

# reality

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*VAAL TRIANGLE, LATE 1984. WILL THIS END IN 1985?*

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*Cover Photograph: Vaal Triangle Scene, 1984. See Leader and Article on page 9.*

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*Cover Photograph: Tladi Khuele*

# EDITORIAL

## REAL CHANGE AT LAST?

Three statements from the Government in the first week of the new parliamentary session offer the hope that the Nationalists may at last be turning away from their past and looking for a new direction which could inspire a new atmosphere of mutual co-operation here.

First, there was the announcement, in Mr P.W. Botha's "package deal" for blacks, that freehold rights would be available to them in white South Africa in future.

Second was the offer to release Nelson Mandela and other political leaders and talk to them, provided they renounced the use of violence. Third was the announcement of the suspension of all resettlement plans for black communities which did not want to move from their present homes, while a policy review took place.

Although Mr. Botha's "package" was rejected by the entire range of black leadership, the conceding of freehold rights, on however limited an initial basis, represents a complete about-face on an absolutely basic tenet of Verwoerdian apartheid which must have that formidable figure twirling in his grave.

The Mandela statement also represents a complete break with the past government attitude towards people who have always been represented by it either as agents of Moscow

or as common criminals, not fit for decent people to be seen talking to. It is a brave step that Mr. Botha has taken and, whatever verbal skirmishing may obscure the initial response to it, we hope that response will be positive.

The suspension of the resettlement programme will, we hope, soon be followed by its being publicly abandoned altogether. That would mark the end of one of the ugliest and cruellest features of Nationalist policy. We hope too that in the policy review which is taking place, threatened communities will be fully consulted, and that the technical and financial assistance which has never been given to them in the past, will be made available to rehabilitate and develop the places where they live. Instead of being in constant conflict with their white neighbours, these communities might then be able to build up a healthy relationship with them which would be an example of harmony and co-operation to all those, black, white and brown, who now find themselves facing each other across totally artificial boundaries created by the past madnesses of apartheid.

Provided these three new initiatives do not turn out to be hedged about by all sorts of hidden conditions on the Government side, they could point the way to a new era of really constructive engagement between it and its opponents which could give new hope to all of us.□

# FREEHOLD IN THE HOMELANDS : WHAT ARE THE REAL CONSTRAINTS?

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This paper is written as comment on D.R. Tapson's earlier presentation\*, which argues for alternatives to freehold land as the final policy objective for land reform in the homelands. Tapson's approach correctly assumes that wage work is the core of the homelands economy, and then outlines a type of cooperative leasehold tenure arrangement to be run on a tribal basis as a more effective means of developing agriculture.

Where freehold is concerned, Tapson's position is very sound; but jettisoning freehold means coming up with workable alternatives, and the collective leasehold plan may suffer even more than existing betterment schemes from outmoded assumptions which do more harm than good to development.

The arguments given here are put forward mainly with reference to KwaZulu and the Nguni-speaking area, and largely but not entirely from a peri-urban viewpoint; they are based generally on extended field research rather than on published sources. Like Tapson's paper, this has been written under pressure of time, and is intended to contribute toward debate on the issues of rural tenure.

## 2. FREEHOLD AS A LAND REFORM OPTION

In attacking freehold, Tapson draws attention to the fact that freehold does not appear in practice to support agricultural development. Particularly, he notes that freehold is likely to have the unanticipated effect of creating a landless rural underclass; that freehold in Zimbabwe and in Ciskei has not increased production above what is found in nearby areas under other forms of tenure; that existing freehold rural areas in the homelands tend to become informal settlements rather than farms; and that freehold does not stop land degradation either.

All this is argued very effectively, and it is easy to give wholehearted support to Tapson's assessment of the chances for improving agricultural productivity in the former reserves through freehold; in a joint publication in 1982, several colleagues and I argued for very much the same reasons against instituting freehold in KwaZulu specifically<sup>1</sup>, on the grounds that it would be likely to be counterproductive, while other authors have made similar arguments in relation to other parts of Africa and the rest of the Third World<sup>2,3</sup>. In fact, the attraction which freehold has for development planners in Southern Africa is based on myth to a much greater extent than on its real effects.

What follows then takes issue not with Tapson's views on the issue of freehold, but with the **collective leasehold plan** which he puts forward as an alternative.

Research evidence suggests that Tapson's critical reassessment of the basic assumptions involved in land reform has not gone nearly far enough; he continues to accept many of the mistaken impressions which have historically afflicted the entire land debate. This is hardly Tapson's fault, as he notes that the plan is mainly derived from the literature, and the assumptions he makes simply perpetuate some of the impressions which have been accepted into published sources<sup>4</sup>.

But if the basic assumptions may not be sound, it has to be asked whether the plan can work as expected, and also how serious the unintended consequences might be.

## 3. COLLECTIVE LEASING OF LAND AS AN ALTERNATIVE

The land reform plan which Tapson suggests is in many ways a revamped version of government betterment planning. Based on the principle of collective landholding on a tribal basis, it sets **maximum productive use of the land** as its major goal.

Noting that much of the arable land in the present homelands is not now in use, he proposes that all the land without exception be taken over into the public domain. Reasonably generous compensation would be paid to the dispossessed landholders of the community.

Each family would then receive a "home garden" of .1 hectare, equivalent to a plot roughly 32 metres square, and presumably a house site. All remaining arable and grazing land would be rationally demarcated and leased out to those interested in using it, at as high a rental as the market could bear.

All rent money would go to the tribe as the "de facto landlord", and then be shared out equally to all individual families.

Tapson argues that this arrangement would be simple and fair, would return money to the people and especially to the poor, and would facilitate conservation and increase productivity. In addition, it would be easily capitalized and would put land into the hands of those in a position to use it; most important of all, "... no landless class would be created, and the security role of land would not be threatened..."

Tapson's perspective is a very humane one, and his focus on the land options of the poor is a considerable advance. But this is still a very sweeping type of reform plan. If it were generally applied, it would physically and socially dislocate the entire rural population of every "homeland" in South Africa, a matter of eight million or more people.

Further, the new system of land allocation would leave the average rural household with almost no control over its own land at all.

#### 4. LIMIT FACTORS IN RURAL LAND PLANNING

For the collective leasehold plan itself, implementation should depend on establishing whether this type of initiative is compatible with the constraints that shape the existing rural land economy. But in addition, much deeper questions arise in relation to the fundamental **objectives of rural development planning**.

All land reform of this type assumes that self-reliance for the homelands is best served by maximizing productive land use and that this requires establishing a category of **commercial farmers**. All other families not prepared to make a very heavy commitment to agriculture are then cut off from any opportunity to hold or deal in land.

This is a very precarious assumption. This proposition has guided homelands land planning since its inception; but if it is wrong, then it is necessary to ask if these types of land reform plan can ever work at all.

##### 4.1 Indigenous tenure

Tapson's view of indigenous land systems is that they need no discussion; they provide security, but are inimical to agricultural land use, and they have to go:

"The issue of whether land reform is necessary or not is not addressed here. It is assumed to be necessary so that the discussion of alternatives can be advanced..."

In almost any of the homelands, this is a dangerous line of approach. In KwaZulu specifically, community organization is welded to the land in a way which urban society has difficulty in understanding. Land rights under indigenous tenure are the entire scaffolding of community organization; and they are not held in common.

##### 1. Describing indigenous land tenure as "communal" obscures the way it actually works:

The popular image of "communal tenure" has been leading land planning astray for at least 40 years. Land rights, as Tapson correctly remarks, are normally secure; but they are also essentially private. The "communal" rights which give rise to so much misunderstanding refer only to certain classes of commonage rights relating to particular resources that people may not be able to find on their own landholdings. These commonage rights do not imply in any way sharing land, or that "land belongs to the tribe", as Tapson's basic premise holds.

##### 2. Land affairs under undisturbed indigenous tenure are normally conducted at the extreme local level

Instead of being centrally administered, from the top, tribal land rights characteristically emerge at the grass roots and travel upward. Although in many areas outside intervention into the administrative system has given chiefs authority they did not possess originally, the classical function of the chief in land transfers is to validate and sanction the transactions already arranged within the neighborhood, at the lowest levels of the land system.

The local-level neighborhood and kinship alliances jealously guard the sovereignty of their component families; if the chief or indunas actually intervene in land affairs without being called in by the landholders, it is usually

resented as constituting abuse of authority, and resisted as much as possible.

##### 3. Land is the means the community uses to organize itself and to provide against the unforeseen

Starting with the local settlement cluster, a group of neighbours who mutually protect each others' landholdings, a tribe comprises a series of land-based groups. These are built up through **voluntary land grants**, which a landholder uses to bring his chosen associates to live by him, building up an inner community of people brought together by their need to depend on each other.

Based on mutual help, security provided at this level is one of the most important supports of the community. It depends directly on people's right to arrange their own land transfers and residence rights.

As this implies, the right to dispose of land is chiefly held by the individual landholder, who can and does make transfers of land not only to his male heirs, but also to other people of his choice.

##### 4. Indigenous tenure allows arable land to be transferred privately to families who want to use it

Under prevailing tenure, **arable land** is relatively easily exchanged or leased. In order to make residential land transfers to people not of his own family, the landholder often has to satisfy the possible objections of his family and present neighbours, who will have to live with the new people; but this does not hold for arable land. The landholder's right to make temporary or permanent transfers of arable land to others in the area who need it more than he does is normally a private affair, involving only the families, and needing no public approval.

These transfers are a very prevalent feature of indigenous tenure. In areas where land is scarce, **rent payments** now form part of the arrangement.

It is not accurate to assume that prevailing tenure prevents agricultural land from going to those who want to use it; there is a danger here of holding the tenure system to blame for patterns of land use that are actually caused by other factors entirely.

**In summary**, the land system in the homelands is not simply equivalent to a stagnant collection of families holding on to land because it provides social status. The land-based organization of a rural community is to a large extent its system of **risk insurance**, its families' hedge against subsistence failure. Equally, the right to deal in residential land forms a dynamic system, which actively builds security, and provides the vehicle for leadership to emerge at the local level.

Requiring a rural community to abandon its land system means going over to an impersonal, urban-like form of organization, which does not match up with existing institutions and for which the necessary economic infrastructure is not present. Consequently, being deprived of control over land rights means a loss of coherence in the community as well.

