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UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

HISTORY WORKSHOP

STRUCTURE AND EXPERIENCE IN THE MAKING OF APARTHEID

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In 1950 the small rural Reserve of Witsieshoek in the Orange Free State made national headlines when migrant workers, peasants and chiefs openly revolted against the implementation of agricultural 'betterment' in the area. The revolt came twelve years after 'betterment' was introduced. In 1938 the Department of Native Affairs divided Witsieshoek into five grazing camps as a first step towards reducing livestock and controlling overgrazing. In terms of this scheme the onus was placed on local chiefs to ensure that 'poor quality' stock be forwarded to the local administration for culling. In 1939 the authority of chiefs was further undermined when the state decided to redistribute all agricultural land in the Reserve. In terms of this scheme 1500 three morgan plots were demarcated for a population of over 2600 households (UG 26-51: 17).

By 1942 'betterment' had achieved some results. Most of the existing agricultural land had been reallocated and all but one small settlement, situated in the demarcated grazing zones, had been successfully relocated. The refusal of Chief Howel Mopeli and his son Mopelinyana to relocate marked the beginning of local resistance to 'betterment' in Witsieshoek. In defying the authorities Howel Mopeli claimed that he was the authentic paramount chief of the Bakwena people in the Reserve and that he would not allow his people to be dispossessed of their land and livestock by an 'unjust' admininstration. His challenge was clearly directed as much against the incumbent paramount, Charles Mopeli, who had choosen to co-operate with the administration on the issue of 'betterment', as it was against the state. Popular support for Howel Mopeli was, however, initially limited because Reserve inhabitants had been led to believe that stock culling was a voluntary measure (Roberts 1949: 7).

By the mid-1940s it was clear that the state had no intention of allowing migrants and peasants to make their own choices about culling. Stock owners were now ordered to produce their animals for grading and culling. Howel Mopeli again refused to comply with the regulations, and when he was taken to court he won his case on the technical point that he was not personally informed of state's intention to cull. As culling proceeded Howel Mopeli's popularity increased among villagers and migrants who lamented the extent to which Paramount Charles Mopeli was prepared to collaborate with state officials. They also realised that culling favoured the tribal elite, whose large herds were being trimmed only marginally relative to those of smaller owners. Lodge (1983: 272) claims that some people lost oxen in the culls, and owning

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* This paper is an expanded version of a chapter in my thesis entitled "Traders and Taximen in Qwaqwa: A Study of Class Formation in a South African 'Homeland'" submitted for a Master's degree in Social Anthropology at UCT in August 1987. The research is based on over a hundred detailed interviews with traders and taximen in Qwaqwa, as well as other primary and secondary sources on the recent history of the area. I am grateful to my supervisor, John Sharp, for his comments and criticisms of an earlier draft of this paper.

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no draft animals, were unable to plough their allotments. The haphazard and indiscriminant manner in which 'betterment' was imposed in Witsieshoek created scope for a popular allaince to be forged between dissident chiefs, migrants and peasants. Mobilised behind the long-standing migrant association, Lingangala ('those who stand firm'), the petty-bourgeois leadership of the resistance movement managed to transcend the narrow limitations of tribal politics and the constraints of their class position. They associated widely outside the Reserve, sending delegations to speak to both the ANC and the South African Communist Party, as well as employing liberal elements within the government to plead their case (Marony 1976).

In 1950 the Witsieshoek Rebellion was effectively supressed. Its leaders were imprisoned or bannished from the Reserve. An uneasy silence fell over the whole area as local inhabitants were forced to rebuild fences and to comply with the official limit of ten units of livestock per household. This ensured that long-established processes of class differentiation in the Reserve were abruptly checked. As one agricultural officer candidly wrote to his brother in 1950, 'betterment' has been "just another means of bringing poverty and misery to the Native so that the White man can be assured of adequate labour for his mines, his industries, his farms and his homes" (Roberts 1950: 2). But the Witsieshoek rebellion was more than a "desperate final act of resistance to proletarianisation" (Lodge 1983: 273), it was a statement of political unity among the Reserve's inhabitants against the state and the co-opted Bakwena tribal elite. Indeed, in 1985 the incident was still remembered locally as episode of popular resistance which successfully bound people together across class and clan barriers. This feat has not been repeated subsequently, in spite of the re-emergence of petty-bourgeois elements whose locally-rooted class interests and political objectives have, at specific junctures, been inextricably linked with those of the resident working class.

It is my aim in this paper to trace the slow re-emergence of class differentiation in Witsieshoek after the rebellion and to the consider the implications of this process for political struggles waged in Qwaqwa during the contemporary phase of 'homeland self-government'. The paper focuses centrally on the emergence of a commercial petty bourgeoisie in the Qwaqwa since the 1960 and its changing political profile over the past two decades. In developing this analysis I focus mainly on licensed retail traders in Qwaqwa. My discussion proceeds in three parts. The first part deals with the period 1960 to 1974 and is dominated by an investigation of the activities of the Bantu Investment Corporation (BIC) in Qwaqwa. The second section of the paper concentrates on the period 1974-1980, a phase of mass population relocation and rapid economic differentiation. It concentrates on the unfolding of political struggle between the homeland political elite and the emergent commercial petty bourgeoisie. In the final section of the paper I focus on changing economic opportunities for African traders in the early 1980s as they are brought under the wing of the Qwaqwa

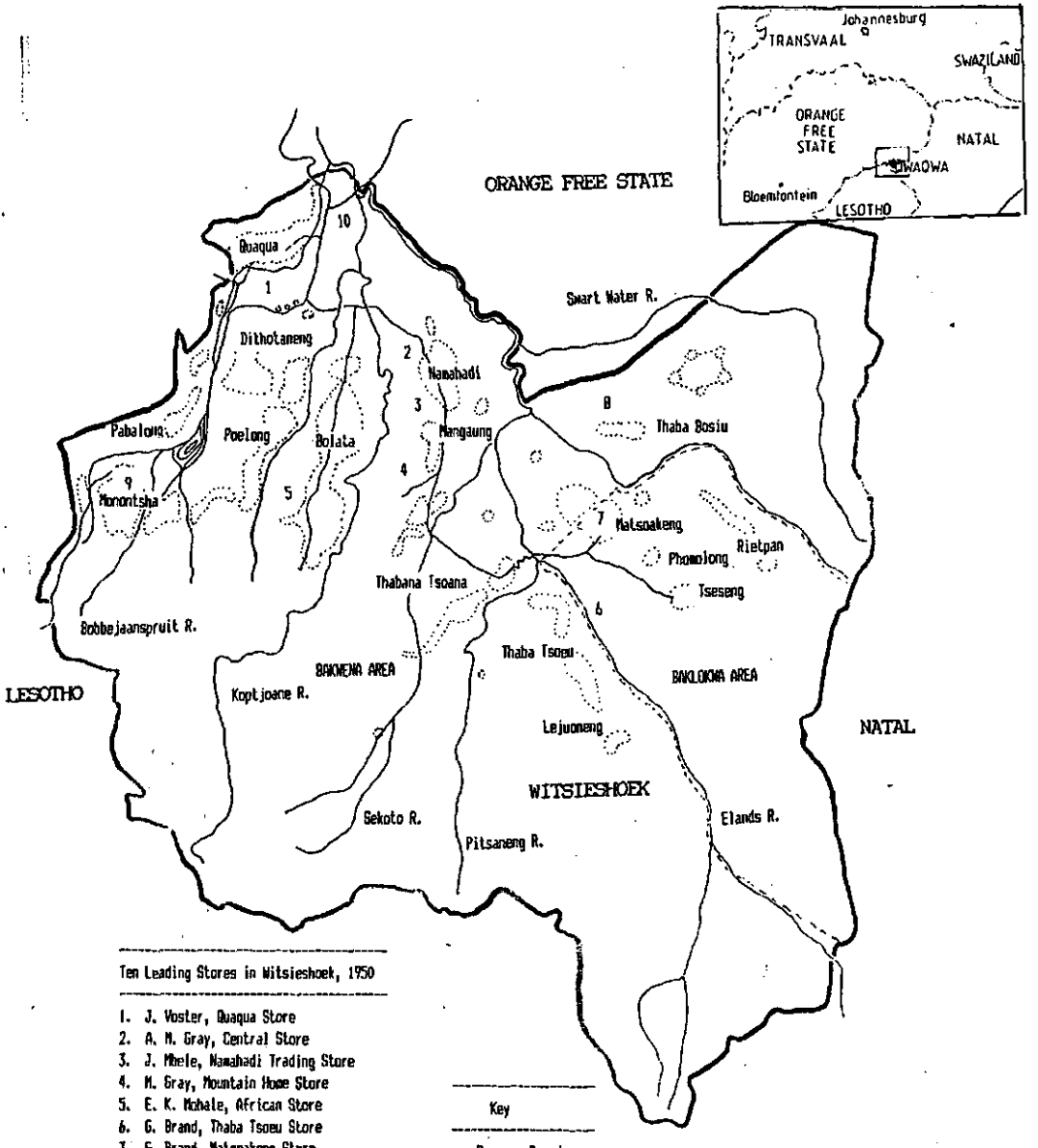
Development Corporation and the Mopeli government. The paper concludes on a comparative note by addressing similarities and difference in the changing political strategies of traders in Qwaqwa in the face of economic centralisation with those of storekeepers and artisans in ninetenth century Europe.

