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Piet Draghoender's Lament

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The Kat River Settlement which commenced life with high hope in 1829 is now (1987) reduced to no more than 100 families. By 1990 it will be dead. As an academic, I became interested in the tragic history of this small peasant community. As a member of the Grahamstown Rural Committee, I became involved in their vain battle against the South African Government's expropriation of their remaining land. But the Kat River people themselves made little distinction between the struggles of the past and the struggles of the present. Their communal experiences have merged over time to create a single integrated world-view. Their political opinions are framed in distinctly archaic terms and their historical reminiscences have acquired a specifically contemporary relevance. Nowhere is this characteristic consciousness more apparent than in "Piet Draghoender's Lament," the subject of this paper.

Draghoender's lament is a most remarkable oral document. It is not only an expression of personal anguish and a substantial literary achievement, but it also represents the unarticulated political sentiments of the entire community. This paper begins by providing the necessary historical background, continues with text and analysis of the Draghoender lament, and concludes by outlining the subsequent history of the Draghoender family, whose fate throws into sharp relief the material consequences of the attitudes so memorably expressed in the lament.

I

The Kat River Settlement was founded in 1829 on the initiative of Andries Stockenström, the Commissioner-General for the Eastern districts. Stockenström's declared purpose was philanthropic:¹

To collect the remnants of the Hottentot race, to save them from extirpation, to civilise and Christianise them.

A less noble motive, the defence of the Cape frontier, weighed more with Stockenström, but the Kat River people did not know that. They accepted the proffered territory (confiscated from the Xhosa after the 1818-9 frontier war) gratefully, and set out to make a success of its fertile lands. By 1845, the fixed property, livestock and annual produce of the area was worth over #65,000.² Even more significant, though not statistically quantifiable, was the deep attachment of the Kat River community to Christianity as manifested in the Congregational Church at Philipton and the Dutch Reformed Church at Hertzog.

The material interests and cultural inclinations of the Kat River people led them to side with the white settlers, whom they viewed as the bearers of Christianity and civilisation. They fought ferociously on the side of the Colony during the Frontier Wars of 1834-5 and 1846-7, and were largely instrumental in securing the victory of the whites.³ The Kat River people did not in any way resent these military duties. It was the price they paid for their land, the price they had paid to make their land "free". Their blood washed the ground clean of the claims of its previous owners, and erased the "debt" which they owed to the

whites who gave it to them. Hence the importance of the concept of "bloodgrond" in Kat River political thought.

Their sacrifices availed them nothing in the long run. For the sake of brevity, their history over the last 150 years can be summarised as the story of three betrayals by the white community, whom they regarded as their role models. There is a curious lack of bitterness about this in the Kat River, that is to say bitterness is confined to specific events and specific individuals and never extends to the structures of Colonial domination. The closest thing to a general criticism that I ever heard was:

Look, we were misled by those who should have helped us. But they misled us.

The first betrayal came in the late 1840's from Eastern Cape settlers, who disliked the Kat River Settlement because it occupied valuable land which was needed for sheep farming and because it permitted the growth of an independent peasantry rather than a class of wage labourers. Their greedy desires were represented in terms of morally defensible phobias concerning stock theft and treason. Harsh and unsympathetic magistrates were appointed to the Kat River, while Eastern politicians agitated for vagrancy laws. Alarmed for their future, a substantial number of Kat River people rebelled against the Colony in 1850 and joined the Xhosa side in the Eighth Frontier War.

The second betrayal occurred after 1853, when whites were settled in the Kat River on lands confiscated from the rebels. Unscrupulous lawyers such as A.R. Adendorff and V.G. Fenner-Solomon acted as money-lenders and cheated the people out of their properties.

Adendorff, he had the system of a bucket under the table. When the people went to ask him to help them with money: 'How much?' 'No, just as much as you can manage, Sir.' 'Take, take from there.' Now then. I take just like that with both hands Now he comes and says, 'I want your guarantee. Look, your land must be the security.' He knows that you won't be able to repay that money in three months time. Then your land goes for being the security of that money.

