# Urban Blacks in the Separate Development Propaganda of the South African Government in 1958–1966

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## 1. Introduction

Apartheid was one of the most interesting political systems of the 20th century, partly because it was an anomaly in the post-Second World War atmosphere of decolonisation. After the electoral victory of the National Party (NP) in 1948, South Africa went ahead to develop an oppressive system which was based on the idea of white supremacy. Apartheid was institutionalised racism: it divided the population of South Africa into whites, coloureds, blacks and Indians. Racial category of an individual defined his or her rights, possibilities and residential areas. Thus, apartheid was a full-scale architecture of power that functioned on multiple levels: it divided the territory and social space as well as the population of South Africa based on imposed ethnic and racial identities, creating a hierarchical and oppressive political system.

However, apartheid was not a static system: its ideology transformed continuously in the battle between different discursive, political and economic forces.[1] The ideology of the early of years of apartheid, the so-called *baasskap*[2] apartheid that underlined white supremacy and the exclusive right of the white population to political rights, was replaced with a new separate development ideology in the late 1950s. "Separate development" was a slogan adopted by the National Party

[1] Magnusson 2000, p. 15.
[2] Literally "boss-ship", i.e. supremacy.

government in 1958 to improve the crude and racist image of apartheid. It envisaged total political and territorial separation for the different “national groups” of South Africa, with a commonwealth of independent states as its ultimate goal. The new political rhetoric aimed at replacing the racist features of apartheid ideology with a utopia based on independent ethnic units. The black population was to be divided into separate ethnic groups, which each got their own homeland or “Bantustan”. All political and economic activity of the black population was to take place in these homelands, outside white South Africa.[3] Nonetheless, even though the political activity of blacks would take place in the homelands, they could still work in the white areas as migrant workers. Therefore, the homeland system provided cheap and docile black labour for the white areas of South Africa.[4]

The new form of apartheid emerged in conjunction with anti-colonialism and increasing African nationalism in South Africa.[5] Changes in the African continent forced the apartheid government to search for a solution with which political rights could be granted to the black population without jeopardising the position of the whites.[6] Separate development as a term had existed in South African political vocabulary throughout the 1950s but it was only in 1958 that the term became the catchphrase of the official propaganda. The new design of apartheid was announced by Prime Minister Hendrik Frensch Verwoerd in September 1958.[7] Verwoerd is commonly regarded as the main architect of the new policy, responsible for the transformation of apartheid in to a systematic and comprehensive political doctrine.[8] Verwoerd gave apartheid a certain moral force and direction that were absent before. During the Verwoerd era, from 1958 to 1966, apartheid became a philosophy, a “benevolent” form of segregation, aiming at the well-being of all population groups.[9]

In the propaganda of the Verwoerd era, South Africa was portrayed as a developed and modern state that was now prepared to grant the blacks independence in their traditional homelands in accordance with the African revolution. At the same time, the whites would be able to maintain their national independence in their own historical territories. The government embarked on a project to construct an image of an exclusively white South Africa: the blacks were to be contained

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[3] Maylam 2001, pp. 187, 194.
[4] See for example Terreblanche 2005, p. 13.
[5] Lazar 1993, p. 384.
[6] Giliomee – Mbenga 2007, pp. 324–325.
[7] After being elected as Prime Minister on 2 September 1958, Verwoerd first mentioned separate development as a synonym for apartheid on 3 September 1958 in a national broadcast. Fortnightly Digest of South African Affairs no. 15/1958, p. 3; Pelzer 1963, pp. 149–150. See also O’Meara 1996, pp. 72–73.
[8] Giliomee – Mbenga 2007, p. 314.
[9] Norval 1996, pp. 160–161.

in the homelands. The history of South Africa was framed to suit the policies of the government. According to the official historical narrative, whites were not immigrants or colonists because they had arrived into an empty land at the same time in the 17th century as the blacks were slowly moving southwards from their "original home" in Central Africa. In addition, history had brought about a distinctive white nationhood that consisted of both the Afrikaners and the English speaking whites. This white nation had the right to its own historical homeland.[10] In this way, the blacks were deprived of rights in South African proper. The propaganda paraded the white, Western and developed nature of the country, silencing the voices of the other racial groups as equal members of the society.

