

**21<sup>st</sup> Alfred and Winifred Hoernlé Memorial Lecture**

# **The plural society in Africa**

**Meyer Fortes**



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21 OCT 1970

# **THE PLURAL SOCIETY IN AFRICA**

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**THE ALFRED AND WINIFRED HOERNLE  
MEMORIAL LECTURE 1968  
SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTE OF RACE RELATIONS**



### **THE PLURAL SOCIETY IN AFRICA**

was delivered by Meyer Fortes. F.B.A. the William Wys Professor of Social Anthropology in the University of Cambridge. The Alfred and Winifred Hoernlé Memorial Lecture is delivered once a year under the auspices of the Institute of Race Relations by some person having special knowledge and experience of racial problems in Africa and elsewhere.

FORTES, Meyer. The plural society in Africa. The Alfred and Winifred Hoernlé Lecture, 1968. SAIRR: Johannesburg. 1970.

I REGARD it as a singular honour to have been invited to give the Hoernlé Memorial Lecture tonight. That I am able to be here at all is due to the enterprise and generosity of the Witwatersrand University Students' Visiting Lecturers' Fund, and I must express my gratitude to the officers of the Fund for this. I am fortunate enough to have been acquainted with both Professor and Mrs. Hoernlé. I first met Professor Hoernlé forty odd years ago very briefly. He happened to be at the University of Cape Town as the external examiner for an examination I sat, and his encouraging approval was a great spur to me. I first met Mrs. Hoernlé some years later. This was at a lecture she gave at the London School of Economics. It was a time of lively controversy about the theoretical approach best suited to the study of culture contact, or, as the Americans called it, acculturation, in the rapidly changing societies of Africa. The prevailing view was that the processes and results of these changes could only be understood by focussing attention on the substance of what tribal peoples were taking over from the West, be it literacy and Christianity or the use of money or new tools and implements. Mrs. Hoernlé clarified another, and as some of us soon realised, a more fruitful approach. She emphasised the frame of social and political structure within which the flow of cultural borrowings and transmissions took place. This meant considering what sort of a total society the mixture of peoples one was likely to find in a tropical colony constituted. It suggested asking what did it signify, for the processes of acculturation, that the representatives of the colonial power and its culture, had overriding political control, as well as technological and cultural superiority. It suggested considering, therefore, how they were thus enabled to determine both the contents, and the rates and direction of social change in these areas. We were led to realize, thus, how important it was, in the course of investigating the indigenous political, legal and economic structure of tribal societies, to take into account their association in the arbitrary framework of a colonial dependency.

This was one subject we talked about when I next met the Hoernlés in 1937, after my field research in the Northern Territories of what was then the Gold Coast, modern Ghana. Another, inevitably, was race relations and the segregation issue, in this country and in America.

After the war I was in South Africa again at intervals, and



had two or three long evenings with Mrs. Hoernlé. So I learnt to appreciate her wisdom and humanity and the wealth of her knowledge. In the matter of race relations in this country, she had, it seemed to me, a profound judgement in evaluating both the motives behind national policies and the complexities of the social reality they were supposed to deal with.

## I

I suppose we would all agree that the Hoernlés were representative in the views they held, of many liberal thinkers, of their generation. For them, as I see it, the case against a social system based on the ascription of politico-legal status, and the allocation of occupational roles and of rights of access to the community's resources, by reference to the adventitious criteria of skin colour and race, rested ultimately, on moral grounds. But they also sought rational and objective grounds for their principles. An argument much emphasised was the indissoluble and increasing dependence of the South African economy on African labour, with the implication that the more the economy developed the more would this increase, and the more would reserved skills and, for example, managerial opportunities be shared with Africans and thus eventually render thorough-going apartheid unenforceable.

Rather less objective seemed and still seems the argument based on the political and moral ideals of a free society, so eloquently and passionately expounded by Dennis Cowen in his 1961 Lecture.<sup>1</sup> The premiss, as Hoernlé, quoted by Cowen (page 14) put it that ". . . it is as certain as anything in human life that the spirit of liberty is ineradicable and cannot in the end be denied" might have held out some hope in the thirties. It carries much less promise of fulfilment to a generation like ours, inured as we are to the tenacity of totalitarian state power and its inevitable excesses. The spirit of liberty had precious little chance, we now know, in Hitler's Germany, or in Czechoslovakia last month. The fact is that the claim that individual freedom and the rule of justice are more likely to be enhanced than curtailed by a conscientious policy of "separate development" is as difficult to refute in the abstract as the contrary is difficult to validate in the abstract. It is the same with all moral arguments, in contrast to the apparently hard facts of economics. One either accepts, as a first principle, that the personal worth and legal autonomy of every individual should be recognized in law and custom, regardless of adventitious attributes of race, colour or creed, or else one does

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<sup>1</sup>Cowen, D. V. 1961. "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity — Today." South African Institute of Race Relations, Johannesburg.

not; and it would be impossible to refute purely by logical argument a contention that "separate development" would extend rather than contract such recognition.

The economic argument is felt to be more objectively founded. It claims that ever increasing economic interdependence between Africans and Europeans and the other racial minorities, is inevitable in the expanding industrial economy of South Africa and must entail consequential political changes. At its most extreme, the argument is taken almost deterministically. It is taken to imply that granted modern industrial technology cannot and must not be impeded if the economic progress is to be maintained, this will automatically and irresistibly compel the extension of advanced technological and economic participation to racial groups at present denied free access to these sectors of industry. And it is assumed that this inescapable economic symbiosis must eventually generate cross-racial social (and therefore political) integration or else precipitate violent protest aimed at establishing political and social parity between the races. In a less Utopian form, the economic argument is taken to imply that recognition of the economic realities (with its inevitable concomitants, such as the permanent urbanisation of substantial numbers of all the different races) will sooner or later compel the dominant minority to concede political and legal equality to the disfranchised racial groups in the interests of peace and prosperity, beginning, perhaps, with specially qualified (educationally or otherwise) élite individuals, and so breaking the barrier of categorisation by race.

Unfortunately, the economic evidence that is often interpreted in favour of one or other of these views lends itself equally to sceptical conclusions. The issue is not a new one; nor is it peculiar to industrially advanced, multi-racial societies like South Africa and the United States, and least of all is it to be regarded as primarily a curious by-product of Marxist thinking. Fundamentally the same divergence, if not antithesis of emphasis, between those who attached priority for their liberal hopes to economic advance, and those who gave precedence to political development, appeared in the thirties, in the debates about the colonial policies of the various European powers.

