LIBERALISM AND SEGREGATION REVISITED

by

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The relationship between liberal thought, capitalism and the development of segregationist policies in South Africa was first outlined by Martin Legassick in a series of three unpublished but highly acclaimed seminar papers.[1] His ideas have subsequently been developed by a number of other writers, most notably Paul Rich and J W Cell.[2] Legassick's work was intended as an explicit challenge to the liberal assumption that apartheid is incompatible with economic growth and that the existence of racist ideas represents a "hangover" of archaic forms of thought. In arguing that the processes of segregation and industrialization are inextricably linked, Legassick forwards two important propositions: first, the notion that liberal segregationists were directly engaged in elaborating policies designed actively to promote capitalist development in South Africa, and, second, the idea that white liberals, by acting as agents of "social control" rather than as a force for "beneficial reform", helped to secure the conditions for capitalism's long-term reproduction.[3] These propositions, though closely associated, are different in important respects, and Legassick is not always clear which one it is that he adheres to. With this in mind, my intention in this paper is to explore the interaction of liberalism, segregation, and capitalist industrialization. Finally, I suggest that the concept of "social control" requires refining.

A strong case can be made for the argument that liberal social theorists like Howard Pim, Edgar Brookes and Charles T Loram played an important role in the elaboration of segregationist ideology.[4] These writers were vitally concerned to advance a theory of territorial segregation as a solution to South Africa's "native question". They sought to establish a comprehensive policy which, by humanizing the nature of white domination and facilitating African "advancement", would avert any serious challenge to white supremacy. It may be objected that, in suggesting such schemes, they were not liberals at all and might better be described as (say) "benevolent paternalists". However, the writers and activists with whom we are concerned clearly identified themselves as forming part of the South African liberal tradition. Moreover, they played key roles in liberal organizations like the South African Institute of Race Relations during the inter-war years. On these grounds alone they may therefore be referred to as such.

The theorists of segregation were, above all, responding to the pattern of South Africa's process of industrialization. They were greatly alarmed by the declining ability of the reserves to feed their populations, the dissolution of "tribal" bonds, the rapid migration of African men and women into the cities, and the emergence of a politically conscious industrial proletariat. These fears were underscored in the immediate post-World War One era by such events as the formation of the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union in 1919, the 1920 Mineworkers' Strike, the Bulhoek rising of 1921, and the massacre of the Bondelswarts in 1922. In this context segregation was conceived of as a defensive strategy which would permit the development of capitalist industrialization in South Africa while containing the vast social forces unleashed by that process.

Liberal segregationists were concerned to distance themselves from the species of <u>laissez faire</u>, universalist liberalism which they associated with the mid-Victorian missionaries and politicians of the Cape Colony. This represented a shift away from earlier concerns with common citizenship and individual equality before the law, to a consideration of just ways in which to administer the indigenous African population. The understanding of the "new" liberals was informed

by the British colonial experience as well as early experiments in indirect rule and trusteeship. The history of Jim Crow legislation in the American South and a direct acquaintance with the ideas of Booker T Washington convinced them that "social differentiation" was a natural human state. Africans, they concluded, were ideally suited to a rural existence, where they could aim at achieving agricultural self-sufficiency while being shielded from the harsh and corrupting influences of "industrialism". The prevalence of eugenist notions about the dangers of "miscegenation" and the inevitable "degeneration" of black and white races in the industrial context persuaded many observers of the need to prevent direct competition for jobs as far as possible and to preserve "racial purity".

Liberal segregationists participated closely in the development of social anthropology as an academic subject during the 1920s. Their confident belief in the efficacy of positivist science led them to trust in the advice of "experts" as a means of solving complex social problems. Anthropology's recognition of the essential worth of traditional "tribal" structures lent credence to the idea that "civilisation" was not a universally transmissable quality. A "scientific" study of the distinctiveness of "native mentality" promised to disclose solutions to the "native question". The pluralist and relativist notion of "culture" seemed to transcend the evolutionist assumptions of both the Victorian "civilising thesis" (which envisaged a universal, upward progression of "primitive" peoples from a state of "barbarous") as well as social Darwinist theories (which assumed the existence of an innate and immutable racial hierarchy). Segregation was therefore seen as a viable and humane means by which to encourage the development of diverse "cultures" along the lines of their "natural advance".