Historians widely recognise the change that took place in the late 1950s in apartheid discourse towards a more "humane" portrayal of the system, based on "separate freedoms". Aletta J. Norval notes that during the separate development era, the central concept in Afrikaner nationalism, the *volk* (nation) began to act as an organising principle for the whole society, and as a result, political frontiers were forged according to both race and ethnicity. On the other hand, Norval points out that even during the early years of apartheid, the black population was considered both a homogeneous race and a collection of different ethnicities. The significance of separate development was the way in which these ethnic differences became to act as the basis of territorial separation.[11] In addition, Karl Magnusson states the changes in discourse in the beginning of the Verwoerd era, when "nation" came to replace "race" in the rhetoric of the government. At the same time, the strong hierarchisation of differences diminished.[12] However, Adam Ashforth has noted that the apartheid slogan contained some aspects of separate development discourse even as early as during the elections of 1948, including the theme of separate communities with the prospects of future self-government.[13]

Separate development was based on the idea that the black population was not a permanent feature of the white South African nation-state. Nevertheless, the government could not escape the increasing number of blacks in "white" urban areas and it had to deal with this reality in its propaganda discourse. This paper examines the portrayals of the urban black population of South Africa in separate development propaganda during the Verwoerd era. I will concentrate on the conflicting roles played by the urban black population in the propaganda discourse. I begin with a

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[10] See for example Progress through Separate Development (1966) and You Be the Judge (1964).
[11] Norval 1996, pp. 9, 139.
[12] Magnusson 2000, p. 182.
[13] Ashforth 1990, p. 149.

brief examination of the essential characteristics of "the Bantu" in separate development propaganda. I then move on to analyse the role of the urban black population in the propaganda and highlight the way in which the government failed to reconcile its policy with the realities of urban developments.

## 2. The Rural, Tribal, Child-like Black

In separate development propaganda, the black homelands and their inhabitants emerged as the opposite image of modern, industrialised and developed white South Africa. According to the propaganda, the multiple "Bantu nations" had their own history, culture, and political systems and their "unwritten traditions" went back many centuries.[14] The construction of the blacks as "the other" in separate development propaganda resembled the operation of other colonial discourses. Paul Landau points out that in the Western tradition, the European view of non-European peoples has always reflected the way in which the Europeans have imagined themselves and their own history. For example, in the 19th century, Africa was seen as the primitive past of the West, which made it possible for Africans to attain the level of civilisation achieved in Europe. According to Landau, a chronological gulf emerged between the black and white races: Africans lived in a past era, which existed simultaneously with the present.[15] Similarly, in separate development discourse the blacks were deeply connected to the old tribal traditions but they could still develop towards civilisation.

In separate development propaganda, racial categories were increasingly replaced with national categories. The blacks were comprised of "several distinct and separate nations".[16] Each ethnic unit had its own and distinctive culture, heritage and language. The propaganda film *Bantu Tribes of Southern Africa* is a good example of the way in which the government tried to emphasise the essentially rural and tribal nature of the blacks. In the film, the traditional community forms the basis of black identity. It takes a tour to the homelands and describes the unique cultural customs and artistic achievements of each tribe. According to the film, the blacks had emerged somewhere in North-eastern or Central Africa "as a result of inter-mixing between the negroid peoples of Africa and the Hamite migrants from the east". After crossing the Limpopo River, the black

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[14] The Transkei and the Case for Separate Development (1963), p. 6.
[15] Landau 2002a, pp. 2–4.
[16] Progress through Separate Development (1966), p. 45.

migrants spread all over South Africa and settled into their own areas. The film emphasises that although the black tribes are "presumably of the same origin", "each main group has developed its own unique language and culture" and they all differ greatly from one another, despite the fact that to "many of us", i.e. to whites, all black South Africans look alike. The Zulus, Xhosas, Swazis, Ndebele, Southern Sotho, Venda and Shangaan-Tsonga are each introduced in turn, with special attention given to their different ways of dress, beadwork, art and architecture. In the course of the film, the blacks are associated with rural imagery and vast landscapes, underlining their essentially rural nature. The blacks had retained their traditional ways in spite of the recent penetration of Western influences and the increasing number of blacks working outside the traditional homelands. The blacks had gained a new way of life as a result of their contact with the whites but although the blacks were modernising and adapting to the Western world, they were still maintaining their identity and culture. Even though they had moved to the cities,

> "[t]he Bantu have kept many of their tribal customs. In the big cities, Shangaan still lives with the Shangaan and Zulu with Zulu; even though their houses and their dress are no longer so distinctive, even though some of the old customs have been replaced by European ways."

Therefore, the traditional cultures of each separate black nation still held relevance, and the blacks could not be considered to be a unitary group or being part of the white South African nation-state.[17] Thus, the propaganda desperately tried to hold on to the essentially rural nature of the blacks as well as to their loyalty to their own "nation" and tribal homeland. The tension between the notions about blacks entering a new stage of development and this insistence on traditional tribal life is obvious. In the propaganda, the blacks can be seen, as stated by Paul Landau in his analysis on colonial imagery, as "acting Africans", performing their role as "Africans" as imagined by the South African government.[18] Those blacks who had stepped out of this traditional tribal role were hard to accommodate in the picture.

