

UNIVERSITY OF ZIMBABWE
DEPARTMENTS OF
ECONOMICS
LAW
POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE STUDIES

Paper 11

TRAINING INTELLECTUALS FOR INDEPENDENCE:
THE CASE OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

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INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR SERIES
SEMINAR ON
INTELLECTUALS, THE STATE AND IMPERIALISM:
TOWARDS INTELLECTUAL DECOLONISATION

HARARE
20-22 OCTOBER 1987

Training Intellectuals for Independence: The Case of Southern Africa.

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(First Draft)

Paper prepared for the seminar: Intellectuals, the State and Imperialism:
Towards Intellectual Decolonisation. Departments of

Economics

Law

Political and Administrative Studies,

University of Zimbabwe, 20-23 October, 1987.

* The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily coincide with those of the UN Institute for Namibia.

Training Intellectuals for Independence: The Case of Southern Africa.

As the topic for this paper has dictated, one has to look both at the process of training intellectuals in this region and at the way this prepares the intellectuals for coping with the demands of independence.

It may be significant that the generators of this seminar chose to refer to the training of intellectuals only rather than to the general issue of training personnel of various categories for key sectors in the countries of the region. It is clearly intended that this should, among other things, allow in-depth discussion of the stratum of intellectuals which plays a role quite disproportionately significant in relation to their number. The danger in this narrow focus however is that this will artificially focus the discussion on socio-economic change on what is only a tiny fraction of the people. This bias should be checked somewhat by Barthily's presentation on intellectuals and the class struggle in the Third World, and Nelson Moyo's on the intellectuals and the struggle of the working people in the region, putting the role of the intellectuals in the broad context of the decisive forces in struggles for revolutionary transformation.

In Southern Africa, the training of the indigenous people for post-independence responsibilities has been a very important task and concern, given the more intensive settlement by people of European descent who have been used by racist regimes to staff the colonial machinery of government and key positions in commerce and industry, both managerial and technical.

One issue which should be attempted in discussing the role of intellectuals in southern Africa is the clear identification of this category. The term can be employed to refer to all those whose work is not primarily manual and

for which formal academic training has been undergone. This broad definition would embrace professional, technical and vocational personnel at all levels. However, in this paper the term will be employed narrowly to refer to further- and higher-education graduates, i.e. those whose actual or potential jobs put them in a decisive position to influence the orientation of institutions. This demarcation is closer, in my view, to defining the elements that are the focus of this seminar series, rather than providing a scientific identification of the category. I am aware that the very term "intellectual" has various connotations, including unfavourable ones which Bertrand Russell had in mind when he said,

I have never called myself an intellectual, and nobody has ever dared to call me one in my presence. I think an intellectual may be defined as a person who pretends to have more intellect than he has, and I hope this definition does not fit me.¹

Whether or not intellectuals in this region have similar misgivings about being thus defined, the term is nonetheless useful in that it allows us to make certain generalizations about their common experiences, predispositions and hence their modes of behaviour as a social stratum.

In this session we are to focus on the training of intellectuals for independence in Southern Africa. This region is one in which struggles for independence and against white minority racist regimes have been long-drawn out. The corollary of that is that there was also the least deliberate preparation for independence since the regimes in power before rule by the majority would not in most cases countenance a transfer of power until their situation was untenable. In Mozambique, Angola and Zimbabwe the change was induced by a protracted armed struggle whereas in Zambia and Malawi the threat of anarchy following nationalist agitation against their incorporation in the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland and for independence

led to these two less white-settled territories being decolonised earlier. The former "high commission" territories of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland, were in a special position because although they were run as economic appendages of South Africa, they were under the British crown. Their capacity for different evolution was circumscribed by the South African connection and benign neglect by Britain, the area of education of high-level personnel included. They shared with the South African and Namibian blacks the disadvantages of being under the control/influence of the bastion of white racism in the region - South Africa, particularly after the National Party came to power in 1948.