As far as Africa is concerned the philosophies and policies of the major colonial powers — Britain, France, Portugal and Belgium — are conveniently and dispassionately expounded in Lord Hailey's *African Survey*.<sup>2</sup> The British with their declared policy of eventual self-government for each colony, based on local representative and responsible legislative, executive and legal insti-

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<sup>2</sup>Hailey, Lord, 1957 ed. of *An African Survey*, Oxford University Press, London, especially pages 145-195.

tutions, despite the diversity of intermediate stages they visualised, gave the highest priority to political and administrative devolution, plus a good measure of judicial autonomy, to local cadres and leaders. As regards the settler colonies, the Kenya story shows that, despite some far from creditable patches, genuine efforts were made to uphold the paramountcy of African interests in the face of settler pressures.<sup>3</sup> The French by contrast, characteristically getting the best of all possible worlds, put the emphasis heavily on a highly selective cultural assimilation of an élite. It was clearly never their intention to confer self-government, or any other form of local political autonomy on their colonies, or to subordinate the economic and political supremacy of the predominantly white *colons* to the interests of the indigenous peoples. The distinction between citizens and subjects and the uniformity of the legal institutions symbolised their colonial philosophy, a philosophy of metropolitan centralisation frankly and nakedly in the interests of France.

Portuguese policies were rather like those of France. But the outstanding contrast to British policy was that of Belgium in the Congo. Like the Dutch in the Netherlands Indies their emphasis was overwhelmingly on economic development, calculated to build up a body of native craftsmen, agriculturalists, and minor technicians, under the strict paternalistic guidance of metropolitan officials, the Catholic Church, and industrial agencies. There was no room in their system for an educated and assimilated élite as in the French colonies or for local professionals, political spokesmen and administrative officials as in the British system.<sup>4</sup>

I leave it to the professional historians of the colonial era to assess the results of these diverse policies in the light of post-war blunders and betrayals. All I want to draw attention to is the implicit antithesis represented in them between accentuating economic development as the key to colonial progress towards a modern westernised type of social system, and stressing provision of political opportunity and administrative experience, and above all educational facilities and the corollary of legal freedom to enter the professions, commerce, and the Church, on the same terms as white citizens of the metropolitan power or settlers.

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<sup>3</sup>Lord Hailey's Romanes Lecture for 1941 "The Position of the Colonies in a British Commonwealth of Nations", gives a fair and comprehensive review of the British colonial position of the thirties.

<sup>4</sup>A useful survey comparing different European colonial policies in the 20 years or so before the explosion of post-war nationalism is given in the record of a series of lectures presented at the Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, and published by the Institute under the title, *Colonial Administration by European Powers* by José de Almada et al. 1947.

## II

Thus in the nineteen thirties, when the polarisation of political, cultural and moral opinion on the race issue was emerging sharply in South Africa, analogous problems were exercising both social theorists and the practical politicians and administrators concerned with the tropical colonies in Africa and Asia.

One of the most eminent was J. S. Furnivall, a British scholar with many years of both administrative and academic experience in the British and Dutch colonies of the Far East. Furnivall<sup>5</sup> coined the term "plural society" to describe the social and economic pattern which he claimed to be common to all tropical dependencies. It consists, always, he declared, of the "Western superstructure" of political and cultural supremacy, within the confines of which there is to be found a medley of peoples that "mix but do not combine", since each group clings, partly perforce, to its own language and culture, its religion and habits of life. They live side by side, but separately, within the same political association. But it is not an integrated society, for their sole field of inter-relationship is the economic one. They meet only in the market, buying and selling goods, services, labour and skill; and there is commonly a division of labour by racial groups. Such plural societies arise initially through the establishment of colonial rule in tropical areas that may already have been multi-racial. Subsequently there is the immigration of underprivileged racial groups, both forced and voluntary, predominantly for economic reasons, and this swells the range and numbers of the diverse racial groups and consequently extends the framework of plurality for the society as a whole.

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<sup>5</sup>Furnivall's final version of his theory of the plural society is set forth in his book, *Colonial Policy and Practice: A Comparative Study of Burma and Netherlands India*, Cambridge University Press, 1948, especially pages 303-312. A short summary of his views that is particularly pertinent to my present topic is to be found in his contribution to *Fabian Colonial Essays 1945* edited by Rita Hinden, London. This book is a collection of essays expounding various aspects of the approach to colonial policies advocated, in the years immediately after the last war, by the Fabian group in the British Labour Party. Furnivall was broadly in sympathy with this approach but he had doubts about the Fabian group's uncritical belief in the suitability of the institutions of parliamentary democracy as a basis for self-government in ex-colonial territories. He was critical also of the emphasis put upon education, provisions for welfare, and above all economic development without a "moral purpose" in the socialist colonial policies advocated by the British Labour Party. My own essay in the same volume ("An Anthropologist's Point of View") is in effect a commentary on Furnivall's ideas. A very considerable literature on the subject of the plural society has grown up in the past 25 years. I shall refer to some items later.

For Furnivall, the critical feature is the fact that such plural societies arise "from the play of economic forces" that are "exempt from control by the social will" — i.e. from control by the consensus of the community as a whole on the goals of policy and the values to be aimed at for the common good. This is what he regards as distinguishing the plural society in the strict sense from other societies with mixed populations such as the United States. There, he believed, some "common traditions of Western culture" and the "social will" expressed in the political organization, ensure that social relations, in other spheres than the purely economic one, bind socio-cultural groups as well as individuals to one another in genuinely social and moral associations. In the plural society, the racially or culturally distinct groups do not act as "corporate" or "organic" wholes, contributing to the formation of a "social will" reflecting the common values of a unitary political system. Their members engage in interlocking economic relations and activities impersonally. The unity that exists is not voluntary but is imposed by the autocratic colonial power, taking advantage of the economic pressures, to dominate a mass of socially discrete individuals whose only common interest is their economic inter-dependence.

