

FANCY DRESS: CONCEALMENT AND IDEOLOGY IN SOUTH AFRICA

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The atmosphere on this sunny morning in Pretoria is really much more that of a picnic than a demonstration.¹ For the first few minutes after each of about 20 buses empties its passengers onto the lawn in front of the Union Buildings the men parade in loose formation, one or two running forward to smack his shield with a knobkerrie. It's not long, though, until they settle in the shade alongside the groups of women who are dressed as if for Sunday services. When the speakers finally mount the podium it takes a full ten minutes of pleading and scolding over the sound system to convince the audience to get up and approach the platform. Comments one irritated IFP leader to another: 'They don't understand!'

IFP leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi and Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa (Contralesa) president Pathekile Holomisa² have come with their bus-loads of only semi-enthusiastic supporters to protest against the government's decision to introduce democratically elected local government bodies in rural areas. Near the platform stand two men wearing full leopard-skin regalia, but where many of the men in T-shirts and slacks carry small shields and sticks or spears, these two are seemingly empty-handed. On closer inspection, though, the edge of a holstered 9mm automatic becomes clear underneath each one's leopard-skin. After an uncharacteristically quick speech by Buthelezi, one of the speakers begins to read out their memorandum to President Mandela: 'Western culture is imposed on us ...'

This is certainly not the first time that a political movement has announced itself in the image of a somehow more glorious and heroic past. The revolutionaries of 1789, Marx (1963:19) reminded us in *The 18th Brumaire*, took to their tasks wearing Roman robes. In that instance, Marx suggested, the actual political programme of the revolutionary bourgeoisie was far outstripped by the garments in which it was delivered. While the *Brumaire* itself presents a powerful argument against a view of history as mechanically and irreversibly 'progressive', Marx did suggest that future revolutions would have to outgrow their handed-down clothes. In at least some cases of contemporary revolutionary struggles, 'content' has succeeded in going beyond 'phrase'. In name, Urnkhonto

weSizwe (MK) may have called up images of pre-colonial Africa as Steve Tshwete once recalled (Barrell, 1990:11), but in deed the ANC-led alliance remained solidly modernist, never seriously claiming its political program to be the resurrection of an African past. It was also in the *Brumaire* that Marx explored the state's use of masks and costumes, and this too has a contemporary analogue. There seem, in fact, to be no small number of contemporary possibilities for the counter-revolutionary employment of costuming and concealment, and South Africa under the apartheid-state saw a yet unmatched effort to develop such possibilities in the particular form of the proxy force.

In one sense these were political puppets: the Witdoeke, the Black Cats, amaAfrika, Inkatha (to name only a few, and the list of names alone suggests how deeply invested the apartheid state was in the strategy) carried out the state's work, using its funds, arms, and training, under the guise of independent existence and action. But it is the nature of the 'guise' and not the action itself that is crucial here. SA Defence Force (SADF) troops and SA Police (SAP) officers were quite capable of assassinating African National Congress (ANC) and United Democratic Front (UDF) leaders or of launching terror attacks on their supporters in the townships, and did so with considerable effect. What they could not do, however, was to fundamentally re-shape the perceived nature of the political struggle, to turn state terrorism and political assassination into 'black-on-black violence', to make the township wars between the SAP or SADF and MK appear as though the community itself was torn by an internal civil war. At least two large-scale proxy operations inside South Africa's borders³ have already been revealed: 'Marion' aimed at utilising the counter-revolutionary potential within Inkatha in KwaZulu, and 'Katzen', an effort to replicate 'Marion' in the ANC's Eastern Cape stronghold with the creation of a 'Xhosa Resistance Movement'.⁴ Both were deeply entwined with the machinery of separate development, the grandest and most destructively farcical masking of all. The details of operation 'Marion' are still emerging in the trial of former defense minister Magnus Malan and more such evidence is certain to be brought out in the hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Researchers and historians will no doubt be able to use this material to piece together a better picture of the political landscape in South Africa during the 1980s. For the moment, however, I would like to reflect on the implications of some of this material for our thinking about politics today.