These minor swindles culminated in the major fraud of the Boedel Erven Act of 1905, whereby most of the lands of the Kat River people and the vast grazing commonages, to which their titles had given them access, were swallowed up by the fraudulently inflated legal fees which were charged to get their properties legally registered.

The last few remnants of the Kat River people struggled on into the twentieth century, a forgotten community in an obscure rural backwater. The young men volunteered en masse for the Second World War and their medals joined those of their fathers and grandfathers in the drawers and cardboard boxes where they kept their most precious possessions. General Sauts had promised them that it would be "a different Africa" when they returned, but few got more than a bicycle or an old plough to show for their military efforts.

Even so, the Kat River people could scarcely believe the rumours circulating among their white neighbours that the whole of Stockenström district was to be expropriated and handed over to the Ciskei "national state." No Government official had bothered to inform them of this decision or to explain its implications to them. As the evidence mounted that some major changes were in the offing, they addressed a memorandum to the Government.

We ask for a defined territorial area exclusively for Coloureds, preferably in the Kat River area. If that is not possible, we ask for lands elsewhere in exchange for those lands being incorporated in the Ciskei.

C.M. Heunis, the responsible minister, sent them a friendly response, stating:

I gladly give the assurance that this matter shall be thoroughly investigated ... You will however understand that such an investigation will necessarily occupy a considerable period of time.

It was only after two years of waiting for this "thorough investigation" to be completed that the Kat River people realised that they had been betrayed once again. Not only was no alternative ground being made available, not only had no "thorough investigation" ever begun, but F.W. de Klerk, the new responsible minister, denied in Parliament that the Kat River memorandum had ever been received.⁷

As the inexorable machinery of forced removal - census of population, evaluation of property, numbering of houses - ground on, it became increasingly apparent that no one in Government was prepared to accept any responsibility for the future of the Kat River people. They refused to accept that they were dealing with a deeply rooted and coherent community, and they insisted on treating the Kat River people as a series of individuals. Each individual would get the money for his or her property, and that was the end of the matter. There was no provision in the relevant legislation for the purchase of a communal territory elsewhere.⁸

The Kat River political leadership were humbly and righteously obstinate. They persisted in their opinion that the

problem was not one of their own making, and that it was the responsibility of the Government to solve it. Meanwhile, the ordinary, illiterate Kat River peasants, lacking any clear direction, were left to agonise over their situation. Piet Draghoender was one of these.

II

The Draghoender family were originally settled at Wellsdale, but in the late nineteenth-century, they were persuaded by the Honourable John Laing (a local landowner and a Cabinet Minister in Cecil Rhodes's government) to exchange their plot for one in the neighbouring block of Bergmans Hoek. As time passed, a farmer named Theron bought up all the plots in Bergmans Hoek until only the Draghoenders and the Bantams retained their properties. The Theron's fenced the commonage under the provisions of the Boedel Erven Act, thus depriving the Draghoenders of most of their grazing. Their plot, divided between three relatives, was small but it still provided for most of their needs.

I first met Piet Draghoender (b. 1906) in December 1982, and had visited him on a number of subsequent occasions collecting his stories about the frontier wars, the anywet (Boedel Erven Act) and the notorious lawyer, Fenner-Solomon. I visited him again in January 1984, accompanied by a video team from Rhodes University. It had become clear to me that the Kat River community was doomed, and I conceived the idea of making a video which would relate the whole story of the Kat River in the words of its people. The Kat River people were most enthusiastic about the project since most

of them have children in the cities, and a video film is more accessible to most of them than a book or an academic paper.