In independent countries of Southern Africa and East Africa, the majority of the intellectuals were for many years the products of foreign training institutions. In the case of Tanzania, 1970 was the first year in which more students graduated at home than overseas.² This break point will vary from country to country, but the Tanzanian experience is by no means extreme in comparison. And however shorter its advent, what is crucial for our purposes is that the transition from colonial rule to independence saw the top personnel in the new administrations drawn from products of foreign and predominantly colonialist metropolitan institutions. Besides, while the location of the institutions may be significant, the content of what is imparted in the process of training is just as crucial, even more crucial. It has been suggested that

...education probably was the most pervasive instrument of colonial control, social change, and Westernization. Education was the means by which Europeans justified their colonial culture of domination, racism, and materialism. The Europeans transmitted their technology, religion, customs, and values through education.³

The earliest institutions of higher education for Africans in Southern Africa were operated by missionaries.⁴ Because of the confluence of interests between the missionaries and the colonists, the proselytizing of the missionaries and the "civilizing mission" of colonialism were intertwined. The missionary

....annointed settler industrialists, farmers, merchants, soldiers, administrators, and housewives as superior custodians of civilization, values, morals, and ethics. Hence colonialism was no longer simply an economic process of capitalistic exploitation of African resources and labour, but a noble and moral act of sacrifice for the rest of humanity. The missionary, therefore, was the best agent to produce the efficient, lawabiding, subservient African labourers and consumers, through a "good Christian education".⁵

Among the issues that arise in the training of intellectuals for independence in Southern Africa therefore are the volume and technical preparedness of the intellectuals, /as well as the extent to which they can contribute to meaningful independence in the region, seeing that their training was initially not determined by those who would utilise them, post-independence regimes.

As indicated earlier, one of the most important considerations of the southern African colonial and racist regimes in the training of Africans was the need to retain control of key sectors of the economy and political administration in the hands of whites. Of course, this is not to suggest that there were no contradictions among the settlers. On the contrary, there were conflicts of interests between capitalists and white employees in various industries which were however overridden by their

common interest in suppressing the earning power of blacks. Shortages of skilled white labour in South Africa have sometimes pushed employers to upgrade black workers. But,

These opportunities, however, are accompanied more often than not either by a downgrading of the status of the work, or by a reduction in wages, or both. Hence employers save on black wage bills and are able to increase the salaries of whites whose relative scarcity has put high value on their services. The downgrading of skills and status protects the relative occupational prestige of whites, and the fact that many of the advances of blacks are in black areas (or spheres of work) also means that whites are protected from status competition or equal status contacts with blacks.⁶

Though less rigidly defined in legislation, the Rhodesian practices operated in a similar manner, and with broadly similar results.⁷ And in colonial Angola and Mozambique, the policy of "assimilation" ensured that the overwhelming majority of blacks were not in a position to compete with whites for skilled employment, although poverty existed among elements of the white workers.

At independence, the countries of southern Africa were confronted with the departure of white settlers and expatriates who either objected to serving under majority black governments or feared for their security on account of the propaganda they had been fed by the racist and colonial media. In Angola and Mozambique, this went beyond just the skilled and professional categories and also embraced capitalists in various sectors, with some of the Portuguese "retournados" destroying equipment before

fleeing Angola. In the case of Zimbabwe, the "scorched earth policy" which had been mooted as a possible response to majority rule in some white circles did not materialise. However, some measure of white emigration had always been expected. One study estimated that in 1977 employment and vacancies in jobs held by whites "Asians" and "Coloureds" in professional technical and related categories was 127441 (my own addition of estimated employment and vacancies given for December 1977). In the event of these key workers leaving in the expected exodus, between 65,086 and 127441 Africans would need to be trained immediately to occupy the posts.⁸ The same source gave figures for scholarships held outside Rhodesia, with 2,789 undergraduate degree-, 265 postgraduate degree-, and 926 diploma and certificate course recipients of scholarships expected to complete altogether by 1980.⁹ In addition to this, many trainees sent out by the liberation movement could not be known to the researchers, and the full picture would only emerge with this and the figures for training at the University of Rhodesia and the other local institutions being taken into account. It was estimated however that the total figure for African graduates from the University of Rhodesia up to 1980 was unlikely to be more than about 2,500, well below the minimum estimate for likely emigrating skilled personnel with university education.¹⁰ The point here is that even with the unplanned but considerable growth in African intellectuals towards the end of minority rule in Zimbabwe, the numbers still fell far short of what was needed in the event of a worst-case scenario in white reactions to majority rule.

Zambia, Malawi and Botswana also had difficulties with personnel for their post-independence needs, with many expatriats being retained while local people underwent training and apprenticeship. The regional picture therefore is one in which the post-independence administrations, if they sought to replace whites or expatriats who had been appointed largely on racial basis, were not in a position to effect indigenization/Africanization of posts if they so wished, at least not immediately.