The first question that these strategies of concealment present us with is clearly one of ideology. What is seemingly important is the name a grouping is given, the imagery it deploys, the particular signifiers with which it identifies and, more importantly, justifies its actions. This immediately brings out the second critical

issue here, that of legitimacy, for ideological claims, ideological contests, are about legitimacy: who does a particular political grouping represent, who do they act and speak for? In the Western context, the issue of legitimacy has been the central battle ground for liberals and certain of their critics: Dahl and Huntington wheel out legitimacy as the golden crown of capitalist democracy, Habermas and Chomsky reply that it is nothing but a crudely manufactured imitation. In South Africa, the issue of legitimacy has been more clearly tied to specific political figures and forces and to their claims to represent some element of the population; it is less an academic question than a practical political one. Finally, then, the question of ideological contestation for legitimacy should give some account of its own relevance. How strong an element is ideology or legitimacy in state/society cohesion? If ideology is everything, how can unpopular (or for that matter simply unpleasant) regimes or social orders survive? If material forms of hegemony are what really count, why was the apartheid state so willing to pour resources into efforts to conceal itself?

I

If South Africa has seen some of the most prolific development of political proxies and the most elaborate forms of concealment, their inspiration was never far away, or particularly hard to find. Separate development's DNA can be traced to the British colonial policies of indirect rule. The requirements of the 1884 Berlin Conference's doctrine of 'effective occupation' (a basic military presence and a skeletal administrative capacity) for recognition of colonial claims set the tone for the colonisation of Africa as quick and dirty. The British in particular gave considerable thought to the expedient establishment of hegemony on the ground by bringing any existing system of political authority under the control of the colonial governor. Where indigenous 'chiefs' did not exist, they were manufactured and where local populations were inconveniently placed, they were reconfigured into similarly constructed 'tribes'. The British were by far the most advanced in the application of indirect rule, but as Mahmood Mamdani (1996) has recently suggested, rule through 'native authority' became the norm throughout colonial Africa, and continues to have a formative effect on the post-colonial state.

The development of a system of indirect rule in Natal has been well documented (Brookes, 1927; Welsh, 1971; Etherington, 1989). Unlike in the Cape and the Orange Free State, where African chiefs were regarded as a threat to white farming interests, in Natal the paradigm of indirect rule sought the preservation and manipulation of indigenous political structures rather than their destruction (Lacey, 1981:94). Shepstone's system placed a layer of colonial administration over the existing hierarchy of *amakhosi* and *izinduna*, leaving it

structurally intact, but where any conflict of interest arose the settlement was in favour of colonial transformation rather than indigenous preservation. Where people had no chief one was created, where chiefs resisted they were deposed, and where 'tribal' administrative units were necessary they were cobbled together. The pre-colonial powers of the chiefly class which had their origin in the allocation of land to newcomers and local control of military regiments were replaced by administrative and judicial powers in the colonial hierarchy (Guy, 1982:179-80; Lambert, 1989:379-80). Indirect rule was most immediately a system of social administration and hegemonic power, but with the codification of 'native' customary law in Natal, it increasingly took on an ideological dimension as well.

The 1891 Natal Code of Native Law (Rogers, 1933:316) made this jump into the shadowy world of ideology by placing on the Governor-General the mask of 'The Supreme Chief', endowing him with,

all the powers, authorities, functions, rights, immunities and privileges which according to the laws, customs and usages of Natives are exercised and enjoyed by any Supreme or Paramount Native Chief and which shall be deemed inter alia to include the following: (a) Power to call upon chiefs personally to render military or other service and to supply armed men or levies for the suppression of disorder or rebellion; (b) Authority in the exercise of his functions and powers to punish disobedience of his orders or disregard of his authority by fine or imprisonment or by both fine and imprisonment; (c) The function of Upper Guardian of all Native orphans and minors in law.

Passage of the 1927 Native Administration Act extended the powers of the 'Supreme Chief' to the Transvaal and the OFS (Republic of South Africa Act 38 of 1927). The members of the ANC's Council of Chiefs responded to the act with a detailed memorandum to the government arguing that neither chiefs nor Paramounts had ever held the powers given to the Governor-General in his 'Supreme Chief' mask. Chieftaincy, they argued, was an hereditary office over which the 'Supreme' or Paramount Chief held no powers of appointment nor of deposition. No chief, they suggested, could take action without first consulting with his uncles and brothers (his lineage council) and receiving the ultimate approval of the *pitso*, a gathering which, 'every male person of age is expected to attend ...' Autocratic powers of rule by proclamation, such as were routinely wielded by the Native Affairs Department, were unheard of. The chiefs' memorandum, later published as a pamphlet by the ANC (GG 1184 - 50/1313), made clear the nature of the political struggle immediately at hand:

The African National Congress, of which this Council of Chiefs is an integral part, is strongly opposed to the policy of segregation unless by it is meant the creation of two States, one European and the other Native. We cannot see how two peoples, living in the same country and under the same governmental control, can develop separate nationalities and separate civilisations. It is our firm conviction that the Bantu people can develop along their own lines if they have a country of their own and are free from European interference. However, if it is the policy of the government that the Bantu people should be governed by means of their own laws and customs, we feel it our duty, as guardians of the people, to point out that this should be in accordance with native law and not with the wishes of the white race.

The government was not simply claiming the right to make law for black South Africans by proclamation, but to do so as one of them. By transforming the Governor-General, and through him, the Native Affairs Department, into a 'Native Authority' rather than an 'Authority over Natives', their every action was instantaneously made legitimate. South African 'native administration' now issued not from the mouth of a white administrator but from that of a 'traditional native chief', translating the paradigm of indirect rule from an operational principle on the ground to an ideological masking at the highest levels of power.

The costuming of the Governor-General and the Native Affairs Department as African chiefs was always a far-flung proposition, but looked at from the perspective of the sort of ideological battles it was meant to prevail in, it failed to go far enough. The 'Supreme Chief' mask seemed to cover only the face of the Governor-General himself - at every level in-between the state and the local appointed chief or headman, the white administrators remained all too visible and along with the general rationalisation and tightening of control over blacks after 1948, apartheid brought also a reinvigorated attempt to both conceal and legitimise itself. The precise origin of the new strategy is difficult to locate and this is perhaps because no one point marked the unveiling of a fully-formed program, ready to be wheeled out and put to work. Its traces, though, can be seen in the statements of National Party politicians in parliament, and in the annual reports of the Native Affairs Department.

The final pages of the NAD Report of 1945-47 featured a fold-out photograph depicting the visit of the British monarch to a Johannesburg township. The caption reads, 'At Orlando, in Johannesburg, the biggest Native township in the Union, it is estimated that upwards of 100,000 Africans of all tribes lined the streets as Their Majesties drove to the Community Hall'. The crowd in the photo

is unremarkable for an urban setting circa 1946, dressed in contemporary European suits, coats and hats (RSA, 1948 I:29-30). By 1951-52, the Department chose to portray the population under their administration rather differently. In the Report for those years, Africans are represented by 'A Xhosa woman enjoying her pipe' and 'A young Pondo Girl', both dressed in blankets and beads (RSA, 1955:7). The most noticeable shift is urban to rural, corresponding of course with the apartheid dictum that blacks were only to be present in the cities as 'temporary workers' (RSA, 1948 II:col 1730). But there is also the slightly more obscure(d) treatment in both representations of the notion of 'tribe'. The 1946 photo from Orlando is said to depict thousands of Africans 'of all tribes', quietly admitting to the urban integration of ethno-linguistic 'tribes', of which an entire section of the Department was devoted to producing detailed ethnographic analyses. To reveal that Xhosas, Pondos, Zulus and Sothos all lived next door to one another in the townships and came out together to wave to the Queen was dangerously close to an admission that, at least in urban areas, 'tribe' had little relevance. Once the 'tribal' denomination had slipped, could an erosion of the 'race' paradigm be far off? After 1950, the ideological slippage was distinctly reversed. The captioning of the 1951-52 photos makes the 'tribal' designation the most significant identifier of each woman. They are each shown standing alone, solitary, emblematic representatives of their 'tribes'. Any good South African school-child who had studied his or her 'Race Studies' text would know instantly what sort of hut each woman lived in, what sort of pottery she spent her days making, and what traditional foods she ate.⁵ They would see and know nothing of the urban townships, or of the workers in the mines and the factories, though they would be surrounded by them and their works every day of their lives.

The ideological effect begun by the NAD in its own internal operations, then disseminated publicly through the educational system, portrayed black South Africans as somehow foreign and distant from South African society. It is also here in the early-1950s that the Department and members of the National Party began to consciously substitute 'Bantu' for 'Native', the term which had been used since at least the late-1880s, though it was not until Hendrik Verwoerd's becoming Prime Minister that the shift was made a matter of state policy (Lapping, 1987:131). 'Native', while unquestionably derogatory, calling up colonial notions of primitivism, also carried with it the distinct suggestion of belonging. A 'native' has been there all along. It is only the person arriving from outside, the colonist, the settler, who is in a position to point fingers at the 'natives'. 'Bantu', on the other hand, held no such hidden claims about rights of first occupancy.