##### 4.2 Regional space economy

It is now clear that the economic weight of South Africa's industrial cities is creating a massive gravity flow of population into the white urban and black peri-urban areas. Significant differences at the local level develop within indigenous tenure systems as a systematic product of the

development of the regional space economy. At the same time, the regional economy has a direct demographic and economic impact on agricultural potential.

**Location factors** related to urbanization are a very live factor in relation to development prospects, and one of the key points here is the effect of population movements on the community.

### 1. Wide-ranging replanning for agricultural development is not likely to be feasible in the areas best situated for it

Factors of location and distance have an overwhelming effect on the local economy at different points in the homelands. For instance, peri-urban communities in KwaZulu appear to be relatively prosperous, though a poverty sector appears as well<sup>5</sup>; by comparison, remoter regions with poor transport connections to the urban centres appear much worse impoverished<sup>6</sup>.

If agricultural land values are determined first by location<sup>7</sup>, the peri-urban areas will be those with the best potential for economic agriculture. But in densely settled areas of this type, **residential land use** will remain dominant. Population densities of more than 500 per square kilometre can be reached even in areas under rural tribal organization.

A working approximation of possible land rents in a peri-urban area near Durban suggests that the present population is already too large relative to arable land resources for a collective leasing plan to produce significant returns from rentals. R40 per family per year might be a maximum with fully economic land use, and R10 more probable. At this level of return, present landholders could not in fairness be asked to give up their land. In any case it is not feasible to undertake moving and resettling so many families to make room for putative agricultural development.

### 2. Replanning of outlying areas for agriculture is problematic for economic reasons

In or out of the homelands, outlying rural districts for the most part suffer seriously from locational disadvantages in relation to agricultural production. Cooperative leasehold planning is not necessarily excluded at the outset by the ratio of population to arable land, but agricultural development in more remote areas is difficult for other reasons.

Population density in most outlying areas is too low to provide a ready local market for large-scale crop production in the homelands. Transport infrastructure tends to be inadequate and expensive, while requirements such as seed, fertilizer, and farm equipment are difficult to obtain.

It is unrealistic to expect to establish new smallholding enterprises in outlying localities when established white farmers in similar areas, with substantial backup facilities, available capital, crop insurance, and disaster relief funding, are being forced to leave their land by economic adversity. Handicapped by the problems of starting up in addition to the costs of transport, it is difficult to see how new black farmers can compete economically in a market already supplied by established producers. To make homelands production viable in the market, prohibitively expensive subsidies and insurance schemes would probably be required.

### 3. Population movements are giving rise to new indigenous tenure systems based on trading in residential rights

Tapson describes contemporary tenure systems in the homelands as "... unhealthy travesties of the original models." This is misleading. In response to the cash economy and the urban drift of population, a **new land market** is developing in the rural areas. It can be demonstrated in KwaZulu and elsewhere that areas with a high inflow of population spontaneously develop new modern forms of tenure which can be described as **informal-freehold systems**.

These provide both for sale and for rental of land based on the right of the individual to hold and dispose of land parcels privately. They differ from formal fee-simple freehold in that they give weight to the community ethic, and do not appear to lead to the agglomeration of landholdings, the concentration of land rights in the hands of a privileged few, or the emergence of a landless underclass.

### 4. The incidence of impoverishment in rural districts may be closely linked to regional population movements and to prevailing land use patterns

As the rate of in-migration steps up, the pressure on the local tenure system increases. At the same time, the stream of out-migration leads young married heirs to leave their home areas and move closer to town in their turn.

The result is that the process of migration and population flow stretches the inheritance system of classical tenure to its limit. In the local-born landholding population, a relatively large category of **substitute heirs** emerges, who inherit land by default as the only remaining representatives of old-established families where large numbers of viable households have moved out.

This process strips the community of its strongest families, those who are able to mobilize the resources needed to make a major move. Those who remain behind when stronger households leave tend to be the poor. As substitute heirs, these families are institutionally in a weak position; in addition, their own household organization tends to be weak as well, and they are often headed by women.

Dealing in the indigenous land system, whether through sales, rentals, exchanges or voluntary grant transactions, appears strongly associated with the poor and the weak under these conditions. Research results from KwaZulu suggests that it may be **weak households generally who deal most in land**, using their land resources to produce both food and income, as well as to try to create land-based alliances which they can use to offset their disabilities.

**In summary**, the new modern tenure systems which allow for sale of land rights stand to show that homelands tenure systems can adapt very effectively to modern conditions: they deal effectively with massive shifts of population in the rural regions. The reasons why they are not adapted to agricultural strategy reflect the character of the regional space economy itself. For intrinsic reasons, wage work is the economic base of rural homelands society, and likely to remain so. This is the reality to which land tenure adapts. Some of the reasons why this is so will be examined in the next section.

The locational limits affecting homelands agriculture lead naturally to the **options that are open to rural households** facing these constraints. The household is the major decision-making unit where land use and expenditure are concerned; one of the significant problems with a collective leasing plan is that it does not take account of land strategies at this level.

Rural families evaluate competing economic options in the light of how well they fit into their total economic strategy. The single critical factor here continues to be the constraint of risk.

Against this background, most rural households are in a position to undertake some agriculture, but very few are likely to be able to manage it successfully in a way that would fit into the objectives of the leasehold plan.

### 1. To the rural household, agriculture looks too cumbersome and vulnerable to be a workable option for supporting the family

Seen from the household level, agriculture as a regular economic alternative is marginal at best. **Limit factors** here include the following:

1. Extremely high and unpredictable **risk factor** in relation to **weather** and environment
2. Relatively high demand for **working capital**
3. Need for advanced **technical and managerial skills**
4. Heavy, irregular, and inconvenient demand for **labour time**
5. Difficulty in **marketing crops** for cash return
6. Unpredictable, highly **cyclical returns** instead of regular income.

A quick thumbnail estimation of maximum returns, based on costs and prices in the Northern Natal white farming economy<sup>8</sup>, suggests that in many outlying districts it would be theoretically necessary to manage a holding of at least 25 hectares on stringently modern and economic lines in order to get an income equivalent to what a semi-skilled worker in a Pinetown factory could earn with lower qualifications and less work.

Even for a person with the necessary skills, either wage work or many forms of informal-sector activity were seen as preferable to farming. These need little or no capital in comparison, and have a quick cycle of turnover, giving relatively predictable levels of cash return at convenient intervals.

### 2. Homelands agriculture often acts as an emergency backstop for the household economy

For the majority of rural families, household agriculture now serves at most times as a subsidiary element in their total support package, and tends to have a low priority relative to other economic activities. But this does not mean it is economically unimportant, or that it could readily be abandoned.

The single over-riding objective of a rural household's economic planning is to obtain a **steady and reliable income**, not to obtain the maximum returns to the factors of production. Rural families commonly aim to minimize the risk that all their lines of support will fail simultaneously by multiplying their economic alternatives. In normal circumstances rural households then often let their agriculture slide in order to concentrate their efforts and their resources on their highest-paying secure combination of economic enterprises.

But while agriculture is too unmanageable and risky to rely on, it can be used as an **emergency option**. If the family's cash income drops suddenly, people fall back on agriculture and increase the labor time invested in cultivation.

### 3. Specific groups in the community are likely to make significant economic use of agriculture

Relative **commitment to agricultural strategies** varies within the rural community. Two significant categories emerged from study of the criterion factors for agricultural success which were put forward by KwaZulu respondents in a relatively modern community.

Successful **semi-commercial cultivation** was almost entirely confined to the first category, a few elite households with very sound structure and advanced developmental cycle, an older male head of household, at least one wage earner, and an estimated total income above R700 per month. In contrast, the second grouping represented the poor and disadvantaged, who were using **semi-subsistence agriculture** as one of their basic lines of support.

At first glance, the **high-income agriculturalist group** would appear to be the desired candidates for participation in communally leased land schemes. But for these families, semi-commercial cultivation seemed to rank low, usually as the **last option adopted** to round off a complex series of formal and informal enterprises. Like the rest of the community, they deliberately controlled their agricultural commitment in careful relation to other economic options, avoiding investing substantial amounts of money or taking on debt. They tended to lease out part of their agricultural land, and showed little interest in expanding their agricultural enterprise.

The other group, made up of **poor households with weak organization**, seemed to give agriculture a higher relative priority, and produced better than what might be expected from their limited resources. In spite of their handicaps, their rated level of agricultural success was roughly average for the community.

If allowances are made for their relative capacity, it appeared to be among the poor rather than the rich, that the greatest agricultural commitment actually occurred.

**In summary**, the common expectation that the serious hardships and disadvantages of the migrant labour system in South Africa must make farming the more attractive alternative have not been borne out in economic terms. However unfair, migrant labor is now an institution; it gives rural families access to the cash economy, enabling them to escape the insecurity of depending on rain-fed subsistence crops for survival.

Under modern conditions, agriculture tends to remain a **marginal economic strategy** in most types of area. Its demands are too great and its risks too high to allow even prosperous rural families to divert scarce resources from competing needs.

In addition, the perceived disadvantages of agriculture have little to do with tenure institutions or with the size of arable landholding available. Instead, they revolve around the kind of economic options that are viable at household level.

Development initiatives which attempt to pry homelands agriculture loose from the compelling grip of the regional space economy face formidable obstacles at this level.

## 5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Against this background, Tapson's collective leasehold plan has both advantages and disadvantages. Its most attractive aspect is the idea of returning economic land rents to rural communities hard hit by poverty.

Several issues are involved here:

1. What **level of rent income** has to be provided to make the plan worthwhile for the landholders?
2. Is it realistic to expect to **reach this level** of rent income?
3. Can these rent incomes be **guaranteed or insured** so that rural households could safely rely on them?

Tapson does not discuss the economic viability of the rent option, but rough estimates of the probable ceiling levels on land rents in Natal/KwaZulu suggest that great differences between localities prevail. In peri-urban areas, the density of population on the land probably makes the plan uneconomic at the outset. In the more remote areas, the picture is less clear.

A rough estimate suggests that rent incomes in the neighbourhood of R150 – R350 per family per year<sup>8</sup> might theoretically be possible; there is at least some informed opinion which holds that potential rent returns could ultimately run as high as R500 per year per family or more. For a guaranteed income on this level, a great many rural families in impoverished areas might willingly give up their cherished land rights and resolve to live with the consequences.

For outlying areas, the ultimate outcome would then depend on **whether the plan is likely to succeed** if adopted – that is, if it can bring rural agricultural production in the homelands up to the general level achieved by nearby established farms so that economic rents could be obtained. The line of analysis followed here suggests that this is not likely.

