

RED LEADERS

BOTHA AND COLOU

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AT the meeting between the prime minister and the executive members of the Coloured Personsâ\200\231 .RÃ@pres,entative' Council, Mr P W Botha used an interesting analogy. After the Anglo-Boer war, Mr Botha

said, the vanquishÃ@d Afrikaners

were given not freedom but

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only representatlveâ\200\231\ljgle,,\;low-

ever, the Afrikaner leaders did -

not reject the machinery cre-

ated for them. â\200\234They usex

- machinery that hadâ\200\231

%at'e_@gfqr them, and'l

executive posts in thEs

- zations and within a few years

â\200\230had created such a situation

that Union could take place.â\200\235

Mr Botha admitted that the

position of the Afrikaners after

' the war was not altogether

analogous with that of the

coloured people today. But, he

. continued, â\200\230â\200\230the principle re-

-mains the same, that people

_are either prepared to work '

together (with those who rule

them) for the sake of their

people with the machinery that

is there and to look for im-

_proved machinery, or they are

& notâ\200\231â\200\231. i

Historical analogy

Mr Bothaâ\200\231s historial analogy

opens up some intriguing is-

sues. On a more abstgact level

there is the question about the

utility of historical analogy to

â\200\230penetrate the particular rela-

tionships or policies of today.

More concretely one may ask

to what extent does Mr Bothaâ\200\231s

â\200\234analogy help to understand the

present political dilemma of

South Africa. Quite simply: Is
our history relevant to our present situation?

It was Arnold Toynbee, the |

magician of historical analogy,
that sounded the most eloquent

warning against the pitfalls of .

historical comparison. He observed that
however far we may succeed in going in our

search for sets of identical ex-

amples on either side, we shall
never be able to prove that
there is not some non-identical
factor that we have overlooked,
and that this non-identical factor
is not the decisive factor
that accounts for the different
. outcomes in different cases. of

what has looked to us like an

identical situation but may not
have been this in truth.

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Roprno (e o
of collaboration

By HERMANN GILIOMEER, senior lecturer in history at
: - Stellenbosch University.

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The factor in
Mr Botha's analogy is easy to

| spot. Indeed an analysis of

Afrikaner politics in the Trans-

| vaal and the Free State just

after war shows that a completely
different strategy was followed
than the one the prime minister
suggested. ;

Leaders refused

The recognized leaders of the
disfranchised Afrikaners in
Transvaal and Free State at
the beginning of the century
flatly refused to collaborate

with colonial rule until the British granted responsible government to the ex-republics. Finally the Liberal Party in December 1906 granted responsible government for the Transvaal which meant self-rule for the colony and not only some degree of control over the communal affairs of the Afrikaners. Only now did the Het

Volk party under Botha and Smuts proceed to fight the

election (which it won) and use the existing machinery to promote the cause of their people.

Thus the principle that was non-negotiable to Smuts and Botha was this: Do not get involved in any political order

which does not provide for acquiring the substance of power.

What would Botha and Smuts have done had they been given the opportunity to occupy positions in the British-controlled administrative apparatus of the

colony to pay out pensions and nominally pass budgets? A

year after the war Lord Milner approached them to serve on the Legislative Council of Transvaal, a body remarkably

" similar to the present Coloured

Persons Representative Council.

Milner also invited some Joiners and Handsuppers

among the Boers to serve on the council. (The first were Boer deserters who fought on the British side; the latter

burghers who at an early stage

of the war lay down their arms

and then observed an oath of

neutrality.)

Rejected offers

' ' The bittereinder leaders all

refused Milner's offers, thus ensuring that they did not become identified with British domination. Standing outside

the apparatus of colonial rule, |
they could continue to criticize |
the government and mobilize
support for their own cause.

limitÂ\$ |

Milner did find some Joine!
and Handsuppers who accepted
his offer. But, as A M Grund-
lingh points out in his superb
study â\200\230â\200\230Die Hendsoppers en
Joinersâ\200\235â\200\231, just published by
HAUM, they had no real bar-
gaining power or influence in
the political order. General
Smuts wrote at the time: â\200\230â\200\234The

- Councillors as well as the pub-

lic know that they are mere
puppets in a play in which des-
tiny is the real actor.â\200\235

There is also another princi-
ple to be derived from the anal-
ogy of Afrikaner politics during
the reconstruction of 1902-07.