It is important to realize that economic inter-dependence, in this model, relates to a market economy not to a subsistence economy, and above all that it is deemed to be dominated by the capitalistic private sector, which is not geared to goals of the common good corresponding to a consensus of social demand for augmenting the general well-being. Its driving force is the urge for private gain and material advantages, be it only for the security of wage labour, where the alternative is utter poverty. Even the introduction of Western medicine and health measures, Furnivall claims, as well as education and Christianity, serves essentially these economic ends and not any higher cultural or moral or social ends. Though the rural cash crop producer and the immigrant farm labourer are also involved in the plural society, it is in the colonial urban and industrial areas that the plural society is most conspicuous.

This is apparent from the contrast with socially and culturally homogeneous traditional societies on the one hand, and with caste societies on the other. In the latter, the occupational differentiation and economic inter-dependence of the caste groups, their residential segregation and the correlative cultural barriers, such as the prohibition on inter-marriage, inter-dining and common worship between castes, are supported by a consensus of religious beliefs and values. Caste is accepted as morally just by all and is believed to serve the common good. There is a nucleus of common social will — at least until an autocratic alien government and modern economic exploitation disrupt the system.



### III

Furnivall's theory of the plural society quickly attracted attention from social scientists in general, as well as from students of colonial affairs and practical politicians and administrators. Anthropologists, in particular, quickly saw its relevance to the problems of multi-racial or multi-cultural political and social relations in the arbitrarily constituted colonial dependencies or multi-racial states in which most of them worked. Having been personally acquainted with Furnivall, I had several opportunities of discussing his theory with him and came to the conclusion that it depicted very aptly the colonial situation of the time, as my previously cited article in *Fabian Colonial Essays* indicates. Some years later Stephen Morris<sup>6</sup> examined the relevance of the concept of the plural society to the multi-racial, culturally diversified and economically and politically white-dominated colonies of East Africa. His particular concern was with the place of the immigrant Indian groups in Uganda and Kenya. He noted that there were considerable variations in the degrees of cross-racial and cross-denominational association between individuals and families corresponding to class and educational status. He observed that relatively close social contacts and active co-operation in political and economic affairs could occur between members of the wealthy or educationally advanced upper classes and the dominant European groups. By contrast, lower down in the scale of economic and social status the pattern tended to be much closer to the Furnivallian "plural society". Such plurality, he observed, could be imposed in part by legal restrictions, as in the case of South Africa. The influence of stratification by class and by caste in maintaining the plural pattern was further explored by him in a series of papers that showed up their tenacity under the surface of increasing economic and social cross-racial assimilation, especially at "upper class" levels<sup>7</sup>.

Professor Clyde Mitchell took up the same theme in his inaugural lecture at Salisbury<sup>8</sup>. With a model of an homogeneous African tribal society in mind, he emphasised "the atomisation" of the individual in the plural society of the Rhodesian (Zambian) Copperbelt, and pointed to the absence of counter-balancing cleavages, cutting across distinct ethnic groups, as characteristic of these societies. The inference is that if some scheme of social and cultural alignments and associations, cutting across racially-ordered

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<sup>6</sup>Morris, Stephen, 1956, "Indians in East Africa: a Study in a Plural Society". *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. VII, 3, pages 194-211.

<sup>7</sup>Stephen Morris's researches are brought together in this recent book *The Indians in Uganda*, London, 1968.

<sup>8</sup>Cf. Mitchell, J. C. 1959, "Tribalism and the Plural Society", Oxford University Press. (Inaugural Lecture, University College of Nyasaland and Rhodesia, Salisbury.)



economic and political divisions, could be implemented, the divisive forces of pluralism could be contained. It is all the more important, therefore, to note M. G. Smith's emphasis on the over-riding compulsion exercised by the systems of colonial government and law<sup>9</sup>. Developing Furnivall's arguments, Smith points out that the system must of necessity be coercive and alien, and yet it alone makes it possible for a plural society to emerge and to operate at all. With the West Indies and Nigeria in mind he advocates a federal state structure to reconcile social and tribal separatism with pluralistic inter-dependence. Political consensus, he argues, is the key to the creation of the common social values that are necessary for a unitary society to exist.

It will be remembered that the plural societies Furnivall examined in constructing his model were made up of racially, linguistically and culturally distinct sub-divisions. Later writers, including those I have just cited, often focussed attention on these aspects of the notion of the plural society rather than on the economic dimension which was paramount for Furnivall. The concept has thus come to be applied to any society that is politically unitary through being under a single, supreme political authority, or that has a unitary organisation in relation to the outside world by any other structural criteria, but is internally made up of ethnically or culturally diverse groups who maintain distinguishably separate ways of life.

From this comprehensive point of view, there are very few contemporary nation states, whether of ancient or long-standing origin, as in Europe or America, or of recent emergence, as in ex-colonial states, that do not exhibit some degree of pluralism. Taken in this sense, pluralism may be highly correlated with stratification and specialisation in terms of occupational or financial or social classes or divisions, as is the case with the ethnic composition of countries like the United States and South Africa, which are generally agreed to be dominated by the white, culturally, economically, and politically privileged and powerful racial group of west European origin. But we must not forget that analogous forms of pluralism are met with in countries like India, Malaysia, and Indonesia, which are no longer dominated by a white governing class or foreign white capitalists, but still retain the multi-racial character and the divisions by caste, culture, and religious denominations to which Furnivall drew attention. Similarly, most of the new nation states of Africa have marked pluralistic features not only on account of their multi-tribal composition, but also

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<sup>9</sup>Cf. Smith, M. G. 1965. *The Plural Society in the British West Indies*, University of California Press, and *Idem*, 1965, "The Sociological Framework of Law" in Kuper, H. and L. (editors) *African Law: Adaptation and Development*, Ch. 2, University of California Press.

by reason of their economic structure. Zambia, Nigeria, and the ex-Belgian Congo, are striking examples.<sup>10</sup> But let me emphasize once again though it be at the risk of nauseous repetition, that pluralism thus interpreted is not the central issue in Furnival's model of the plural society.

It is only when racial or cultural pluralism is isomorphic with unrestricted economic competition and with the absence of social consensus, when it is the basis, therefore, of conflicting interests and purposes in relation to moral values and to the political order, that Furnivall's concept strictly applies.