Landau reminds that African women, whose place was perceived as being in the traditional economy from which the men could easily come and go, were doubly alienated in colonial discourses from colonial policy, both as Africans and as women.[19] This double alienation is also evident in separate development propaganda. In *Bantu Tribes of Southern Africa*, women are portrayed as being confined within the rural homelands: in the city scenes, there are hardly any

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[17] Bantu Tribes of Southern Africa (s.a.).
[18] Landau 2002b, p. 158.
[19] Ibid., p. 156.

black women present.[20] This is a general theme in the propaganda. While the black men were portrayed as mobile migrant labourers, the women and children were to remain in the homelands, “tilling the soil”, which was portrayed as the role of women in the traditional “Bantu culture”:

> “To a large extent even today, it is the womenfolk who till the soil, beside their domestic duties.”[21]

The way the women were portrayed as the essence of rural tribal life made the traditional role of women a legitimating factor for the apartheid system. In propaganda publications such as *Bantu Tribes of Southern Africa*, bare-chested black women dressed in traditional tribal gear received a lot of attention.[22] According to Landau, by portraying bare-chested women in colonial photography, women were both sexualised and made to stand for cultural difference.[23] In this way, the black, half-naked, traditionally dressed women of separate development propaganda epitomise the cultural difference between the white and the black as well as the tribal and the modern, becoming the ultimate African other of the white man.

The rural image of the black was not a unique feature of the South African propaganda: this imagery is tied to the history of the European colonial project. Landau portrays how pictures of traditional Africans were used in colonial imagery to support the view that the tribal economy functioned outside the colonial economy. Thus, black men emerged as a possibility to bridge the gap and to develop their own tribes. The image of “the tribe” masked the dependence of the colonial economies on cheap black labour, and it hid the way in which African chiefs were contributing to the system by providing this labour force. Landau claims that in colonial imagery, “the performed or photographed ‘tribesman’ was the visual manifestation of the phony stasis of custom, neatly concealing the dependence of whites on the coerced or semi-coerced labor of Africans”.[24]

Verwoerd compared the relationship between the blacks and the whites to the bond between a father and a child: “a child cannot become independent without growing slowly under the care of a father”.[25] This “benevolent” paternalistic attitude towards the blacks underlined the whole separate development discourse. In propaganda films, the blacks were portrayed as child-like, emotional and

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[20] Bantu Tribes of Southern Africa (s.a.).
[21] The Progress of the Bantu Peoples towards Nationhood, no. 3: Self-development – Economic Advancement (s.a.), p. 3. See also The Progress of the Bantu peoples towards Nationhood, no. 4: Self-development – Land and Agriculture (s.a.), p. 1.
[22] Bantu Tribes of Southern Africa (s.a.).
[23] Landau 2002b, p. 156.
[24] Ibid., pp. 155–156.
[25] South African Digest no. 2/1963, p. 8.

peace-loving men.[26] The propaganda films *The Condemned Are Happy* (1958) and *The Fox Has Four Eyes* (1959) are interesting examples of the portrayal of "the black man" in the propaganda. In both of the films, the main character and the first-person narrator is a black man who has been forced to leave his rural homeland to go to the city of the white man. The films were funded by the South African government and directed by Jamie Uys, who later received international recognition for his 1980 film *The Gods Must Be Crazy*.[27]

In *The Condemned Are Happy*[28] a black subsistence farmer moves to a white city (Port Elizabeth) with his family because a drought has devastated his land. The family settles in an informal settlement near a factory where the man finds work. In the film, the main character is portrayed as a simple, ignorant and uneducated family man, who is forced to leave his beloved homeland. He wants the best for his old father, for his two wives as well as for his children, but he is not content with the life in the crowded, crime-ridden settlement. He does not entirely understand the city around him and describes it as a "very strange place". On top of everything else, he has to tolerate living in the same area with "lower tribes", with whom he does not want to interact. Recounting his experiences, the man speaks simple English with an exaggerated accent.[29]

One day, the informal settlement is visited by the white mayor of the city, whom people call "the man of mercy". The mayor asks the man if he would like to have a big house with a garden. The black man does not understand how he could ever have such a house and contemplates: "Truly the head-man of this city is a smoker of hashish." However, when he later sees the new settlement that the whites have built for the blacks, he begs the mayor to condemn his house so that he too can move to the new township, calling the mayor "my father". The new settlement with its big houses is portrayed to be the achievement of the white man, who is epitomised in the mayor. The narrator states that "truly the white man is very clever", confirming that the white man has many plans for the development of the blacks.[30]

In *The Fox Has Four Eyes*, a similar image of the black man reappears in a different context. In a tribal village, people are disappearing. They are being killed for magic potions, but the villagers are