Simultaneously, National Party politicians began to proclaim on the 'proper sphere' for black political rights. The 1951 Bantu Authorities Act took the first step in policy towards Minister of Native Affairs EG Jansen's suggestion in 1948 that, 'this side of the House says that they can have their rights in their own area but not in the European area' (RSA, 1948:col 1727). The comments of one field administrator in a correspondence with the Commissioner's office make clear the more material purposes of the Act (NTS 8931 - 232/362):

I shall be glad if the Bantu Affairs Commissioner will submit concrete proposals for the establishment of a tribal authority for Chief Sekgopa's tribe. At the same time the conferment of civil and criminal jurisdiction on the Chief will be considered.

Once these steps have been taken, the Chief and his Council can proceed against agitators according to the tribal laws and traditions and if such action fails, consideration will be given to proceeding against the agitators in terms of section 5 of Act 38 of 1927.⁶

Bantu Authorities was also an exercise in political costuming, and here there was to be an unmasking, a transference, as well. After Bantu Authorities, the white administration would no longer play at the role of 'Supreme Chief'. Instead, that role was passed on to the same chiefs and headmen who had been playing bit parts since the turn of the century. Expanding the ideological potentials of indirect rule to their outer limit, the new tribal authorities were declared to be a resurrection of 'the traditional Bantu democracy' (RSA, 1959:49), and the Department's belief in the power of its new ideological machinery is reflected in a memorandum sent from the Secretary of the newly re-named Department of Bantu Administration and Development to the local commissioner in Pietermaritzburg instructing him that the design and construction of facilities for the tribal authorities should conform, 'as far as possible, with Bantu culture and tradition' (NTS 8993 - 214/362).

Bantu Authorities was resisted fiercely from the beginning, as Govan Mbeki's *The Peasants' Revolt* (1984) detailed, and as the TBVC states (the bantustans given 'independence') were each set adrift they too failed to achieve the demobilisation of the anti-apartheid struggle at which their 'independence' was aimed. Thus by the mid-1980s, the state was faced with reasonably persuasive evidence that the campaign to legitimise segregation was a lost cause, and to some degree the particular ideological thrust of the Bantu Authorities Act and the Homelands legislation (emphasising black political independence) was downplayed, though certainly not abandoned. The more general principles of concealment and costuming quickly and easily found their way into the

urban-centered counter-insurgency efforts of the 1980s.

The details of operation 'Marion' are only now being revealed in the Malan trial. But the specific references to Inkatha in the documentation of operation 'Katzen' suggest that the Eastern Cape plans were drawn up on an existing model in KwaZulu. Against the background of the 1986 State of Emergency, both operations were intended to roll back the organising gains of the UDF and the growing presence of the ANC through the development of 'independent' political movements. At one level, their 'independence' was of course meant to conceal the role of the state in atrocities such as the KwaMakhutha massacre. At another level, it allowed for the mask of 'black authenticity' to be placed on the killers. Again, the underlying aim was the control of political representation and in a certain sense, legitimacy. The self-identified forces of the state clearly represented a hostile foreign power to most township residents, in large part due to the state's own long-standing effort to create just that sort of relationship between them. By the mid-1980s things had clearly come too far for the SADF to win many hearts and minds, but the mobilisation of Inkatha, which until the formation of the UDF was considered by many people to be an internal organ of the liberation struggle (Lekota, 1996), or the appearance of a 'Xhosa Resistance Movement', held out the possibility of transforming the foreign invasion into a civil war.