To get this clear, let me contrast an ideal model of a unitary social system as an anthropologist would think of it. Such a system might be ethnically or culturally mixed, with each segment having a recognized identity focussed in its language or religion or occupation or other distinct social practices. But it would have to be autonomous, that is independent of external control, in a political sense. And basic to its unity and integration would be a conception of common citizenship in the political community, which every person could attain either individually or, if it is mediated through membership of his ethnic or cultural segment, then equally for all. All citizens would be equally bound by a commonly accepted body of public law as regards their duties to the State and their rights of personal security and rights over property, etc. Furthermore, sub-divisions, racial, cultural or local, of the society would have some form of direct representation in the organs of government, in such a way as to obviate autocratic domination by any one section. A common basis of religious beliefs and moral values would be an asset but it would be sufficient if mutual tolerance of diversity in these spheres was accepted as normal and common minimal standards were made enforceable. As citizens, individuals would be free to move about the territory of the polity and should be free to work and reside wherever personal connexions or anticipation of advantage took them, within the sanctioned limits of mutual adjustment. If the society is stratified

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<sup>10</sup>The hazards of pluralism that bedevil, sometimes tragically, the political and social development of these new states, are cogently (the more so because indirectly) brought out in several of the contributions to *Old Societies and New States — the Quest for Modernity in Asia and Africa*, edited by Clifford Geertz, Free Press of Glencoe and MacMillan, New York, 1963. Geertz's paper "The Integrative Revolution" analyses brilliantly the tendencies for ethnic, cultural, religious, and other forms of communal separatism to clash with the striving for political integration, and Rheinstein's essay on "Problems of Law in the New Nations of Africa" is of particular interest in relation to M. G. Smith's ideas. It supplements his interpretation by the clarification it provides of the complications that are liable to arise from the conflict between traditional legal systems and the foreign legal principles and institutions introduced earlier by colonial powers or more recently borrowed.

there should be reciprocal and complementary arrangements enabling members of all strata to participate effectively and equitably in the political and legal institutions.

You will notice that I have omitted mention of economic activities. The reason is that in this ideal model, economic relations and activities are deemed to be subordinate to and harnessed in the service of the common good. Hence all members of the society are deemed to have parity of economic opportunity. Of course this is an ideal model; but many homogeneous, economically and technologically undifferentiated societies in Africa and elsewhere did approximate to it in periods of stability before they were drawn into the colonial orbit.

#### IV

By contrast, the economic differential is, as I have said, primary in Furnivall's model of a plural society. On the one hand, the plural society would fall apart into a multiplicity of disparate groups if the economic nexus between individuals were destroyed. On the other, however, the economic nexus in the competitive circumstances of a colony subject to an alien and authoritarian rule, cannot by itself, in this model, generate the kind of social and moral integration that would be expressed in a common social will oriented to the common good and ensuring a just and equitable social order. The economic nexus, in this context, must at best, generate dissensus and at worst, open conflict.

Furnivall, like many liberal colonial theorists of his day, regarded the plural society as exploitative of the individual and destructive of group values found in traditional society, while at the same time falling far short of those that he believed to be ideally distinctive of modern democratic societies. What was needed, he believed, was some overriding moral or political principle that alone could transcend the divisive forces of material self-seeking inevitably generated in the plural society and that would command the common allegiance of all its sub-divisions. And the problem, then, was how to translate such a principle into appropriate and effective institutional form.

I do not believe that he succeeded in formulating a clear policy to meet these requirements. In effect, what he did was, again in common with most liberal thinkers of his day, to pin his hopes on the emerging nationalist movements. He believed that, once freedom from foreign domination was assured, the leaders of these movements would be able to fuse the ideals of the social good derived from their western education with their loyalties to their own peoples and cultures, and thus be able to set the right sort of moral goals before their people. He believed that they would be in a position to inspire confidence among their people and elicit

their cooperation in the tasks of creating a new, integrated and democratic social order in which narrowly economic aims would be subordinated to higher, collectively desired social goals. It seems, now, that these hopes have nowhere in the ex-colonial world, as yet, come to fruition. But it is perhaps still too early to form a final judgment.

Thus the central problem thrown up by Furnivall's theory still remains open. Can economic advance, and by implication, the technological development that is bound up with it, by expanding the range of cross-racial and cross-cultural participation, of itself conduce to the moral consensus and the political integration that are supposed to characterise a free and democratic society?

It seems to me that there is a marked contrast between Furnivall's (on the whole pessimistic) evaluation of what economic development might be expected to accomplish in a plural society, and the, (on the whole optimistic) evaluation of its potentialities implicit in the views that I have, for the sake of brevity, attributed to Professor and Mrs. Hoernlé's generation. From a Furnivallian point of view, economic and technological inter-dependence between individuals or between disparate groups of people, however elaborate and complex it may be, as in modern industry, can never generate the kind of moral inter-dependence and political equity that is required for the emergence of a common social will at the national level. Nor does it matter what form economic inter-dependence takes. It may be a case of capital resources and technological skill coming from one racial group and labour power from others; or it may be manifested more directly in the division of labour and the distribution of ascribed and achieved occupational roles in productive or distributive or service or exchange activities. It all comes to the same thing. The common social will that epitomises politically integrated society can arrive only in virtue of the appropriate political and social factors not through the economic nexus. From the opposite point of view it is believed that economic inter-dependence, especially when it is increasing and ostensibly binding groups tighter and tighter together in the productive system, inevitably conduces to social integration. Even in the absence of common citizenship and in spite of barriers of custom and of moral ideas, some sort of consensus must, it is supposed, emerge and must in the end compel political integration — if only, as I have suggested, to avert the grim alternative of revolutionary upheaval precipitated by demands for equal rights. Either way, economic interdependence must, it is argued, produce social and political accommodation to its inescapable reality.