'A Wolf in a Sheepskin'
The Bantu Investment Corporation, 1960-1974

The existing literature on the Bantu Investment Corporation invariably presents this organisation as a success in promoting the cause of African class formation in the bantustans. This conclusion is particularly common among analysts of the Transkei. Molteno (1977), in his early contribution to the debate on rural class formation, argued that the BIC was instrumental in producing a shift away from the 'class levelling' tendencies of the Reserve strategy towards the 'class forming' tendencies of the Bantustan strategy. In his more detailed discussion of the Transkei, Southall (1983) substantiates this conclusion when he argues that the BIC played an active role in advancing capital loans to local entrepreneurs and expropriating businesses from white traders. He notes that during the 1960s the BIC (working through its local agency the Xhosa Development Corporation) dispossessed 423 white traders of their stores, and by 1972 had transferred more than half of these to African owners. This figure doubled by 1975 and on the eve of 'Independence' 473 of a total of 562 expropriated stores were firmly in the hands of Xhosa owners.

Although it cannot be disputed that the BIC played a constructive role in overturning white commercial monopoly and promoting black commercial interests in the Transkei, it remains open to question whether the BIC played an equally constructive role in the other bantustans. In the case of Witsieshoek there is little evidence to support a favourable assessment of BIC's role in advancing the interests of Basotho entrepreneurs. The acceptance of 'homeland self-government' in Witsieshoek made little impact on the BIC, which throughout the 1960s failed dislodge white trading concerns in the area. It also put a firm break on the issuing of additional trading licences to Africans, arguing that the Reserve was already overtraded. Of the 15 applications for trading licences received in Witsieshoek during the 1960s, only one new licences was granted. In fact, the number of businesses operating in Witisieshoek actually shrunk from 39 in 1959 to 26 in 1967 [1]. The BIC's insistence that it would only support candidates of proven ability posed serious problems in the OFS where white municipalities had prohibited Basotho entrepreneurs from setting up licensed undertakings. In the absence of 'adequately qualified candidates' it appears that the BIC took it upon itself to set up viable business operations to deal with the local consumer market. The shower of complaints brought before the Qwaqwa Legislative Assembly in 1974 reflected this. As one speaker enquired:

VILLAGES AND TRADING ESTABLISHMENTS IN WITSIESHOEK, 1950



Ten Leading Stores in Witsieshoek, 1950

1. J. Voster, Quaqua Store
2. A. M. Gray, Central Store
3. J. Mbele, Namahadi Trading Store
4. M. Gray, Mountain Hope Store
5. E. K. Mohale, African Store
6. G. Brand, Thaba Tsoeu Store
7. G. Brand, Matsoakeng Store
8. A. Langa, Thaba Bosiu Store
9. H. S. Mopeli, Mopeli Store
10. Thake, Thake's Store

Key

- Reserve Boundary
- Tribal Boundary
- Rivers
- Villages

> I would like to know why it happens that when one applies for a certain business, then, when you wipe your eyes, you see the BIC opening up such a business...I do not know why the BIC gets involved in such applications! (QLA 1974: 90)

Another speaker went further suggesting that the BIC was in the process of taking over all retail stores in the area:

> The BIC does not apply anywhere for permission to run businesses, but merely comes in like a wolf in a sheepskin. We may think that it is our people who are running businesses, only to find out that it is a camouflage, a bluff (QLA 1974: 104)

Attempts by the BIC to take hold of the Qwaqwa economy during the 1960s were not confined to the retail sector. In 1965, for instance, the BIC undermined a number of local dairy co-operatives by placing them directly under the control of the state (Mapena 1970: 290ff). This step followed the incorporation of a dairy farm into Qwaqwa and ensured that previously independent milk suppliers were placed under the close supervision of white agricultural officers. A further example of the BIC's interventionist tendencies occurred in 1967 when the Corporation put Qwaqwa's two largest transport entrepreneurs out of business. Realising that a free market in transport was inimical to the state's economic decentralisation programme, the BIC entered into a partnership with two small bus operators to establish a new monopoly, Setsokotsane Bus Service. The exclusion of local owners, who had dominated the local transport business since the 1950s, was seen as a gross injustice. In 1974 a member of the Legislative Assembly reflected on the prospects of the Setsokotsane agreement:

> The BIC was brought [into the transport market] when local bus owners asked for their assistence, but I can assure you that it has subsequently drowned these owners. Originally, before Setsoktsane was established there were four chickens [Twala, Mohamane, Modingwana and Motaung]. But only two remain. I cannot give you the assurance that they will live very long...It is impossible for a hawk to look after a chicken, because the hawk will certainly eat that chicken! (QLA 1974: 106) [2].

In responding to this kind of criticism the BIC made no bones about its intention to dominate homeland transport and suggested in 1974 that local bus owners were "not professionally equipped to deal with rising demand" (BIC Annual Report 1974: 8).

The orientation of state economic policy toward control during the BIC era was also manifested in the small manufacturing sector in Qwaqwa. One of the most glaring examples of this was seen in the mass closure of independent brickyards along the Namahadi river in 1972. With the advent of mass population relocation and the associated construction of the Phuthaditjhaba township, Qwaqwa experienced a dramatic increase in the demand for building

materials. Local entrepreneurs responded quickly to this demand by hiring plots from the Bakwena tribal authority to set up brickyards on the flood plain of the Namahadi river. From 1970 onwards this area became a hive of activity with dozens of families staking out their claims or sub-leasing from established operators. Most of these operators sold their bricks to the government at the fixed rate of R15 per 1000. Even though these rates were highly exploitative, local owners were still able to extract respectable profits by relying on the abundance of cheap farm labour now available in the homeland. In short, the opening up of the brick market provided both valuable employment for men and women relocated from white farms as well as facilitating a certain amount of petty accumulation by aspirant Basotho entrepreneurs in an open and competitive market.

These developments however came to an abrupt end in 1974 when it was announced by the BIC that the entire brick trade would be ceded to only four individuals. This decision outraged local owners and workers. The brickyards had become the single largest employer in Qwaqwa and hundreds of jobs had been placed in jeopardy by this shock declaration. The issue received urgent attention during the 1975 sitting of the Legislative Assembly where the implications of this move were discussed. One speaker commented on the employment opportunities created by the trade:

> I know of people, Mr Chairman, who came from the farms. When they arrived they were so hungry they could not even greet us, in such poor condition were they. They were content with putting on sacks and making bricks. At the end of the month they were in a position to buy flour (QLA 1975: 110)

In lamenting the new restrictions most speakers were unequivocal in their allocation of blame. Mr S. I. Mohamane had the following to say:

> Our children used to work at the brickyards; our brothers and our wives used to work there, having bought sites they could manufacture their own bricks, but a monster [the BIC] which is the owner of this homeland came along and...has chased them away (QLA 1975: 98)

Even more perplexing than the decision by the state to restrict local brickmaking was its exclusion of the most professionally equipped entrepreneurs from its attempts at economic rationalisation. In 1972 by far the most capitalised Basotho brickmaker in Qwaqwa was the building contractor, George Mofokeng, who owned imported technology capable of producing 30 000 bricks a day. He was prevented from installing this machine on the grounds that the administration could not find power cables to connect his site to the central power source in the area. When he questioned this he was told to approach ISCOM to have his power supply brought to Qwaqwa from Ladysmith in Natal! In 1974, for no apparent reason, George Mofokeng was excluded from the homelands four-man brickmaking cartel. In 1976 faced with deteriorating health and imminent bankruptcy he decided to

sell his rusting machine to a South West African Construction Company at a massive loss [3].