Segregation, it was constantly stressed, was a pragmatic, moderate and flexible policy, designed to transcend the diametrically opposed positions represented by "Repressionists" and "Equalists".[5] According to Edgar Brookes, segregation was the natural "way out between the Scylla of identity and the Charybdis of subordination".[6] The idea that segregation was a workable compromise between two unpalatable alternatives ("identity" as associated with the nineteenth century Cape, and "subordination" as represented by the Boer republics and to some extent Natal), is a constantly recurring theme in liberal thought.[7] Its portrayal in these terms laid the ground for segregation's emergence as a hegemonic or consensus ideology within white South Africa. The very flexibility of segregationist discourse added to its attractiveness. It provided a ready vocabulary which, when taken up by leading politicians, spoke to different interests within the dominant classes: to farmers, segregation meant a ready supply and even distribution of cheap labour; capitalists were reassured that the system of migrant labour on which they had come to depend would remain undisturbed; white workers hoped that segregation would protect them from competition in the job market. Africans were also drawn into the language of segregation by promises of more land and the restoration of traditional forms of authority. Segregation resonated with the growing spirit of Africanist separatism of the 1920s and the increasing struggle to defend communal resources.

II

In the period before 1925 (the year in which General Hertzog outlined his "Native Bills" at Smithfield), liberal theorists helped to define the "native question" and to invest segregationist discourse with a much needed vocabulary. There is even evidence of direct collusion between Hertzog and key liberal thinkers. According to John Cell, C T Loram not only supported Hertzog's segregationist programme but also helped him to draft speeches in its defence.[8] In private, Loram claimed to have written the Smithfield speech himself.[9] A W Roberts, a colleague of Loram's on the Native Affairs Commission and ex-teacher at Lovedale Institution, also seems to have had a hand in the process. At Hertzog's request, he wrote a lengthy memorandum with the cumbersome title "Certain Reflections on the Existence of a Native People in South Africa, and of the Need for a Clear Policy in Dealing with Them". This document was submitted just a few months before the Smithfield speech, and maintained that "the ideal arrangement would be to have territorial segregation, with economic segregation only as far as possible".[10]

Edgar Brookes's early support for Hertzog is widely known, as is his renunciation of segregation after 1927-28. Publication of Brookes' segregationist manifesto, The History of Native Policy, was personally arranged by Hertzog. The Prime Minister greeted Brookes' manuscript with "immense pleasure" and wrote him an enthusiastic letter expressing "the perfect harmony of views and sentiments between you and me on this momentous question".[11] For a short period Brookes became known as one of the key interpreters of segregation. The Cape Times suggested that he might be "a John the Baptist who is making straight the way for the Prime Minister ..."[12]

Howard Pim was another liberal figure involved in the conception of territorial segregation. His 1905 address to the British Association, in which he argued for a reserve-based policy of segregation, attracted the enthusiastic attention of contemporary officials and opinion-makers.[13] As late as 1925-26 Pim was committed to an alteration in the non-racial Cape franchise and the need to secure additional areas for African occupation in terms of the 1913 Land Act. The only point on which he departed from Hertzog's Smithfield proposals in any significant respect was his opposition to the institution of a statutory industrial colour bar.[14]

Hertzog was able to draw on liberal support because of the belief that he was most effectively placed to carry out a comprehensive solution of the "native question" and that his personal intentions were honourable and benign. If some liberal segregationists harboured misgivings about the 1926 colour bar or the abolition of the Cape Franchise, these were suppressed for the moment. They continued to believe that the progressive elements of the Smithfield proposals could only be strengthened by supporting the Prime Minister. However, by about 1927-28 there was marked liberal disillusionment with the whole idea of segregation. Legassick characterizes this period as the first significant breach in thinking on "native policy" since Union; it represented "the birth of modern South African liberalism reconnecting with its antecedents in the Cape".[15]

Brookes' recantation after 1927 was the most public expression of this process. In 1926 he was still advocating Hertzogite policies ("with certain amendments") as an expression of "wise and moderate liberalism".[16] But in October he asked for a private interview with Hertzog and submitted a memorandum which included detailed amendments to the "Native Bills". Though he did not yet attack the principle of segregation as a whole, it is evident that the lack of political representation for "detribalised" and "educated" Africans, "like my friend Professor Jabavu", had begun to prey heavily on his conscience.[17] Other former advocates of segregation changed their views at about the same time. In his keynote address to the 1927 European-Bantu Conference, Howard Pim argued that the reserve system "had been shattered and it could not be rebuilt". To astonished cries of "No", he was reported as saying that segregation was quite impossible "except under conditions of slavery".[18] Two years later Pim declared himself a "convinced believer in the principle enunciated by Mr Rhodes of equal rights for all civilised men".[19] This marked a conscious re-identification on his part with the principle of common citizenship and the idealized liberal values associated with the nineteenth-century Cape.