The communal lease plan's recipe for raising agricultural productivity in the homelands is based on the assumption that **rural tenure and lack of capital are the root causes of low production**. Allowing producers to lease larger tracts of land and giving them access to formal-sector financing would then relax the constraints.

An alternative view of the limiting factors suggests that uprooting rural communities is not necessary and may ultimately be self-defeating. Low productivity in the homelands can be traced to the following:

1. **Higher returns from wage work** than from cultivation at an equivalent level of skill;
2. **High costs** and uncontrollable **risk of crop failure** associated with agriculture;
3. Inadequacy of the **transport and supply infrastructure** in the rural homelands;
4. **Uncompetitive transport costs** associated with unfavourable location;
5. **Scarcity of necessary skills** among rural homelands population;
6. Incompatibility of agriculture with the **goals of household economic planning**.

None of these points implicates the tenure system, and there seems to be little evidence that shortage of agricultural land is a major factor. Instead, the other constraints

appear to limit agricultural production before the limit of available land is reached.

If this formulation is accurate, land reform planning based on collective leasing of agricultural land is not likely to be successful in most localities in the homelands. If the present rural economy tends to avoid commitment to agriculture because it is extremely risky and uncompetitive, the position can probably be changed only by subsidies and insurances which would be prohibitively expensive and very difficult to control. If this is broadly true, then reshaping the tenure system to give more land and more capital to present producers may be misdirected effort.

It is evident that homelands communities which still retain control over their own land have a great deal to lose if existing land rights are swept away in order to promote agricultural production. If high-level economic production is not attained, then significant, reliable rent income will not be achieved either.

Accordingly, it needs to be asked if such drastic forms of land re-planning are worth their probable cost; and also, whether the goal of maximum agricultural land use should push aside other development objectives. It is suggested that encouraging the emergence of a **strong local-level economy** whose households are self-sufficient comes closer to what "self-reliance" really means in the context of the rural homelands.

It is an absolute priority that the homelands need better agricultural production urgently. But this does not necessarily imply that every square metre of arable land needs to be brought into maximum production. What is needed to meet the homelands food crisis could equally well be formulated as **higher wages and an effective policy of income re-circulation** to enable families in the rural homelands to buy food on the same basis as wage-earning households anywhere else.

The most effective role of homelands agriculture is likely to be as a major type of **informal enterprise** contributing to the local economy.

Seen in this light, self-reliance for the rural community suggests a different kind of approach to land, based on **maximizing the household's scope to deploy its own resources**. Research results suggest that any kind of communal or communalized tenure is far from the natural outcome of the spontaneous evolutionary changes now working on indigenous tenure.

Prevailing tenure appears to be moving steadily toward a condition which is close to freehold, but which recognizes the community land ethic and uses it to control some of the dangerous tendencies of laissez-faire freehold tenure. This type of advanced tenure system allows the free exchange of land rights, but discourages the concentration of land resources in the hands of the few.

This is a fair system, and it is compatible with economic planning both at the household and at the national level. It is also more flexible in relation to demographic and economic change than rigid agricultural planning schemes. It is therefore suggested that **stabilizing prevailing tenure may be the most effective type of land planning** in areas where indigenous tenure has been allowed to develop undisturbed.

In this type of approach, residential land use would be allowed to take over from arable cultivation when the expansion of the regional economy demanded it:

1. As far as possible, all families should retain the right to hold and deal in land;
2. Both **residential and arable use of the land** should be promoted appropriately;
3. Attention should be given to **intensive forms of arable cultivation** on relatively small plots;
4. The right of the landholding family to **lease out its land privately** for either arable or residential use should be formalized;
5. Attention should be given to providing the poor and disadvantaged with intermediary **access to the land administration**.

On the assumption that no one type of development planning will work equally well in all rural regions, it is critical to investigate the demographic structure of the local population as well as the local economy; what the prospects for agriculture really are depends on competing opportunities.

There are many possible combinations of circumstances where attempting to develop agriculture at the cost of uprooting the entire community is not justified. Equally, there may be situations where a communal leasing type of plan may be the most effective option available. This could be particularly true in areas now under close-settlement **betterment planning**, where the community has already lost control of its land.

Alternatively, the disruption likely to accompany communal leasing as Tapson has outlined it might be reduced by allocating .5 hectare to each family as their private holding, to be used or reallocated at their discretion; or, an equivalent type of rental plan might be undertaken and

administered en bloc as a state-capitalism enterprise to obtain economies of scale in outlying districts where established farms are very large.

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8. I would like to express my thanks here to several staff members of the agricultural departments of Natal University for their time spent in helping me guesstimate potential economic rents for farmlands in Natal and KwaZulu.
9. Equivalent to about R16 – R30 per month.

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# CONTINUING UNREST — A SMALL TOWN PERSPECTIVE

(A tentative and probably premature analysis from Grahamstown, where, at the time of writing, the schools' boycott was going into its fifth month and cars were being stoned on the main road from East London to Port Elizabeth where it passes through the town.)

Partly because of the regional focus of most South African newspapers, but also because of the vast scale of the Reef townships, the casual reader might well believe that the small platteland towns have been largely free from the "unrest" and boycotts of the past six months. Far from it, for the Eastern Cape at least has maintained its record of obstinate resistance throughout the months since the elections for the Coloured and Indian chambers of the new legislature. The modest Eastern Cape centres of Graaff Reinet, Cradock and Grahamstown have each seen the familiar cycle of detentions, school boycotts and spiralling violence over the past six months, with no clear indication about future developments. Schools have been boycotted, stoned and in some cases burned; motorists in Grahamstown risk running a gauntlet of stone-throwers; government offices, beer halls, community halls, a voluntary welfare centre complex and an historic church hall have been gutted by fire; police have been engaged in a crude form of urban guerilla warfare with stones and bottles hurled against shields, hippo trucks and the personnel who man them with their clubs, guns and gas grenades. And the familiar litany of culprits has been suggested by the authorities and, sometimes, the press — communists, A.N.C., students, vandals, "the youth" and the unemployed being variously blamed for being "behind" or in the thick of the troubles.

As with all "unrest", the reality is masked fortuitously through its complexity, and deliberately by the participants who seek to avoid becoming a target for one or other of the contending parties. In Grahamstown, where the white and black areas are contiguous and easily seen from the other side, the white residents may imagine that they have a clearer vision of events, but there as elsewhere each is likely to be deceived by the account of his favoured personal source (usually a domestic employee) whose own vision is partial and whose own interests are involved. And the black residents, more unwilling participants than impartial observers, are little better placed, as individuals, to understand the unfolding of events.

This said, there seem to be five inter-related elements involved in the present troubles, most of which are essentially national issues, but each of which possesses a particular local flavour mediated by unique incidents and the personalities of the individuals involved. The elements are:— (i) the new constitution, (ii) the crisis in local government, (iii) black educational issues, (iv) the drought and recession, (v) internal power struggles within the black communities. Where the scale of a town is too small for the leadership to be inconspicuous, troubles are less likely, but Graaff

Reinet, Cradock and Grahamstown, and even Port Alfred with its 12,000 black residents have reached that critical mass necessary to sustain unrest over months.

The new constitution, whatever its merits might have been in various right directions for some people, provides a perfect focus for black unity in opposition. The U.D.F. has responded by providing an organisational base for concerted protest against the new system, but it was scarcely necessary for any organisation to tell the people that for the mass of blacks, the 'new deal' means business as usual, with no more protection for their security of tenure outside the black 'homelands' and no appreciable change in their political rights. The 'Coloured' and Indian elections provided specific occasions for boycotts and the rhetoric of revolutionary change, especially in the small towns where black and brown areas are adjacent to each other and their residents closely related to each other. The simple demand for a common franchise and citizenship, unacceptable to the white authorities and their electorates, provides the basis for a united front, however divided the leadership might be about what sort of society would or should emerge as a result of a common franchise. The spacing of the elections a week apart, and the campaigns necessarily waged in every town, encouraged school students to take the intervening days off to promote their cause and, in Grahamstown at least, set in train the process of spiralling conflict. Until some constitutional accommodation is reached with at least the urban blacks, this underlying cause of conflict will persist.

Second, the crisis in local government has been brewing since the national government removed the black townships from the jurisdiction of the white local authorities by creating Administration Boards in 1970. Before 1970, the costs of black local government were met from three sources; the rates and levies from the townships themselves, the profits from the production and sale of alcoholic drink through the municipal beerhalls, and a certain amount of hidden subsidy in the form of services to the municipal area as a whole which were paid for out of 'white' rates. With the advent of Administration Boards, the costs of black local government rose, but the hidden contribution of the 'white' municipalities was lost, since they were no longer involved. Latterly, the liquor business has been privatised to an increasing degree, and as black tastes shift away from sorghum beer, the profits available to the Boards and the new black community councils have tended to shrink and in some cases have vanished. Thus, regardless of the political issues of apartheid and the continuing influence of white officials in black local government, themselves a major focus for opposition, the new black local councils faced by a constituency with rising expectations and little confidence in those rash enough to offer themselves for election, have to meet large and growing demands from a smaller revenue base. They can

only balance their budgets by raising rates and levies – which makes them even more unpopular in hard economic times. Regardless of venality and incompetence in its personnel, the new local government system is economically unviable and hence its executives find themselves both victims of the system and targets of the opposition. The council at Cradock has taken the logical step and dissolved itself on the grounds that its opponents outside the council (CRADORA) command the respect of the people; the Department of Co-operation and Development has not grasped the logic and proposes to hold new elections.

Third, the simmering crisis in black education is always likely to produce boycotts, which in turn release on to the streets a large number of angry and frustrated young people. The causes of that crisis have been endlessly rehearsed and are readily tabulated:—

a) the traditional inequity in resource allocation to black and white education such that to even up expenditure it would be necessary to transfer the entire defence budget to black education.

b) The lack of training and professionalism in a substantial proportion of the black teachers – to some extent reflected in the demands for student councils and an end to corporal punishment i.e. greater control by the pupils over their schools at the local level.

c) Consequential poor results – which mean that families may sacrifice much for many years, only to find their children have a largely useless scrap of paper, while the varying age of starting school exacerbated by high failure rates means that men with little chance of success sit in the secondary schools with children whose studies are on course and whose prognosis is reasonable but who cannot resist the orders of their stronger, academically demoralised classmates.

d) Low standards in black tertiary institutions, such that employers are compelled to discount qualifications earned in them when they are seeking staff.

e) Shortage of secondary school places and properly equipped libraries and laboratories.