The 'Katzen' documents refer to the necessity of making 'maximum use of traditional leaders' and here the connections can be drawn not only to the systems of Native Administration and Bantu Authorities, but to the apartheid state's external proxy campaign in Mozambique. Renamo, first organised by the Rhodesian security forces in 1975 then passed on to the South African Defence Ministry in 1978, tapped into old networks of indirect rule that had been abandoned by the Frelimo government, winning the support of the chiefs or *regulos* by returning to them their positions as petty administrators and tax collectors in the areas under its military control. Along the way, Renamo came to be associated with a sort of neo-traditionalism, though one heavily influenced by tradition's meaning under colonial rule (Vines, 1991:17-18, 111-9; *Africa Confidential*, October 6, 1995). If the assumed connections between 'Katzen' and 'Marion' are correct, efforts must also have been underway in the mid-1980s to make 'maximum use of traditional leaders' in KwaZulu and Natal. In rural areas, the 'warlordism' of the mid-1980s often took on the trappings of tradition, with irregular taxation by chiefs becoming tied to Inkatha organising (Minnaar, 1992:63-64). Here again it is difficult to locate precisely where 'tradition' begins and ends. The subsidisation of a chiefly class by household-production surpluses was certainly a widespread feature of pre-colonial societies in Southern Africa.

Chiefly accumulation, however, was understood to function as a support net for the community as a whole in times of crisis or for individual families in times of need (Mohapeloa, 1945:4; Beinart, 1982:15-17, 22; Bundy, 1988:16). Demands for a contribution of R5 a head for Inkatha membership may be based on the same 'traditional' form, but their content is radically different.

As was the case in the other Homeland administrations, the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly was dominated by chiefs holding appointed seats. As the ruling party, Inkatha was strongly tied to their existence and their interests, as they were to it. But on looking back at Inkatha during the 1970s and 1980s what is particularly surprising (given their public positions since 1990) is the distinct lack of ethnic or traditionalist rhetoric or particularly focused attention on the role of 'traditional leaders' in local government. In the late-1970s, Buthelezi seemed far more interested in the role of 'Black Nationalist Leader' which could be captured through public flirtations with the ANC than that of 'Tribal Chief' which the state had provided him. During Buthelezi's 1977 meeting with Justice Minister Kruger, for example, the following exchange took place (Karis and Gerhart, forthcoming):

Mr Kruger: Don't you consider the Zulus as an entity on their own, as an entity of people I mean. What is the position between you and the Xhosas for example?

Chief Buthelezi: No, I would say that the position between us and the Xhosas is the same as between the Afrikaners and the English. I mean they are all, you are the same people, as we are the same people. We have been speaking the same language in fact as the Xhosas.

Mr Kruger: But surely, Chief, you consider the Zulu people to be an independent people, and independent people in the sense that they are independent of other peoples, that you are a nation, a Zulu nation.

Chief Buthelezi: Once we were conquered by the British of course, that fizzled away and once the whites of South Africa in 1910 decided to submerge us with all the other people of South Africa, it was not our decision.

After 1990, and even more so following the April 1994 elections, Buthelezi, whose prominence in the late-1970s was in large part due to his resistance to bantustan 'independence' for KwaZulu, could not say enough about the 'Zulu

Nation' and the need for the province of KwaZulu-Natal to become 'an autonomous kingdom' (*Business Day*, September 20, 1995). In July 1995, communications from the Premier's office came underneath a letterhead announcing their source as 'the Government of the Kingdom of KwaZulu-Natal' (*Star*, July 12, 1995). During the Indaba negotiations in the mid-1980s there was scarcely any mention (if at all?) of chiefs as local government officials and in the Buthelezi Commission Report, Inkatha's two volume contribution to the process, not a word was devoted to the subject. Compare this with the IFP's demand during the negotiations over the KwaZulu-Natal provincial constitution that chiefs constitute primary local governments for rural residents (IFP, 1995 I:7d), and IFP secretary-general Ziba Jiyane's claim that the chiefs represented 'the core of the Zulu kingdom' (*Business Day*, January 22, 1996).

It was only in 1990, following the unbanning of the ANC and SACP, that Inkatha began to seriously examine the possibilities for building a post-apartheid power-base on the foundation of KwaZulu's rural chiefs. The 1990 Amakhosi and Iziphakanyiswa Act took the first steps toward insuring that that base did not slip out from under them (KwaZulu Act 9 of 1990). The Act gave the homeland's Chief Minister the power to appoint or depose any person as a chief and to determine their rate of remuneration. Until 1990, chiefs in KwaZulu were paid on average R5,000-6,000 per annum. After 1990 the lowest paid of KwaZulu's 244 chiefs, those without standard 10, began drawing R18,000 per annum. Under the old regime, the chiefs were bound to the system, and to Inkatha, by the overarching hegemony of the apartheid state. But as the evaporation of the bantustan boundaries drew nearer, Buthelezi and Inkatha clearly recognised that they would have to pay for the chiefs' loyalty. The IFP's current struggle over the right of the provincial government to control the chiefs' remuneration is an open acknowledgment of this form of patronage.