The case of George Mofokeng, like that of others collected in Qwaqwa, strongly indicates that the orientation of BIC policy in Qwaqwa was aimed at economic restructuring rather than at nurturing the growth of an African commercial class. The reasons for this, I believe, are explicable on the one hand by the organisational weakness of African traders in Qwaqwa BIC era, and on the other by the inepititude of the incumbent homeland leader, Wessels Mota, to campaign on behalf of Basotho traders. In the Transkei and Kwazulu, where the BIC has been heralded for its constructive role in class formation, it might be noted that the state faced African traders in organised bodies with clearly articulated demands and with powerful local political allies. The latter point is clearly demonstrated in the pressure homeland leaders such as Matanzima and Buthelezi placed on the state to elect Africans to the BIC board of directors, to lower interest rates charged by the Corporation and to hasten the extrusion of white commercial interests. In Qwaqwa, however, the legacy of municipal restrictions on the extension of African trading rights, the perpetuation of white commercial monopoly and the deep-seated political divisions wrought after the Witsiesheok rebellion ensured that Basotho entrepreneurs remained both unrepresented and vulnerable to the domineering tendencies of the white state. In setting itself up as an economic force in Qwaqwa, the BIC was thus allowed to imposed its policies unfettered by the demands of traders and politicians [4].

'The Politics of Opposition'
Relocation, Traders and the State

While disputes over the role of the BIC raged in the Legislative Assembly in the early 1970s, population relocation to Qwaqwa proceeded at an astonishing pace. Between 1970 and 1974 the homeland's population quadrupled from 24 000 to approximately 100 000 people. Most of the new immigrants came from OFS farms, and were dumped on arrival in temporary transit camps while government bulldozers cleared large tracts of agricultural land for the establishment of 'closer settlement' villages. These villages rapidly mushroomed into sprawling slums similar to those found on the outskirts of many third world cities. Banked up on the slopes of the Maluti foothills, relocated families were left to fend for themselves on urban sized residential plots. They were expected to build their own shelters, dig their own pit latrines and feed their children by acquiring work at a small number of virtually defunct labour bureaus (cf. Bank 1984). Only a small number of urban families relocated from towns and cities managed to escape the favela-like environs of the closer settlements. These individuals were settled in small municipal housing estates with running water and flush sanitation in the growing commuter town of Phuthadtjhaba.

The extent of population relocation to Qwaqwa shocked local

authorities. As early as 1972 tribal officials were complaining that:

> There are already too many people in the homeland. The areas set aside for residential development are already overcrowded and new arrivals are being settled on agricultural land. Our resources are so exhausted that people will have to eat one another in Qwaqwa (QLA 1972: 42).

Even the Chief Councillor, Wessels Mota, complained that if the Qwaqwa government was not immediately granted more land, high-rise buildings would have to be constructed to accommodate new arrivals (QLA 1972: 39). But land shortage was not the only problem: chiefs and headmen had to be appointed to administer the new residential areas, taps and reservoirs needed to be installed, schools had to be built and new roads opened. This placed tremendous strain on the rudimentary administrative structures of local authorities, who found themselves unable to cope with growing demands on their resources.

The existence of minimal government enabled local entrepreneurs to ignore state controls and respond directly to market opportunities. The paucity of licensed traders in the new closer settlement villages resulted in a proliferation of illicit business undertakings. Backyard grocerers, shebeens, hardware shops and clothing outlets sprang up everywhere. Hawkers walked the streets selling anything from coffins to ornaments, while vehicle owners offered their services in transporting these operators backwards and forwards to nearby farms and towns. Migrants also responded to these conditions by sending home consumer goods for resale in the closer settlements rather than cash which was quickly whittled away at local stores.

For some entry into the burgeoning informal sector was simply a strategy for survival; for others it was a means of reinvesting hard earned income with the aim of securing attractive returns. Faced with wide-ranging business possiblities, associated with an upswing in the migrant labour market, the latter owners felt increasingly uncomfortable operating from small, unwieldy residential sites and aspired to setting up licensed businesses, in which they could operate openly without fear of harassment.

In this context of growing differentiation in Qwaqwa, T. K. Mopeli's Bakwena-based Dikwankwetla ('strong men') party launched its campaign to dislodge the ruling Basotho Unity party in the 1975 Qwaqwa elections. In striving to flesh out a constituency beyond its narrow tribal base, Dikwankwetla drew attention to the injustices perpetrated against Basotho entrepreneurs by the BIC and promised to institute a policy of economic reform to safeguard the interests of local traders (van der Merwe et al 1978). Dikwankwetla's vigorous appeals to a petty bourgeoisie constituency paid dividens when this party swept to power in 1975 by capturing 19 of the 20 elected seats in the Qwaqwa Legislative Assembly.

Responding immediately to its promises of economic reform, Dikwankwetla expelled the BIC from Qwaqwa in December 1975 and set up a new Qwaqwa Development Corporation in its place. Soon afterwards, in June 1976, new legislation was approved by the Legislative Assembly to reorganise business licensing at the local level. The Minister of the Interior, who also had business interests in Kroonstad in the Orange Free State, explained that the main aim of the legislation was to exclude the Harrismith municipality from business licensing within Qwaqwa, and to turn control over to the Tribal Authorities and the Qwaqwa government (QLA 1976: 84). He expressed the hope that this measure would rapidly advance black business development in Qwaqwa and would bring to the homeland much of the money spent by local consumers in 'white' South Africa.

The wave of enthusiasm which washed through the Qwaqwa business community following this announcement was, however, shortlived. In March 1977, almost a year after the passage of the Trading Bill, considerable confusion still surrounded the new legislation. Heated discussions in the Legislative Assembly revealed that the District Magistrate in Phuthaditjhaba, a white official on secondment from Pretoria, was continuing to obstruct licence applications because he had not received confirmation that Pretoria had approved the Act. The magistrate, it was said, applied the letter of the old legislation concerning the standard required of business premises, and could be moved to grant licences only if applicants employed white lawyers to represent them. One speaker remarked that the magistrate was 'mocking the Basotho people' by making them 'wait about an hour to buy a box of matches' (QLA 1977: 360). But these debates deliberately exaggerate Pretoria's responsiblity for traders' grievances. In fact, in spite of these claims, the total number of licensed traders doubled in Qwaqwa between 1976 and 1977. Traders were not irked by long queues outside their stores nor even by the slow pace of licensing; their wrath was invoked by local authorities who sought to enforce licensing practices as part of a general strategy to assert law and order in the homeland. The following case recorded in 1984 of an ex-trader from Tseki illustrates some of the problems faced by small traders in the mid-1970s:

Case 1: Terminating Unlicensed Trading in Tseki

In 1970, after spending many years as a plasterer in the building trade in Ventersburg, JH made a successful application for a cafe licence in the Ventersburg location. The store opened in 1971 under the management of his wife and eldest son, who was then still at school. By 1974 all three of JH's sons had completed their schooling and were eager to help their father expand his business. However, they soon realised that the local municipality was not receptive to the further expansion of black business in the town and began to consider opportunities elsewhere.

Unable to transfer their urban rights to other locations in the

white area, JH's family began to seriously consider moving to Qwaqwa where, according to Radio Sesotho, there were endless business opportunities and attractive loan schemes offered by the BIC. In response to these adverts, JH visited Qwaqwa in 1974 to negotiate an agreement to set up a shop in one of the newly established closer settlement villages. He arrived at the Bakwena Tribal Authority offices and went to meet Chief Setsoto in Tseki. Setsoto was allegedly favourably disposed to having stores set to help the Tseki people and immediately offered JH two sites on which to start his business. With the support of the local chief, JH returned to the Bakwena Tribal authority and made an official application for a general dealer store in the homeland.