[26] Women did not usually have a central role, either as individuals or as a gender in general.
[27] Uys later made a feature-length film based on *The Fox Has Four Eyes* called *Dingaka* (1965). The film received considerable attention abroad, launching Ken Gampu's career as one of the first black South African Hollywood stars.
[28] Later renamed "Urgent Queue".
[29] The Condemned Are Happy (1958). Similar portrayal about the difficulties faced by a black man moving to a white city also appeared in Welfare of the Urban Bantu (1961), pp. 4–5.
[30] The Condemned Are Happy (1958).

too scared to do anything because they fear the powerful witchdoctor. The black man's life is devastated when his daughter is murdered. The witchdoctor convinces him that the daughter was killed by a young black man of the same tribe. The father follows the killer to the city and attempts to kill him. However, the main character gets caught and a white court sentences him to four years' imprisonment. During his imprisonment the man is moved into a work camp where he "does useful work" and "useful things" and learns better farming techniques. In the meantime, the efficient white justice system finds out that the real killer was, in fact, the witchdoctor who is then hanged for the crime. In the end, the man understands that even though he feels in his heart that four years is a long time in prison, he deserved his sentence: "my head says I nearly killed a man who could have been innocent". He thus confirms the superiority and righteous nature of the white justice system with its rational and modern enquiry as opposed to the traditional justice of eye for an eye. Witchdoctors are condemned to be "liars, robbers and murderers". After learning how to be a good farmer in prison, the man does not need magic anymore.[31]

As in *The Condemned Are Happy*, also in *The Fox Has Four Eyes* the blacks emerge as essentially rural, tribal and ignorant people. After following the killer to the city, the black man is lost in the city of the white man, finding it a strange place. He is initially sceptical of the white justice system but, in the end, realises that the white lawyers and judges had a plan all along. The black man is irrational and impulsive, as he is attempting to kill the alleged perpetrator of his daughter's murder immediately after seeing him. His language is again simple English with a thick accent and simple phrases. Both films seem to have been aimed primarily at blacks, educating them about the positive sides of the government policy.[32] The black narrators appeal to the audience, who are seemingly treated as people of little intellect incapable of questioning the obvious propagandistic nature of the films. In the films, the blacks are simple, childish and irrational men, who do not fully understand the reality of their situation, thinking rather with their heart than with their head and holding traditional values and their family in high esteem. The wise white men of the cities know best how the blacks should live their lives, and they take care of the blacks like fathers. The city belongs to these white men, and the black man is a stranger there, not really belonging in the urban environment.[33]

[31] The Fox Has Four Eyes (1959).

[32] Propaganda films for blacks had a long tradition in South Africa, beginning from the 1920 when the mining industry used propagandistic films to reduce criminal tendencies of black workers and to make them more docile. Later, the government started to finance films aimed at black audiences. Tomaselli 1989, pp. 54–59.

[33]The Condemned Are Happy (1958); The Fox Has Four Eyes (1959).

### 3. The Dual Image of the Urban Black

In the context of the theme of tribalism that was associated with the black homelands, the image of the "urban Bantu" in the propaganda is extremely interesting. Blacks were seen as "temporary sojourners" in the white areas. Urban blacks were supposed to be exclusively single male migrant workers, who were residing only temporarily in the urban areas. The film *The Work Seekers* portrays the role that the blacks had in the white areas according to separate development propaganda. The film shows black Africans flowing to the white cities of South Africa to find work. As in *The Condemned Are Happy*, a man has been forced to leave his homeland and travel across the wilderness due to a sudden drought. Work seekers are said to come to the cities "from far and near", "across the continent" and "many thousands" are "on the move". It is never fully clarified whether the work seekers are coming from within or outside the borders of South Africa: they are a homogeneous mass of blacks, flooding to the cities to find work. However, the way in which these work seekers are portrayed in the film is a prime example of the way in which the black migrant worker was perceived in separate development propaganda. These men are "men of a hundred tribes with no common language", illiterate and without no means to communicate with each other. Again, the men are said to be "strangers to it all", but still able to learn "the rudiments of simple mechanisation" in their new places of employment.[34]

The industrial economy of South Africa is said to be like "a pot of gold in the rainbow's end". The city is depicted as a Western, developed and undoubtedly white city, where the black man is confused, walking in the city and admiring the modern buildings and being frightened by a bus as well as a photograph of an elephant in a shop window. "Many have never seen a motor car, never worn shoes", the narrator recounts. The men are inspected for diseases and they are taught the meaning of clocks and time. They learn "a simple composite language" to be able to communicate with each other as well as with their white supervisors, and as a result, much of the madness surrounding them begins to make sense. It is said that "given patience and understanding, they gradually take to new ways and strange machines".[35]

Although the work seekers adapt to the life in the cities, they are said to remain guest workers, who come to the urban areas only for a short while. Once they leave, they will be able to use their skills

[34] The Work Seekers (s.a.).
[35] Ibid.

and knowledge back home. Even during their stay in the cities, the men maintain their traditional cultural habits and tribal identity and have traditional tribal celebrations. The men miss their rural homes, and at the end of their contact, “excitement mounts as the call of home grows louder.” The men travel back home with money, useful knowledge and memorable experiences.[36]

