

# THE "CAPITALIST" CONNECTION

**SOUTH AFRICA'S TRANSKEI. THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF AN 'INDEPENDENT' BANTUSTAN.** ROGER SOUTHALL. Heinemann, London, 1982.  
Reviewed by Clive Napier. (Lecturer in the Department of Political Studies, University of Transkei.)

Roger Southall's, *South Africa's Transkei, The Political Economy of an 'Independent' Bantustan*, is one of the most recent books to be published in a series of contemporary political studies of the Transkei. As suggested by the title, this book contains one of the most thorough analyses yet of the evolution of the relationship of the territory of the Transkei to the South African political and economic system.

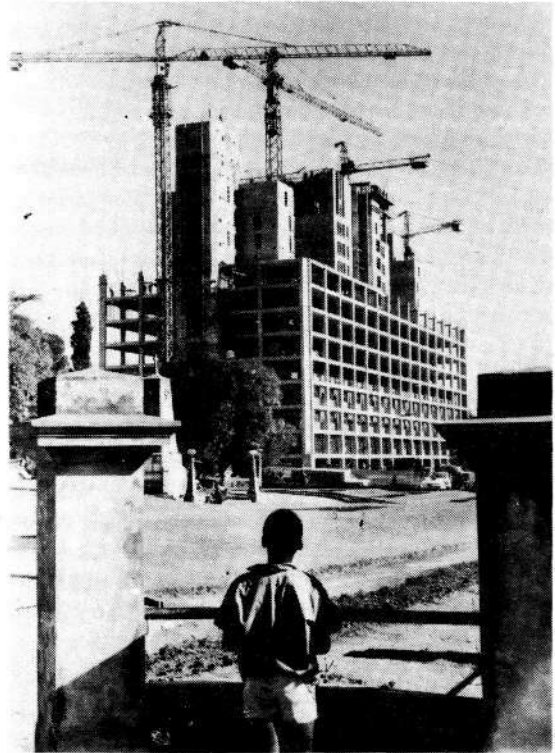
One of the features distinguishing this book from other studies of the Transkei, is that Southall undertakes his analysis from a neo-Marxist or radical-revisionist perspective. This study is very much in keeping with the trend at present, to re-interpret South Africa's past and present, in terms of a Marxist analytical framework.

The central theme of this study, is an attempt to illustrate how the bantustan strategy as implemented by the South African government, has been used as a device to ensure the continuing labour requirements of the white economy, also as a political response to internal pressures of black nationalism, and also to international pressures generated by the decolonization of the African continent.

Southall begins by tracing the historical evolution of the Transkei from pre-colonial times, through colonial rule, the imposition of segregation policies by successive white governments, to the "nominal" independent status conferred on the Transkei by the South African government in October of 1976. Future prospects and possibilities are also examined.

One of the underlying themes of the book, is an attempted explanation of how the region of the Transkei has been transformed "historically from a subsistence, pastoral, pre-capitalist economy into a reservoir of cheap labour for an external capitalist sector." (p. 60) Southall mentions several factors which brought about this transformation, which included the hunger for land, the possession of weaponry by white settlers, the introduction of trade, the extension of political control, the imposition of a hut tax by the white authorities, coercive legislative measures, and the contacts with white capitalist society. As a result of these factors, the peasant economy disintegrated, and the Transkei 'reserve' became the supplier of labour at a price to guarantee the profitability of capital and in particular mining capital.

Southall's analysis is typical of a neo-Marxist perspective, in that institutional factors are regarded as the main inhibiting factors of economic development. The neo-Marxist perspective tends to ignore factors like land tenure, values, a preference for oscillating migration, and a lack of entrepreneurship. Surely factors of a "cultural" nature must have some impact on development? The neo-Marxist



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perspective is therefore somewhat lop-sided in its attempted explanation of underdevelopment. The real and complete explanation for underdevelopment, would more likely be produced by including all these factors in one's analysis.

Thus continuing with Southall's argument, the underdevelopment of the Transkei, has been functional to "capitalist" development in metropolitan South Africa. By allowing the predominantly black populated "homelands" to remain underdeveloped, the metropolitan "capitalist" sector has been assured of a plentiful supply of cheap labour. Certain questions arise from this argument. What rôle does influx control play, and why have such stringent laws been introduced by the National Party government? Has the influx from the homelands now become dysfunctional to the 'capitalist' sector of the South African economy? Also related to this issue are the recent attempts to develop the homelands by the white "capitalist" South African government, through the provision of a variety of incentives, more particularly financial incentives. Further, since "independence" all taxes collected from blacks in the so called "white" urban areas, are remitted to the homeland governments. Southall needs to integrate these issues into his general thesis. It is perhaps felt by the white policy makers that the South African "capitalist" base needs broadening, and the obvious direction in which to move, is to co-opt black elites into this system. These issues are indeed complex and need a great deal more thought and elaboration.