In accounting for the liberal break with segregation, the 1926 Colour Bar Act, the 1927 Native Administration Act and the failure to implement fully the provisions of Smuts's 1920 Native Affairs Act were significant. The palpable hardening of political debate following the publication of Hertzog's "Native Bills" in 1926 was a further contributory factor. Also important was the pressure exerted upon white liberals by African members of the Joint Council movement and delegates to the 1923 and 1927 "European-Bantu" conferences. But something more was required to weld these misgivings into a coherent, theoretical critique of segregation's fundamental assumptions. This emerged from within the liberal intellectual paradigm itself, in the form of an entire reformulation of the economic basis of segregation and its relationship to industrialization.

It is primarily to the historian W M Macmillan and his student, S H Frankel, that we should look in this regard. By the early 1920s Macmillan came to realize that the plight of poor whites and poor blacks was essentially linked. His path-breaking investigation into agrarian conditions led him to the realization that the South African political economy was a complex, interdependent whole. The economy of the reserves was integrally dependent on that of industry; it was, therefore, meaningless to talk about separate or differential developments.[20] Macmillan's insights were elaborated on and set within a more rigorous framework by the economist S H Frankel. From 1926 Frankel was explicitly critical of those (like Edgar Brookes) who spoke of "economic aspects of the Native Problem": that problem was merely "one aspect of South Africa's economic policy in general". Frankel reiterated Macmillan's argument that segregationist schemes were absurd "in the face of an outworn and economically unsound tribalism, appalling overcrowding, ignorance and poverty".[21] The essential interdependence of black and white in a unitary economy rendered segregation impossible.

The full implications of Macmillan's "economic school" were never fully accepted. Some liberals continued to believe in segregation as the best theoretical solution to the "native question", even if economic realities rendered it practically impossible. Nevertheless, the insights of Macmillan and Frankel played a decisive role in mainstream liberalism's rejection of segregation in its Hertzogite form. Macmillan's perception of the essential unity of the South African economy underlines what is perhaps segregation's dominant contradiction: its ideology was given material life as a result of fears arising from South Africa's rapid industrialization process; but the economic integration of black and white which industrialization entailed meant that separate development was no longer a feasible alternative.

III

In the decade between 1926 and 1936, the main focus of liberal political activity was directed towards opposing Hertzog's "Native Bills". In this regard the most important liberal organizations were the Joint Councils of Europeans and Natives, which were established in urban centres after 1921, and the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR), which was founded in 1929. Membership of the Joint Councils comprised prominent liberal professionals, African politicians, academics, churchmen, and welfare workers. Many of these individuals were closely tied into the international mission network which Richard Elphick has suggestively termed the "benevolent empire". The Joint Councils drew on the conservative ideology of moderation and gradual political reform championed especially by Booker T Washington in the American South. Their primary interest was in matters of social welfare, but they also attempted, by means of discussion and research, to "build bridges" between whites and blacks as well as to influence the direction of government policies. In the absence of statutory bodies which could mediate between whites and blacks, the politically centrist Joint Councils and the SAIRR occupied a unique position and they played a major role in co-ordinating opposition to the Segregation Bills.[22]

Until the late 1920s the Joint Councils appeared to evade the question of the non-racial franchise, hoping instead to win concessions on the land question. This involved campaigning for an extension of the reserves and promoting leasehold tenure in the released areas (along the model of crofter legislation in Scotland) in order to facilitate the emergence of an African yeoman peasantry. Increasingly, however, the issue of the franchise dominated political discussion, and on this matter the Joint Councils were highly equivocal. In 1927, the Pretoria Joint Council declared itself in favour of the principle of Hertzog's Representation Bill, provided that an adequate quid pro quo for the abolition of the Cape franchise was provided.[23] On the other hand, the Johannesburg Joint Council took the view that, while it was not in favour of differential political treatment for Africans, partial and differential representation might be necessary in the interim.[24]