By the time of the October 1995 demonstration in Pretoria, the IFP was calling for 'the preservation of a traditional system of societal organisation' in which 'traditional leaders' would practice 'African-type direct democracy' (IFP, 1995 II). The similarity to the apartheid state's own pronouncements on separate development is striking, and the ideological concealment at work is the same: the mask of tradition is dropped over a system of power and patronage which forms the backbone of social control in the rural areas. The dressing up of coercion as legitimate authority is so stark in places that it would be almost laughable if it were not so terrifying. The 1990 Amakhosi Act declared it to be a matter of traditional law and custom that no person could resettle from a tribal area without first receiving the permission of the chief and paying a *valelisa* fee. Failure to comply could draw a five month term of imprisonment. Thus, should

a rural resident find 'tradition' not to his or her liking, modernity was as close-by as the nearest prison cell.

II

What is already known about the history of Inkatha and the KwaZulu government, as well as what is now being revealed about their relationship with the apartheid state's security apparatus, suggests an interesting question: to what degree can the IFP be criticised or challenged for the manipulations of the past, or to put the question another way, what are we to make of the political legacy of separate development? The evidence of the manipulation of ethnic identity and cultural tradition by various state organs is clear and it is voluminous. The charge could be laid, however, that such evidence can only result in a conviction that after the entry of post-structuralism onto the field can no longer be upheld, for underlying it is a claim about the truth or falsity of consciousness. For its part, the IFP has already moved in this direction to support its political claims. The Pretoria Memorandum was particularly notable for its deployment of the politics of cultural identity, arguing for the right of 'different social formations to exist' (IFP, 1995 II).

As I suggested earlier, concealment strategies contain both material and ideological or ideational components. Indirect rule and Bantu Authorities were, in the material sense, forms of power, as is the rather more obvious case of the Hit Squad. Their aim at this level is to coerce, to control, or to cause resistance leaders to 'temporarily disappear' as an SADF memo revealed in the Malan trial so charmingly put it (*Daily News*, March 28, 1996). Their ideological aspects are meant to engage on the terrain of political communication or discourse. The job of the ideological mask is in a sense parallel to that of the skilled political organiser. The inescapable truth of mass politics is that it is rarely, if ever, thoroughly and completely spontaneous. A good organiser, then, must teach the unknown through the known. The garments of the past, the weight of dead generations, is not unnecessary, but it must be outgrown. In its counter-revolutionary version, the same principle suggests that the *unknowable* must be hidden behind the known. It is the critical thrust here, the implication that something both can and should be known, that threatens to draw out the notion of false consciousness.

The 'weak' false consciousness case is functionally tied to a conception of interest and the classic example here is the charge that workers who follow ethnic political elites are ignoring their 'true' class interests under the delusion of a type of 'false' consciousness. The post-structuralist/post-modernist response to this sort of claim, heavily influenced by contemporary interpretations of Nietzsche, was to level the field of identity, declaring that all forms of consciousness were

equally 'true'. Without an objective position from which to judge consciousness as 'true' or 'false' only a subjective notion of consciousness could be viable. As Terry Eagleton (1991:22) has pointed out, however, the argument that consciousness cannot be 'false' if it structures the environment in which a person thinks and acts employs a logical slide from 'false' as meaning 'untrue to what is the case' to 'false' as meaning 'unreal', collapsing an epistemological question into an ontological one. The claim involved in criticising ideological strategies of concealment involves not an assessment of objective truth, gauged from some external location, but an examination of internal contradictions. It is a question of historicising consciousness.

All forms of consciousness and identity may be equally constructed, but on its own this point fails to deny the validity, and the importance, of tracing the historical roots of that construction. The theorist whose work springs to mind with regard to the matters immediately at hand is Louis Althusser (1984), for if ever an Ideological State Apparatus roamed the earth, it did so in South Africa. Ideology, for Althusser, has the function of constituting concrete individuals as subjects. Social groups do not spring from the earth with a list of their collective interests in hand as some pluralist theories would suggest. Individuals must somehow be welded together to form a defined social unit, they must be instructed as to their social roles and responsibilities. For Althusser, the church, the school, the press, and the legal system carry out this task of, as he puts it, 'hailing' or interpellating subjects. Ideology, then, is not the reflection or expression of a way of life, it is a way of life. Ideologies are strategic endeavours designed not simply to announce the political views of a particular group, but to actively bring that group into existence. The sort of concealment strategies under investigation here were certainly aimed at this purpose. The creation of a 'Xhosa Resistance Movement' was to contest for the right to, in Althusser's terminology, interpellate blacks in the Eastern Cape: to provide them with a set of roles and responsibilities, to tell them who their leaders were and who their enemies were.