I am doubtless exaggerating the contrast — for, of course, Professor and Mrs. Hoernlé were not blind to the political and moral dimension; but it serves to pinpoint an issue that is uppermost in all multi-racial, multi-cultural plural societies of the modern world. The belief, or shall I say the hope, that the promotion of

economic and especially technological interdependence at various levels of economic organisation will foster politico-legal and moral integration is widespread. It is voiced in a number of quarters in South Africa, in the United States, in Great Britain, and in developing ex-colonial African territories, particularly by broadminded industrial and financial leaders. The *de facto* modifications, evasions and exemptions made in regard to job reservation, to influx control, and to endorsement out, in the interests of economic progress, in this country, (and their counterparts in other African countries) are sometimes quoted as indicating the power of economic reality to promote social integration. So, sometimes, is the violence of the protests by interest groups and organisations racially entrenched, as in South South Africa, or claiming special privileges as natives of the country, as in some of the new African states, against relaxations of the rules. And similar reactions, more reminiscent of the fear of magical pollution found in caste societies than of economic rationality or social consciousness, have been occurring in England and America too. We touch here on aspects of personal response, by members of different ethnic groups in a plural society, to one another, that I can only mention in passing. It is the social system that I am concerned with; race prejudice and snobbery, religious or social exclusiveness and effects of stereotypes projected by members of one race on another are not my theme<sup>11</sup>.

## V

It is significant, in the modern world, that what I am calling the liberal-optimistic view of the economic factor, seems not to be shared by the governments of western countries faced with the problem of pluralism. The influx of coloured immigrants into Britain since the war has been almost wholly determined by economic considerations on both sides — given the eligibility by citizenship of the immigrants. But it has been found necessary to introduce legislation not only to control it, but more significantly to ensure that all the rights and privileges of equal citizenship are accorded to resident minority groups. Prejudice and discrimination exist; but there is no colour or race bar established and maintained by law in Britain. In the United States likewise, provision of more economic opportunities and facilities for Negro and other minority communities is tremendously emphasized in the schemes to eliminate the violent urban upheavals of recent years; but increasing emphasis is also placed, by government agen-

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<sup>11</sup> It is worth noting, though, that much evidence has accumulated since Macrone's pioneer studies in South Africa in the thirties, to show that the stereotypes thus projected are shaped by the experience of differential privilege, and the definitions of social status that emanate from political leaders and parties and other organised interest groups and ideological associations.



cies and private organisations, on the extension of civil rights to minority groups, and on creating conditions for common social experience and understanding through mixed schools and cross-racial religious and cultural enterprises. Promoting economic development and interdependence for its own sake is not expected to reduce the stresses of pluralism. On the contrary, programmes for the creation of more economic and educational opportunities for Negroes in particular, are regarded by both governmental agencies and private organisations as morally and legally due to them by virtue of their claims as free and equal citizens of the country. As the recent report of the *National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders* (1968) to the President puts it, the aim of policy should be “. . . creation of a true union — a single society and a single American identity — as our major goal” (p. 413).

Paradoxical as it seems, the policy of separate development projected in this country seems to imply the same conviction. One might describe it as calculated to create a plural society in full conformity with Furnivall's model, and to an unprecedented degree of consistency. The basis is there in the existing plural structure of South African society. As in his model, there is a white minority which has a monopoly of political and economic power by virtue of its western civilization and the superior technical, administrative, scientific and social skills, knowledge and resources at its command. With a mixture of the sincere paternalism and authoritarian rigour described by Furnivall, this ruling minority is taking steps to separate out the different ethnic and cultural groups in the population into discrete communities, politically as well as physically and culturally; and the ideal seems to be that when once every ethnic group is equipped with the resources of civilisation for development within its own boundaries, then the only significant relationships individuals of different groups will be free to engage in will be in the economic field. In all other contexts of social relationship, individuals will engage, not as persons with a common frame of values, let alone as citizens of equal status in the same politico-legal system, but as representatives of their racial communities.

It is of interest to note the addition of caste-like restrictions, for example, on inter-racial marriage and on modes of access to public facilities and amenities, intended presumably to enforce observance of strict moral and emotional boundaries in conformity with the political, occupational and social boundaries. It is consistent with this policy to attempt to secure a regular industrial labour supply by a migratory pattern. This avoids risk of permanent multi-racial urbanisation. There is a realization here that permanency of residence in an urban environment alienates the individual from his home culture, and may become the basis of cross-racial associations and activities related to common local



urban issues, between racial groups kept apart by law. The procedures for enforcing a continuous residential turnover of black labour, and circulation between industrial centres and the tribal homelands, are calculated to depersonalize the relations between the white employers and their employees, thus turning labour into a commodity that is marketable like any other commodity.

However, it is not the morality or humanity, but the basic premiss implicit in this policy that is of interest to me here. It is, surely, that economic interdependence and collaboration, whether in the white urban areas or in the tribal homelands, whether at the level of general factors of production or on the shop floor or building site, is unlikely to generate social, political and moral integration and is therefore compatible with separate development; and past experience would certainly seem to confirm this<sup>12</sup>.

Thus the British and American policies, on the one hand, and the South African policy on the other, though they seem to be poles apart, seem to agree with Furnivall's evaluation of the probable effects of economic development *per se*. But positing opposite social goals, they project opposite plans of politico-social action. The British and American official policies (and that is what I am talking about not the actualities of the social behaviour of individuals) may be said to be aimed at achieving integration *in spite of the divisive effects of economic factors* by emphasizing political, legal and moral measures. The South African official policy is, contrariwise, to apply such measures to the ends of *ensuring separateness* while relying on the expectation that economic interdependence of itself will not breed social and moral interdependence.

## VI

I imagine that both Professor Hoernlé and Furnivall, if they were here today, would favour the official Anglo-American rather than the South African variation on the Furnivall model. But if they looked closely at other parts of post-war Africa, at India, and at recent events in Indonesia, the United States, Britain and elsewhere, their confidence in their principles might be shaken. The persecution of the Chinese minority in Indonesia, the restriction of coloured immigration to Britain, and the hostility shown to coloured residents by whites in some areas of England, the summer riots and other forms of violent protest by Negroes in America, the expulsion of Asians from Kenya, the murderous war between arabicised northerners and the tribal southerners of the Sudan, the slaughter that followed independence in the Congo, the cruel

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<sup>12</sup>As is excellently documented in Dr. Sheila Van Horst's Paper "The Effects of Industrialization on Race Relations in South Africa", Ch. V. in *Industrialization and Race Relations*, ed. by Guy Hunter, Oxford University Press, 1965.