In the propaganda, the movement of South African blacks between the homelands and industrial cities was presented as a ceaseless migration back and forth from one area to the other. Many of the blacks were said to have returned permanently to the homelands in order to “apply in their own territories the skills and capital that they have gained in the cities”. This flow of blacks back to the homelands was said to be increasing as the economic development of the homelands accelerated.[37] The urban black was a solitary tribal man, returning to his rural home after the end of his contract. Black women and children were absent in the portrayals of the black migrant workers in the cities, pointing to the fact that the black men were tied to their homelands not only as their place of origin, but also as the place of their family home.

Philip Bonner, Peter Delius and Deborah Posel point out the contradictions of apartheid: the underdevelopment of the reserves meant that the rural base of the migrants was hindered, but the development of reserves might have reduced the willingness of migrants to continue working outside the reserves.[38] In this context, the development of the black urban areas could not be ignored. In addition, the influx of blacks to the cities proved hard to reverse. The government could not overlook the large amount of permanently urban blacks, whose numbers were increasing despite the influx control measures. As urban slums grew, the problem of urban housing required a solution. Thus, the government started a vigorous housing campaign to build urban black townships. According to Dan O’Meara, the housing projects were first initiated by the previous governments shortly before and after the Second World War, but the NP launched a new and more extensive housing programme, which was a systematic attempt at social engineering. By the beginning of the 1960s, over one million urban blacks had been housed in housing schemes in major urban cities, and the housing problem was officially declared to be solved. The urban space was reconstructed, squatter camps were razed and the white urban areas were cleared of the unwanted black population. In the new townships, the blacks came under a much closer official surveillance and control. The interesting feature is that these areas, which had been planned in the

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[36] The Work Seekers (s.a.).
[37] The Transkei and the Case for Separate Development (1963), p. 30.
[38] Bonner et al. 1993, pp. 5–6.

1940s and 1950s, were initially meant for "detribalised, stable nuclear families", producing the next generation of urban black work force.[39] The detribalisation strategy was abandoned by the early 1960s since it was seen to deviate from the official policy that emphasised ethnic differences among the blacks.[40]

Nevertheless, it was a fact that an increasing number of black families were present in the urban areas. These developments created an interesting contradiction in separate development propaganda: urban housing programmes had a central role in the propaganda programme. In *The Condemned Are Happy*, it is the black *family* that gets a new life after moving into the government-built township. The crowded informal settlement is portrayed as a bad environment for children, who are influenced by thieves, robbers and drunks as well as drugs. The slum is a dirty, unsanitary and unsafe place: people live in heaps like ants. The children have no future in the slum since they cannot go to school. "The eyes of my sons could not feed on the beauty of the hills but only on ugly things", laments the narrator. On top of things, greedy black landlords force their tenants to pay high wages for shacks that are too small for a family to live in.[41]

On the other hand, the new town seems to be a perfect place, where the man and his family can find a better life. Even though it is further away from the city, it has big houses with gardens, it is clean and the rents are lower. There is a school for the children as well as an old people's home for the man's father. The family prospers in the new home: they now have a garden with trees, proper furniture and decent clothes. The daughter wants her father to "eat with tools like a white man". The message of the film is summarised in a speech made by the white mayor, where he says that if a house is not fit for a man to be lived in, it must be pulled to the ground, but a better house must be given to replace the old one: the government of South Africa wants every family in the country to live in a good house. The word "condemn" gets a new, positive connotation since to have your house condemned to be demolished means that you will get a chance to live a better life.[42]

In this way, images of model townships came to be a prominent feature of the propaganda. The achievements of the housing programmes for black families were described in great detail.[43] Black communities were separated along ethnic lines, which was said to be the "natural desire" of the

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[39] O'Meara 1996, p. 24.
[40] Bonner et al. 1993, p. 35.
[41] The Condemned Are Happy (1958).
[42] Ibid.
[43] See for example Welfare of the Urban Bantu (1961), p. 10; The Progress of the Bantu Peoples towards Nationhood, no. 5: Self-development – Social and Cultural (s.a.), pp. 3, 7.

blacks. Each family was given a house that was adequate in size to the number of family members, and the houses often had a garden. It is interesting how gardens became to represent the high living standards in the townships: gardens became the symbol of civilisation, modernity and well-being.[44]

Photographs of identical small houses in symmetrical patterns promoted an image of orderly development for the urban blacks in South Africa. Aerial photographs of the new geometrically arranged townships were frequently printed on propaganda pamphlets: usually the township in the pictures was Meadowlands, which was located in Soweto, Johannesburg. It was often made explicit in the captions of the pictures that the houses in the photographs were "family dwellings", not barracks meant for single male workers.[45] The chaos of the earlier slums was replaced with the serenity of the government built townships. Thus, urban architecture became the symbol of the progressive nature of the apartheid programme.