Given the assurance that for a man of his experience the issuing of a licence would be a mere formality, JH decided to sell his assets in Ventersburg and brought his family to settle in Tseki in November 1974. He hired a truck to assist with the transportation of family possessions, building materials and non-perishable stock from his Ventersburg store. Shortly after arrival in Qwaqwa, JH enquired after his business licence and was told that his licence application had been sent to the District Magistrate for consideration. Anticipating a six month wait, JH set up a temporary shelter in his backyard from which he began to sell his wares to local consumers who were until this time expected to walk several miles to Makong village to do their shopping.

In April 1975, with his informal store operating at a large profit, JH received notification that his application for a licence had been refused on the ground that the building plans supplied with the application did not meet local regulations. He now forwarded a second application with revised plans, but this too was refused - this time with no explanation. JH could not believe the manner in which he had been treated by licensing officials, and made an official complaint to the Tribal Authorities. Two months later, and without any further notification, JH was woken up by a contingent of Qwaqwa policemen who informed him that they had been instructed to demolish his business premises and confiscate his stock. In January 1976, with his dream of pursuing an independent business career in Qwaqwa shattered, JH was forced to take a labour contract back to Ventersburg as a plasterer.

Disagreements between government and tribal officials, lengthy bureaucratic delays and outright rejections of licence applications encouraged traders of all descriptions to organise themselves behind the Qwaqwa Trading Association (QTA), formed shortly after Dikwankwetla came to power in 1975. In anticipating conflicts of interest between 'business' and 'government', the QTA had aligned itself closely with the National African Federated Chamber of Commerce (NAFCOC) from November 1976 (Keeble 1980: 37). This alliance was, however, severely shaken in 1978, when the QDC announced that it had invited Frasers, one of South Africa's largest white-owned chainstores, to participate in a

multi-million rand shopping centre scheme in Phuthaditjhaba (Ibid). The QTA was now sceptical of NAFCOC's ability to solve its problems, and sought assistance from a group of Pretoria attorneys. The latter drew up a memorandum stating the QTA's rejection of the Tripartite Agreement system and the QDC shopping centre scheme. This document, which claimed to represent the interest of 350 local traders from all sectors was presented to the QDC in September 1979 (QTA memo: 1979).

Opposition to the Dikwankwetla government in this period was not confined to traders. Developments in other areas deepened schisms within the emerging petty bourgeosie. Local teachers organised in the Qwaqwa Teachers Association, became increasingly critical of Dikwankwetla's education policy. They were incensed by the 1976 Education Act, which endorsed the central principles of Bantu Education at a time when this system was the object of nationwide political opposition (QLA 1977: 205). They also claimed that the Dikwankwetla government had ignored its pre-election promises to raise teachers' salaries in Qwaqwa to parity with those of white teachers in the common area.

A number of teachers and traders were prominent in the formation of a new opposition party, Mogka wa Setjhaba. The groundwork for the organisation of the party was done in 1977, but Mogka wa Setjhaba emerged officially after the No Confidence debate of 1978 when the Dikwankwetla chief whip crossed the floor with four other members from the government benches. In the course of the debate the new party quickly displayed the source of its support: criticism of the Dikwankwetla was concentrated on four issues.

Firstly, the party slated the Qwaqwa Education Act for its ethnic focus and general adherence to the South African government's prescriptions about African education. It also, secondly, lashed out at Dikwankwetla's failure to institute meaningful reform for African traders. Thirdly, with an eye on other segments of the petty bourgeoisie, the party accused the government of ignoring its initial promises to 'Africanise' the local bureaucracy by pointing to the leading role still played by seconded white officials in all government departments, and to the continuing disparities between white and black salaries. Finally, and in the same vein, it criticised the tribal basis of homeland politics, arguing that the existence of non-elected tribal representatives in the Assembly ran counter to the established principles of constitutional democracy (QLA 1978: 13-95). As one representive recalled later:

> The idea was not to exclude chiefs altogether. It was rather to reduce their power through the establishment of two houses of parliament, like the House of Lords and House of Commons in Britain. In this set up the chiefs would retain their traditional status, but would not be involved in tasks for which they are not qualified, such as making laws on behalf of the nation (Fieldnotes, Septemeber 1984)

In view of these concerns it is significant that the leader of

the new party was headmaster of a local school and chairman of the Trader's Association.

Dikwankwetla's response to the debate showed that it was keenly aware of the new party's potential constituency, and sought to defuse criticism by arguing for the legitimacy of a separation between 'business' and 'politics'. The Chief Minister stated that:

> I want to explain and emphasise that Mokga wa Setjhaba should be regarded as a front for the local Chamber of Commerce. But we must further explain that they have disobeyed the policy and the instructions of the chairman of NAFCOC, who stated that businessmen or business organisations should not interfere in politics as it is a dirty practice.... It would be a sad day if our businessmen did not do what was expected of them and decided to take somebody else's place, instead of helping the nation (QLA 1978: 147).

Support for the new party came not only from various segments of the homeland petty bourgeoisie. Evidence collected in the field suggests that there was some degree of favourable response from Dikwankwetla's erstwhile supporters in the urban areas of common South Africa. In the 1975 election campaign Dikwankwetla had promised to address some of the day-to-day problems of urban dwellers, especially in the field of housing. After the election these promises were left unattended, because the government turned its attention to the growing number of relocation refugees in the tribal areas within Qwaqwa. This shift in interest was manifest in T. K. Mopeli's concerted effort to bring the tribal authorities within the ambit of his government's power, and also in his emphasis on land incorporation and rural relocation as central political issues (Sharp and Martiny 1984).

The exclusion of urban dwellers beyond Qwaqwa from Dikwankwetla's political programme caused further tension in the Legislative Assembly in 1979, leading to the dismissal of two Ministers, the Minister of the Interior and the Minister of Education (SAIIR 1979: 317-18). Both were influential urban representatives who disagreed fundamentally with the Chief Minister on the government's approach to the external, urban constituency. The Minister of the Interior had challenged T. K. Mopeli on numerous occasions for directing most of his attention to the plight of Basotho living in the Transkei and Bophuthatswana, while ignoring the plight of urban families who were being evicted on a daily basis under influx control legislation.

In 1979 the two ex-Ministers formed yet another party, Matla a Setjhaba, bringing to three the number of opposition parties within the Assembly. The three parties were, however, unable to unite or form an alliance: the Basotho Unity Party was an anathema to the other two because it endorsed the paradigm of tribal politics, and there were strong personal differences between the leaders of Mokga wa Setjhaba and Matla a Setjhaba. The latter's leaders had been the two Dikwankwetla Ministers most

closely involved in the bitter exchanges surrounding the earlier breakaway by Mokga wa Setjhaba. Thus the two most recently formed opposition parties, which shared overlapping constituencies were unable to forge a united front to fight the 1980 elections.

'Reinstating the Tribal Paradigm'
Repression and the Politics of Patronage

On the eve of the 1980 Qwaqwa elections T. K. Mopeli was aware that his power base had been significantly eroded by the growing influx of urban traders and teachers into Qwaqwa. He also realised that the urban experience and organisational skills of these individuals were attracting support within the closer settlements from aspirant entrepreneurs waiting for a chance to enter licensed commerce. The fact that the QTA claimed to have the support of 350 local traders by 1979 when the government had only issued half as many licences must have been a disturbing revelation. Moreover, T. K. Mopeli was aware that his government's inability to seriously influence urban policy had lost it support from urban voters who found it easier to identify with Matla a Setjhaba's urban leaders. With these factors looming large, the governing party decided to approach the 1980 elections with the aim of suppressing political opposition.