Proclamations of good intentions by the Minister and the substantial output of school places and teachers in recent years have done little more than encourage some students in the belief that they must protest more vigorously than ever in order to achieve their ultimate goal of free and equal education for all. A paradox of improved education is that it makes those who are being educated very much more aware of the inadequacies in their education.

The drought and recession have aggravated the economic problems associated with local government and education, particularly in the small towns in the drought stricken Eastern Cape. There has been a rapid influx of families from the white-owned farms to the platteland towns, as workers have been laid off. This has put additional pressure on housing, education and welfare resources in towns which are themselves suffering from the decline in farm incomes and the demand for goods and services which the farms generate. In particular the kinsmen of the immigrants suffer as they have to share the meagre fruits of their labour with the unemployed newcomers.

Established black families in the small towns are finding that as the recession bites, there are fewer jobs available,

even on a casual basis, and the people whose resourcefulness has kept them going as petty traders and providers of services within the black communities are suffering as the workers have less to spend. The recession also exacerbates the devaluation of educational qualifications and the days when a Junior Certificate was a passport to a clerical job or technical training are virtually gone. Even a senior certificate will be examined carefully by a prospective employer for the maths and language symbols.

The mix is thus highly inflammable and needs only the spark provided by a small incident or some revolutionary charisma to ignite it. Koornhof's brave new deal turns out to be the old stacked deck, with a few new names and titles; the bright lights of town are not worth the candle when one cannot afford the matches to light it; the promise of education as the gateway to economic emancipation lies in the dust of well-trodden streets past the NO VACANCIES signs; the old despair, the young rebel. A popular teacher is transferred to a distant place, or an unpopular one promoted; a teacher thrashes a popular pupil or is believed to have favourites; a youngster gets hurt in a brush with the law, or an inexperienced and frightened young policeman panics when confronted by a group of marchers far more sophisticated in the ways of protest than himself; a councillor, elected on a 5% poll, is seen to be abusing his office; an official, socialised in the context of a docile rural black population, decides that the schoolchildren need only to be shown who is the baas for their boycotts to cease. Then come the stones, the birdshot and rubber bullets, the settling of old scores with venal councillors, and young leaders, whether or not they are associated with national organisations such as COSAS or AZAPO, have their first taste of power.

A basis for competition between the various organisations is soon established. A local organisation such as GRACA (the Grahamstown Community Organisation) or CRADORA (its counterpart in Cradock) may claim broad based support on the basis of the very low poll in council elections following its call for a boycott. Its goals will tend to be defined in local terms, such as better services, lower levies, greater public accountability and a unified municipal government. Being an organisation which includes older people with children at school, as well as younger activists, it tends to be ambivalent on the schools' boycott issue and is soon outflanked by a student organisation such as COSAS which seeks a national or regional schools' boycott until its broader educational demands have been met. COSAS in turn may be outflanked by AZAPO or a similarly exclusive black political body which seeks to unite the people primarily on the basis of colour in order to press for its national goals. Jockeying for leadership or control at the local level can readily degenerate into name calling, thuggery and vandalism such as that which led to the destruction of an historic Methodist hall and the headquarters of several welfare organisations in Grahamstown. The shadowy leadership accepts no responsibility for the destruction of government property, houses or communal institutions, although some people both in and out of the community see in the destruction an organised pattern of revolutionary violence against the authorities and of intimidation of the local population – if the church is not sacrosanct, then what chance do the homes or ordinary opponents of violence stand? Some people suspect the use of **agents provocateur** from the authorities or their right wing associates, as premises which

house community youth programmes, the Black Sash Advice Office and a clinic have been damaged or destroyed. The more optimistic see a settling of private scores at the root of at least a part of the destruction, and argue that some of the trouble over the festive season can be attributed to migrants coming home for their annual holidays and the demon drink.

Much of the preceding paragraph is speculation — a summary of the beliefs of people in and near the black community. Whether the broad outlines or the details are true may never be known until some crucial survivors record

their memoirs — what is significant is that the people believe certain things to be true and act accordingly. Perhaps the most depressing aspect of the beliefs is the despair and the paralysis that they engender. The police are seen as the agents of the oppressive power and hence are unavailable as a source of protection or help, while the shadowy local groups, be they criminal gangs or agents of the known organisations, cannot be resisted, no matter what sacrifices they demand of the workers or pupils in the townships. And the good people **can** do nothing.□

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by DOT CLEMINSHAW

## FROM CROSSROADS TO KHAYELITSHA TO . . . ?

White settlement at the Cape has always relied on an industrious black labour force. By 1900 some 10 000 blacks resided in Cape Town, some renting, others owning their homes. They married local women, or brought their wives and families from the rural areas. In 1900 Africans (blacks) could still qualify as voters in the old Cape Colony legislature. But over the years they have lost what few rights they possessed, and to-day there are no blacks in Cape Town who are not legally foreigners or aliens, even 2nd and 3rd generations born here. They have been made citizens of Ciskei or Transkei.

Black people, whose forebears resided in the centre of Cape Town, have steadily been pushed further from the city. With the advent of the Afrikaner Nationalist government in 1948 their physical control has been tightened by pass laws and influx control, and categories of "legal" and "illegal" imposed, the latter being forced back to rural areas. From Cape Town they were moved to Ndabeni, to Langa in 1923, to Nyanga site-and-service in 1946, to Guguletu in 1959.

A disastrous social experiment began with the Eiselen line in 1955, creating a Coloured Labour Preference area in the Western Cape. In August 1984 the University of Western Cape held a seminar calling for an end to this policy, and later Prof. Sampie Terreblanche (of the Theron Commission) concurred, saying of his original support for the Coloured Preference policy "I was wrong". Recently the decision to withdraw this policy was announced by Mr P.W. Botha.

Increasing emphasis has been placed on migrant labour (one-year renewable contracts) for black males in W. Cape, and it was deliberate official policy not to build family housing. Employers were permitted to build men-only hostels in the townships, but the State built no family

units from the mid-60's for a period of 10 years while the black population increased by over 60%

Pressures of rural poverty brought many workseekers illegally to Cape Town, and combined with the natural increase among the legal residents, overcrowding soon created many squatter camps the best known being Crossroads. The saga of its survival in the face of sustained attempts by the Government to wipe it out by means of demolitions, arrests, night raids with armed officials and police, dogs and tear gas (and the fencing of empty sites with barbed wire), made of Crossroads an international issue.

### POPULATION

Official estimates of Cape Town's total population (all races) are 2 million in six years' time, and 3 million by 2000 AD. The Department of Co-operation and Development estimated the black population in Western Cape in January 1984 to be 229 000, of which 169 687 were legally here. So over 59 000 or 26% (but probably many more) were here illegally. Meantime the official estimate of the maximum number that could be accommodated in the existing townships of Langa, Guguletu and Nyanga without overcrowding was 87 214 (mostly in houses, but 25 030 in single quarters). So by official admission, available housing could accommodate only half the "legal" blacks here, demonstrating a major factor in the growth of squatter communities. Mr J. Gunter, Chief Director of the W. Cape Development Board, was quoted in the **Argus** on 8 Aug. 84 as saying that statistics proved influx control had failed to stem the tide of black urbanisation, with the result that there might be up to 100 000 blacks illegally in the Cape, with possibly half of these living in Crossroads. On 10 Jan. 85 Prof. S.P. Cilliers called for the ending of

influx control and a "reconceptualization" of separate development.

### FACTIONS AMONG SQUATTERS

Misery wrought by official policing of squatter camps was intensified during 1983 and 1984 by conflicts between leadership of different factions. The earlier, admittedly tentative, unity between the so-called Mayor, Mr Johnson Ngxobongwana and Mr Oliver Memani collapsed over issues such as their separate lists of who qualified to be regarded as recognised residents of Crossroads — this in the post "Koornhof-agreement" era. As people living in overcrowded conditions in the townships scented the possibility of a new dispensation arising from that agreement, many crept in under the Crossroads umbrella. Several other factions developed. There were the Cathedral Squatters, who, having starved themselves for weeks in St. George's Cathedral, eventually moved to Nyanga Bush, awaiting a promised solution from Dr Koornhof. There was a series of occupations of the area called K.T.C. (after a nearby shop, the Kakaza Trading Co.) and which was to have been the site for Phase II of the New Crossroads scheme promised by Dr. Koornhof.

At the end of December 1983 the factions of Ngxobongwana and Memani clashed violently. A number of Memani supporters fled from violence in which several were killed and many injured, houses were burnt and possessions lost. They congregated on dunes at K.T.C. next to the Methodist Church. Authorities insisted they could not remain there. They refused to move — either to the newly erected Fletcraft huts at Khayelitsha, the new "model city", or to alternative sites allocated at Crossroads (fearing renewed attack from the Ngxobongwana faction). A campaign of shelter demolition and mass arrests began and extended over the next 8 months. Armed police with armoured vehicles prevented violent retaliation. Mr Riaan de Villiers, whose dedicated reporting of the black community's struggle for housing and labour rights in Cape Town has been invaluable, commented that the people had shown tremendous determination and perseverance in rebuilding shelters, some destroyed and rebuilt at least 30 times. Somehow family life continued and children were generally well cared for. (Cape Times 8 Jan. 84). Finally in August 1984 the raids stopped and since then shacks have mushroomed, so that by the end of November 1984 there was a huge new squatter settlement at K.T.C. between Mr Memani's group and the road bordering on Nyanga to the west. Many of these people were "legals", having had to move from backyard shacks in the townships demolished by order of the authorities. Some of this was said to have been triggered off by the actions of Mr Archie Siqaza, a member of the black Community Council, who however denied having given permission to people to erect shacks, but found himself between the twin pressures of demands from "legals" and inaction from both the Western Cape Development Board and the Community Council, which simply did not deal with his letter asking for action on the issue.