The black residents of the new townships were enjoying the Western way of life: they were wearing Western clothes as well as engaging in education and commerce in their own separate facilities. Urban blacks had even started to appreciate the high achievements of the Western culture, such as the European style of painting and sculpture. Urban black music had Western influences: popularity and quality of traditional music was declining in the cities. Jazz was popular and urban blacks who were "more exposed to the Western way of life" also enjoyed Western classical music and even ballet.[46] Even though the blacks were often said to have retained their tribal traditions, the propaganda tended to concentrate on the Westernised nature of the urban blacks. In the cover of the pamphlet *Welfare of the Urban Bantu* (1961), urban blacks are depicted going about their daily lives working, playing sports and studying, without even a hint of "traditional", "ethnic" or "rural" features.[47] Urban blacks did not seem to discard their modern ways even in the private sphere. Portrayals of black family life praised the civilising effects of the government housing schemes. The photographs of smiling urban black families having breakfast in their kitchen and sitting in

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[44] The Progress of the Bantu Peoples towards Nationhood, no. 5: Self-development – Social and Cultural (s.a.), pp. 7–9.
[45] Fortnightly Digest of South African Affairs no. 20/1962, p. 7; Progress through Separate Development (1966), p. 32; The Progress of the Bantu Peoples towards Nationhood, no. 1: Self-development – Self-government (s.a.), p. 10; The Progress of the Bantu Peoples towards Nationhood, no. 5: Self-development – Social and Cultural (s.a.), p. 8.
[46] The Progress of the Bantu Peoples towards Nationhood, no. 5: Self-development – Social and Cultural (s.a.), pp. 18–19, 21, 36.
[47] Welfare of the Urban Bantu (1961).

their modern living room have no indications of traditional customs: the rooms are filled with modern furniture, and the people are wearing modern suits and dresses.[48]

The two conflicting roles that the urban blacks played in the propaganda created constant tensions in the logic of separate development discourse. By promoting housing schemes for the black population in urban areas and by displaying the achievements of these programmes in its propaganda, the government created a paradox in its official ideology. On the one hand, the government kept on insisting on an exclusively white South Africa, but on the other hand, it paraded the black housing schemes that were carried out in urban areas of South Africa proper. The cities were supposed to be the domain of the white men, where blacks resided only temporarily, but the housing schemes indicated that the presence of the blacks was permanent. Thus, the government undermined its own notion of an exclusively white South African nation-state. This dual role that the urban blacks had in separate development propaganda shows the manufactured nature of the propaganda, and it is a prime example of the way in which the discourse could not mask the South African situation. The government was not able to escape from the reality of increasing black urbanisation despite its attempts to portray blacks as only temporary visitors to the urban areas.

## 4. Taming the Savage

The tribal black was transformed into a modern, civilised man through planned urbanisation. The black man was gradually being Westernised "through the filter of his own culture". In their new, civilised society, the blacks would be able to leave witchcraft and other pagan practices behind.[49] In *The Condemned Are Happy*, the black man is transformed from a rural subsistence farmer into a prosperous modern man, who imitates the ways of the white man by having a modern house and furniture, wearing a suit and eating with a knife and a fork. In the same way, the geometrical new townships are in strict contrast with the earlier slums. In this way, the "primitive" blacks are domesticated with the help of modernisation. This theme is not merely implied in the propaganda: for example, in *Welfare of the Urban Bantu*, housing and employment is said to diminish antisocial tendencies among the blacks.[50] The transformation is described as follows, and, once again, gardens are seen as the decisive component of civilised life:

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[48]The Progress of the Bantu Peoples towards Nationhood, no. 3: Self-development – Economic Advancement (s.a.), p. 2; The Progress of the Bantu Peoples towards Nationhood, no. 1: Self-development – Self-government (s.a.), p. 23.
[49] The Progress of the Bantu Peoples towards Nationhood, no. 5: Self-development – Social and Cultural (s.a.), pp. 10, 17.
[50] Welfare of the Urban Bantu (1961), pp. 10–11.

> "We, who have had the opportunity to transfer families from overcrowded locations and squatter camps to well planned housing schemes can testify to *the metamorphosis of the outlook on life of the majority of these people*. It is encouraging to note how they beautify both the interior and exterior of their houses, lay out attractive gardens and even plant lawn on the pavements, and there is no lack of eagerness to enter for the various home and garden competitions."[51]

In the film *Assegai to Javelin* (1965), the "savage" blacks are tamed with the help of Westernisation, and sports are given the central role as an outlet for the violent nature of the blacks. After centuries of "savage wars", the blacks had now entered into a new life, where the assegai, a traditional Zulu war spear, had been replaced by a javelin. The film shows black children on a play ground, swimming in a modern swimming pool and playing other sports. The black first-person narrator states that many people only see the traditional black culture, such as the traditional kraal lifestyle, tribal dance, warriors and hunters. He recounts:

> "We are a long way past the stage of imagined warrior nations. There's no longer anyone to fight, nor any need to fight, but a well developed body of physical fitness is still important to us, an essential part of our way of living."