This campaign was conducted on several fronts. Dikwankwetla used its control over schools and other venues in Qwaqwa to prevent opposition parties canvassing support. During my fieldwork members of the opposition claimed that it had been common practice for the government to prohibit opposition meetings at the last minute and to send Dikwankwetla representatives to address the assembled voters in their place. Another accusation was that the ruling party had used chiefs and headmen, particularly in the Bakwena area, to influence voters. It was, for instance, noted that pitso (tribal court) gatherings were used as a public platform by Dikwankwetla spokesmen. In the 1980 pre-election Legislative Assembly session, senior Bakwena chiefs openly acknowledged their allegiance to Dikwankwetla and pointed to the role they would play in influencing voters. Chief Haig Mopeli explained:

> No-one will be forced or compelled to do anything. We, the chiefs, will only indicate the direction and say that in our opinion this (ie. Dikwankwetla) is the government which is acceptable to us and will render service to the nation (QLA 1980: 114)

It was alleged by my informants that some chiefs went so far as to threaten villagers with eviction if they did not cast their votes for the ruling party. Government spokesmen vehemently denied these claims, but it was recorded at the time that Phuthaditjhaba Town Councillors were preventing non-Dikwankwetla members from obtaining municipal housing. This was documented in an official enquiry into the housing issue which revealed that Dikwankwetla membership cards were being used as a prerequisite

for obtaining housing in the town (QLA 1979: 593-622).

The activities of Dikwankwetla outside Qwaqwa were more diffuse, although some effort was made to canvas support from South Sotho-speakers in other bantustans. T. K. Mopeli had offered political asylum to Basotho refugees from the Herschel and Maluti districts of the Transkei in 1976 (Streek and Wicksteed 1981), and he played a major role in the establishment of the Onverwacht squatter camp near Thaba 'Nchu in 1979. Onverwacht (now known as Botshabelo) was set up by the South African government to accommodate Sotho speakers who were being persecuted in Bophuthatswana (Murray 1983).

Mopeli jealously guarded his role as benefactor of his ethnic constituents in other homelands. In 1978, when the leader of the Mokga wa Setjhaba attempted to enter negotiations with the Maluti/Herschel South Sotho Central Committee (a body formed to protect the interests of Sotho speakers in the Transkei) he was severely reprimanded by the Chief Minister (QLA 1978: 149). And in 1979 a blanket ban was placed by the Qwaqwa government on political meetings by any of the opposition parties in Onverwacht.

Dikwankwetla's ability to mobilise support in urban areas of common South Africa was limited, despite the fact that the South African police were prepared to intervene on its behalf. In March 1980 the police arrested a group of opposition politicians who attempted to attend a Dikwankwetla rally in the common area; the politicians were released without charge shortly after the meeting ended. In April, one of the opposition parties laid an official complaint that a South African police band had led a Dikwankwetla procession through the streets of Phuthaditjhaba in the election build up (The Friend 14/4/1980). To create an impression of widespread support in the common area, Dikwankwetla used government vehicles to bus local supporters from within Qwaqwa to urban meetings (QLA 1980: 42).

Finally, it was alleged that, despite all these precautions, Qwaqwa government officials tampered with the 1980 election result, in which the ruling party ostensibly captured all 20 seats. Suspicion that the result was rigged led the opposition parties to combine after the election to file a case against Dikwankwetla in the Rand Supreme Court. The legal preceedings were drawn out over four years before the court finally endorsed the election result in September 1984. Opposition parties immediately maintained that the court decision was politically motivated (Fieldnotes, September 1984).

Although shrouded in controversy, the 1980 elections marked the beginning of a new phase in the relationship between traders and the Qwaqwa government, one which saw the decline of traders as a force in homeland politics.

T. K. Mopeli's first goal after the elections was to take full control of the institutional framework of homeland politics,

including the Tribal Authorities. This is documented by Quinlan (1986) who suggests that the interests of the Mopeli clan were promoted at the expense of the Batlokwa chiefs and were more fully integrated into the central power structures of the homeland state. As part of the latter drive, T. K. Mopeli replaced the two urban-based cabinet ministers who were dismissed in 1979 with the Bakwena paramount, Motebang Mopeli, and a senior chief, Haig Mopeli. The passage of the 1983 Qwaqwa Administration of Authorities Act marked the culmination of this tendency by giving the Chief Minister discretionary powers to appoint and dismiss chiefs. The new system also reduced the number of senior chiefs in the homeland to ensure greater centralisation and control of tribal affairs.

At the same time direct action was taken to rout opposition operating outside the formal political structures. Although excluded from the Legislative Assembly, opposition parties were still active in Qwaqwa canvassing support for the court proceedings they had instituted against Dikwankwetla. Mopeli's first response to the impending court case was to strengthen his links with Pretoria and distance himself from the opposition parties. This was done primarily by his withdrawal from the Black Alliance, a political forum established by Kwazulu Chief Minister Gatsha Buthelezi to initiate discussions on the future of South Africa by 'moderate' black political leaders. The Alliance, which stood for 'one parliament, one government, one economy and one citizenship' in South Africa (QLA 1979: 547), was opposed by the South African government, and was strongly supported by the breakaway opposition parties within Qwaqwa. In June 1981 Mopeli, who had been a founder member, announced his resignation from the Alliance in the following terms:

> The unitary form of government that Chief Gatsha Buthelezi together with Inkatha and the South African Black Alliance are striving for is just a chimera which cannot be realised in our present South African racial set-up (Lentswe la Basotho, June 1981)

Simultaneously, at the local level, Mopeli and his political allies in the Tribal Authorities sought by all possible means to undermine and suppress the activities of opposition parties. For instance one prominent member of Mogka wa Setjhaba was served with two banning orders which silenced him until the end of 1982 (Sunday Times, 24/9/1982), and others were banned for shorter periods. Of crucial importance was the fact that several prominent supporters of the opposition had their business licences withdrawn and their residential permits threatened. The threat of further withdrawals and the refusal to renew licences caused a number of traders to review their adherence to Mokga wa Setjhaba.

The following case study, drawn from my study of traders in 1984/85, illustrates the strategic shifts in political allegiance made by one individual in this period, and shows how the Qwaqwa government was able to undermine overt support for

opposition parties.

Case 2: Reaching a Political Compromise

In 1970 MM fell foul of the influx control regulations in Odensdalsrus, a mining town in the Orange Free State. He had been recruited as a migrant worker on the mines, but had left that job in the late 1960s, and had tried to set himself up as a watch repairer in the township. After arriving in Qwaqwa he had struggled for a number of years to establish a small retail business, selling groceries and soft drinks. He was unable, during this period, to obtain a license from the Harrismith municipality, and was forced to operate the business from his home in the town.

By 1977 MM was tired of the struggle to make ends meet, and frustrated by official obstructions. He decided to join the Qwaqwa Traders Association, where he could share his grievances with others who experienced similar problems. With the help of the Association, MM managed to obtain a retail licence from the Qwaqwa bureaucracy. The licence was for a kiosk at the Phuthaditjhaba sports stadium, where he sold fruit, soft drinks and confectionery. During the week he relied on passing trade, mainly from nearby housing estates, but was busiest at the weekend when crowds of spectators came to football matches.

MM's involvement with the QTA after 1977 also brought him into contact with members of the new Mokga wa Setjhaba party, who provided him with advice and assistance in his business. Party members provided him with small loans when he started, and he used these to buy the first stock for his shop. By 1980 he was deeply involved with the party and participated actively in its election campaign. Even after the election MM remained a loyal Mokga wa Setjhaba supporter, and offered to make a statement in the Supreme Court about irregularities he claimed to have noticed at the polling station at the sports stadium on the day of the election.

Owing to this involvement, MM began to experience problems with the bureaucracy, which decided to amend his licence to restrict business hours, on the grounds that the Phuthaditjhaba stadium was used only at the weekends. MM complained about this 'injustice' but was told that supporters of the opposition should expect this kind of treatment.

With his business in increasing difficulty, MM reconsidered his position carefully. In June 1981 he withdrew from the opposition and joined Dikwankwetla. He also withdrew his affidavit implicating the Dikwankwetla officials in election irregularities. In return for this he was rewarded by being issued a permanent cafe license in 1982. By 1984 MM had acquired a site in one of the closer settlements near Phuthaditjhaba and built a general dealers store. The store was doing well, with an eye to possible expansion and

diversification in the future, MM had become an active regional organiser for Dikwankwetla.