Piet Draghoender, whom I knew quite well by this time, was pleased to repeat his stories for the video team. We sat in one of his favourite spots, below a tall tree which grows among the rocks below his wattle-and-daub dwelling. He was not perturbed by the cameras and I am quite sure that once he got going, he never noticed them at all. He began quietly enough, going through some of his favourite anecdotes, and I have used one of them as the preamble to the lament (1.1-13). Occasionally, he dropped into blank verse, but this was hardly surprising as many of the Kat River people do that. All of a sudden however, in response to a perfectly ordinary question ("Tell us about your neighbours, Oom Piet. What happened to them?"), the tone of his voice and the pace of his speech subtly changed. From a slow and hesitant beginning, he gradually worked himself up to a fever pitch, speaking like a man possessed so that it really seemed as if the frail body of the old man had become a medium for the spirit of the Kat River itself.

There was only one break in the lament, between lines 70 and 71, when Draghoender got up from under the tree and led us to a spot where we could get a better view of the way in which he had divided up the lands. I have cut some of the hesitations and repetitions which necessarily accompany a spontaneous outburst like the "lament", and I have divided it up into lines and punctuated it in an attempt to capture some of his speech rhythms. I can only hope that I have managed to convey on paper some of the passion of the original.

7.

III

Die bont oorlog ... Toe is hy gevat,
en hy is weggestuur om te baklei.
En as die oorlog oor is, toe vat mar Stockenström,
toe vat hy hom soldate aan,
elke soldaat, kaptein met hom soldaat,
vat hy aan, en sit hulle so. Hy sê,
"Die oorlog is oor, nou ek stuur julle huis toe,
en ek gaan vir julle weid gee.
Nou ja, Isak Draghoender, ek sit jou in Readsdale.
Dis jou property, dis die basela wat ek jou gee, 10
die boedel wat ek jou gee,
vir jou dood, wat jy ingegee het vir die dood,
om dat die plek vrymaak, en jy het hom vrygemaak."
En toe, gee hy dit af

Van dat hier op is dit pure bruinmense,
maar hulle is so uit, so uit.
Hulle is nie geloop met hulle geseg nie.
Hulle is met hulle rug uit.
Sonder lus!
Soms dit vandag gaan, 20
soms dit nou vandag met my ook gebeur.
Ek gaan ook vandag sonder lus.
Maar ek sê, ek sê, ek ...
Ek profet!

III

The Frontier War Then he was taken,
and sent away to fight.

And when the war was over, Mr Stockenstrom took them,
he took his soldiers,
each soldier, the captains with their soldiers,
he took them and he placed them like this. He said,
"The war is over, now I'm sending you home,
and I'm going to give you grazing.

Now Isak Draghoender, I'm placing you in Readsdale.

That's your property, that's the reward I'm giving you, 10
the inheritance that I'm giving you,
for your dying, for what you gave up to death,
to make the place free, and you did make it free."
And then, he gave it

From here up, it was all brown people,
but they were pushed out so.
They never left by their agreement.
They were out on their backs.
Without wanting to!

As it is happening today, 20
as it is happening today to me too.
I am going too today, without wanting to.
But I say, I say, I ...
I prophesy!

Nie op die aarde nie,

ek profeet op!

Die wat aan my die kwaad gedoen het,

en aan my die sonde gedoen het,

hy sal nie leef nie!

Hy sal nie op die aarde leef

30

en hy sal nie die voorreg bo het.

Hy sal gestraf word bo

en hy sal hier dood

en hy sal begrawe word onder die aarde.

Dit profeet ek!

Profeteer dit. Profeteer dit, profeteer dit

se wat jy al ding wat jy praat kom soos jy dit se

want jy vra dit by jou eis ingewand.

Dis wat ek by my ingewand vra.

Kyk hoe swak is ek!

40

Waa'n'toe moet ek loop?

Maar dit wat ek aan die Oubaa se het is

Ek se, "Ek steek vlag op ...

(He raises one arm in a gesture of surrender)

Regtelik.

Ek vra vrede vir alles wat oor my kom val.

Behou my,

al as 'n kind, al as 'n diensknegt van Jou.

Moet net nie laat hulle my nalaat nie.

Trek my in 'n lyn van geregtigheid.