So far, the discussion has been in terms of the output of inherited institutions and opportunities for outside training of African professionals/intellectuals prior to and at independence. But in all cases in the independent countries in Southern Africa, determined efforts were at once embarked upon at independence to expand not only the pool of high-level professionals but also the educational opportunities for the majority of the young. Whatever the failures and distortions in the purpose and content of the education provided, there is no gainsaying the strides made in redressing the colonial denial of basic education and career opportunities for the majority in the region.

One of the major issues in training which we have to tackle is the content of the training imparted. The difficulty we are immediately confronted with having said this is that of the wide range of professional specialisations that we have to bear in mind. However, there are general questions which have to be raised and which naturally will be more critical in some professions than in others, but which nonetheless apply to all professions. I will proceed by putting forward two of these questions which should help focus this part of the seminar by organising my views on the theme of training for independence:

- (1) Do intellectuals need any training specifically for independence?
- (2) How decisive is the position of intellectuals for independence?

The first of the above questions encompasses the whole definition we give to independence: independence from whom and for what? The answer to this question is a precondition for deciding if the intellectuals need any training beyond what qualifies them for the designation.

I shall state banalities in order to lay the basis for discussing more controversial propositions. First, it is now widely acknowledged that the newly independent countries of Africa, Asia and the Caribbean

attained formal independence generally without a corresponding control of the means of production in their territories. The former colonial powers and imperialism in general have thus retained an indirect and decisive say in the political and developmental decisions that can be made in most of these countries, a phenomenon popularly referred to as neo-colonialism. Outside Mozambique and Angola in the Southern African region, the former colonial power and its allies dominate most of the key productive sectors. The degree to which this fact has had a bearing on domestic and regional policies has varied, with such contrasts as between Malawi on the right and Zimbabwe on the left, for example, popular expectations generated in the course of the independence struggle partly accounting for the more radical tone of official pronouncements and some of the programmes in the latter case. Whenever progressive policies have been attempted as in Angola and Mozambique, where possibilities were emerging for a break with imperialism and its regional cats-paw racist South Africa, the enemies of true independence have come out in their true colours and sponsored the UNITA and MNR bandits and even carried out both overt and covert acts of destabilisation in their own account.

The point has been belaboured in various forums that only socialism can guarantee true independence from the shackles that took hold during undisguised colonial possession of our countries by imperialism.

Earlier on reference was made to the colonial and racist denial of education and training to blacks in Southern Africa. One of the most pressing concerns when post-colonial administrations were about to commence and for some time afterwards was how to ensure that competent professionals and other skilled personnel could be found to replace diehard opponents of majority rule who might or were actually fleeing the emerging regimes. Most black professionals, including some who had practically colluded with anti-people policies were counted in the

assessment of possible replacement for white professionals and other skilled personnel. One has to appreciate that there were few alternatives, so that the least common factor - acceptance of majority rule - was about the only precondition for service in even key organs of the new state structures. Worse still, with the "constitutional" handovers in which Britain ensured that the new regimes succeeded to the obligations of the colonial administration in respect of "civil service" conditions of service, further impediments were obvious even for those who would want to press for more streamlining of high-level personnel. There was therefore a genuine and laudable preoccupation to ensure that those who had been systematically excluded from skilled professions should be accommodated. The point at this juncture however is that many black intellectuals were trained for independence only to the extent that there should be blacks who could/would take over from whites, wherever a conscious decision was taken to increase training of blacks. Why is this significant?

The continuity of administrative machinery and procedures between colonial and post-colonial regimes is perhaps the most important argument for questioning the orientation received by intellectuals if they are to contribute to change. Admittedly, up to a point there is some routine in bureaucratic, professional and technical activity which may be common to different social systems. The same cannot be said however about the direction of the programmes implemented or the translation of broad policy guidelines into concrete goals or targets. Now, this leads us to a rather obvious observation, that is, that the issue of direction can be conceived at two levels - that of the functionaries in the selection of emphases in their work, and that of the regime laying out the socio-economic guidelines.

The individual intellectual should not cop out by pleading organisational constraints in contributing to change. Real as these are in this region on account of the inherited colonial bureaucratic structures

and capitalist policies, there are areas in which those conscious of the need to extend our independence beyond the formal trappings can operate to some effect.