### COMMUNITY COUNCIL

The failure of Government to respond adequately to black housing needs as demonstrated by a series of ad hoc decisions and cancelled undertakings by Dr Koornhof (who finally resigned as Minister of Co-operation and Development in August 1984, when squatter camp demolitions

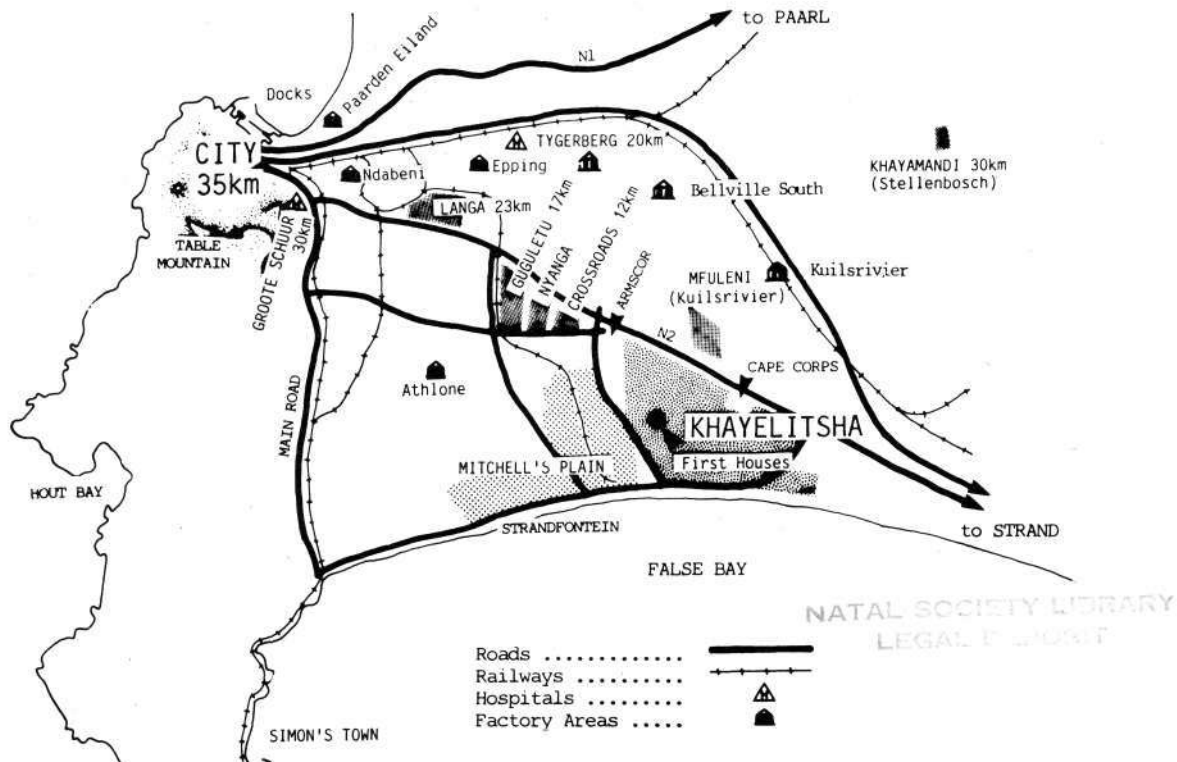
became an issue for Mr Heunis' Department of Constitution and Planning) leads to the question of the effectiveness of the black Cape Town Community Council. In brief, it has proved as impotent and unrepresentative as similar councils elsewhere, for the usual sorts of reasons. The new, higher status of Local Authority has not yet reached our black communities. In November 1983 the black residents voted for the re-election of the Community Council. The percentage poll was 11,6 compared with 27% in 1977. A boycott campaign promoted by the U.D.F. undoubtedly assisted the result, but it is clear that the generality of black people reject these bodies which are no substitute for democratic involvement in central government. The then "Mayor", Councillor Mr Elliot Lubelwana, in an attempt to counter the boycott campaign, imposed a ban on all meetings in the townships. (Mr Lubelwana was murdered in 1984 by unknown assailants who fired shots at him outside his store one night.)

The ban had a continuing deleterious effect on public discussion, so that when the controversial Khayelitsha ("Our New Home") was announced, groups opposed to it, or simply wishing to share information, could not find venues, township halls requiring permission for use from reluctant Community Councillors. Even ministers of religion refuse the use of church premises in the black townships from fear of official disapproval. In fact, a great ecumenical service on 24th June 1984 had to be held in a tent in the grounds of a Lutheran church outside the townships, which must have brought home to the many visiting European and American dignitaries present just how unfree people are to say what they think. In a situation of oppression, where conditions simply do not exist for democratic elections, unrepresentative and frustrated leadership slides easily into authoritarianism and corruption, whether the leaders are councillors or squatter camp heads, whether black or white.

### KHAYELITSHA

When Dr. Koornhof announced the decision to build Khayelitsha (in the Assembly on 30th March 1983), some cautiously welcomed it in the hope that it would be an additional, totally free option for blacks wishing to move there, even though still conceived within the framework of Grand Apartheid. However, on 25th May 1983 Dr. Koornhof stated that Khayelitsha was intended to provide for the consolidated housing needs of the black communities in the Cape Metropolitan area, and that as people voluntarily moved there, the possibility of other race groups being accommodated in the older black townships would be considered.

Other than through the rejected Community Councillors, the residents of Langa, Guguletu, Nyanga, Crossroads, Mfuleni (Black-heath) and Khaya Mandi (Stellenbosch) were not consulted about the decision. Information of the detailed, unvarnished kind required by the average sensible person to assist in assessing the proposed new "satellite city" was very hard to come by. A Guguletu friend remarked "Khayelitsha has nothing to do with the black people", meaning it had been conceived, planned and commenced without consultation with the very people the Government intended should live there, and that even the decision to do so or not would not be for the black people to make. Officials held news conferences, presenting the most favourable image of Khayelitsha, and at one stage even dropped estate-agent-type leaflets from a



helicopter, but to little effect. Very soon Khayelitsha was being condemned on all sides. If Khayelitsha had been designed for the white group, there would have been a long series of informative presentations and public meetings to discuss the project, and many forceful opinions conveyed via M.P.s and M.P.C.s to Government. The question as to why such channels are not open to black people goes to the heart of the matter.

#### WHERE AND WHAT IS KHAYELITSHA?

To those who have only viewed Khayelitsha on SATV, filmed on a fine sunny day with a tantalising glimpse of \*blue sea in the background, it could seem like a veritable heaven, let alone "new home". In reality, the relative isolation of Khayelitsha (about 35 km from Cape Town centre), and its situation between the sea (False Bay) to the south, a no-go area of "wetland" (the Kuil's River flood zone) to the east, the SADF Cape Corps Training Centre to the North, and Armscor land northwest, the place has an uncomfortable camp-like or enclave atmosphere. There is only one entrance/exit road, and no direct access to the N.2 highway. Sited in an area of high white sand dunes, except for a narrow coastal series, soon bulldozed flat (making for cheaper large-scale building), Khayelitsha resembles the Sahara desert in a sandstorm when the wind blows.

Khayelitsha is planned to comprise 4 towns, each divided into 4 villages of approximately 15 000 people. Each village is to house a neighbourhood centre, and each town a suburban centre, with the main city centre located in the geographic middle of the area. Clean water is to be provided to each house, stormwater drainage has been laid, and waterborne sewerage (temporary, to be renewed after 5 years). There is high mast street lighting and tarred roads (now rather sand-covered). Apart from initial fletcraft huts, Phase I covered provision of 1 000 sites, Phase II a further 5 000 sites, and Phase III a further 10 000. The

first 5 000 "starter core" houses are expected to be ready by March. These core houses are about 28 m<sup>2</sup>, built by three contractors to 3 or 4 basic plans which are modifiable a few ways. Each consists of a small area with toilet and a tap (for basin or shower), a kitchen area with tap, and a small living room. The idea is for the owner to build on one or two extra rooms at his own expense, using approved building materials and advice from a resource centre provided (present cost about R400 per room). Bitter complaints about the small size of the rooms (which could never accommodate the double beds and wardrobes of some Crossroads shacks) were made by some of the first people to move into the core houses. A visiting engineer wrote that he and 7 friends had no difficulty standing together in one of the rooms. A Black Sash member replied that what was required was lying down space for granny, husband and wife and 4 children, let alone any furniture. The houses have no floors, ceilings or plaster.

Rentals for the core houses are heavily (R6,5 million over 2 years) subsidised at R20 per month. Even this is too high for many black families to pay. An incredibly high sum was approved in Parliament for the clearing, levelling, infrastructure and building of the Phase I houses (R80,5 million). Building tenders estimated at R40m escalated by 50% after contractors had commenced building, to some R60m in June 1984. It transpires that up to 60% of the total black housing budget for 1984/5 had been taken up in the provision of Phase I (5 000 core houses and infrastructure) at a cost of almost R100 million.

Various other facilities and amenities are planned, the only question being whether they will ever be built. Plans are there for 13 primary and 4 high schools, of which 2 primary and one secondary are built. In addition plans exist for nursery schools, clinics, a day hospital, commercial centres, shops, sites for churches, and public open spaces, with grassed sports fields and tree planting. A projected railway line is being studied.

When will these things be built? The sad fact is that fun-

\*Phase I houses are 3½ km from the sea as the crow flies (maybe 2 hours' walk for a toddler?)'

dinq is now a problem; the Government has realised it cannot complete the scheme without help from the private sector, and has invited their participation. It would have been far more productive to have spent money developing the existing townships, building on empty sites (particularly the useless "buffer zones" decreed to separate the races) and redeveloping badly used sites.

Khayelitsha is designed to accommodate some 280 000 people, mostly in houses, but some in "Single Sex" hostels, at an average residential density of 120 persons per hectare (against 50 per ha. for "coloured" and 35 per ha. for "white"). Even the committee which produced the 1984 Draft Guide Plan for the Cape Metropolitan Area (including the above density rates) indicates that in the long term there might be a further need for land for blacks. Other more realistic assessments are that two Khayelitshas would be required in Government terms.

#### MAIN CRITICISMS OF KHAYELITSHA

Prof. D. Dewar and Ms V. Watson of the University of Cape Town's Urban Problems Research Unit made the following points of criticism of Khayelitsha at an early stage. Summarised, these are:-

- \* enormously high costs of development, providing services, building, in a new area 35 km distant from Cape Town would result in unaffordable rentals requiring State subsidy.
- \* Khayelitsha had no chance of becoming a "city" but would be a dormitory bantustan populated by low-income people.
- \* There would be few local jobs, hence large-scale daily commuting to Cape Town, an increased load on already traffic burdened roads and transport systems, the costs of which would escalate.
- \* Working parents would be absent from children for even longer hours, with adverse effects on family life, leading to increased delinquency and crime.
- \* All goods and services would cost more, including food, clothing, household furniture, education and health bills.
- \* Regardless of plans to build future amenities, few would eventuate in this isolated area, whether commercial, social or recreational.
- \* the proposal to include "self-help building" was a cynical prostitution of the concept. Provision of the starter core houses, using officially designated materials and designs, was totally inadequate.