Al wat ek moet praat vandag,

50

Not on the earth,
I prophesy upward!
He who has done me this evil,
and he who has done me this sin,
he shall not live!
He shall not live on earth
and he shall not have the privilege of heaven.
He will be punished above
and he will die down here
and he will be buried under the earth.

30

That I prophesy!
To prophesy something. To prophesy something, to prophesy
is when everything which you say comes out like you said
because you ask it with your guts.
This is what I ask with my guts.

Look how weak I am!
Wherever can I go?
But what I told the Old Master was,
I said, "I'm raising my flag ..."
(He raises one arm in a gesture of surrender)

40

Truly,
I ask peace for everything that will happen to me.
Keep me,
Even as a child, even as a servant of Yours.
Do not let them forsake me.
Draw me in the line of righteousness
Everything which I say today,

50

moet ek praat so lank as ek lew in geregtigheid."

Als ek vra die Here dit.

Niks wil ek hê van 'n ander mens.

Nie 'n blou fart nie.

Nie 'n blou fart nie.

Ook nie 'n piesie grond hê nie.

Kyk hoe het ek met die kinders gewerk hier.

Dis my oompe se seun, hierdie.

Ek sit nou in my oompe se plek, hier.

Toe sê ek, "Kyk hierso, kom hier, hier's jou plek." 60

Het gekom my auntie se seun (ons is drie)

"Daar's hy! Sit!"

En ek gaan bokant sit.

Sit!

Want ek wil nie 'n naberoute he nie,

naberoute van my nageslag.

Ek wil vrede.

Die dag wat die Oubaas my vat

moet hy my in vrede kom vat.

So is dit, meneer. 70

Soos ek hier staan,

het ek daardie plek afgesny vir my tot die rivier.

Ek plant hom vol mielies.

Daar staan die mielie vandag,

laat hy gee sy eien vrug.

I must say as long as I live in righteousness."

Always, I ask the Lord for this.

Nothing do I want from another man.

Not a blue farthing.

Not a blue farthing.

Also not a little piece of ground.

Look how I have worked this out for the children.

This is my uncle's son, this one.

I sit here now on my uncle's farm.

Then I said, "Look here, come here, here's your place."

60

Then my auntie's son came (we are three)

"That's yours! Sit!"

And I will sit on the upper side.

Because I don't want recriminations,

recriminations from the generations I leave behind me

I want peace.

The day that the Old Master takes me

let him take me in peace.

That's how it is, sir.

70

From where I stand,

I cut off the place for myself as far as the river.

I planted it full of mielies.

There stands the mielie today,

may it give its fruit.

Ek gee my suster se seun hierdie stuk.

Hy ploë hom om.

Hy's vol mielies, boontjies, ertjies, aartappels.

Daar's hy!

My oompie se seun, gee ek vir hom die stuk.

80

Mielies! onder uit.

So ek voel baie trotsig.

Maar om te kyk hier waar ...

dit kan amper my eindigheid is

laat ek vandag so 'n vrug ...

Kyk hoe sit die vrug!

Ek moet nou die vrug so laat staan.

Kyk die bome!

Kyk die vrugte daar af.

Kyk die vrugte van my oompie se seun!

90

Dis pure wat ons voor huil.

Want dis treurig, dis treurig

vir 'n mens om te plant en jy oes nie

en jy gaan nie die oes geniet nie.

So ek voel baie hartseer.

Maar ek sê die ding af,

ek gee hom af

aan die grootste Baas wat daar is op aarde,

die Baas wat sê waar jy nie sien nie.

So ek stel myself volkome tevrede,

100

en sê vir die Duiwel of die Vyand,

ek sê vir hulle almal,

I gave my sister's son this piece.

He ploughed it over.

It's full of mislles, beans, peas, potatoes.

There it is!

My uncle's son, to him I gave this piece.

80

Mislies! right to the end.

So I feel very proud.

But to look here where ...

it can almost be the end of me

that I leave such a harvest ..

Look how the harvest is placed!

I must leave this harvest just like this.

Look at the trees!