The black athletes are shown playing games such as tennis, cricket, rugby and golf, helped in their training by the whites who appear as paternalistic supervisors and guides. Municipalities and the government are shown to provide facilities for sports, including "Bantu sports grounds" for all ages. With the help of an abundance of opportunities for sports, including over 700 junior soccer teams and nearly 1,000 adult teams in the Johannesburg area alone, the blacks can now satisfy their appetite for physical fitness through an alternative outlet.[52]

In addition to sports, education emerged as an integral feature of government policy in the propaganda, crystallising the development of the blacks from ignorance and savage primitiveness towards Western civilisation and urban lifestyle. In the film *Bantu Education*, the traditional imagery of tribal blacks living their rural lives in the village is changed once the state education plan is launched: images of clean school buildings, modern facilities as well as black children in school uniforms are introduced in order to attest the way education had forever changed the lives of the blacks. The missionary schools have been replaced by the government-controlled black education system that is designed to benefit the black people. Now the black school children have a chance to progress even to the higher levels of education since multiple universities and technical

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[51] Ibid., p. 10 [my italics].

[52] Assegai to Javelin (1965). Sports get attention also in other propaganda material. See for example South African Digest no. 4/1963, pp. 6–7; Welfare of the Urban Bantu (1961), p. 11; The Progress of the Bantu Peoples towards Nationhood, no. 5: Self-development – Social and Cultural (s.a.), p. 35.

education have been launched for the blacks. All pupils from primary school to the universities are presented as clean, eager to learn and disciplined. The blacks are said to have “a direct say” in the ruling of their own schools. There are schools even for special needs children, such as the deaf. As a result of the achievements in black education, the film implies that the standard of living for the blacks is rising: it contrasts images of various commodities with images of traditional tribal life. Once again, whites feature in the film as paternalistic instructors and supervisors taking care of the blacks.[53]

In the film, most of the black teachers are said to be women, who had not had employment opportunities earlier because of their heavy domestic duties. Thus, the government is helping in the emancipation of the black women.[54] This theme of separate development as the liberator of black women is a recurring feature in the propaganda: in the traditional culture, women had been oppressed and overworked, going about their daily duties “with little diversion or relaxation”, but as the women moved to the cities they were able to find a work and also educate themselves.[55] The contradiction between these images of emancipated black women and the notions of rural black women, still supposedly tilling the soil in the homelands, is notable.

The way in which the civilisation mission was in conflict with the maintenance of the “traditional” black culture posed problems for the propaganda. Often the emphasis was on how the black education system combined civilisation with tradition, although it remained unclear how this combination worked in practice. In the pamphlet *South African Realities,* black education was portrayed as being different from that of the whites, but nevertheless it was asserted that this education was not inferior. Separate educational systems were explained to be justified since while the whites had a long tradition of Western education, the blacks were “only now emerging from a ‘primitive’ existence”. Black education had given the blacks an opportunity to be themselves for the first time, i.e. “to be Bantu, and civilised”. Previously, the blacks had had to sacrifice their identity and try to become pseudo-European in order to be educated.[56] Often, the separate programme for black education was justified with the fact that in other African countries the black authorities

[53] Bantu Education (s.a.).
[54] Ibid.
[55] Welfare of the Urban Bantu (1961), pp. 3–4, 13; See also The Progress of the Bantu Peoples towards Nationhood, no. 5: Self-development – Social and Cultural (s.a.), pp. 33–34.
[56] South African Realities (1963), p. 9.

themselves had decided to abandon the old European oriented educational system and to revise syllabuses to rediscover the cultural heritage of Africa.[57]

In the propaganda, the education of blacks was said to be "by the Bantu, for the Bantu", with black universities as the focal point of black "national development". According to the government, a nation could not be entirely free until its citizens were literate, and for this reason, advancement of black education was a central feature of the government policy of separate development.[58] However, the "civilised", educated and urbanised blacks appeared in the propaganda as detribalised and stripped of their ethnic identity. In the process of modernisation and development, the blacks began to appear as similar to white people, adopting their culture, way of dress and consumer habits. This should have been unacceptable considering the way in which separate development discourse was based on the notion of separate communities with different traditions and different ways of life. The blacks were shown developing towards higher levels of civilisation and adopting the lifestyle of the whites, thus leaving their primitive existence and tribal culture behind in the process. At the same time, they were portrayed as essentially different and tribal with their own separate "national" traditions. This conflict remained unresolved in the propaganda.

