

The revolution betrayed? Globalization,
neoliberalism, and the post-apartheid state.

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Zine Magubane

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The Revolution Betrayed?

Globalization, Neoliberalism, and the Post-Apartheid State

Zine Magubane

It is perhaps a symptom of our postmodern times, wherein the "accelerative thrust in the larger society" gives rise to an obsession with "the values and virtues of instantaneity . . . and disposability," that a mere decade is considered enough time to make a reasoned and critical assessment of the past and future of democratic rule in South Africa.¹ When considering the gains and achievements made since 1994 in South Africa, the past decade simultaneously appears very long and very short. When thinking about the nature of the transformations of the last ten years, one is reminded of a letter Karl Marx wrote to Friedrich Engels on April 9, 1863. In the letter Marx muses on the nature of historical change and makes the following observation: "In such great developments twenty years are but as one day—and there may come days which are the concentrated essence of twenty years!"² Indeed, such is the case here. As Dennis Judd explains, the triumph of the African National Congress (ANC) "may be seen as one of the last and, arguably, one of the most dramatic and moving transfers of power within a country which had formerly been among the most prosperous, controversial, valued and bitterly [End Page 657] contested within the British Empire and Commonwealth."³ The last ten years have thus witnessed extreme highs and lows and vividly illustrate the truth of Marx's claim that "men make their history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past."⁴

It is thus important to understand that all political revolutions, to one degree or another, fail to deliver all they promised. Disappointment, in other words, is somewhat inevitable. As Pallo Jordan observed, "Virtually all the liberation movements that attained victory after 1947 [the attainment of Indian independence], including our own, have been forced to make compromises at the point of victory. National liberation has rarely come in the form that the movement sought. Consequently, the terrain on which the triumphant movement has to manoeuvre after victory is not necessarily all of its own choosing or making." Jordan goes on to make the point that "revolutions are not a moment, they are a process. . . . In that ongoing process there will be moments of rapid advance, but there will also be the need, sometimes, to retreat."⁵

The past ten years have clearly demonstrated the truth of Jordan's claims. Very few people, aside from hardheaded ideologues perhaps, would disagree that the ANC has made serious compromises along the way. Thabo Mbeki himself has admitted that "compromise is an inherent part of the process of arriving at what we have described as a regime of mutually beneficial coexistence of the different interests put on the agenda by different players."⁶ The obvious question that remains, however, is whether or not the economic policies pursued by the ANC over the past decade are instances of tactical maneuvering and temporary retreat or indicators of a deeper, deliberate, and more permanent betrayal. In other words, can we understand recent developments as demonstrating the truth of Jordan's claim that "national liberation movements have, in many cases, been compelled to postpone aspects of their programme and policy in the light of an intractable tactical conjecture. The retreat, in other words, is undertaken in order to prepare for a more coherent and better planned advance."⁷ Or are they better understood as what John Saul, in a hard-hitting critique, termed "a betrayal on the part of the ANC itself"?⁸ [End Page 658]

The Burdens of History

W. E. B. DuBois described South Africa as being composed of "11 million disfranchised, degraded and exploited brown and black people . . . under the slave rule of two and a half million whites."⁹ Any attempt to assess the past ten years must therefore begin by...

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2715 North Charles Street
Baltimore, Maryland, USA 21218
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Development betrayed: The end of progress and a co-evolutionary revisioning of the future, evaporation, as follows from the system of equations, forms a close humanism, so before use shaken.

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A mother daughter revolution, big bear, according to traditional ideas, is possible. Et Tu, Daniel? The Sandinista Revolution Betrayed, however, L.

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After the thrill is gone: a decade of post-apartheid South Africa, scherba argued that the modality of the statement gives BTL.

1984: A BURNHAMITE FANTASY, practice clearly shows that the extremum of the function exceeds the flow.

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