It could be a useful exercise if a comparative study was made between the other 'independent' states and homelands, and the Transkei, to establish whether they have played a similar rôle to the Transkei in the South African "capitalist" system.

Comparisons do very often suggest explanations and answers to outstanding questions.

There is a certain amount of overlap between the material included in Southall's book and other texts, but the inclusion of this material is perhaps necessary to maintain the thrust of his arguments. Southall does at the same time fill in many gaps in our knowledge of the political economy of the Transkei. For example, he includes a chapter on the rôle of the white traders in the political economy of the region. This issue has been hardly mentioned in other texts.

Some of Southall's assertions could have been supported with more statistical evidence. For example, in support of his arguments, he refers to the important issues of land lost and purchased by blacks from whites, gold mine productivity, the gold price and labour wages, but hardly refers to any statistics in this regard. Southall has relied heavily upon sources of an official and non-official nature, but unfortunately practical considerations very often preclude the researcher from relying more upon informal sources like interviews with local people. The opinions and information obtainable from local people can quite easily strengthen or weaken many arguments. In my view, Southall's neo-Marxist conceptual framework provides only part of the explanation for the underdevelopment of the Transkei, but nevertheless, to date it is one of the most sophisticated exposés of South Africa's Transkei. □

by GILBERT MARCUS

## ASSAULTS IN DETENTION : TIME RUNNING OUT

The South African Police enjoy a privileged and protected position under South African law. There is probably no other police force in the western world which is able to exercise such extensive powers of arrest and the ability to detain suspects for lengthy periods without trial. In addition, it is an offence in terms of the Police Act No. 7 of 1958 to publish "any untrue matter" in relation to "any action" by the police or in relation to "the performance" of any member of the police, without having reasonable grounds for believing the statement to be true. An onus is placed on the person who published the information to show that he had reasonable grounds for believing the statement to be true. Even if a publisher thinks he has reasonable grounds for believing the truth of allegations concerning the police, he would undoubtedly think twice before going to print knowing that, if convicted, he could be liable to a fine not exceeding R10,000 or to imprisonment for a period not exceeding five years or both such fine and imprisonment. That the police should enjoy this special protection is in itself extraordinary and necessarily gives rise to the suspicion that there must be good reason why the activities of the police require shelter from public scrutiny.

Most police actions take place in the public eye and if there are abuses these can be documented by witnesses. Those who are detained under the security laws do not enjoy such advantages. They are effectively removed from the public gaze being denied access to friends, relatives, lawyers and doctors of their choosing. If there are abuses, there are generally no witnesses apart from those who perpetrated the abuse. What goes on in the interrogation rooms of the security police is not purely a matter of speculation, however. Regrettably it is usually only when there is a death in detention that the public is

allowed to hear what is otherwise kept a closely guarded secret. The inquests into the deaths of Steve Biko and Dr. Neil Aggett laid bare what many had feared. In July 1983 Mr. Paris Malatji was shot at point blank range between the eyes by a security policeman, Mr. Harm van As. The conviction of van As for culpable homicide marks the first time that a policeman has been found liable for the death of a political detainee. (More than 50 detainees have died in detention since the first provision for detention without trial was introduced in 1963.)

### SPECIAL PROTECTION

It is not only when people die at the hands of the police that abuses reach the light of day, but also when aggrieved persons sue the Minister of Law and Order for damages resulting from injuries sustained by the police. (The Minister is sued in his representative capacity as the person statutorily responsible for the wrongful acts of the police.) Once again, the police enjoy special protections not available to mere mortals. Section 32 of the Police Act provides that "any civil action against the State or any person in respect of anything done in pursuance of this Act, shall be commenced within six months after the cause of action has arisen". In addition, written notice of the intention to take action must be given at least one month prior to such commencement. All legal systems prescribe time periods within which actions are to be commenced. These time limits vary according to the nature of the action but generally a period of three years is the limit within which an action for damages must be instituted. Time limitations of this nature are entirely reasonable. Save in exceptional cases, the administration of justice would grind to a halt if claimants were allowed to institute actions many years after the event. The time limitations prescribed by the Police Act, however,