## 5. Conclusion

Apartheid ideology can be seen as a comprehensive hierarchy of power. Separate development, as its one discursive manifestation, was also ridden with racist attitudes towards the blacks. In separate development propaganda, nation was mobilised to function as the attribute that divided the population into separate categories. Nevertheless, the use of national categories functioned mainly as a rhetorical device. Apartheid legislation was based on *racial* categories, not on nations or ethnicities, and the fundamental role of racial categories in apartheid policy is mirrored in the separate development discourse, despite the attempts to refashion apartheid to fit the mould of Western nationalist thought. Closer examination of the propaganda reveals that, to a great extent, it was not nation but race that was the eternal, unchanging category and that all arguments of the propaganda tied to cultural relativism are actually based on "racial relativism": the *black* nations were not essentially similar to the Western or *white* nations. Even though the black population was supposed to be made up of separate nations, the blacks were frequently portrayed as a unitary mass.

[57] Why Apartheid? (s.a.), pp. 8–9; South African Realities (1963), p. 9; You Be the Judge (1964), p. 4.
[58] South Africa Speaks (1962), pp. 9–10.

The “national differences” between the black groups often seemed trivial, and the different ethnic groups, as well as the coloureds and the Indians, received surprisingly little attention in the propaganda. In the end, the discourse was built upon two concepts: whiteness and blackness. The white and the black were essentially different, and this polarisation constructed a hierarchy of races. Although the propaganda seemingly celebrated the diversity of South Africa, it also made it clear which culture was superior. Thus, separate development discourse was an inherently racist ideology. It was only masked in the rhetoric of Western nationalist tradition and distorted such concepts as morality, equality and national self-determination.

In separate development propaganda, the blacks were seen as essentially rural beings, who were still tied to their tribal traditions. Propaganda films drew a comprehensive picture of the black man: he was simple, uneducated and family-loving, lost in the city of the white man and needing his help to survive and to develop towards a more dignified existence. The role of a black male in the white South Africa was to be that of a temporary migrant worker, who would eventually return back to his homeland, where his wife and children would be waiting for him, taking care of the homestead. Black women were excluded from the white South Africa, both as blacks and as women. They became to represent the complete opposite of the masculine, white and modern man as tribal, rural and feminine creatures.

The blacks had multiple conflicting roles in the propaganda: they were tribal, underdeveloped peasants and temporary migrant workers, but at the same time, they were developing towards civilisation, both in their rural homelands and in the cities. The conflicting role of the “urban Bantu” in the propaganda shows how the government was unable to escape the realities of black urbanisation in its propaganda discourse. The blacks were a permanent feature of the “white” South Africa, not just as temporary sojourners but also as families. The central role played by the urban housing programmes in the propaganda created a paradox in the official ideology of the government. The notion of temporary migrant workers and these presentations of urban housing projects and urban black family life caused tensions in the propaganda discourse. As a result, the government undermined its own notion of the existence of a white South African nation-state in which blacks had only a temporary role.

The pictures of model townships with their identical houses in geometrical patterns came to symbolise the orderly development of the black population of South Africa. The architectural symmetry of the new townships turned the urban black areas into a space in which the black mass

could be controlled and contained by the government. The housing programmes and planned urbanisation, alongside sports and education, took part in the process of refashioning the primitive and tribal "savages" into modern, docile citizens who could build their own political community with the help of the government. The blacks were to be tamed and domesticated. The role of sports as the outlet of the "violent nature" of blacks is an interesting detail in the discourse, and it shows how "the black" was not just an "equal other" to the white man or a "noble savage": he was also a wild, violent and threatening being who needed to be contained. Gardening, on the other hand, was the pinnacle of civilisation, pointing out the way in which the urban blacks had entered a new stage in their development. The blacks were being Westernised and made into modern gentlemen in every sense.

At the same time, the propaganda desperately tried to maintain that the blacks were essentially rural beings and loyal to their own ethnic group and tribal traditions. The tensions between tradition and development, rural and urban as well as African and Western were prominent features of separate development propaganda. Nevertheless, even though the government tried to hold on to the essential "otherness" of the black, the government did aim at modernising the blacks and making them similar to the whites, despite reassurances that it respected the traditions and culture of the blacks. As a concept, separate development was based on the idea of *development*: towards civilisation, modernisation, urbanisation and Westernisation. In this equation, the traditional, tribal and undeveloped black was to be fundamentally changed. The discourse was unable to finally resolve whether the blacks should have maintained their essentially different nature or whether they should have left their traditions behind in the course of development and urbanisation. The tensions in the discourse concerning the role of urban blacks seemed to imply that the government preferred the latter. The white, Western and developed was always superior to the black, African and traditional in the mental framework of the apartheid government, despite the attempts to mask the racist features of apartheid with the concept of separate development.

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