 24,700 whites and 190,000 Africans employed in the gold-mines.²⁷ On the average whites earned R666 per annum, and the Africans R57 p.a., the earnings gap ratio between white and black labour being 11.7:1.²⁸ Whereas white wages had been rising between 1889 and 1911, African wages had declined from R78 p.a. to R57 p.a. in the same period.²⁹ The monopoly capitalists had forced down the wages paid to the African working class by means of monopolistic wage fixing agreements³⁰ and the formation of a central recruitment organization for all African mine labour.³¹ Thus, competition between mining capitalists for African labour was halted, and consequently the wages of the defenceless workers could be substantially reduced to that level of impoverishment which would guarantee a steady supply of 'willing' workers from the rural areas. True to Marxist theory that the distribution of social wealth corresponds to the relations of production established in the mining industry, capital's white functionaries were well rewarded³² for their service as overseers of the shackled African proletariat.

Political Relations

Another aspect growing up simultaneously out of the production relations is the specific political form of the South African society. During the 1830-1870 period of British colonialism, priority was given to domestic accumulation of capital, and this led to a policy of abandonment of the colonial financial burden and a liberal distribution of political power to the colonies. The British Colonial Office forced a liberal political policy³³ on to the Cape colonists, by instituting a non-racial qualified franchise in 1854 when they granted it representative government. But, with the rise of monopoly capitalism and the aggressive imperialist policy in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and the transfer of pure capitalist production relations to South

27 Frances Wilson, *Labour in South African Gold Mines, 1911-1969* (Cambridge University Press, 1972), p. 157.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 46.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 45.

30 Horwitz, *The Political Economy of South Africa*, op. cit., p. 27.

31 *Ibid.*, pp. 26-27.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 169.

Index Numbers of Money Wages of Skilled Artisans, 1913

Johannesburg, S.A. ...	100	Germany	26
South Africa (other) ...	80	Belgium	20
England and Wales ...	31	U.S.A.	72
France	23	Australia	60
New Zealand	58		

33 Lord Oliver, *White Capital and Coloured Labour* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1929), pp. 54-55. Describing the mid-Victorian colonial policy, he writes: "There followed the second period of colonial policy, that of Liberal Colonialism, ... whilst during the following half-century Britain especially, being most active in suppressing the slave-trade and earnestly libertarian in temper, acquired a special repute as the friend of African peoples. It became an axiom that wherever the British flag flew, there liberty, equality and justice were guaranteed to all races and all colours. For two generations (1830-1880) the policy of the British Colonial Office was resolutely and aggressively liberal, establishing these principles even in the Cape Colony in the face of the sullen obstruction of the inheritance of the slave regime."

Africa, an inevitable shift from the official liberal political policy took place.³⁴

The specific production relations in the mining industry were based on a racial barrier between the white supervisors and the enslaved African proletariat. The corresponding political form of this specific relationship was the granting of political rights to capital's white functionaries, and the denial of political rights to the African workers.³⁵ Accordingly, when the British imperialists relinquished their political hold over South Africa in 1910, they placed all the political power firmly in the hands of the white colonists, and left the Africans as powerless in the political sphere as they were in the economic sphere. The white wage labourers inevitably used their political gift from the capitalists to firmly entrench their skill and supervisory monopoly and to uphold white political supremacy.

Ideological Relations

The ideological aspect growing out of the specific production relations also shifted with the revival of British capital's interest in South Africa. For, just as large-scale, capitalist exploitation of black labour necessitated the revocation of the liberal non-racial franchise, so too, earlier ideological liberalism had to be revised. In 1894 the Glen Gray Act was passed at the Cape, marking the official change in 'Native' policy. Whereas the previous liberal policy had regarded the Africans as 'civilizable', i.e., potentially equal, the new policy of segregation stressed the non-assimilability of the Africans into the 'civilized' white society. By trying to retard the cultural assimilation of the African people, the mining capitalists hoped to keep the black workers docile and prevent the inevitable development of their class and national consciousness. The deliberate shift to a racist ideology aimed to inferiorize the African workers and superiorize the white overseers,³⁶ thereby entrenching the 'natural' master-servant relationship between racially 'inferior' blacks and racially 'superior' whites. It is important to stress that the shift away from the political and ideological liberalism practised at the Cape in the mid-nineteenth century corresponded to the establishment of capitalist production relations in the late 1800s, and had little to do with pressure from

34 *Ibid.*, p. 56. "Those, however, with historical colonial knowledge, who were in touch with the facts at the time, realized quite clearly and with concern that about 1890 British colonial policy was breaking away from its traditional principles, founded not only on axioms of Western civilization, but on the results of a century of experience in our older mixed communities, and selling the national soul to the exigencies of the new enterprise of capitalised exploitation which inspired the Partition of Africa. European enterprise was once more, as in the slavery period, being deliberately launched into a direct confrontation of white with black, the white seeking the black as a labourer and a labourer only."