massacre of Ibo immigrants in Northern Nigeria and its aftermath in the present horrible Nigerian civil war — these are but extreme manifestations of a new and intolerant spirit of ethnic and cultural separatism that has succeeded the universalistic liberalism of the first flush of nationalism in the former colonies. From the outset national unity, albeit within the artificial boundaries of the colonial dependencies, was the ideal. In the many multi-tribal ex-British African states of the 1950's, traditional tribalism, with its territorial basis and linguistic and cultural distinctiveness was felt to be a threat to unity. As I have already remarked, most of the African colonies were pluralist in Furnivall's sense, at any rate in the urban and industrial areas. The immigrant labourers from the north who worked on the mines, roads, and cocoa farms of what is now Southern Ghana, were there primarily for economic reasons. Like the Hausa, Mossi, and Yoruba, who came over from other territories, they lived in their own, virtually segregated quarters, in the towns and villages, and had no citizenship status in the traditional communities in which they resided. In the larger towns of West Africa, there were long established communities of foreigners dating to pre-colonial times, each living its own life, practising often its own religion, speaking its own language, and often following specialized occupations. There was constant traffic between these enclaved groups and their tribal homelands, labour coming south and the fruits of labour being taken back to be used for marriage, for ritual purposes, and for the satisfaction or ordinary needs. It was a pluralistic pattern; but it was voluntarily maintained by individual movements of migration and mobility in virtue of the law and order established by the colonial power; it was not forced on the immigrants for the economic good of the society in which they worked. Where there was demand for new kinds of services or where there were new opportunities, ethnic enclaves tended to develop, as with the Ibo in Northern Nigeria. But all had tribal homelands where they retained traditional citizenship, whither they could go back when they wished and to which in any case they could relate themselves as a group. Often urban immigrants formed associations to promote education, social developments and political progress in their natal tribes and villages, with which they kept in close touch<sup>18</sup>.

The nationalism which culminated in the establishment of the new nations of Africa was the activity of élites, most of whom were educated in Europe or the United States. Imbued with western

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<sup>18</sup>Cf. the excellent discussion and wealth of data on this subject in the article by Wallerstein, I., "Voluntary Associations", at pages 318-339 in *Political Parties and National Integration in Tropical Africa*, edited by J. S. Coleman and C. G. Rosberg, Jr., University of California Press, 1964.

ideologies and political theories as well as western patterns of values, they emphasized national unity above all. They understood, as Nkrumah's exhortation to seek the political kingdom first and let the rest follow, showed, that it was essential, as a first step, to take over and monopolise the political supremacy already established by the colonial regime. In a small country like Ghana, with its as yet educationally undeveloped and traditionalist hinterland and no large, culturally diverse and politically competitive subdivisions, Nkrumah and his party could successfully maintain the unity bequeathed by the colonial regime. Tribal particularism emerged mainly in the support given differentially to the two major political parties before the one party state was established<sup>14</sup>. But in large, tribally complex countries like Nigeria, where each tribal cluster is populous, as well as culturally, linguistically and historically distinct, and where each has its own westernized and politically ambitious élite, with experience of indirect rule in a well entrenched traditional polity, the new nationalism had an unexpected repercussion. It stimulated the separatist nationalism of each tribal cluster, their aspirations to the same kind of sovereignty and nationhood as was being promoted on the national level.

The compromise was a federal structure which failed, as we know, eventually to withstand the pressures of tribal particularism. In French West Africa, by contrast, inter-tribal jealousies were so acute that they led to the dissolution of the erstwhile colonial federation into eight new states, each dominated by French-educated élites, usually under the relatively authoritarian leadership of one powerful personality and all still closely tied to France<sup>15</sup>.

It was in reaction to these separatist tendencies, simmering with explosive possibilities, that there developed the one party authoritarian government, the cult of personality in the leaders, the dogmas of African socialism, and, on the emotional and cultural level, the exaltation of African customs and practices, of the African personality, and of *négritude* in opposition to European culture — not to speak of more forceful or persuasive measures, aimed at silencing dissidents and attracting support, such as the imprisonment of political opponents on the one hand, and the filling of key political offices and administrative posts by patron-

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<sup>14</sup>For a discussion of this aspect of Ghanaian politics of Austin, Dennis, *Politics in Ghana, 1946-60*, Oxford University Press, 1964; and for a more general and searching theoretical analysis see Fallers, Lloyd, "Equality, modernity and democracy in the New States" in Geertz (editor) *op. cit.* 1963.

<sup>15</sup>This and related topics are very fully documented in the admirable collection of studies I have previously mentioned *Political Parties and National Integration in Tropical Africa* ed. by J. S. Coleman and C. G. Rosberg, 1964, University of California Press.

age, on the other. Nationalism was undoubtedly lucrative to not a few party loyalists and leaders.

However, the economic fruits of independence were, initially at least, more widely distributed. There was a spurt of economic expansion, due in part to outside aid. With this went an enlargement of occupational and professional opportunities, for example, through the Africanization of establishments in government departments and business concerns. Within a short space of time, more schools and the opening of universities began to increase the educated element, who might have been expected to be nationally conscious and not tribally oriented. These developments were accompanied by more immigration into areas of greater economic opportunity, which meant, in effect, the urban, commercial and administrative and industrial centres. The result was an increase in the multi-tribal character and pluralistic economic and social structure of these towns. Thus under the surface of the euphoria of unity and independence, pluralism of the very type described by Furnivall received an added impetus.

The political instability that resulted is plain from the recent history of military coups and counter coups, assassinations and expulsions, and finally the ghastly civil wars in the Congo, Nigeria and elsewhere. And what is most significant about these intestine struggles and conflicts is the way in which tribal, cultural, and regional divisions, animosities and particularist loyalties have been mobilised in them. They are not examples of class conflict, in any sense, but of inter-tribal conflict in pluralist societies. A pathetic testimony to this is the present (1968) "Biafran" patriotism of a man like Nnamdi Azikiwe, whose whole life was dedicated to the ideal of Nigerian national independence and unity.

Let us be clear that the big problem was and remains to engender the sense of nationhood, a national consciousness, a common social will in Furnivall's terms, ordered to the conception of the reality of the sovereign state. And the main obstacle from the outset was not class differences as between capitalists and workers, nor was it a question of educated élite versus illiterate rural tribesman, or even of Christians versus Moslems or Pagans. The obstacle was the tribal equivalent of nationalism. What was laudable at the national level was, it was felt, surely no less laudable at the level of longer-standing tribal consciousness. Even the new-fangled, western-type political organisations fell into line with this. In theory nationwide, in practice, the mutually opposed political parties in Nigeria, Ghana and other new states, tended to have their respective focal areas and main support among particular tribal groups both in the urban centres and in the tribal area<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup>Cf. Austin, *op. cit.* for details with reference to Ghana. See also the revealing analysis by Sklar and Whitaker of the "communal basis" of Nigerian political parties in 1962 in Coleman and Rosberg, *op. cit.* pp. 644-648.