The transfer of business licensing from the Harrismith to the Qwaqwa authorities opened the system to a new kind of abuse. Its transformation into an instrument of political patronage occurred in several stages. Until 1978 licensing was in the hands of the white magistrate and the change from the old system was negligible. Thereafter authority in this matter passed to the Minister of the Interior, who exercised his personal discretion. One of the factors which contributed to the Minister's dismissal in 1979 was that he refused an application recommended by the Chief Minister (SAIRR 1979: 318).

After this incident the licensing procedure again came under scrutiny and the new Mokga wa Setjhaba party argued that a Licensing Board should be established within Qwaqwa, with representatives from the Traders Association among its members. The government refused and decided that the cabinet would take responsiblity in this field. Abuse of the licensing process for political ends now became much more widespread, especially since the core of the opposition in the homeland lay within the QTA.

In 1981 steps were eventually taken to establish a Licensing Board in terms of the Qwaqwa Business and Trading Undertakings Amendment Act. When the Bill was discussed in the Legislative Assembly, an appointed representative of the Batlokwa Tribal Authority (the only 'opposition' left in the house) argued that it was imperative for the Phuthaditjhaba Town Council, the QDC and the Traders Association (now the Chamber of Commerce) to be represented on the Board. The ruling party again refused this, and complete control over the appointment of the Board's members was given to the Interior Minister, who was at this time the Bakwena paramount, Motebang Mopeli (QLA 1981: 44-67, 93-100).

After the 1980 election relations of patronage dominated the political arena. Traders wishing to acquire licences were now forced to demonstrate their political compliance with Dikwankwetla's political aims. T.K Mopeli was unequivocal in this regard when in 1982 he outlined the prerequisites for upward mobility in the Qwaqwa bureaucracy:

> We appoint supporters of the government into the civil service, even if they are inefficient. We appoint them to thank them for their support (QLA 1982: 453)

In view of the Qwaqwa government's renewed strategy to win the support of the homeland petty bourgeoisie, business licences were issued with great rapidity after 1980, ensuring that between 1980 and 1984 the total number of licensed traders in Qwaqwa doubled from approximately 200 to well over 400. In rejuvenating business licensing after disputes in this field during the late 1970s, the Qwaqwa government sought not only to smother pockets of political opposition within the licensed commercial sector, but it also aimed to win credibility with a large group of entrepreneurs who

had previously been prevented from acquiring licenses. Among this group, which had certainly been active in the Mogka wa Setjhaba Party during the late 1970s, were a number of civil servants who wished to expand their resource base in the homeland by entering commerce. Initially, it seems that these individuals experienced considerable difficulty acquiring licenses, but after 1980 they found easy entry into licensed commerce by registering their business undertakings in their wife's name.

But while the Qwaqwa government made a concerted effort to placate certain segments of the burgeoning illicit commercial sector in Qwaqwa, it also used its enhanced power, manifested in the growing size of the local police force, to exercise control over the rampant informal sector. Evidence collected on the shebeen trade in Qwaqwa during the early 1980s demonstrates a rapid escalation of police harassment in this sector between 1980 and 1984 (Bank 1987: 202-207). Efforts to suppress the uncontrolled shebeen trade were, however, clearly selective and often depended on the extent to which illicit operators were prepared to co-operate with the authorities on issues such as crime prevention. This was endorsed by the Qwaqwa Chief of Police who suggested in an interview that:

> I do not want to say that there is only a dark side to the shebeen business. There are some shebeens here in Phuthaditjhaba which are an example to the maintenance of law and order...These are model shebeens and they are given police protection (15.1.1985)

A similar tendency of selective police harassment was also noted in the long-distance pirate taxi business where illicit operators came to rely on protection from the Qwaqwa government to soften the blow of fines and imprisonment which faced them as soon as they took their vehicles beyond the homeland borders. By offering protection to these owners through the provision of rank facilities near the central bus terminal in Phuthaditjhaba, the Qwaqwa government managed to win the support of an influential segment of the commercial petty bourgeoisie. Taximen were an important ally for Dikwankwetla because of their daily involvement with migrant and commuter workers (cf. Bank 1987:209-220).

Dikwankwetla's post-election strategy of co-optation and repression sidestepped many of the basic grievances of homeland traders. Nevertheless by 1982 the government had so successfully split up its opposition that a new Chamber of Commerce was able to emerge, seeking open reconciliation with the QDC and the Qwaqwa Government. The Chamber was brought into existence by a group of loyal Dikwankwetla supporters and within months of its formation the new body had entered negotiations with the QDC. In September 1982 the first of several meetings to discuss the shopping centre concept was held, and the Director of the QDC was soon able to report that:

> The relationship between the Chamber of Commerce and the

> Development Corporation is excellent...Whenever there is a difference of opinion the matter is discussed thoroughly until a consensus is reached (QDC memorandum 31/1/1983).

He was also grateful that the new Chamber did not intend to operate as a political party and stated that it evidently realised that 'its objectives can more easily be achieved if it has the active support of the government' (Ibid).

Although the Chamber opted for conciliation, it also tried to woo the remaining dissident traders. In 1983 the Chamber sought reaffliation to NAFCOC and associated itself with that organisation's national objectives. Simultaneously, at the local level, it refused to endorse a suggestion made by Dikwankwetla that the Chief Minister should become the Chamber's Honorary President. These attempts to project an image of autonomy were, however, seriously compromised by the fact that all the Chamber's leading executives accepted positions as co-opted members of the QDC board of directors (Bank 1987: 82).

The growing trend towards political and commercial centralisation was not without its tensions and contradictions. During my fieldwork I was aware of strong conflicts of interest between the QDC and leading Chamber officials. This was particularly apparent in the area of real estate in Phuthaditjhaba. In 1982 the QDC had pre-empted the extension of freehold rights to residents of the town by investing substantial capital in luxury housing schemes (QDC annual report 1982). These houses were offered for purchase by residents at relatively high prices. Initially the scheme attracted little attention, but after the granting of housing subsidies to black civil servants in 1984, there was a sudden rush for the new accommodation.

Leading businessmen anticipating a future demand in this area, also sought to participate in the real estate market by purchasing and developing property. Despite opposition from the QDC, these entreprenuers managed to extract sites from the Qwaqwa tenure board, and set themselves up in opposition to the QDC. This caused considerable tension, particularly since the local businessmen made extensive use of local subcontractors and cheap labour, and were able to offer homes at prices considerably lower than those of the QDC.

Another issue over which the new Chamber of Commerce and the QDC clashed was the latter's reluctance to grant ownership of premises in the QDC shopping centres. Chamber members argued that the QDC was being deliberately obstructionist, by demanding exorbitant rental from traders who could easily afford to purchase these premises.

The nature of these tensions provide a clear illustration of the composition of the new Chamber of Commerce: conflicts over property development and the ownership of premises in shopping centres were the concerns of a handful of elite traders. In 1984/5 the majority of traders in Qwaqwa felt increasingly

isolated from the new forces in the homeland commerce. A major complaint during my fieldwork was the request sent out by the government, with the Chamber's blessing, for donations to the Dikwankwetla party's 10th Anniversary celebrations. Recipients of these requests were asked to enclose the amount they felt to be appropriate to the occasion, which was interpreted as a thinly veiled threat to contribute generously or face the consequence of identification as 'dissidents'.

Given such pressures many of my informants referred nostalgically to the 1970s as a period of trader unity and commercial progress, and complained about the complete powerlessness they felt in the face of growing centralisation in the homeland's economy. Many accused the co-opted business elite in the Chamber of Commerce of working hand in glove with the QDC, whose policies few were prepared to endorse.It was, indeed, reported that in 1984 only 50 of approximately 500 licensed traders were paid up members of the Chamber. The lack of support and trust Qwaqwa traders had in the new Chamber of Commerce was graphically demonstrated in September 1984 when NAFCOC President, Sam Motsuenyane, was invited to address local businessmen at the opening of the Qwaqwa Industrial Show. Although widely advertised, the occasion held at the new Charles Mopeli Staduim attracted virtually no support from traders outside the organisational structure of the Chamber. In fact, as a QDC member confided in me later, "the whole episode was a terrible embarrassment - it was probably the smallest audience Dr Motsuenyane ever addressed".