35 Simons, *Class and Colour in South Africa*, op. cit., p. 192.

36 de Kiewiet, *A History of South Africa*, op. cit., p. 212. "Thus in the labour organization of the mines there developed the sharpest differences between skill and the lack of skill. And these differences corresponded so exactly to the inbred attitudes of the country towards race that race and colour became more than ever before the badge of economic status. Racial inferiority was held to be sufficient proof of economic incompetence. More unambiguously yet did unskilled work and Kaffir (African) work become synonymous terms."

the racially intolerant Boers.³⁷ The British imperialists controlled South Africa economically, politically and ideologically, and were not in the habit of granting concessions to the Boers, as the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902), so well demonstrated. So the fact that the ruling British shifted towards a racist policy, and thereby resembled the Boer racial sentiment, must not be confused with a 'policy of conciliation towards the Boers', but must be clearly seen as the necessary alignment of the political and ideological structures with the underlying capitalist production relations.

General Production Relations

Up to now we have been concerned with the capitalist production relations established in the mining industry in the 1886-1920 period. We now briefly examine the production relations prevailing in the manufacturing and construction industries, and more recent mining production relations. These relations were described, as follows, by Tingsten in the 1950s: "Nearly 350,000 whites work in industry, mining or building where practically all of them are foremen or highly paid skilled workers."³⁸ The 'colour bar', i.e., white skilled labourers and supervisors and black semi-skilled and unskilled workers, laid in the mining industry was the foundation stone for a similar 'colour bar' in the manufacturing and construction industries.³⁹ These latter industries experienced tremendous growth in the war years (1940-1945) overtaking the mining industries' production value, and continuing to expand in the 1950s and 1960s. By reference to the following two tables one is able to piece together the present state of production relations in South African industry.⁴⁰

Table 1. LEVEL OF SKILLS OF WHITE AND AFRICAN INDUSTRIAL EMPLOYEES IN 1955⁴¹

	Skilled	Semi-skilled	Unskilled	Total
Whites	86.1	12.7	1.2	100
Africans	4.6	15.4	80.0	100

37 The Boer Republics had never permitted racial equality in the State or Church.

38 Herbert Tingsten, *The Problem of South Africa* (London: Gollancz, 1955), p. 58.

39 Wilson, *Labour in South African Gold Mines, 1911-1969*, op. cit., p. 13. "In the years that followed [post-1948] the four features which had been built into the structure of the South African labour market by the development of the gold mining industry, became, as we shall see, yet more firmly entrenched. Indeed, for their labour policy in all sectors of the economy, the architects of Apartheid have taken the gold mining industry as their model."

40 Since we have excluded Coloured and Indian labourers in the discussion so far, we prefer not to introduce this complicating factor now. However, it should be noted that Coloured and Indian workers represented 15% (330,000) of the total industrial work force in 1970. They work mainly as semi-skilled and unskilled labourers in the manufacturing and construction industries, and their wages amount to about a quarter of white wages in manufacturing and a third in construction. These workers are paid slightly better wages than their fellow African workers. This wage differential is used by the capitalists to create and maintain division in the Coloured working class of South Africa.

41 Muriel Horrel, *A Survey of Race Relations* (Johannesburg: S.A.I.R.R., 1957) pp. 176-77.

In Table 1 we observe that as a whole the white labourers are skilled, i.e., supervisors, technicians, artisans and foremen, while the African workers are the manual workers under white authority. Notably, we view the white labourers as a 'whole'. It is quite true that in the 1920s and 1930s a sizeable part of the white labour force was neither skilled nor in a supervisory capacity. However, the 'civilized labour policy' undertaken by the capitalist State, subsidized white labourers and at no time permitted them to sink into the ranks of the African proletariat. State intervention saved the colour bar from the eroding effects of the market forces, i.e., white and black labour never became equals on the same production line, a necessary prerequisite for multiracial, working class consciousness. Thus, the white labourers remained a homogeneous group; their political and ideological similarity unified them, while it simultaneously separated them from the rest of the labouring population.