Look at their fruit.

Look at the harvest of my uncle's son!

90

It's absolutely for us to cry.

Because it is sad, it is sad

for a person to plant and you don't harvest,

and you don't enjoy the harvest.

So I feel very heartsore.

But I resign the thing,

I resign it

to the greatest Master that there is on earth,

the Master who strikes where you don't see it.

So I make myself completely satisfied,

100

and say to the Devil or the Enemy,

I say to all of them,

Ek is skuldig!

Ek is skuldig aan die rede

Laat ek met die ... (but he can't think of a reason)

Hierdie grond was afgegee deur bloed.

Die bloed kom van my oupa.

Aster my oupa kom daar 'n oorlog!

Ons gee drie seuns, drie ..

(he counts the names out to himself)

Drie seuns gee ek af vir die dood, te vrymaak,

110

omdat die plek vrymaak, dat hy vry is,

is die kinders gevat.

My kinders het in die oorlog gevat

en die kinders is aangeja daar na die hof toe.

Daar sit hulle, ge-examine, en het hulle gevat,

en die kinders het loop werk.

Een is geverloer in die oorlog

maar die ander het teruggekom.

So ek voel baie hartseer.

Die oorloge ...

120

My vader het vir 'n oorlog gestaan.

My oupa het vir 'n oorlog gestaan.

My vader het vir 'n oorlog gestaan.

My kinders, my vader se kinders, wat het vir 'n oorlog gestaan.

My oompie se kinders wat het vir 'n oorlog gestaan.

My auntie se kinders wat het vir 'n oorlog gestaan.

Bloed!

Van bloed!

I am guilty!

I am guilty for this reason

that I ... (but he can't think of a reason, he breaks off)

This ground was washed clean by blood.

The blood came from my grandfather.

After my grandfather, there came a war!

We gave three sons, three ...

(he counts the names out to himself)

I gave three sons up for death, to make it free, 110

to make the place free. For its freedom

the children were taken.

My children were taken in the war

and chased into the courthouse,

where they were examined and they were taken,

and the children went off to do their work.

One was lost in the war

but the others came back.

So I feel very heartsore. 120

My father stood up for a war.

My grandfather stood up for a war.

My father stood up for a war.

My children, my father's children that stood up for a war.

My uncle's children that stood up for a war.

My auntie's children that stood up for a war.

Blood!

Of blood!

Om dat die plek vry maak, laat hy, laat hy

En vandag moet ons dit laat staan.

130

Sonder lus.

Sonder lus.

So is die ding.

Die grond is 'n vry grond!

Die grond is ook nie in skuld nie.

As Januarie slaan,

Januarie, Februarie,

dan betaal ek die rente uit.

Hulle kan hulle recepte ook vat.

Ek kan ook my recepte vat,

140

ook nie agter.

Om te se jy's 'n maand agter of jy's 'n maand voor.

Liewer voor as agter.

Maar daar moet ek vandag,

in die voorskap is ek agter.

Maar ek sê,

ek stel dit in die wil van die Oubaas af,

dat hy sal sulke goede regmaak,

en hy sal kyk as hy vir my 'n plek kry

of wat, wat sal word.

150

Maar ek sê

dat die Here is so goed

(he turns and speaks directly to his land)

To make the place free, that it, that it ..

and today we must let it go.

130

Without wanting to.

Without wanting to.

Such is this thing.

This ground is a free ground.

This ground is also not in debt.

When January comes,

January, February,

then I pay the interest.

They can bring their receipts.

I too can bring my receipts,

140

and not behindhand either.

For them to say you're a month behind or a month ahead.

[I was] rather ahead than behind.

But where I am today,

even though ahead, I find myself behind.

But I say,

I leave it to the will of the Old Master,

that he will put such things right,

and he will look and see if he can get me a place

or what, what will happen.

150

But I say

that the Lord is so good

(he turns and speaks directly to his land)

dat die Here gaan jou nie vat nie.