Tribal separatism has prevailed undiminished even where the economic and military disasters it might entail were patent, as in the Congo and Nigeria. The claim has been made that it will be easier to achieve national unity and the creation of a common social will in such uni-lingual, uni-cultural and mono-ethnic new states as Lesotho and Swaziland. Leaders of these states have indeed emphasized this ethnic and cultural basis of their unity as opposed to the ethnic and cultural diversity of other African states. There are signs that being aware of the dangers of pluralism, they will attempt to prevent this by controlling immigration and other sources of internal cultural or racial fragmentation.

## VII

What the recent history of the new multi-tribal states of Africa teaches us is that integration on the national level is not easily attainable. In particular, the hard facts of economic interdependence and economic expansion have not prevented inter-tribal conflicts and such apparently suicidal tribal revolts as that of the "Biafrans". This situation is somewhat different from that of the plural society as Furnivall saw it. But the lesson to be drawn is the same. Political integration can, in the end, be achieved only by political means which, as is well-known, often includes military power. Whether or not the over-riding political authority necessary for this purpose can be successfully mobilised by an élite that is nationally oriented and seeks to be free of personal tribal bonds, remains to be seen.

The conclusion seems inescapable that measures calculated to bring about increasing economic interdependence do not, by themselves, generate the political solidarity and the moral consensus that are required for the quality of social integration, believed by Furnivall to be the basis of the common social will, to emerge. The current state of race relations in England and the United States, indeed in all industrial societies, surely confirms this.<sup>17</sup> It is the existing ideology of race and culture that determines the allocation of economic roles and privileges and the attribution of status to individuals in a society where race is a critical factor

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<sup>17</sup>Cf. the penetrating discussion of this subject by Herbert Blumer "Industrialization and Race Relations" in Hunter, Guy (ed.) *op. cit.* Ch. IX. "The position is essentially", says Blumer, "that the racial lines as drawn in a society are followed in the allocation of racial members inside the industrial structure." (p. 241). And again "My frank impression . . . is that the transformation of racial relations in industry is brought about by forces that lie outside the structure, not within it" (p. 247); and, spelling this out, he puts the main emphasis on "political pressures" including e.g. "fair employment" laws, and actions by the Federal Government and the Courts in the U.S.A.



of social values. Class solidarity does not obliterate felt — and resented — divisions between groups by race and culture. Even living together in the same community is not, it would seem, inevitably, a solvent of inter-racial antipathies. For this a change in the value system and in political ideology is necessary. It needs a habit of thinking about, and of categorising people of different race or different culture as individual persons, not as representatives of a designated group, let alone a group defined by the customs and peoples of another group and by the laws of the land, as alien if not inferior.

At the same time, there are difficulties about limiting all economic relationships rigorously to the economic sphere, even in modern industry. Employers become welfare-minded; personal loyalties are apt to grow up between fellow workers and mutual respect may ensue. That is why extreme segregationist measures are resorted to where it is firm policy to keep inter-racial relations strictly on an economic footing.

But there is an aspect of the resurgence of tribal separatism in the new African states that is worth thinking out more fully, especially in the light of similar developments in America and Asia. Take the Black Power movement in the U.S.A. Nothing could, on the surface, seem so irrational and absurd as the demands, supported by increasing numbers of Negroes, for the recognition of the Negroes as a culturally and socially autonomous community, for instance by the provision of degree courses in "Black Studies" in all universities. Some Negro groups even go so far as to demand a form of territorial apartheid for themselves, so as to be recognized as a nation within the Federation. The violence in the cities is more than an explosion of protest against poverty, unemployment and urban congestion. It is to no small extent aggravated by the passion of Negroes to be recognized and respected as a separate community, whose members are entitled as individuals to be accorded the same worth and dignity as the whites, and this not in spite of but just because they are black. All this seems the more irrational and retrograde when we bear in mind the years of struggle of both white and Negro liberal organizations, as well as government agencies and the courts, to secure equal civil rights for individuals regardless of race. The emphasis now is on the primacy of group identity.<sup>18</sup> It is not too far-fetched to compare with this the suicidal struggle of the "Biafrans" to

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<sup>18</sup> Congestion, unemployment, poverty, low standards of education, broken family life — all of these are important factors, as the previously cited *Report* to the President documents profusely; but there is also ample evidence that the rioters included many of the better-educated Negroes whose main impulse was resentment of racial discrimination, in particular the contempt directed towards them by whites just because they were Negro.



assert their ethnic autonomy and identity and their territorial sovereignty, in opposition to the Federal Nigeria which they claim has rejected and spurned them. The Southern Sudanese are fighting and dying in the same cause. They want their political autonomy to be recognized as the basis of their social identity and of the sense of worth that is the foundation of the common social will. The partition of India twenty years ago, and the current long-drawn out Naga revolt in that country, the conflict between Greeks and Turks in Cyprus, the continual clashes between Flemings and Walloons in Belgium, and similar movements in Canada, all testify to the same urge in groups with distinct linguistic and cultural heritages in societies that do not seem to be pluralist, in Furnivall's sense, until closely examined. Then the pluralistic under-currents become evident.

### VIII

The problem I am raising has received attention from a number of students of group and individual social relations among the multi-tribal populations of modern industrial and urban areas in Africa.<sup>19</sup> In these settings, one might expect the sense of ethnic or tribal loyalty and identity of persons to be abandoned under pressure of their common condition of urban work and life. Gluckman,<sup>20</sup> indeed, has argued that this is what has happened on the Zambian Copperbelt. But there is evidence that tribal loyalties and allegiances operate there too. This is the case in matters that do not involve the economic relations of African workers with the European mine managements.<sup>21</sup> In West Africa, where there is not and never has been the same degree of political and economic domination by whites, the situation is different. City dwellers in multi-racial towns like Freetown and Accra mix freely by residence, in their work, in the market-place, and in other urban settings. But their voluntary associations are organized on tribal lines and they tend to align themselves by tribal factions in modern party political contexts.<sup>22</sup> We can compare with this what happens in America and in the European countries where people of different races and cultures are free to live and work wherever it is most advantageous, and there is no legally enforced segregation or differentiation by

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<sup>19</sup>As in several of the papers in Southall, A., (ed.) 1961 *Social Change in Modern Africa*. A review of the issues with special reference to West Africa is conveniently provided in Kuper, H. and L. (editors) *op. cit. passim*.