It is perhaps telling of the fate of Althusser's work that just this sort of an attempt to use it as a social scientific lens with which to view history brings into focus its sharpest internal contradiction. The fact that the apartheid state recognized itself as having to contest for ideological supremacy in the 1980s, suggests that ideology was not the sort of all-pervasive and infallible 'social cement' that Althusser (not to mention the earlier structural-functionalist sociologists) thought it was. In his effort to do away once and for all with the truth-falsity question in ideology, Althusser proposed that the construction of essentially false subject-identities by ideological state apparatuses was universally present; that ideology, in this sense, had no history. What we find in

the case of the apartheid state, however, is a very distinct history: one of conflict and struggle both in and outside the state. Where Althusser had assumed only a handful of 'bad subjects' who would fail to respond to their interpellation, South Africa turned them out by the tens of thousands.

The necessary corrective here is a step back to Gramsci, remembering that just as state ideological hegemony must be fought for and won, there is also, always, the possibility of counter-hegemonic projects being launched. From this perspective we can return to Althusser's notion of instrumental ideology to see that it is not, in fact, the construction of a way of life - whole, complete, seamless - but the legitimization (or attack on the legitimacy) of a way of life. The Bantu Authorities Act did not bring 'retribalized traditional communities' into existence but sought to costume the already existing relations between rural residents, migrant workers, and the state as something they were not. For a migrant worker in the 1950s it was objectively true that he or she did not live in a traditional community, separate and distinct from the Republic of South Africa. The truth-falsity issue returns with force as the concept of the discursive construction of reality is deflated to more intellectually sustainable proportions. On looking back at the efforts of the apartheid state to costume its actions the question is not of the truth or falsehood of a particular social identity, but of the source of its construction and the material contents it concealed. It is not the consciousness of the individual as much as that of the institution that is under scrutiny.

Instrumentalism may be a serviceable tool for looking back at the history of ideological concealment in South Africa, but in the current context it quickly reaches the limits of its usefulness. Inkatha may at one time have been, to greater or lesser degrees, a proxy of the apartheid state, but the apartheid state is no more, the proxy is now on its own. The difficulty with analyzing ideology-as-instrument is that we are left unable to account for the half-lives of the products of ideological strategies. To speak in the language of another great thinker on questions of ideology, Georg Lukacs (1971), what we must come to terms with here is the problem of reification. With regard to ideological strategies, both an active and a passive moment of reification can be identified. An active process of reification can be seen in the sort of cloakings and concealments that attempt to project the present into a timeless past, and it is this process that we find at the heart of the instrumental strategies of concealment. The passive moment of ideological reification is something like the after-effect of the active process. Human products, the result of real historical social relations and interactions become 'part of the landscape'. They encourage us by their very existence to see them as 'natural', and they may take on material powers that

govern, in a real sense, aspects of our lives.

To label something as 'traditional' is to scrub it clean of the dirty fingerprints of human history: 'We are only doing what has always been done'. But if the label is allowed to stick, it may seem to take on a life of its own. When someone in South Africa today uses the term 'traditional' they are usually referring to the same structures and relations that for years various state organs had been manipulating, manufacturing, and labeling 'traditional'. The object of reference is here in the present, but the label itself seems to carry with it its own internal ideological charge, linking that present object with an imagined past. Without even trying, the trick is done: appointed rural administrators become 'traditional leaders', golf clubs and pieces of concrete reinforcing rod become 'traditional weapons'. What was once a strategic instrumentality now becomes a spontaneous emanation, and in the process a claim about political legitimacy slips by as well.