Die Here sal nooit toelaat dat jy gevat word so

(he scoops up a handful of soil)

en weggegooi word nie.

(he throws it away)

En as hy afgesit word vir die Vyand s'n,

sit hom in daardie varkhok.

Sit hom in die varkhok!

Want hy behoort aan niks.

that the Lord will not take you.

The Lord will never permit you to be taken like this

(he scoops up a handful of soil)

and thrown away.

(he throws it away)

And if it is taken away and given to the Enemy,

put it in the pigsty.

Put it in that pigsty!

For it belongs to nothing.

The dramatic unity of the Draghoender lament is all the more remarkable for being entirely spontaneous. Two themes predominate: the just claim of the Draghoenders to their land, and the personal dilemma of a man who has seen his trusted God take this treasured family right away from him.

The Draghoenders' claim, like that of all the Kat River settlers, begins with the blood which they spilled in defence of the district during the Frontier Wars of the nineteenth century. Their deaths "freed" the ground (l.13) and their blood washed it clean (l.106). Stockenström gave them the ground explicitly in return for these sacrifices (l.12). Ever since that time the Draghoenders have been giving their blood in defence of their land, and Piet Draghoender makes no distinction in principle between the nineteenth-century Frontier Wars and the twentieth-century wars against Kruger and Hitler. He himself gave three sons up to possible death "to make the place free" (l.109-30), just as their ancestor, old Isak Draghoender, had done. The sacrifices of the past merge with the sacrifices of the present in Oom Piet's memory, just as they do in the ancient shoebox where he keeps the family medals (Ninth Frontier War, Boer War, First World War, Second World War) and the title deed from Queen Victoria.

But blood is not the only claim that the Draghoenders have to their farm in Bergmanshoek. In a striking play on the double meaning of the word "free", Draghoender declares "This ground is a free ground! / This ground is also not in debt." (l.134-5). His family have held the line legally as well as militarily. In lines

139-41, he bids defiance to the whole tribe of crooked law-agents who have dispossessed his neighbours. "They can bring their receipts," he cries. "I too can bring my receipts/ and not overdue ones either." Remembering perhaps the internecine feuds which divided the Kat River people at the time of the Boedel Erven Act, he enthusiastically points out the just and appropriate manner in which he has sub-divided the property between the different branches of the Draghoender family. "Because I don't want recriminations/ recriminations from the generations I leave behind me." (1.57-66)

But there is a third claim as well, a claim which only becomes explicit in the moving climax of the lament but which is implicit in everything the old man says and does, and that is the organic connection between the Draghoenders and the very earth of the Kat River. This underpins his proud description of the fruitful crops engendered by himself and his relatives (1.72-90), and it becomes visible at the moment (1.153-4) where he turns around and addresses his land directly, using the familiar second person as if speaking to a beloved friend. The Draghoenders do not simply own the ground, they give it life, and without them it will die. To sever the link between the Draghoenders and their land is to throw away not only the Draghoenders but the land itself. If God takes his land away, Piet concludes, then "You can throw it in that pigsty./ Throw it in the pigsty!/ For it belongs to nothing." (1.156-8)

There is another, more profound dimension to the lament which enables it to transcend the specific historical

circumstances in which it was uttered and gives it a truly universal quality. This is the insight it gives into the pathetic attempts of an old and illiterate country farmer to reconcile himself to the cruel indifference of a trusted and beloved God.

It is not that Draghoender is in any doubt as to the correct attitude to adopt. Over and over again, he stresses his desire to accept God's will in a spirit of resignation and righteousness. "But what I told the Old Master was,/ I said, "I'm raising my flag." (1.42-3) "I want peace./ The day that the Old Master takes me/ let him take me in peace." (1.69-71). "So I make myself completely satisfied/ and say to the Devil or the Enemy/ I say to all of them/ I am guilty" (1.100-3). But however much, Draghoender would like to submit peacefully, there is another part of him that resists, that cannot abide the rank injustice of it all. "Nothing do I want from another man./ Not a blue farthing" (1.53-4). "It is sad, it is sad/ for a person to plant ..and you don't enjoy the harvest"(1.92-3). "But where I am today/ even though ahead I find myself behind" (1.144-5). Even though he admits that he is "guilty", he cannot think of any guilt great enough to justify his expulsion (1.104-5). He comforts himself with the thought that God, "the Master who strikes where you don't see it" (1.99) will punish those who have stolen his land. "He shall not live on earth/ and he shall not have the privilege of heaven" (1.30-1).

