**POL 3013: SOUTH AFRICAN POLITICAL THOUGHT**

**TUTORIAL 6: APARTHEID’S GAMBLE**

This worksheet includes four extracts from the parliamentary debate on the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act of 18–20 May 1959. The questions below form the basis for discussion in tutorials.

*The Minister of Bantu Administration and Development (Dr. De Wet Nel)*: Every nation in the world finds its highest expression and fulfilment in managing its own affairs and in the creation of a material and spiritual heritage for its successive generations. We want to give the Bantu that right also. The demand for self-determination on the part of the non-white nations is one of the outstanding features of the past decade. Outside Africa more than a dozen non-white nations have already obtained their freedom. In Africa it is the greatest phenomenon of the time. There are a number of people in Africa who have already received their freedom and others are on the way to receiving it. . . . These matters lie close to the soul of the nation and no safety valve in the world can smother them forever (column 6006).

*Sir De Villiers Graaff (leader of the opposition United Party)*: Everything possible should be done . . . in order to develop that responsible class of Native who will have an interest and a stake in the maintenance of law and order in South Africa. . . . With this policy will go hand in hand a policy for the dynamic industrial expansion of South Africa, designed to raise living standards, to enable us to strengthen our European population and to win for South Africa the position of the industrial workshop of the Continent of Africa. . . . This policy will enable us to win and hold the leading position on the Continent of Africa. It will place White leadership on a sure foundation. It will give our Native people cause and reason to become co-defenders of Western civilization. It will build our real national strength of a patriotism shared by all the peoples of South Africa (6042-3).

*The Prime Minister (Dr. H. F. Verwoerd)*: The first point made by [Graaff] was that this Bill deprives the Natives of all four provinces of rights without substituting anything else for those rights; and that is bound up with his other argument that what is being partially substituted for those rights is the tribal system which is archaic and in which there is no room for the educated Native. . . . This attitude is based on entirely false premises, namely that urbanized Bantu will have to go back to purely rural reserves, as we knew them in the past, and furthermore that the tribal system as it existed in primitive times is the be-all and end-all of the Bantu governmental development visualized in this Bill. That is by no means our intention. What is happening here in respect of the system of government is that a system which has developed over the centuries amongst the Bantu, a system which is known to them, indeed a system which is engraved in their souls and which is incorporated in their own Native laws, is being taken as the starting point for development. . . . If the Leader of the Opposition reads the speeches of the Black leaders of Central African states . . . he will see that what is demanded by people like Dr. Nkrumah is that the Black nations must not be expected servilely to take over the systems which have been developed in Europe up to the present time, but that they should be allowed to start with what is their own and that they should be able to adapt what they learn from the outside world to their own system (6215-6).

*The Prime Minister*: The hon. Leader of the Opposition said that White leadership should be retained by virtue of moral qualities. . . . But then he adds, as a further assurance of security: We are going to take certain anti-Native measures. . . . Our White leadership based on moral qualities is going to be on the basis that we say we want friendship with the Bantu while we are openly going to harness against the Bantu all the powers of the White race that we can muster. . . . My question is whether that is morality? (6231).

1. Why do speakers on both sides of the debate refer to developments taking place elsewhere in Africa and the formerly colonized world? What are their strategies for fitting in with these developments? To what extent do these strategies share a common goal?

2. How does Verwoerd see the role of the “educated Native” and the “urbanized Bantu” in the development of the homelands? How, if at all, does his policy match the demands which he attributes to Nkrumah? Do you think he had any chance of winning the support of the African middle classes in the cities? If so, how?

3. Is there any justice in Verwoerd’s suggestion that apartheid was a less hypocritical policy than that of white leadership?

4. If we think of apartheid as a gamble on the direction of world history, what would it have taken for the bet to be won? That is, what world-historical developments could have preserved the legitimacy of racial domination in South Africa, at least in the eyes of the Western powers? And if the gamble was lost, who would pay for it?