At first there was no offer of leasehold tenure. Later it was stated that 99-yr. leasehold would become available at Khayelitsha and a few other (unspecified) places. The latest statement from Government is that it is prepared to negotiate freehold rights with those granted 99-yr. leasehold. However not one 99-yr. lease is yet held by any black person in Cape Town, and the whole area is fraught with problems, the most important of which undoubtedly is that security of tenure is being held out to blacks as a carrot to get them to move "voluntarily" from the townships.

One of the sticks was a total freeze on all development in the townships, lifted slightly for 2 or 3 projects.

#### VOLUNTARY REMOVAL IS A MYTH

Black spokesmen (and women) have made it clear they will not move to Khayelitsha, and only those most hard-pressed for housing have gone and will go there. Observers who imagine that a new township must be preferable to overcrowded squatter camps do not see Khayelitsha as

black people do, against the three co-called Bills of 1983, namely

- \* Black Local Authorities
- \* Black Community Development
- \* Orderly Movement and Settlement of Blacks (suspended).

Black people know that even if freehold rights are given in several places in the Cape, limits on the provision of housing will continue to be used as a modern form of influx control. They note with scorn the Government's use of the words "full property rights" when the Group Areas Act segregates the races, and there is no real choice as to where blacks may buy or sell property. Dr. Koornhof stated on 8th June 1983 that people moving to Khayelitsha would not lose their "section 10 rights" (under the Blacks in Urban Areas Consolidation Act of 1945) as Khayelitsha fell within the "prescribed area" of the Cape Divisional Council. Will this statement, like others, become "the dead hand of the past"? What is the future of the Divisional Council under proposed Regional Services Councils? People in Kwa-Mashu and Umlazi lost their section 10 rights when their townships were moved and became part of Kwa-Zulu.

All Xhosa-speaking people in Cape Town now have citizenship of states unrecognised by the rest of the world (Transkei and Ciskei) and are subject to deportation (3 000 Transkeians were so deported from Cape Town in 1981). What exactly does the latest Government offer about citizenship really mean? Until such questions are satisfactorily answered, Khayelitsha has slight chance of acceptance.

#### NIGHTMARE

When Senator E. Kennedy visited Crossroads on 10 January 1985 he failed to extract an assurance from top official Mr. T. Bezuidenhout that nobody would be forced to move to Khayelitsha, or that "illegal" blacks would not be penalized. The new Minister of Community Development, Dr. Gerrit Viljoen, reaffirmed the government's intention to move all the Crossroads squatters, legal and illegal, to Khayelitsha. The intention is to house the "legals" in core houses, and to give temporary site-and-service to the "illegals", pending their redirection, presumably to the rural areas. Opinion is divided in Crossroads - some will go to Khayelitsha, others demand recognition of rights before moving, while yet others want both housing and rights at Crossroads. Recent fresh outbreaks of faction fighting and demonstrations against increased rents in Crossroads has seen the arrest of several squatters. Both Mr Ngxobongwana and Mr Memani are in police custody awaiting trial on charges relating to this unrest. Women leaders like Mrs Regina Ntongana and Ms Nomangesi Mbobosi (who is also on trial) have had their homes in New Crossroads burnt down.

A nightmare scenario haunts those who are opposed to the move to Khayelitsha - a post-Sebokeng scene in which Administration Board officials arrive at dawn with lorries, Crossroads is sealed off by police and SADF soldiers, the area is declared "operational", and newspaper reporters and TV cameramen are excluded. Section by section the people are moved to a similarly sealed Khayelitsha, "legals" moved into houses and "illegals" processed away from Cape Town. This has happened elsewhere in the country, why not at Crossroads? But then not all nightmares really happen. □

# THE TRANSKEI BANTUSTAN AND IT'S UNIVERSITY : A CRISIS OF LEGITIMACY

During 1984, events in the Transkei Bantustan and its University, the University of Transkei (Unitra), have received a great deal of publicity which has focussed on the boycotting of lectures, the storming of the University library by the Transkeian police and army, the beating, detention and expulsion of several hundred students, reports on court cases, allegations of corruption and mismanagement within the University, the appointment and findings of an "independent" commission of inquiry into University disruption, and the deportation over a period of months of nine University academic staff members by the Transkei government. These events have resulted in the almost complete disruption of the University academic year.

In this article I will attempt to explain why this disruption occurred. I will also attempt to demonstrate that these events cannot be explained in isolation from the dynamics of change in the South African political system. I will finally speculate on the future of the University of Transkei in the context of the Transkei Bantustan.

As a starting point one must look at the background and purposes for which the Transkei Bantustan and its University were created. The foundations upon which the Bantustans were laid can be traced back to last century, however the decision to create politically "independent" and racially exclusive geographic areas carved out of greater South Africa is of more recent origin. The Bantustans are now referred to by their creator the South African Government and its supporters in them as "independent nation states" in the hopes that this change in terminology will give them a greater degree of respectability. I find little that is respectable about them and will continue to refer to the Transkei as a Bantustan.

The decision to create politically "independent" and racially exclusive geographic areas within the boundaries of South Africa, was taken in the early 1960's by a white Afrikaner minority Nationalist Party government in Pretoria headed by Dr H.F. Verwoerd. Verwoerd was Prime Minister from 1958 to 1966 and is the main theorist behind the doctrine of "separate development" or "apartheid". Verwoerd is described as the "architect of apartheid", (1) the doctrine which provides for the creation of "independent nation states." The Transkei was the first so called "independent nation state" to be created in terms of this doctrine. Although Verwoerd was not a born Afrikaner (he was born in the Netherlands) he identified very strongly with the Afrikaner nationalist cause, and became one of the most dedicated and fanatical proponents of racial segregation and territorial fragmentation. It was in 1962 that Verwoerd stated that,

"the Bantu (blacks) will be able to develop into separate states. This is not what we would like to see. It is a form of fragmentation that we would not have liked if we were able to avoid it. In the light of the pressure being exerted on South Africa, there is however no doubt that eventually this will have to be done thereby buying for the white man the right to retain his domination in what is his country." (2)

The creation of the Transkei Bantustan was plain and simply a product of the perceptions of Verwoerd in particular, and the Nationalist Party and its auxiliaries like the Broederbond, the South African Bureau of Racial Affairs, Afrikaner academics and senior government officials, as to how South Africans of different colours should be politically and economically accommodated within the same territory. The Bantustans were clearly a product of white political thought rather than black political thought.

Now before a territory can become "independent", it must have a government and leadership generally supportive of the idea of independence. In order that the South African government could achieve its objective of an "independent" Transkei, it had to embark upon a black leadership recruitment and development program. One of the key "leaders" recruited by the South African government was a black South African tribal chief by the name of Kaiser Matanzima. Matanzima was already a collaborator in the early 1950's of the South African government's race segregation policy. In order to make an "independent" Transkei work, support had to be shored up for Matanzima and a future government. The South African government used a number of devices to achieve its objectives. It offered material, financial and other inducements to potential black supporters. It moreover resorted to extremely dubious electoral techniques during successive elections to pack a parliament with generally supportive members, South African government officials were used to manipulate events in its favour, and further, considerable power was given to government paid and appointed chiefs who were therefore obliged to support an "independence" government. Finally, wide ranging "security laws" were passed and used to further build up support for Matanzima and his Transkei National Independence Party (TNIP) and to demoralize and jail individuals and political party members who were opposed to racial segregation and an "independent" Matanzima-led Transkei. (3)

A further important factor to consider in relation to this process is that the opinion of the Xhosa-speaking Transkeian population was never sought either in a referendum or special election as to whether they really wanted an

"independent" Transkei or an alternative form of political accommodation in South Africa. Data gathered in sample surveys and observations made by several researchers indicate an overwhelming rejection of an "independent" Transkei amongst the residents of that territory.(4) By not holding a referendum it would suggest that the South African government and the Transkeian "leadership" were anxious to avoid the possibility of the idea of an "independent" Transkei being rejected by a Transkeian electorate. Another important fact to consider is that in the 1981 Transkei election for members of the National Assembly, only thirty-one percent of the eligible Transkeian voters actually voted. This must surely indicate a general lack of support and enthusiasm for the Transkeian government and its "leadership."

The above indicates that "independence" was foisted upon the Transkeian population. No request for "independence" was ever made by the Transkeian population. Any requests that were made for "independence" were made by South African government supported puppets. The "independent" Transkei was therefore set up by the South African government to fit with Verwoerdian ideology and was not created in response to the general will of the population of the Transkei. A government lacking in legitimacy and support will of necessity resort to measures to protect its existence and interests when it perceives itself to be threatened. It is this perception that has brought about the disruption of the University of Transkei academic year as will be explained below.

With the pending "independence" of the Transkei Bantustan in 1976, it was felt that the establishment of a University in the territory would lend it status, legitimacy and credibility in the eyes of the local and international community. An official publication of what became the University of Transkei in 1976, states that "on request of the Honourable the Chief Minister of Transkei, Paramount Chief K.D. Matanzima and his cabinet, the University of Fort Hare was approached during 1974 by the Honourable the Minister of Bantu Education, Mr M.C. Botha, with a view to the establishing a branch of the University of Fort Hare at Umtata in 1975." (5) From this statement it can be seen that the establishment of a university was seen as necessary to an "independent" Transkei and supported by both governments. Moreover, Matanzima acknowledged in 1977 that "the establishment of a university in Transkei has been a personal ideal for many years, the present events (the official opening of the university) should in many a way be regarded as a long cherished dream." (6) The establishment of a university might therefore assist Matanzima in realising the personal ideal of being recognised as the leader of an internationally recognised "nation-state."

In order for a university to fulfill its functions "suitable" staff members have to be appointed. This was all the more important in the case of the University of Transkei in view of the role that this University would have to perform. One of the key staff positions in any university is that of principal. The University of Transkei Act, 1976 was framed so as to ensure that the political goals of the University were likely to be met. In terms of this Act, the principal was to function as "chief executive officer and shall by virtue of his office be a member of every committee and joint committee of the council and senate." (6) This provision places the principal in a very strong posi-

tion within the University. A further provision was included so as to ensure that the government could exercise indirect control over the University. Section 7(1) of the Act states that "the principal of the University shall be appointed by the Minister after consultation with the council." Moreover, in terms of government notice No. 118 of August 1977, "the Minister may dismiss the principal on the advice of the council." As the processes of government work in the Transkei Bantustan, the Minister is in fact the autocratic and domineering Kaiser Matanzima who became Prime Minister at "independence" and later President. Despite Matanzima's constitutional designation as President and ceremonial head of state, he continues to dominate the government of the territory. As a consequence of the provisions of the University of Transkei Act, 1976, the incumbent of the office of principal is in effect answerable to Matanzima rather than to the Council of the University to which all other University staff members are answerable. A conclusion that one can draw from these provisions of the Act is that the draftsmen of the Act who were no doubt the Transkeian and Pretoria governments, feared the consequences of a truly autonomous university. A provision for indirect control was therefore included. However, as time passed by it was discovered that this control mechanism was not adequate and other control measures had to be used as will be explained below.