The moods of resignation and resentment alternate abruptly throughout the lament, reflecting the agonised conflict within Draghoender's mind. He would like, and he really does try, to end on a proper, Christian note of submission. "But I say/ I leave it

to the will of the Old Master/ that he will put such things right/ and he will look and see if he can get me a place/ or what, what will happen." (1.146-50) But he cannot sustain this line, and at the very end, the bitterness is too much. Draghoender just cannot believe that a good God can treat him so. "But I say/ that the Lord is so good/ that the Lord will not take you [his land]/ the Lord will never permit you to be taken like this [scoops up a handful of soil]/ and thrown away" (1.151-5).

V

It was nearly six months before we saw Piet Draghoender again. Throughout the painful but seemingly uneventful period of waiting, the slow but unyielding machinery of the expropriation process had been grinding on and in April 1984, the trap was finally sprung. While the community was still awaiting a meeting with the Minister or a formal response to their request for an alternative territory, each property-owner suddenly found himself confronted with a personal, individual decision in the form of a letter from the Department of Co-operation and Development offering him a fixed sum of money for his property. It is not clear on what basis the offers were made. The properties had been professionally evaluated by independent valuers, but the results of these professional valuations were never made public. Most of the Kat River proprietors received somewhere between R2,000 and R10,000 for their plots. The largest local landowner, the Dutch Reformed Church, received R800,000 for more than twenty properties. Others received as little as R5. It shows how low an estimation the South African

Government had for the "tears" of the Kat River people, which their own regulations required them to take into consideration when making these offers. As one inhabitant remarked,

The people lived on those little pieces of land which they had. If [a man] plants something, he gets it [the harvest]. But now what can he do with this [money]? Just buy a little coffee, and then walk away. And if he is a man who drinks, then he might drink all his money that same day.

By making its offers on an individual basis, the Government pre-empted joint action by the Kat River community as a whole. While some of the people advocated blanket refusal of such low offers, others were inclined to accept. Most were unwilling to decide, hesitating to commit themselves to the offers but nevertheless making secret enquiries with regard to buying places elsewhere.

In June 1984 I visited Piet Draghoender together with Andrew Arends, one of the foremost proponents of refusing the Government offers. We found the old man uncomfortable and embarrassed to see us. He mumbled something inaudible such as "I make myself satisfied," or "I raise the flag." The Draghoenders had received an offer of R12,126 for their property and had accepted almost immediately - one of the first families in the Kat River to do so. Arends grasped this immediately, and the following memorable exchange occurred:

Arends: Where will Oom Piet go?

Draghoender: I still don't have a place.

Arends: When you get a place, then you can say "I am satisfied." But I will not be satisfied until I know where I can get a place to buy. Or has Oom Piet already jumped out to find himself a place?

Draghoender: I have not yet jumped out. I have not yet jumped out to find myself a place. I still stand around searching, but I can't find a track.

Arends: Does Oom Piet think he can get a piece of ground with the offer he has received?

Draghoender: I don't know if I will be able to get a place.

Arends: Or will that money be just enough to ride around a bit and see the world, and then finish the money on the road?

Old Piet was unable to reply, and the burden of the response was borne by his nephew Klaas, the son of his older brother and one of the joint owners of the Draghoender farm. Klaas is no coward - he was a bomb-loader at El Alamein - but he wanted his share of the money as soon as possible. He had already lined up a house in Queenstown for R37 a month. "The thought which we had," he explained, "was that in order not to trouble ourselves any further, we should just accept what that [offer] gave us..... I don't wait to move in a rush."