In this section I have attempted to identify some of the techniques used by the Dikwankwetla regime to gain control over a dissident and politically threatening commercial petty bourgeoisie. I have highlighted the insidious manner in which T. K. Mopeli and his party approached the 1980 elections - how they manipulated their legislative powers and government resources to blot out growing opposition to the tribal political paradigm and the Mopeli regime. I have also shown that in the post-election period Dikwankwetla adopted a policy of co-optation and repression as a means of breaking down existing pockets of opposition and recruiting party support. In the latter sphere, the formation of a new Chamber of Commerce proved decisive in allowing Dikwankwetla to establish an organisational foothold in the field of homeland commerce and to keep a close watch on the political activities of small traders. Yet, in attempting to explain the demise of class based political opposition in Qwaqwa during the 1980s, it is necessary to look beyond the political strategies of the Dikwankwetla party and consider the changing political and economic complexion of the homeland petty bourgeoisie during this period. It is to this issue that I turn my attention in the final section of this paper.

'The Silence of Poverty': The Consequences of Economic Centralisation

The overwhelming election victory by Dikwankwetla in 1980 shocked the political opposition in Qwaqwa to the core. It was clear from the outset that Dikwankwetla had not taken its electoral opposition lightly and would demand retribution for the humiliation it had received at their hands. This reality played heavily on the consciousness of Mogka wa Setjhaba and Matla Setjhaba leaders, who realised that their interests would not be served by remaining within Qwaqwa's borders. By the end of 1980 T. K. Mopeli had already banned party activists, threatened others with eviction and drafted new legislation to control political opposition [6]. In the face of these threats prominent opposition politicians and traders were confronted with clear-cut options: they could stay in the homeland and face restriction or they could try to move to another homeland such as Kwazulu or Lebowa or they could attempt to re-enter urban areas in common South Africa.

In 1980 the third option was the most attractive for disssident politicians and traders. The wavering of certain restrictions on black business in urban areas after 1976, together with improved prospects of loans with the establishment of the Small Business Development Corporation, encouraged the emigration of selected traders with urban rights out of Qwaqwa. Many of these individuals had retained these rights by virtue of their qualification as 'professionals'(ie. teachers or bureaucrats) or through participation in the newly announced 99-year leasehold schemes (Hudson & Sarakinsky 1986: 177). Moreover, the announcement in September 1980 by the Minister of Co-operation and Development, Dr Piet Koornhof, that all scheduled municipal elections would be postponed until 1982 when community councils were to acquire full municipal responsibilities breathed new life into the frustrated political aspirations of opposition leaders. The prospect of controlling key resources such as housing and business licensing in the townships proved appealing to individuals who had often moved to the homelands precisely because of the lack of political opportunities available in the cities. For leaders such as Caswell Koekoe, James Ngake, Dr. E. B. Tlali and others who had campaigned extensively in OFS towns during the 1980 elections the move from homeland to urban politics proved unproblematic and they were easily able to secure positions on the new councils [7].

The option of urban migration was, however, limited to a small strata of urban immigrants in Qwaqwa. For the majority of Mogka wa Setjhaba members, especially those affiliated to the QTA, there was no possibility of urban migration. For these owners the only option open to them outside Qwaqwa was to apply for ethnic reclassification in terms of the Homeland Citizenship Act. Evidence collected in Qwaqwa suggests that some leading QTA members managed to transfer their business interests to Lebowa after 1980, but this was not always an easy option, especially

when traders had developed a reputation as political activists. In one case study it was noted that a QTA executive member was forced to divorce his wife in Qwaqwa and remarry a Lebowa women in order to secure entry into this homeland.

Although the exodus of dissident politicians and businessmen from Qwaqwa was a major factor in the disintegration of the QTA and its political mouthpiece, Mogka wa Setjhaba, after 1980, this fact alone does not provide sufficient explanation for the eclipse of these organisations. In seeking a more complete account of this process it is necessary to consider the impact of the expansion of white commercial capital into Qwaqwa during the 1980s.

The infiltration of white capital into Qwaqwa under the guise of the tripartite agreement system, as I have already mentioned, occurred in the late 1970s with the arrival of Frasers, Toyota, Plate Glass, Sasko and Clover in Qwaqwa. Of these firms the most threatening to small retailers, the bulk of the commercial petty bourgeoisie, was Frasers, which in terms of their agreement with the QDC was guaranteed a prime retailing site in the new multi-million rand Setsing shopping complex opened in Phuthaditjhaba in 1980.

The opening of Frasers next to the central Qwaqwa bus terminus had an immediate impact on small traders. Consumers from all corners of the homeland flocked to the town to capitalise on the stores opening offers. Many were staggered by the low prices which they had only expected to find in the neighbouring towns of Harrismith and Bethlehem. Frasers also benefitted from the passage of approximately 10 000 SASOL migrants through the Setsing centre every fortnight. The workers, who flooded into Phuthaditjhaba in mini buses, disembarked at Setsing to purchase basic household items before proceeding to their homes in the villages by bus. Commuters working in Harrismith and Bethlehem also found it more convenient to do their weekly shopping at Setsing than to carry goods home with them from these towns. One trader explained the difficulty of competing with the company which dominated both the wholesale and the retail markets:

> Purchasing stock for Frasers wholesalers became a farce because many items were just as cheap at the Frasers in Setsing as they were at the wholesalers. Our only answer to this was to travel an extra 40km into Harrismith to use Metro wholesalers.

The impact of tripartite companies in Qwaqwa was spelt out by the QDC, which estimated that in 1980 alone these operators had taken approximately 5 million rands in turnover away from local traders (QDC memo 1980). The majority of these losses accrued to Frasers, which in 1982 were opened a second supermarket. At approximately the same time Pep Stores opened a branch in Phuthaditjhaba, and to ensure that rural families were not denied the benefits of cheap consumer goods a number of Spar outlets were set up in QDC owned shopping centres in the villages by 1983 [6].

To fully grasp the implications of these developments for local traders it is necessary to consider the following two case studies, selected from a sample of 40 interviews conducted with rural storekeepers during 1984.

Case 3: Facing up to Frasers Limited

HT arrived in Qwaqwa from Thaba 'Nchu in 1977, after resigning his job as a clerk in the magistrates offices. He claimed that the growing ethnic animosity towards Sotho-speakers in this enclave of Bophuthatswana had encouraged him to pursue his career in Qwaqwa. On arrival in Qwaqwa, HT was settled in Bolata village and shortly afterwards acquired a job as a clerk with the Qwaqwa government. In the course of this work he dealt with applicants for business licenses and soon became convinced that his future lay in the general retail trade. By the middle of 1978, he had used his contacts in the Department of Interior to process an application for a general dealer licence in Makgalaneng, which he believed to be a prime site for commercial undertakings.

With the assistence of urban kin and a small bank loan, HT managed to set up a small store in the heart of this growing village. Benefitting from a fortuitous location next to a large secondary school, his business did well dealing in a wide range of basic consumer goods, including daily necessities such as coal, parrafin and maize meal. His experience in government service, complemented by his wife's training as a credit controller in Harrismith, enabled them to run their small business at maximum capacity. Indeed, the ease with which he managed to repay his bank loan and purchase his own means of transportion encouraged him to hire a second store in 1979 closer to his home in Bolata. In opening this outlet he simply transferred stock from Makgalaneng and left the operation in the capable hands of his wife.

By 1980 HT claims that his monthly turnover from both stores was in the region R8 000, enabling him to employ a full-time driver and several female shop assistants. This enlarged income also allowed him more time to socialise and to concentrate on renovating his Bolata home. HT's upwardly mobile lifestyle, however, ended fairly abruptly after 1980 when Frasers supermarket opened in Phuthaditjhaba. This outlet's low prices soon encouraged Makgalaneng consumers to walk the extra two kilometres into town to do their weekly and monthly shopping. HT now found that his turnover on basic items such as washing powder, tinned food, sugar and flour decreased significantly. The effects of this competition were exacerbated in 1982 when the lease on the Bolata store expired. HT's wife now return to manage the Makgalaneng store, while he resumed his responsibilities as driver and stock purchaser.