Besides making legal provision for the control of the University the type of person appointed to various offices is of great importance. When it came to appointing the first principal in 1976 of the new University of Transkei, (Unitra was still a branch of the University of Fort Hare at that stage) Professor J.M. de Wet, Rector of the University of Fort Hare, and no doubt with the blessing of the erstwhile Minister of Bantu Education, M.C. Botha, appointed, Professor B. de V. van der Merwe as Rector's representative in Umtata. This was a most suitable appointment from the point of view of both the Pretoria government and the Matanzima government in that Van der Merwe was a conservative autocratic Afrikaner from the Orange Free State who still believes in Verwoerd's racial segregation vision and would ensure that this vision was implemented. He was moreover a former Professor in the Philosophy and History of Education at the University of Fort Hare and would ensure that Matanzima's "Xhosa nation" received a good dose of ethno-national education.

Both the Matanzima government and the Pretoria government have long desired that the Transkei gain recognition in the international community. If the Transkei was recognised by the international community as a *de facto* independent state, then the apartheid doctrine would gain in legitimacy. Part of the strategy towards international recognition would be for the new University of Transkei to be placed in the most favourable international light possible. In an address Van der Merwe said that "the university of Transkei aims at developing into a modern university" and will "have strong ties with the people of Transkei" and the "Xhosa nation." He continued, "it will be the task of the university, both staff and students alike, to remember the historic past, the particular nature of its present responsibility towards the people of Transkei. But this must not be seen in a narrow or exclusive sense; the university also wants to be universal and therefore is also open to all who qualify to lecture and study here....."



The university must be of Africa, but not of the dark Africa of the colonial past; on the contrary, the university must show the way to the new Africa, freed from the influence of the past, and free in its own right without falling prey to a new form of colonialism or pseudo-democracy." Van der Merwe concludes that the task will be to blend the best of the Xhosa past with what is worthy in western civilization. It must of necessity be a joint effort of black and white. (7)

In the context of an enforced racial order, it is impossible to attain all these goals. Some of these goals were however partially attained. As the years progressed, the University acquired in 1974 an academic staff numbering approximately one hundred and eighty and originating from sixteen different countries as diverse as the Soviet Union and South Africa. Further, the 1984 student enrolment numbered nearly three thousand of which nearly ten percent originated from outside the borders of the Transkei. In the context of southern African universities, the University of Transkei became one of the most open of all universities in the region to "all who qualify to lecture and study here." Naturally if the University was open to a student and staff complement from diverse backgrounds, they would bring with them diverse political, economic, educational and social views and promote views contrary to the existing order. It is a clash of diverse views which is at the heart of the legitimacy crisis which is being fought out at present and has resulted in the almost complete disruption of the academic year.

The participants in this crisis can be viewed as two loose and shifting alliances. The one alliance comprises Matanzima as founder of the University and the University's first Chancellor. Matanzima is also effective head of government as mentioned above. Other members of this alliance include functionaries like Matanzima's younger brother as Prime Minister, Van der Merwe as an employee of Matanzima, the Ministers of Education, Interior, Police, Prisons and Defence, and their immediate subordinates. About a third of the University academic and administrative staff and a number of students and more particularly part-time students are also members of this alliance.

There are several factors which have brought this alliance together. Almost the entire membership of this alliance has an interest in preserving the status quo. For example, if a different political, economic and social order prevailed in greater South Africa, Matanzima would not hold the position of power that he holds at present. Matanzima owes his position to the South African government and not to the general wish of the Transkeian population as explained above. Matanzima would obviously not support any effort or allow any doctrine to be propagated which might upset the status quo and redistribute power and wealth. Similarly, Van der Merwe owes his position to Matanzima as referred to above, and is unlikely to easily relinquish his position or fall out of favour with his employer Matanzima. Van der Merwe is also useful to Matanzima in that he can act as a useful conduit to Pretoria for Matanzima's financial and other requirements. Other members of the alliance also have material interests in the status quo like good salaries, positions of power and business opportunities. Members of the alliance also include recipients and potential recipients of patronage from Matanzima and his functionaries. Patronage might include the awarding of high positions in government, the alloca-

tion of scarce resources like housing, loans, land and trading rights. A further binding factor in this alliance is a blind acceptance of the Transkei Bantustan and the status quo within the Bantustan as being legitimate and a finality. As far as education is concerned, members of this alliance do not understand the concepts of "university autonomy" and "academic freedom". They see the University as an extension of the civil service where everybody is required to work according to a strict set of rules and code of conduct. They believe that "students are at university to study and not to dabble in politics. Students must obey the authorities." Any deviation from this perception of a university is considered to be rebellion against the authorities. In resolving even minor conflicts, members of this alliance do not have a great deal of competence, they do not see the utility of consultation as a conflict resolution mechanism. They would rather resort to stern measures like force and intimidation as being necessary and appropriate in bringing any form of "rebellion" under control.

Ranged against this alliance is another loose alliance comprising broadly, members of the Students' Representative Council, a sizeable proportion of the student body which includes almost all four-hundred and eighty students in residence, and approximately two thirds of the University academic and administrative staff. This alliance shares several characteristics. Members of the alliance do not have a great material interest in the status quo, they have very little to lose if the existing order is changed. They are not the recipients of patronage. They abhor apartheid and all its implications, and the great disparities of wealth and poverty within the Transkeian and South African societies. Members of this alliance are highly critical of the corrupt and irregular activities in which members of the opposing alliance are perceived to be indulging.

Further binding factors in this alliance are the implications and beliefs in the ideas of "university autonomy", "academic freedom", an "open university" and the "rule of law." With the aid of critical and enlightened staff of diverse persuasions, the student body developed enlightened and critical attitudes towards their society. As a result of this learning process, they have become more articulate and confident in themselves. This process is moreover reinforced by the vicious racial practices including political and economic discrimination to which many of them have been subjected in greater South Africa. Finally, they could see that the prevailing order within the Transkei and in greater South Africa would not afford them the opportunities in the political, economic and social sphere that they would be afforded in a new order.

Members of this alliance do not accept the notion of a "Xhosa nation" but support a greater South African nationalism. They also support real democracy and not "pseudo-democracy" as is practiced within the University and in the Transkei and greater South Africa. Members of this alliance see the role of the University as showing "the way to a new Africa" and not the Africa as seen from the perspective of the Xhosa nationalist or the Afrikaner Broederbond. This view of an alternative society was manifested in various student protest demonstrations against the South African government Coloured and Indian elections held in September of 1984. Some of the slogans chanted with great gusto were, "Mandela is our leader" (referring to detained ANC leader Nelson

Mandela), "we are going to Pretoria" (referring to the take over of the South African government), "students unite," "Tambo lead us" (referring to Oliver Tambo, President of the ANC in exile), "amandla wethu" (strength to the people), and "a luta continua." (the struggle continues) Evidence of a view of another order in South Africa amongst the student population is found in unpublished survey research undertaken by staff members at the University.

The disruption of the 1984 University year has come about as a result of a conflict between these two alliances. Conflicts over large issues are very often set off by relatively minor issues and this is in fact what has happened in regard to the University of Transkei issue. This conflict has followed a general retaliatory pattern between these two alliances. This conflict has developed broadly as follows. It began over the setting up of an informal commission of enquiry by certain staff members to investigate allegations of corruption and mismanagement within the administration of the University. The findings of this commission of enquiry were stopped by an unknown source from being referred to the Attorney-General for possible prosecution which would have most certainly been an embarrassment to the Matanzima alliance. This alliance felt threatened by this and retaliated by Van der Merwe singling out several staff members for attack in public during a graduation address. Further, the Matanzima alliance detained several students for "questioning" who were linked to the Students' Representative Council. This was an attempt to block the Students' Representative Council from mobilising student opinion against the Matanzima alliance. The students responded by holding a mass meeting to discuss the detention issue and decided to protest against the detentions by using the only weapon at their disposal, the boycott of lectures. The Matanzima alliance retaliated by deciding that there must be so-called "agitators" amongst the university staff, and on very subjective and arbitrary grounds, deported four academic staff members and later a further five. This action only provoked further student anger and led to the extension of the lecture boycott. Later in the year, the Matanzima alliance again responded by detaining several hundred students and releasing them without charge. Students again were not intimidated by these actions and again did not return to lectures in great numbers. The Matanzima alliance again responded by prohibiting entry to the campus of five hundred and eighty students. These drastic measures were used in order to control the course of events within the University. Van der Merwe as an employee of Matanzima with a great deal of power in the University was not able to control the course of events.

What are the consequences of these actions? They have besmirched the name of the University throughout the world and set back any progress that the Transkeian government might have made in having the Transkei state recognised by the international community. The little credibility that the University might have had in the international community has been completely destroyed. These actions have moreover radicalised and angered students and sympathisers and unsettled and demoralised staff. As far as the students are concerned, these actions have wrecked many of their academic careers and many of them will be driven more firmly towards the co-called "enemies" of the South African state, in particular the African Natio-

nal Congress (ANC), the South African Communist Party (SACP) and other liberation movements.

As far as the future is concerned, the conflict will continue until a legitimate order is established in South Africa. The conflict is unmanageable within the parameters of the Transkei Bantustan. Many of the conflicting and bungled decisions made by the Matanzima alliance assisted by incompetence in this alliance, are symptomatic of the unmanageability of the conflict. All the Matanzima alliance can really do about the conflict, besides abdicating their positions of power and authority, is to use all repressive and intimidatory measures at their disposal to protect themselves.

In the future, the idea of an "open university" will in practical terms be cast aside in favour of a Xhosa ethnic university. The university will to an increasing extent be staffed by Xhosas or as they are called, "Transkeian Citizens." They are more easily controlled than so-called "expatriate" staff. Their mobility in the job market is restricted by the prevailing racial order in South Africa. They therefore have to "toe the line" or they might be threatened with dismissal or jail sentences. This is perhaps more serious punishment than what deportation with one hour's notice might mean to an "expatriate" staff member. Other repressive measures that the Matanzima alliance will use will include student expulsions and denials of admission to the University.