Both Klaas and Piet referred to the impossibility of contesting a letter which they got from the lawyer, and they emphasized that the letter gave them only 30 days to make a decision. Piet admitted that attempts had been made to find a place for the community as a whole. "But every time that we met, we found that there was nothing new. We seemed to have come to a standstill." The old man was clearly unsure that he had done the right thing, but was unwilling to consider alternatives. Resignation had finally taken possession of him, intellectually and emotionally.

It wasn't my desire to sell the place, saying, "No, I have that other place there." I give in. I give in because I don't want to fight any more. I am now the very least. The door is closed.

Now it is taken, this place is taken you see. Just as I said on that day [of the lament], "I am taken and thrown away." Now then, I must just fall where I have been thrown.

Could we really expect Piet Draghoender to fight on without God by his side? He who had continued to hope, even at the eleventh hour, how could he carry once God had thrown him away?

When the fateful day eventually arrived in September 1985 and the Draghoenders left the Kat River for good, old Piet was strangely calm as his wife Lisbet recalls:

I actually cried, stood with my hands on my head and cried. It was like that. We had to leave our old place, our birthplace. We had to leave it just like that and go.... Then this old man of mine said, "We must make ourselves satisfied .. and go to the place where we are going. The Lord will make provision for us."

After some months of hardship "in a little room" Willie Bantam, their former neighbour, found the Draghoenders a large house on the rural outskirts of King Williams Town. It is much bigger and brighter than the dark little huts of the old farm, and the Draghoenders have obviously spent some of their compensation money buying some smart new furniture. The plot attached to the house is small and there is no river running through it but it is, at least, a comfortable rural environment far superior to the urban slums where many of the other Kat River people have ended up.

So the Lord has, in a sense, provided. But Piet Draghoender still cannot make himself satisfied. Now close to eighty, he is visibly deteriorating both mentally and physically. The slight tremor in his right arm has now taken over most of his body, so that he has become "nothing but a shiver," as Lisbet puts it.

Less than a year previously, he strolled eight kilometres a month into the village of Seymour to collect his pension. Now he can't even walk to the gate, but sits unhappily immobilised in his splendid new lounge. He still hasn't visited the local church. "The old fellow can't get used to the place," says Lisbet. "He talks about the old place all the time." Nothing we say seems to rouse Piet Draghoender from his lethargy, not Lisbet's story of the removal, not the perfidy of Klass whom the family now blame for everything. He grumbles a little about the new place, which is actually not so bad, and about Willis Bantam, his benefactor. Clearly, the battle in his mind still continues and he cannot yet bring himself to finally and unequivocally raise that flag. It is only when his grandsons bring the first crop of the new place into the room that old Piet finally shows some animation. He sits bolt upright, and his eyes sparkle briefly. "Potatoes," he says, "potatoes." Perhaps it is not too late for him to take root in this unfamiliar soil.

NOTES

1. The Autobiography of Sir Andries Stockenström, ed. C. Hutton (Cape Town, 1887), Vol II, p.349.
2. T.Kirk, "Progress and Decline in the Kat River Settlement, 1829-54," Journal of African History (1973), p.418. This gives the best account of the early years of the settlement before the Kat River rebellion.
3. J.Peires, The House of Phalo (Johannesburg, 1981), p.150.
4. Andrew Arenda, interviewed January 1984. Unless otherwise indicated, all the information is taken from my fieldwork notes in the Kat River.
5. Andrew Arenda, quoted in my paper, "The Legend of Fenner-Solomon," which is the only secondary source on the Kat River during the period of the second betrayal. It will be appearing in B.Bozzoli (ed), Class, Community and Conflict (Johannesburg, forthcoming).
6. The Kat River memorandum was dated 10 November 1981. The Minister's response was dated 4 February 1982. I have seen copies of these documents.
7. Daily Dispatch, 12 April 1983.
8. Eastern Province Herald, 23 December 1983.