As a general rule, the Joint Councils defended the existing Cape franchise on the grounds that Africans had never abused their voting rights, that there was no evidence to support the idea of a "native menace", and that the existence of the Cape franchise was widely regarded by Africans as the "touchstone" of good faith on

the part of whites.[25] However, they tended to shy away from active support of the franchise or of common citizenship. In 1928 the Johannesburg Joint Council took a more definite stand in favour of the non-racial franchise, with the publication of its pamphlet, In Defence of the Cape Franchise.[26] But, for those liberals who continued to argue as critics rather than opponents of segregation, this commitment was undermined in practice. W K Hancock observes that

> One of the most frequent arguments by which the defenders of the Cape franchise sought to ward off the attacks of its enemies was the argument that the franchise made no difference - and presumably would never be permitted to make any difference - to the political supremacy of the white population. A liberalism so lacking in self-confidence could not inspire a strong fighting spirit: in substance, it had capitulated to its enemies before the battle opened.[27]

Leading members of the Joint Councils and the SAIRR like Alfred Hoernle, Edgar Brookes and J D Rheinallt Jones were all amenable, at various times, to arriving at a compromise settlement on the "Native Bills". From 1928-29, the Joint Councils and the SAIRR maintained a public commitment to the maintenance of the Cape franchise, but in private reformism and accommodation were to the fore. There are many instances of this type of equivocation. For example, in 1928 J D Rheinallt Jones argued that, once the central principle of common citizenship was abandoned, "we are forced into a quagmire of difficulties". However, this statement was weakened by his qualification that the Cape franchise would be defended "until the country offers some other alternative that does not endanger the status of the Bantu people and the safety of the State".[28] Similarly, in 1930, Jones submitted a confidential memorandum to the Council movement in which he asserted that the central principle of a common franchise should be upheld until "the time is right" to put forward constructive alternatives.[29]

The willingness of the Joint Councils to concede the principle of the common franchise in return for a more equitable distribution of land between black and white underlined the fact that they continued to argue within the terms of segregationist discourse. The conservatism of the SAIRR and, in particular, Rheinallt Jones was condemned by more radical liberals like William Ballinger and Margaret Hodgson.[30] The SAIRR was also criticized by an older strand of liberal thinking represented by such organizations as the Non-Racial Franchise Association (NRFA) and the Cape Native Franchise Vigilance Committee. The NRFA was founded in 1929 by Sir James Rose Innes, J W Jagger, Henry Burton, and Sir Clarkson Tredgold. These ageing political grandees exemplified the remnants of what Stanley Trapido has referred to as the "great tradition" of Cape liberalism.[31] They were uncompromising supporters of common citizenship and resolutely upheld the principle of the non-racial franchise as an entrenched constitutional right, subject only to a "civilization test". Implicit in these ideas was the notion that classic liberal values constituted the best guarantee of social order. As J W Jagger pointed out (invoking a well known metaphor), "there is wisdom in providing a safety valve, in allowing a free outlet for the expression of opinion".[32]

The NRFA persistently criticized the South African Party's weak defence of the common franchise as well as the accommodationism of the SAIRR. Thus Rose Innes informed Rheinallt Jones in 1929 that it was impossible for him "at any stage of the struggle which is yet in sight to advise the Natives to make the best of things and save something out of the wreck". That time might come, but until then the wise course was to "stand upon the principle of no colour differentiation".[33] Notably, the NRFA was not a proponent of the universal franchise. It was fully prepared to raise the voting qualifications, should the widespread contemporary fears of black electoral domination prove real.[34] The NRFA's commitment to common citizenship should, therefore, not be seen as a mere sentimental attachment to Cape liberalism - as some of its critics often suggested. On the contrary, it was founded on a belief that the future stability of South Africa would be most effectively secured by the gradual political incorporation of an improving African elite.