The consequences of the legitimacy crisis are that the students who are supposed to be helped by the University are going to be deprived of a good education. Standards must inevitably decline if a University draws its staff from a small population. Further, no self-respecting academic will be prepared to work at the University, and those who might remain at present will eventually leave for other universities. The University of Transkei will fall in line with the sterile racial order in South Africa as envisaged by Verwoerd and others and will become what is commonly referred to as a "tribal bush college." The Matanzima alliance has gained the upper hand in the conflict for the present, and through its possession of state power will continue to dominate and repress opponents. Nevertheless, forces of change have been released by the University which are uncontrollable and in time will lead to a more legitimate order. The conflict will continue. □

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# CLASS AND CAPITAL IN AFRICA

Bill Freund, *The Making of Contemporary Africa*.  
Macmillan, 1984, R21,50.

Bill Freund, the American author of this new history of Africa, has had an unusual academic career. He first came to South Africa in the late 1960's to do research for his doctoral thesis for Yale University on the Cape during the Batavian regime. From that thesis came his chapter on the transitional years between Dutch East India Company rule and British rule at the Cape in the well-known textbook edited by Richard Elphick and Hermann Giliomee, *The Shaping of South African Society*. After leaving Yale, he taught in the United States before taking a job at Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria, northern Nigeria. There he researched the history of labour on the tin-mines on the Jos Plateau, and wrote a much-acclaimed book on that topic. He also taught, more briefly, at the University of Dar es Salaam, which led to an important article in *African Affairs* on recent developments in Tanzania. After this varied African experience, he was appointed to a temporary post in the history department at Harvard, and it was there that he found the time to write this general history of Africa. Invited to the University of Cape Town as a visiting lecturer in 1982, he became excited by the new work being done in South Africa on the country's social and economic history, so when his Harvard appointment came to an end he accepted a research post at the African Studies Institute of the University of the Witwatersrand. In late 1984 he was appointed the first Professor of Economic History at the Durban campus of the University of Natal. That the author of a major new text on African history should have a permanent post at a South African university says something about the state of the academic job market in Britain and America, but also about the relatively healthy state of African studies at our major universities.

## Previous histories

There have not been many general histories of Africa by one author, and at most two or three of any distinction. Roland Oliver and John Fage, pioneers in the study of African history, combined to write *A Short History of Africa*, which Penguin Books published in 1962. This was in its day the most-used text of the 1970's, Robin Hallett – whose visit to the University of Cape Town in 1971 stimulated, as with Freund eleven years later, a deep interest and long-term connection with this country – produced the first of his two large volumes on the history of Africa. Vividly written, *Africa to 1875* and then *Africa Since 1875* synthesised the very extensive new work of the 1960s and provided a lot of detail on all parts of the continent. Among the new one-volume general histories to appear in the late 1970s, John Fage's *A History of Africa*, and Philip Curtin et al, *African History* were competent texts, but they summarised the existing scholarship, without providing any new synthesis. All these

'Africanist' texts, Freund claims, tended to celebrate the glories of the pre-colonial African past, which was interpreted mainly in terms of state formation, and to adopt a critical or a dismissive view of colonialism. They ransacked the past for the roots of mid-twentieth century nationalism, and ignored the class dimension of African society. Freund is also as critical of the dependency approach in Walter Rodney's *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* for its focus on the exploitative relationship Europe imposed on Africa and its tendency to see Africans as passive victims of underdevelopment. Freund boldly set out not merely to write another general one-volume text, but also to offer a new interpretation of modern African history.

His sub-title, 'The Development of African Society since 1800' delimits the scope of his book, though in fact 'The Development of Sub-Saharan African society' would have been more accurate, for North Africa is omitted entirely. There are in fact forty pages or so on Africa before 1800. Robin Hallett mostly adopted a regional approach in his general history. Freund's much briefer 'extended essay', as befits a work of reinterpretation, is more thematic. But while in the first half of his book he attempts to integrate South Africa into his themes – of legitimate commerce, then colonial conquest – for its twentieth century history South Africa gets two separate chapters. The result is that he provides a much more connected account of the recent history of South Africa than of any other region of the continent and that he devotes more space, proportionately, to this country than did previous general histories. The lack of attention to South Africa was certainly a great weakness in Oliver and Fage's Afrocentric *Short History*, though Freund may have gone too far in the other direction. His justification for so great a focus on South Africa is, first, the importance of this country – an importance which seems to be further emphasised by the fact that the second of the two South African chapters is the last in the book. Secondly, he mentions the complexity of the society, the mix of population and the extent of industrialisation.

On the whole his book is very clearly written, and, though it is likely to be most used by undergraduates, it can indeed, as he suggests, be read by any intelligent general reader. There are remarkably few factual inaccuracies in so wide-ranging a work. A number of slips do occur on pages 99 to 102, where the proclamation of British Bechuanaland (1885) is mentioned before the incorporation of Lesotho in the Cape, which took place fourteen years beforehand, and where four dates are incorrectly given (those for the incorporation of Lesotho in the Cape, the British annexation of Zululand, the beginning of the Transvaal revolt, and the Jameson Raid). Other factual

errors – Strijdom misspelt on p. 269, for instance, and P.J. for P.W. Botha – are minor. ‘Homelands’ should surely have been given inverted commas (266 and ff.).

### A Materialist Approach.

Oliver and Fage’s general history showed that an Afrocentric history was possible. When they wrote, as Ronald Segal said at the time in his editorial foreword, ‘the study of African history has hardly begun.’ A decade later, Robin Hallett could show that a vast amount had been learned about the African past. Freund is not concerned to show that Africa has a past that can be written about – there is no longer need for that – but rather to explain the course of African development. Such detail as he has space to provide is used in support of the arguments he wishes to make about Africa’s past. He sets out his approach clearly in his Introduction. His purpose, he states, is to survey the making of contemporary Africa from a materialist perspective. Many historians of Africa have investigated particular problems from such a perspective in recent years, but Freund is the first western scholar to attempt a materialist history of Africa. What kind of materialist is he, and how successful is his materialist perspective?

His first page proclaims his belief that ‘the web of social and economic relations that emerges from human satisfaction of material needs forms the core of historical development’ (xi), and that class struggle determines the form of history. So the relationship between capitalism and colonialism, and the evolution of classes, become the central themes of African history. The anti-colonial thrust of African nationalism is, for example, downplayed, its class bases highlighted. Generally, the importance of material forces, of capital penetration, and of class, is asserted.

Class was certainly a major lacuna in the approach of the Africanist and other scholars of the first generation of African history. (Though it was by no means altogether left out of account, and sometimes Freund merely uses ‘ruling class’ where Hallett, for example, used ‘ruler’ or ‘rulers’.) Freund contributes an especially brilliant discussion of the emergence of new classes in the colonial period – peasants, workers, bureaucrats – and in general his account of class formation over time is highly stimulating. But there are problems with his approach, and some discrepancies between what he set out to do and what he has actually accomplished. Despite his proclaimed intention not to follow Rodney’s focus on Europe’s relations with Africa, but rather to stress formation in Africa, the early chapters of his book in fact devote more attention to the former than to the latter. In his chapter on pre-nineteenth century developments, Freund says more about state formation, and much less about economic change, than one would expect. He continues with relatively lengthy sections on the Portuguese in Africa and on the Atlantic slave trade, while important internal developments are ignored, even for the post-1800 period. Thus, the Fulani jihads, or say the impact of the Mfecane west of the Drakensberg, receive barely a mention. Usman dan Fodio appears only within the context of a rising in northern Nigeria which took place a century after the famous jihad leading to the formation of the Sokoto caliphate (155). From his book one will learn very little about the internal dynamics of the caliphate, or of any nineteenth century African society. The importance he attaches to the role of capital, mercantile and industrial, has resulted

in his book appearing much more Eurocentric than the earlier general histories. The whites – whether early European traders in west Africa or politicians in South Africa – receive, relatively, a lot of attention. Freund’s paragraph on the Anglo-Boer war (103), to take just one minor example, makes no mention of African participation, the subject of much recent research.

Freund is a subtle historian, rightly critical of the way abstractions such as modes of production have been used without due regard for the complexities of the past. Nor is he a crude economic reductionist. He is sensitive to the importance of culture and religion, and to the complex interplay of a variety of influences on major historical processes. Yet there remains a difference between the materialist, for whom there is no doubt what is ultimately determinant, and the historian of a more pluralist persuasion, for whom there is no such certainty. It is to be hoped that Freund’s text will help produce a fruitful debate – already in progress for South African history – about the relative importance of race and class in Africa. My own view would be that Freund is too dismissive both of white racism and black anti-colonialism, too ready to attribute everything either to the interests of capital – as in the case of the entire late nineteenth century conquest, for example – or to the class struggle. (And he is too ready to see antagonism – **struggle** is a too frequently used term – in class relationships.) The very concept of class is itself a slippery one, as shown by his own use of the term in different senses (sometimes it is merely a group of office-holders, such as the class of bureaucrats mentioned on p. 150). Freund has to admit that little work has been done on classes in pre-colonial Africa (36), that there are problems about seeing distinct classes among a socially exclusive peasantry (145), and that it is extremely difficult to say what classes have existed in the post-colonial period (239ff). No reader of this book can finish it without accepting the importance of class in African history. But a lot more work obviously needs to be done to elucidate the changing meaning of class, and when it has been the question will remain whether class deserves as decisive and determining an emphasis as Freund gives it in this book.

As is often the case with someone presenting a new perspective, Freund tends to be too critical of his predecessors, especially the Africanists, all of whom sometimes seem to stand accused of what only the most extreme ever suggested (that conquest and foreign rule amounted to systematic plunder, for example, or that there were no classes in colonial Africa). Ecological and environmental factors, one might think, should have been given more attention beyond a couple of pages on the drought of the early 1970s. On the themes he does explore, however – and no one can deny that they are among the most important in African history – Freund undoubtedly presents the best general account in print. Even where he is in fact less novel than he suggests he is, he remains an admirable synthesiser, and he is always interesting. His book concludes with a bibliographic essay almost fifty pages long, in which he comments perceptively on an amazingly wide range of sources. In short, his book is both a challenging and an extremely useful text, which deserves to be widely read. □