' This can be put briefly as fol-
lows: The strategy of non-col- -

laboration with the rulers must
be complemented by ceaseless

â\200\234efforts to build up a mass orga-

â\200\230nization if a group or class does
not want to consign itself to
political impotence. :

Real genius

That he could succeed in do-

ing this was the real genius of
Botha. Such was the rancour
between the bittereinders and
joiners after the war that it
was no foregone conclusion that
the Afrikaners could be mobi-
lized against imperial rule. In

~1902 Boer society was almost

fatally divided: Some 10 per-
cent of the republican burgh-
ers, who could be called up for
military service, had become
joiners, 27 percent handsup-
pers, and only 31 percent laid
down their arms as bitter-
einders. Â»

Together with Smuts and De
la Rey, Botha from 1902
worked tirelessly to heal the

wounds of war and effect a reconciliation among the Afrikaners. If joiners showed 'remorse Botha urged forgiveness. To a National Scout he said simply: "I accept your regrets. The time is coming when I shall require your services."

When Botha fought the election -

of 1907 all the joiners and hand-suppers had been effectively integrated into his victorious Het Volk party. = °

However, any straight comparison with coloured politics

today is problematical, for |

there is yet another "non-identical factor" involved. After the war the Transvaal Afrikaners comprised roughly half of the electorate "if they be-

"came unified power was in

their grasp. The incentive for mobilization was too great to tolerate a simmering feud between collaborators and bitter-

. einders, y

.Party. Perhaps the only way to

acrimonious discussion be-

"possible for the Labour Party |

| laborating blacks.

" which he, unlike his predeces- |

"to be derived from the histori-

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Disfranchised |

In contrast, the coloureds | have been disfranchised by the apartheid onslaught and are without any hope to become an effective force in the political | system.. Thus historians will | find it difficult to pass a moral or political judgment on the | present leaders of the Labour |

start a mass organization to speak out against apartheid

was to have seized control of |
the existing machinery. Per- |
haps the disfranchised are con- |
demned to wage a continual
war among themselves while |
there is not the prospect of |
power.

But however that may be the

tween Mr Botha and the Labour |
Party leaders has obviously |
tollled the funeral bell for old-

style â\200\234â\200\230coloured politicsâ\200\235. The |
limits of collaboration have |
been reached. It is patently im- |,

leaders to keep on playing the |
one card they have â\200\224 that of |
non-collaboration within a
framework of collaboration â\200\224 |
and continue to accept the sala- |
ries and the frills of office. Mr |
Botha'â\200\231s cutting remarks caused |
as much glee among Afrikaner |
hardliners as among non-col-

For Mr Botha it is obviously |
the end of a chapter too. The |
style of consensus politics |

sor, wants to adopt is irreconci- |
lable with heaping scorn on the |
designated communal leaders |
of whom it is expected to sell |
decisions to their constituency. |
And among the present group |
of coloureds prepared to col- | -
laborate in the existing system |
there is clearly nobody who |
wield more influence than the |/
present leaders of the Labour |
Party. i

Sincere â\200\230

Hopefully the discussion in
Pretoria between Mr Botha and |
these leaders was the parting -
shots of -a war. If that is so, the
reconstruction has to begin
without delay. Despite District
Six, I believe Mr Botha is sin-
cere in his privately expressed
intention to heal the wounds of
the past 30 years. Whether he
would be prepared to do so at
the cost of party unity remains
to be seen.

But if there is any principle

cal analogy he introduced it is
this: People do not form a po-
litical community and become
full partners in the politics of
negotiation until they acquire |
all the rights and duties pro-

vided under a system of respon- |
sible government. And only |â\200\231
then can there be a move to-
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