It is precisely this claim to legitimacy that seeks to oppose a 'traditional' society to a 'modern' one; an 'African' to a 'European' South Africa. Much of the IFP's rhetoric surrounding the KwaZulu/Natal Provincial constitution centered on the notions of autonomy and self-determination, suggesting that the rights of 'traditional communities' would be violated by the imposition of western standards of democracy. The first question the type of ideology critique suggested here brings to the fore is how precisely a traditional community is to be demarcated from the wider society that it has been an integral component of for more than a century? Once this first line of reification is breached, the next wave of queries comes pouring through: Who is to be considered a member of a traditional community and who is not? If a traditional community should have the right to decide that it will be governed by a non-democratic system of authority why should members have the right to decide on this question once (through a presumably western-style democratic mechanism) but never again? If traditional society is to be preserved and protected, what exactly is traditional society? The existing relations in rural South Africa have come a long way from the time before colonial rule and the current rhetoric about the autonomy of traditional communities speaks much more to the desire to engage with specifically contemporary concepts of democracy and legitimacy than to some notion that an untouched indigenous society must be guarded from foreign influences.

It might well be asked at this point, though, how important 'legitimacy' is after all? Politicians and political activists contest over it, but are they not, perhaps, over-estimating its real value? During the opening years of the negotiations and the run-up to the 1994 elections, King Goodwill Zwelithini was obviously

considered by Buthelezi to be an important component of his 'traditionalist' political package. As Mary de Haas recently pointed out (*Mail & Guardian*, April 4-11, 1996), as head of the KwaZulu government, Buthelezi allowed Zwelithini to maintain an extravagant lifestyle in order to control him. As the distance between them has grown into an open confrontation, with Zwelithini calling for 'traditional leaders' to remove themselves from politics, it has become clear that the King brought with him no wider following of the sort that Buthelezi commands. At the meeting in Nongoma between President Mandela, Buthelezi, and Zwelithini convened to organize a pre-electoral 'peace imbizo' for KwaZulu-Natal, Mandela was loudly booed by the audience of chiefs and indunas for suggesting that they should not 'raise Inkosi Buthelezi above King Zwelithini' (*Daily News*, March 20, 1996). Had Buthelezi, all along, mistaken his own traditionalist propaganda for the more vulgar, material sources of his political power? Outside of the rural areas, where the networks of patronage and coercion were nurtured by Native Administration Department and the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly, the IFP has precious little support, despite its appeals to Zulu traditionalism and ethnic nationalism.

In a certain sense, the power of legitimacy may be largely dependent on the power we allow it, entering into the political equation as those in positions of political power actively look for and respond to their perception of it. This is certainly a democratic reflex, and the importance of claims about legitimacy in politics appears to reflect the almost universal acceptance of democracy as a paradigm, albeit a dangerously vague one. The danger, I would suggest, lies precisely in the way in which we conceptualize legitimacy itself. Genuine democratic legitimacy is something which must be constantly tested, challenged, and debated, and it is for this reason that Rousseau mocked the idea of political representation in *The Social Contract*. With the ascendance of the politics of cultural identity has come a renewed desire to derive political legitimacy from ethnicity or culture. Legitimacy in this sense is something that is affixed to a political office or program based on the symbolic imagery deployed by the politician. Accepting such a notion of legitimacy risks herding people into group identities, privileging elites, and denying genuine participation and debate. This is not to say that any political claim tying itself to a form of identity must be rejected, but that cultural identity should not be allowed to attain the status toward which it aims, that of a trump card. Leopard-skins should be welcome in the public sphere, as should the right to ask what's underneath.

NOTES

1. Described are the events of October 28, 1995, Pretoria.
2. The validity of Holomisa's presidency of Contralesa and his moves toward an alliance with Buthelezi have been recently challenged by other leaders of the organisation.
3. The functioning of RENAMO in Mozambique and UNITA in Angola as proxy forces modeled after the American Contra army in Nicaragua has been dealt with in William Minter, *Apartheid's Contras*, Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press 1995.
4. Documentation of the 'Katzen' operation was revealed in March 1993 by Gen Bantu Holomisa and in the Matthew Goniwe trial. Reference to it can also be found in Paulus Zulu, 'Third Force Operations in South Africa' in Anthony Minnaar (ed.), *The Hidden Hand: covert operations in South Africa*, Pretoria: HSRC 1994.
5. See for example: E Hudson et al (195?) *Race Studies for Standard VII*, Cape Town: Nasionale Boekhandel Bepert.
6. Section 5 of the 1927 Act provided for the definition of tribal and location boundaries, the fusion and fission of tribes, and the removal of tribes and individuals.

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