While there has been generally no training of intellectuals qua intellectuals specifically for independence, the demands of meaningful development and progress are understood by many who identify with the interests of workers and peasants and are not mesmerised by learned techniques and the certainty of reward from the status-quo. Intellectuals can widen the scope for change by, and among other things, fighting for democratization and demystification of their work. This is a crucial step for effectiveness since, objectively, the principal forces most affected by the continuation of neo-colonialism are the workers and peasants. For, while intellectuals are well-placed to understand the workings of neo-colonialism and capitalist exploitation, they are relatively well-off under the present order. In the case of Zimbabwe, the basis for this was put very neatly by Brand thus:

Already, blacks who have entered managerial, professional, and higher administrative positions previously held by whites, have done so on the higher (and under the former circumstances, often artificially inflated) white salary scales. Rhodesia has bequeathed to Zimbabwe a highly attractive, if distorted, set of social and economic structures and available living standards, for those who have the opportunity and the desire to possess it. For the time being, many of these structures appear necessary to maintain the level of national production and to restore the country to much-needed social and political stability.

Once embraced, it nevertheless becomes much more difficult to modify or transform these structures. The danger is that the Zimbabwean leadership might be possessed by them, rather than adapting them to the needs of the people.¹¹

We should add in the context of our discussion that the difficulties for individual intellectuals in fighting for revolutionary measures in their spheres of work include, naturally, possible deprivation of this kind of "security" and consignment to the rank of the jobless or of those in "African" jobs, like the workers.

Although the role of intellectuals in struggles of the working people and in the class struggle in the "Third World" is the subject of other panels in this seminar, the importance of intellectuals for independence demands further attention be paid to aspects of class struggle. We note in particular the need to go beyond struggles limited to one's work-place to the wider world, as it were. This is not to imply that there is no link between struggles that can legitimately be waged in the work-place and the broader one for changing a whole socio-economic system. On the contrary, broad programmes and overall activity for socio-economic transformation must be informed by a close understanding of contradictions as they manifest themselves in various sectors on a daily basis. In other words, nothing short of praxis, the combination of theory and practice, will save theory from being so much liturgy and practice from being tilting at windmills.

It is fitting that the topic given for this session requires discussion in a regional context, given the regional dimension of some factors militating against the independence of Southern African countries. Five of the six frontline states share a border either with the principal author of regional destabilization, South Africa, or South African-

occupied Namibia. The "wider world" for us in Southern African countries thus inescapably includes the whole sub-region as well as individual countries. The enemy of progress in the region, racist South Africa, has continuously and inadvertently taught us the necessity of solidarity between our struggles to retain some measure of independence.

South African attacks on practically all the frontline states demonstrate the futility of trying to remain aloof from the struggles in South Africa and Namibia. Even if no direct help were given to SWAPO and the ANC, the mere example of successful non-racist independent states near the borders of the racist and occupation regime would be an example for South Africa which the racists would want to thwart, more so if the policies successfully pursued were to be socialist. It is the view of this paper that Angola and Mozambique have, apart from being strategically placed for the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) region's communication possibilities with the outside world, been principal targets of destabilization for having dared to set the pace in attempting unambiguous moves towards socialist transformation. South Africa correctly reasoned that avowed and genuine Marxist-Leninist initiatives would be considered legitimate targets by imperialism, led by the United States which has openly shown its hand in Angola in sponsoring the UNITA bandits. Thus although the appreciation of the regional dimension of the struggle has grown in academia, may be as the result of the emergence of SADCC and the Preferential Trade Area (PTA), it needs to be stressed over and above the merely functional cooperation beloved even of circles opposed to lessened dependence on racist South Africa. This is evidently an area where intellectuals have an important role. However, like struggles at the work-place, this is not enough to defend whatever gains may be made. Lasting answers belong in the sphere of organised political practice, with intellectual insights being widely

diffused so as to clarify what programmatic measures need to be taken.

We began by pointing out the denial of educational opportunities to blacks under the racist and colonial regimes in all the countries of Southern Africa, and how this meant that the newly independent states had to struggle to find enough high-level professional personnel, with sometimes little choice on the political calibre of the candidates. As it happens, substantial numbers of young intellectuals were trained either in socialist countries or in capitalist countries of Europe where serious academic studies of socialism exist, or in some progressive post-independence African institutions. These intellectuals and others who because of their association with liberation movements and popular struggles have tutored themselves in Marxist classics, constitute a body of intellectuals with actual or potential socialist direction.

There is however a vast difference between being able to handle the theory of Marxism-Leninism and being a Marxist. Draper puts this succinctly when he draws the distinction between Marxism and Marxology.¹² One is not here trying to discourage academic study of Marxism. On the contrary, the exposure to the theoretical/philosophical framework might indeed sharpen understanding of the current conjuncture in our region. The point is that what separates Marxists from Marxologists is that the former treat Marxism as a living body of theory, not only a philosophical method but also incorporating traditions of struggle and hence a guide to action. Practical answers are needed to the political and other problems of development affecting the region. Marxist-Leninist and other progressive intellectuals should actively assist in articulating national and proletarian consciousness, as well as fight for change.