Table 2. INDUSTRIAL EMPLOYEES: WAGES IN 1969 AND NUMBERS IN 1970⁴²

Industry	WHITES			AFRICANS			
	No. Employed	% of Total empld.	Wages in Rs p. mth.	No. Employed	% of total empld.	Wages in Rs p. mth.	Earnings Gap Ratio W:A
Mining and Quarrying	62,500	9	325	607,500	90	17	19:1
Manufacturing	277,500	24	276	616,000	53	49	5.6:1
Construction	59,400	17	303	246,300	69	46	6.6:1
Total	<u>399,400</u>	<u>18</u>		<u>1,469,800</u>	<u>67</u>		

In recent years the 'colour bar' has been allowed to float upwards, i.e., the maintenance of blacks subordinate to white authority, placing even more whites in the skilled and supervisory jobs, and permitting African workers to perform more semi-skilled jobs.⁴³

In Table 2 we observe that the enormous wage differential between skilled white and manual black labourers, which corresponds to the white supervisor-black worker production relations, has been maintained in all sectors of the economy,⁴⁴ and that the whites account for the top 18% of the industrial workforce and the Africans the bottom 67%.

42 Alex Hepple, *South Africa: Workers Under Apartheid*, An International Defence and Aid Pamphlet, London, 1971, pp. 12 and 51.

43 R. First, J. Steel and C. Gurney, *The South African Connection* (London: Temple Smith, 1972), pp. 59-80.

44 The migrant labour system in the mines made it possible for the mining capitalists to pay considerably lower wages than those paid to Africans in the manufacturing and construction industries.

CONCLUSIONS

In a recent study,⁴⁵ we find an attempt to demonstrate the existence of an authentic white labour aristocracy in South Africa. But, the author's zealotry to discover the objective (scientific) basis for the historically reactionary, white labour politics has led him to apply a novel, but grossly economistic, analytic approach. He writes that:

But if some indication of the detachment of white workers from the bulk of the South African proletariat, and their alliance with the settler bourgeoisie, emerges from our analysis of employment and job status, the conclusive evidence of their present politico-economic position lies in their peculiar income situation. For it is clear that a section of the labour-force will tend to become most fully tied to the bourgeoisie when it benefits from the extraction of surplus value, in other words when it participates in the exploitation of the majority of the working class.⁴⁶

The wage differential approach ignores the fact that the wage itself is a consequence of the historically determined production relations.⁴⁷

This paper, on the other hand, presents an application of Marxist class theory to the capitalist production system which arose in South Africa in the late nineteenth century. By closely analysing the relations of production, particularly the relationship between white and black wage labourers, we have revealed not only the basis of income distribution, but also the hidden basis of the society's political and ideological superstructure. By objectively defining the class of the white labourers as nonworking class on account of its authoritative role on the production front, we have discovered the scientific basis for the historically anti-proletarian political behaviour of the white labourers in the class struggle. White labour vehemently opposed the interests of the African proletariat, joining into a 'pact' Government with white farming capital in 1924, and forming the urban backbone of the fascist movement which gained political power in 1948.⁴⁸ The African proletariat has received nothing but 'kicks and blows' from its white overseers, on the production line and in the political arena.

Marxist class analysis also provides vital information on which to base alliances between the working class and other popular classes in the class struggle. In the other words of Mao Tse-Tung, class analysis enables us to make the crucial distinction as to: "Who are our enemies? Who are our friends?" He writes that:

This is a question of the first importance for the revolution. The basic reason why all previous revolutionary struggles in China achieved so little was their failure to unite with real friends in order to attack real enemies. A revolutionary party is the guide of the masses, and no revolution ever succeeds when the revolutionary party leads them astray.⁴⁹

45 Robert Davies, "The White Working Class in South Africa," *New Left Review*, No. 82 (November-December, 1973), pp. 38-59.

46 *Ibid.*, p. 49.

47 For Lenin's definition of class, see footnote 1.

48 For an analysis of fascism in South Africa, I refer the reader to my article so entitled in *The African Review*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (1973).

49 Mao Tse-Tung, *Analysis of the Classes in Chinese Society* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1965), p. 1.

The South African Communist Party based its alliances on the analysis known as: "The South African Question", the 1928 Resolution adopted by the Executive Committee of the Communist International. This analysis fails to perceive the contradiction between the authoritative role of the white labourers in the production process, and the subordination of the African working class. Consequently, they come to an erroneous policy of alliance, and state that:

The Communist Party must continue to struggle for unity between black and white workers and not confine itself merely to the advocacy of 'co-operation' between blacks and whites in general. The Communist Party must introduce a correct class content into the idea of co-operation between the blacks and the whites. It must explain to the native masses that the black and white workers are not only allies, but are the leaders of the revolutionary struggle of the native masses against the white bourgeoisie and British imperialism.⁵⁰

According to the class analysis presented in this paper, the idea of unification of the black and white labourers, proposed by the Communist Party, directly contradicts the analysis of production relations, which clearly shows that the objective interests of the white labourers and black workers are contradictory. By revealing the dominance of this basic contradiction we simultaneously explode the myth of the white working class.

50 A. Lerumo, *Fifty Fighting Years* (London: Inkululeko Publications, 1971), p. 130.