IV

Drawing on Legassick, Shula Marks observes that segregation was "a set of policies specifically designed to cope with the strains of a society undergoing rapid industrialization".[35] This idea has won widespread academic acceptance. However, it leaves open the problem of how segregation and industrialization relate to each other. One interpretation seeks to emphasize the idea that segregationist policies were instrumental in the development of capitalism in South Africa. This is the clear implication of Wolpe's argument that segregation functioned to subsidize industry's labour costs by ensuring that the burden of the labour force's social reproduction was partly met by the pre-capitalist economies of the reserves.[36] Martin Lacey adopts a related version of this thesis, insisting that segregation was "not only compatible with economic growth but was designed as a coercive labour system geared to ensure capitalist profitability".[37]

A more subtle interpretation places emphasis on segregation as a political response to the impact of industrialization and the emergence of a politically conscious African proletariat. Legassick veers between these two views. At times he argues that liberal segregationists acted as agents of "social control" by deflecting and defusing the social conflict associated with capitalist industrialization. But at other moments he appears to commit himself to the idea that segregation was consciously adopted in order to promote capitalist development. Consider the following passage:

> the elaboration of the policy of 'segregation' was a specific and self-conscious attempt to formulate a 'native policy' appropriate to conditions of capitalist economic growth. And this not even in the 'weak' sense of preserving an existing social structure under new conditions, but rather in the 'strong' sense of elaborating a policy which would actually promote such growth in the specific conditions which existed in South Africa.[38]

The above passage concisely summarizes two distinct ways in which segregation may be said to have been **appropriate** to capitalist development. Yet, in his work Legassick tends to blur the distinction between these two meanings, as do other writers on the topic. My contention here is that the relationship between liberal segregationists and capitalist development can be meaningfully understood only in the **first** sense outlined by Legassick above, i.e. in the "weak"sense of preserving the existing social structure under the new conditions of South Africa's rapid industrialization process.

Howard Pim's paper to the 1905 meeting of the British Association is a case in point. His argument that the reserves should function as "sanitoria" where labour might be recruited without cost to the white community has been furnished as evidence of the validity of Wolpe's reserve-subsidy thesis.[39] On closer inspection, however, this emphasis appears to be misplaced. Pim's advocacy of a reserve-based policy of segregation was not, in the first instance, a manifesto for the procurement of cheap labour. His primary concern was with the maintenance of social discipline and control which, he considered, was essential to the self-preservation of whites and could be achieved most effectively by utilizing the existing "tribal" system. For Pim, segregation was **compatible with** rather than **necessary to** capitalist development; its chief advantage was the social and political stability it offered in the context of South Africa's industrialization process.

A consistent theme in the writings of "moderate" segregationists is the idea that through segregation the social threat posed by a politicized African proletariat could be defused, but that this required an economic sacrifice on behalf of whites. For Maurice Evans, segregation was incompatible with rapacious economic greed. It was therefore not in the long-term interests of whites to submit to immediate calls for cheap African labour:

> For our own ultimate good ... the points of contact of the races are already too many and too close, and to multiply them and intensify them for what is at bottom, our economic gain, is a policy likely to be fraught with evil for both races. The easy way is the perilous way.[40]

The idea crops up over and over again in liberal thought of the 1920s and 1930s. J H Hofmeyr, who attempted to redefine a "new" or "restrained" liberalism in the immediate aftermath of the 1936 segregation legislation, considered that a thoroughgoing policy of "constructive segregation" - though in theory still the best solution of the "native question" - was no longer feasible. This was so because whites were not prepared to "pay the price": i.e. to set aside sufficient land for Africans' requirements or to make do with more expensive and less abundant labour.[41]

A notable feature of Edgar Brookes' writings on segregation is the idea that (white) South Africa should defend itself from the threat posed by a militant African proletariat. This theme recurs throughout his writings, even as his attitude to segregation underwent transformation. Writing in 1923, he argued that it was neither to the advantage of whites nor blacks that Africans should become permanent "industrialists".

> The massing of Natives in centres like the Witwatersrand ... leads gradually to the growth of an Urban population, poor, squalid, propertyless, easily inflammable, whom the Bolshevik Third International has already designated the best material through which to spread communistic doctrine through Africa ... The only section profiting from the transaction is obviously big finance, usually absentee big finance and therefore unafraid of the deluge.[42]

In 1928, after Brookes had rejected segregation, he announced that it had failed as a policy "because black South Africa does not want it, and because white South Africa is not prepared to make the sacrifices without which it cannot succeed".[43] This introduces a striking paradox: that, whereas the early Brookes believed in "protective" segregation as a means of defending white South Africa against a militant black proletariat, he later came to the view that a policy of enforced segregation which precluded the possibility of African advancement would lead precisely to that result:

> Class becomes associated with something definite and tangible as colour. The stage is inevitably set for the 'class war'. As a member of the bourgeoisie myself, I hope it is not set for the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. As a liberal I believe that only swift and far-reaching reforms and many more opportunities for self-realisation on the part of the Bantu can ensure the impossibility of such a dictatorship.[44]

V

The above discussion suggests that liberals did not actively promote segregation as a means of hastening the process of capital accumulation in South Africa. They did, however, help to maintain the conditions for the long-term reproduction of capitalist relations by acting to preserve social and political stability. This proposition introduces the important, but difficult, concept of "social control" which has recently been brilliantly analysed by Thomas Haskell in his article "Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility".[45] In Haskell's view, an essential element in the idea of social control is the idea that a class

> will favour any measure that ensures the docility of the less advantaged sectors of the population, that enhances the discipline and productivity of the work force on which the economy depends, that strengthens its own morale or weakens that of other groups, or that contributes in any other way to the maintenance of its own supremacy.[46]

For Haskell, the chief problem with the social control thesis is that, however sophisticated its application, it is necessarily a reductive form of class analysis. And he adds that efforts to avoid crude reductionism through the use of cautious language can only be achieved by sacrificing an argument's explanatory force. One of the chief deficiencies in the social control thesis is its failure to specify the gap between the **intentions** of ideologists and the long-term consequences of their actions. In our case, a "hard" version of the social control thesis would assert that liberals elaborated segregation in order to promote the interests of capitalism and the bourgeoisie. By contrast, a "softer" interpretation would emphasize the idea of unconscious intentions or unintended consequences, the notion that liberal ideology is "rooted" in the needs of social groups, but not reducible to them.

The existing South African literature tends towards a "hard" version of the social control thesis, either explicitly or by implication. This is often, but not always, the case in Legassick's work.[47] It is present, too, in Belinda Bozzoli's study of ruling-class ideology, in which she argues that liberal theorists and organizations actively set about dividing, conciliating and incorporating the working class.[48] A "hard" form of the social control thesis is also detectable in Baruch Hirson's paper on the Joint Councils and the All-African Convention. Here he contends that, in the fifteen years prior to the promulgation of Hertzog's "Native Bills", the Joint Councils acted to "dampen the movements of protest in South Africa".[49]

This is not to deny the substantial amount of truth in both the above arguments. My intention is only to challenge the impression that liberals, acting more or less directly in the interests of capital, consciously intended to secure a complaisant black working class. While this may indeed be the case in certain instances, it is misleading to believe that liberal ideologists were somehow able to see beyond their immediate historical context so as to dupe the forces of popular opposition. Segregation appears in this light as an act of trickery, wilfully imposed by liberal ideologues in a conspiratorial attempt to secure the hegemony of capital. This form of argument neglects the extent to which ideologies are **believed** in by their creators. Ideologies are not merely conceived in order to obscure the truth and to deceive others. They are also acts of self-deception, rationalizations intended not so much to obscure the truth as to boost the moral rectitude and self-confidence of those who stand to benefit materially from them. Indeed, the very effectiveness of an ideology depends at least partly on the extent to which those who subscribe to and propagate its terms also believe in them.

Undoubtedly, liberal segregationists, by acting to defuse actual or potential class conflict, functioned as agents of social control. But this is not to say that they consciously or consistently saw their role in these terms. Segregation was founded on a notion of "differential sovereignty" whereby Africans' antecedent rights to a share in the land of South Africa was granted in return for their loss of their claims to citizenship. The hegemonic force of this ideology ensured that they remained trapped within the terms expressed by Hertzog's quid pro quo of land for the vote, or "substance for shadow". The idiom of benevolent paternalism which suffused liberal segregationism between the wars and took the form of "trusteeship" was genuinely believed in by many of its proponents. This remained the case until liberal segregationists realized that economic and political realities determined that white supremacy was incompatible with "African advancement". Some liberals renounced segregation when this point hit home. Others, like Alfred Hoernle or J H Hofmeyr, attempted to revise liberal segregation in more modest terms. The success of segregation as a hegemonic or dominant ideology is measurable to the extent to which it was able (for a time at least) to draw on the support of most whites and some Africans as well. It served to define

the boundaries of political debate and - though strongly criticized by some contemporary observers - came to be seen as a nakedly fraudulent justification of white supremacy only when modern conceptions of democracy rendered its fundamental premises utterly threadbare.

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