Finally, we began by trying to define intellectuals as a category, and in the definition used in this paper no effort was

made at that stage to describe intellectuals as a particular interest group; we limited ourselves to categorization by level of education or training. Although on account of their training all intellectuals have the potential to benefit more than manual workers in capitalist society, they are also in this unique position that we have nonetheless called a whole series of seminars to ask them to contribute to struggle against imperialism and dependent capitalism. This is the paradox Amilcar Cabral had in mind when he said that intellectuals should "commit suicide" as a class in order for them to successfully lead in the revolutionary process. In the context of the problems confronting the region, both inherited and arising from lack of political direction, suicide sounds a mild demand to make as it does not necessarily connote physical pain. In many respects, what is being called for is virtual harakiri, not merely theoretical commitment to being gradually phased out, but actively struggling against nepotism, tribalism, and racism, even when it pays one's mortgage. What intellectuals have missed out on by way of political training for independence they can learn in struggle as part of the people.

Summary and Conclusion

The training of black intellectuals before independence in the countries of Southern Africa was limited by racist and colonial policies which whenever possible relied on white immigrant and expatriate skilled workers. In fact, the training of Africans was mostly undertaken by missionaries who in addition to pushing the gospel inculcated values of Western culture and capitalist society. Avenues did open up more towards the end of colonial rule, but not enough to offset the possible emigration of white skilled personnel opposed to majority rule and independence. At independence therefore Africanization was the operative word in most cases rather than any other considerations beyond those of technical know-how.

The absence of sustained political training, except in Angola and Mozambique, mirrored the level of political development of the movements that spearheaded the struggle for independence and which were themselves heterogeneous class alliances without a gelled politico-ideological line for revolutionary transformation. While intellectuals in Southern Africa have had access to Marxist and other progressive political tendencies, they have been inhibited in their contributions by operating within nationalist and occasionally frankly neo-colonialist regimes. In the circumstances, multi-faceted struggles are called for - at the work place involving demystification and democratization of their professional work, and on a wider plane contributing to organisations genuinely committed to the interests of the workers and peasants. Both these lines of action will be opposed by imperialism and its allies, but are inescapable for independence which will not only benefit the majority but is the only possible independence from international capital - the establishment of socialism. In most cases, this calls for a measure of sacrifice from progressive intellectuals.

Footnotes

1. Quoted in Fowler's Modern English Usage, second edition revised by Sir Ernest Gowers (Oxford University Press, 1968) p. 289.
2. Cited by David Latta, "The Impact of Overseas Study: the Donor's Role", in T.L. Maliyamkono (ed.) The Impact of Overseas Training on Development. (Eastern Africa Publications, Arusha/Dar-es-Salaam, 1979) p. 42.
3. David Chanaiwa, "The Political Economy of Colonial Education in Southern Africa: Summaries and Conclusions", in Agrippah T. Mugomba and Mougo Nyaggah (ed.), Independence without Freedom. The Political Economy of Colonial Education in Southern Africa. (ABC - Clio, Santa Barbara, CA, 1980) p. 227.
4. *ibid.* p. 230.
5. *ibid.* p. 231.
6. Lawrence Schlemmer, "Employment Opportunity and Race in South Africa" Studies in Race and Nations Vol. 4, study No. 3 - 1972-3, (University of Denver, Colorado) p. 15.
7. See the discussion of the implications of "verticalism" in the operation of the Industrial Conciliation Act of 1959, in Marshall W. Murphree, "Employment Opportunity and Race in Rhodesia", Studies in Race and Nations Vol. 4, Study No. 2 - 1972-73, (University of Denver, Colorado) p. 10-15.
8. Christopher Colclough and Roger Murray, The Immediate Manpower and Training Needs of an Independent Zimbabwe (Commonwealth Secretariat, London, 1979) p. 42 - 44.
9. *ibid.* p. 66-68, tables 1 to 3 respectively.
10. *ibid.* p. 35-36.
11. Coenraad Brand, "The Anatomy of an Unequal Society", in Colin Stoneman (ed.) Zimbabwe's Inheritance. (The MacMillan Press Ltd., 1981) P. 54-55.
12. Hal Draper, Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution. Vol. II, The Politics of Social Classes. (Monthly Review Press, New York and London, 1978).



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