<sup>20</sup>Gluckman, M. 1961 "Anthropological Problems arising from the African Industrial Revolution" in Southall, A. (ed.).

<sup>21</sup>Mitchell, *op. cit.* makes reference to this.

<sup>22</sup>Cf. Michael Banton's *West African City: A Study of Tribal Life in Freetown*. Oxford University Press, 1957.

ethnic status. As has often been observed, it is very common in these circumstances for groups distinguished by race or culture or religious beliefs to gravitate together residentially and carry on much of their social life in their own communities. Is it not possible therefore that there is a natural tendency for people who belong by birth and upbringing to a racially and culturally distinct group, in a multi-racial or otherwise pluralist society, to find special value and satisfaction in holding together as a relatively closed group, differentiated from other such groups ?

Perhaps recognized differentiation between groups by language, by beliefs and by social habits, whether consonant with or distinct from differentiation by physical features and origins, may be a constructive and indeed necessary element of social structure in the heterogeneous societies of the modern world. Modern industrial society is becoming more complex, more impersonal, more mechanical and more megalopolitan every year. The political conduct of powerful nations is becoming more authoritarian, arbitrary and indifferent to the individual's existence. The gap between the individual and the family on the one hand, and the greater society on the other, grows bigger and ever less bridgeable. In these circumstances it may well be that there is an increasing need for supportive relations, on a basis of mutual trust, with fellows in social groups that are not constituted for purely utilitarian or instrumental ends, that are part of one's life through the fact of birth in a given community, or are achieved by a free choice as is membership of separatist churches in some Southern Bantu reserves.

Be this as it may there is no gainsaying the strength of tribal separatism in those parts of Africa where it is neither an economic handicap nor a political or social impediment to claim or admit one's tribal identity, and no particular economic or political advantage either. It is an expression of voluntary choice by individuals and when politically mobilized of the "social will" of the tribe; it is not forced on individuals or the tribe by arbitrary and superior power. And it is a source of pride in his worth and identity for the individual, whether he stays in his tribal community or moves out, as he is free to do, into the wider arena of citizenship in the nation. It does not imprison him in status he can never escape from or freely transcend.

It is here that the big difference lies between tribal pluralism in the independent countries of Africa, and even as expressed in the demands of the Negro inhabitants of the United States, on the one hand, and the idea of separate development in South Africa on the other. Yet we must conclude that the conception of tribal autonomy and identity exploited in the enforcement of separate development has a basis of social and cultural reality which has profound importance and value for individuals as well as groups.

The difficult, seemingly intractable, problems of adjustment, between persons as well as in respect of social and moral principle, arise in those geographical areas, and in those social and economic sectors, where the various tribes — and I include in this term all the separately distinguished racial groups, white as well as non-white — overlap in their association with one another.

That is why the urban and industrial centres are so important. What the separate development policy seems calculated to ensure is that the overlap shall never entail other than economic relationships — which are believed, and probably rightly so, to be ineffectual *per se* to create moral, social and political cross-racial integration. What the liberal-optimistic view maintains is that economic relationships, in the areas of overlap, are bound in time to generate non-economic, social and moral relationships that will compel steps to be taken to bring about political integration. The liberal-pessimistic view, on the other hand, — and I am bound to admit that I share it — is that it is only by moral and political action, based on values and beliefs that emphasize the rights of every individual to full and free citizenship in the political community, that such integration can be achieved. No matter how prosperous and progressive it may be in the economic sphere, a plural society must remain a plural society, without a common “social will” without common goals of human well-being, without shared moral values or common standards of human dignity and worth, if the only forms of close association and collaboration between its component ethnic or cultural groups lie in the realms of economics and technology. And as long as this is the case, there can be no escape from conflict, no alternative to authoritarian government keeping the peace by force and by virtue of one-sided dominance.

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## POSTSCRIPT

I should like to take advantage of the interval that has elapsed between the delivery of this lecture and its publication to draw attention to a book on its theme that has since appeared. *Pluralism in Africa*, edited by Leo Kuper and M. G. Smith, University of California Press, 1967, is bound to rank as the most authoritative and comprehensive study of this subject for many years to come. The theoretical papers by the editors bring out the diversity of the interpretations that have been attached to the notion of pluralism in Africa and demonstrate the critical role of the political framework and the juridical structure in maintaining the dissensus that generally accompanies pluralism in contemporary Africa. Eight other leading authorities contribute case records and comments exemplifying the different patterns of African pluralism and the dilemmas and tensions that are apt to be found with it.

# The Hoernlé Memorial Lectures

The IRR is republishing the text of the Hoernlé Memorial Lectures, a series of talks which started in 1945. The original introductory note to the lecture series reads as follows:

*A lecture, entitled the Hoernlé Memorial Lecture (in memory of the late Professor R. F. Alfred Hoernle), President of the Institute from 1934—1943), will be delivered once a year under the auspices of the South African Institute of Race Relations. An invitation to deliver the lecture will be extended each year to some person having special knowledge and experience of racial problems in Africa or elsewhere.*

*It is hoped that the Hoernlé Memorial Lecture will provide a platform for constructive and helpful contributions to thought and action. While the lecturers will be entirely free to express their own views, which may not be those of the Institute as expressed in its formal decisions, it is hoped that lecturers will be guided by the Institute's declaration of policy that "scientific study and research must be allied with the fullest recognition of the human reactions to changing racial situations; that respectful regard must be paid to the traditions and usages of the various national, racial and tribal groups which comprise the population; and that due account must be taken of opposing views earnestly held."*

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Since 1929, the Institute of Race Relations has advocated for a free, fair, and prospering South Africa. At the heart of this vision lie the fundamental principles of liberty of the individual and equality before the law guaranteeing the freedom of all citizens. The IRR stands for the right of all people to make decisions about their lives without undue political or bureaucratic interference.