The most serious blow to HT's business however came in 1983 with the opening of Fairways, a new Frasers outlet, and Pep

stores in the Setsing II. This development reduced daily turnover to approximately R100, forcing HT to retrench all additonal labour in his store and to disrupt cash flows by extending credit to enhance earnings. By September 1984 HT's store was sparsely stocked and poorly patronised, even though he extending shop hours and renting a television to attract local interests. He felt embittered by his experience and blamed the government for not keeping a check of the intrusion of white capital.

The realities of growing poverty in the rural retail sector in Qwaqwa had a dramatic influence on the social and political profile of storekeepers. This was especially pronounced after 1982 with the return of the SASOL migrants from Secunda. Increasingly as profits plummeted previously loyal opposition party supporters withdrew from public life. They concentrated with greater and greater introspection on their own business affairs, relinquishing non-kin labour to cut costs and refusing to honour their previous commitments to finance community projects and opposition activities. Some owners even withdrew their financial support for the ongoing Supreme Court hearing against Dikwankwetla. Conspicuous consumption which had characterised the rural petty bourgeoisie in the late 1970s was replaced with frugality as traders neglected their homes, avoided purchasing new cars and refrained from taking weekend trips to Maseru. Confined to the sombre and depressing environs of the closer settlements, these owners retreated into the domestic security of family life. The rural proletariate with whom they had earlier sought a political alliance were now depicted as unscrupulous tsotsis, thieves and credit defaulters. This new animosity towards the working class, reflected in traders' tendency to exaggerate small differences, such as the size of their homes and their hard working lifestyles (as opposed to those of the idle unemployed), appeared to cloak their own fears of proletarianisation and impoverishment.

Rural traders, as I encountered them in 1984/5, lacked the security and self-confidence to speak freely about their grievances, their deep distrust of the QDC, their suspicion of the new Chamber of Commerce and their dissatisfaction with Dikwankwetla control. Occasionally traders spoke bravely about their repression under tribal rule and the extent to which they were cajoled into towing the party line, but most often they skirted carefully around all questions that seemed overtly political.

But while rural retailers discussed their prospects with understandable despondency, there was nevertheless a small contingent of specialised traders who spoke favourably of the QDC and of the intrusion of white capital. They emphasised the benefits of hypermarkets for Qwaqwa consumers and lauded the QDC for its role in upgrading shopping facilities. These traders, whose stores were located alongside those of Frasers in Phuthaditjhaba, doted on the dense consumer flows at the Setsing complex and the increasingly bourgeois aspirations of the town-

based civil service. It was the wealthy butchers, bottlestore owners and service sector operators with luxury houses on the outskirts of town who formed the backbone of the new Chamber of Commerce.

In conclusion then it is evident that the decline of the petty bourgeoisie as a political force after 1980 was not only a response to tighter political control and the dispersal of opposition leaders outside the homeland, it was also a response to structural changes in the class formation process itself. By 1985 the largest section of the commercial petty bourgeoisie in Qwaqwa was increasingly being forced down into the proletariat or back into the civil service. Stores were being leased out in the villages on a large scale as licensed traders decided to cut their losses and wait for an upturn in the market. Their struggle was no longer a political one, but a personal one centred around day to day survival and keeping on the right side of government bureaucrats and party officials. But at the same time there were members in their ranks who had benefitted greatly from economic change. Specialised retail traders and increasingly building contractors, who faced boom conditions with the announcement of housing subsidies for civil servants, formed the core of a new collaborationist petty bourgeoisie. These individuals were thrived on the infiltration of white capital and state investment in Qwaqwa. The realised the futility of opposition politics and were prepared to use their position to exert influence on the QDC. In the context of these developments it is not surprising that the Dikwankwetla party struggled to find political opposition in the 1985 election. The only party still intact, and able to forward candidates for the election was the Batlokwa-based Basotho Unity Party, which once again failed to get a single elected member into the Legislative Assembly.

Conclusion

The political quiescence of the commercial petty bourgeoisie in the face of economic disintegration is not a feature unique to Qwaqwa. Recent studies of the changing fortunes of artisans and shopkeepers in nineteenth century Europe present a similar pattern, albeit over a much longer time period. Studies by Blackburn (1984) and Haupt (1984) demonstrate how the European petty bourgeoisie was first envigorated by the bourgeois ideology of laissez-faire in the early nineteenth century, but progressively retreated into rightwing conservatism after a brief interlude with socialism at the time of the 1848 revolts. These studies highlight the fragmentary effects of the uneven spread of capitalist centralisation on petty bourgeois politics. They emphasise the way in which artisans and craftsmen were the first to respond to displacement by an advancing industrial capitalism, while storekeepers, located in the distributive sector, only began to feel the effects of economic centralisation with the opening of department stores in urban centres towards the end of the century.

Three broad phases can be recorded in the response of the continental petty bourgeoisie to the expansion of capitalism in the nineteenth century. Firstly, it is possible to note an initial enthusiasm and commitment to bourgeois liberalism and the principles of free enterprise. Secondly, following a short liaison with the working class, we witness a retreat into more protectionist ideologies based on state intervention. And, finally, with the disintegration of this class, we see a gradual withdrawal from the mainstream of political life and a pre-occupation with narrowly defined sectorial interest groups.

In assessing the rise and fall of the commercial petty bourgeoisie in Qwaqwa between the late 1960s and the mid-1980s it is possible to identify parallels in political posture. It will, for instance, be recalled that in the face of restrictive white control over commercial practice in Qwaqwa traders made strong claims for the introduction of free enterprise in the homeland. They lamented the rigid licensing regulations of the Harrismith municpality and the controlled economic development propogated by the BIC. In making this stand they associated themselves with Dikwankwetla's promises of economic reform in 1974 and shortly thereafter joined NAFCOC, which argued for equal opportunities for blacks in the field of commerce. In the late 1970s, with the introduction of tripartite agreements, these attitudes changed. Now organised in the QTA, traders demanded protection from the Qwaqwa government against white competition. They withdrew from NAFCOC and employed a firm of Pretoria attorneys to convince the QDC of the importance of middle class development in the homeland. When these requests were curtly refused, they formed themselves into a political opposition, which aimed to dislodge the Dikwankwetla Party in the 1980 elections. This decisive period, which saw the QTA and the Mogka wa Setjhaba fail in its attempt to take control of the homeland state, marked the beginning of the economic disintegration of the commercial petty bourgeoisie and political quiescence described above.

The only aspect missing from this comparision is a political liaison between the Qwaqwa petty bourgeoisie and the rural working class. Attempts to forge a class alliance with the proletariat has historically emerged as a fundamental political strategy of the petty bourgeoisie, threatened by bourgeoisie economic and political forces. The 1848 revolts in Europe provide an excellent example of this, but so does the Witsieshoek Rebellion of 1950 which saw migrant workers, peasants and small stock owners unite in a common front against the South African state. It is perhaps interesting in concluding this chapter to ask, why in the late 1970s and 1980 was the commercial petty bourgeoisie unable to form an effective class alliance with the exapnding rural proletariat in Qwaqwa?

The answer to this question lies in a series of factors. Firstly, it should be noted that, unlike the stock culling measures of the 1940s which had a negative effect on the vast majority of rural households in Witsieshoek [8], the introduction of commercial centralisation in the late 1970s was generally welcomed rather

than criticised by the rural working class. The arrival of large white capitalist concerns in the retail sector exposed workers and their dependents to prices far cheaper than those they had come to expect from local storekeepers. The extent of these price differences, in fact, bred a certain amount of animosity between workers and storekeepers. This was exploited by the Dikwankwetla party, which attempted to set itself up as the benefactor of rural consumers. In 1979 the Minister of Interior, in fending off trader complaints about the government's involvement in tripartite agreements, explained that:

> It is, of course, the duty of the Qwaqwa government to protect the rights of black traders, but on the other hand the government has a duty to protect the defenceless consumer, who is in the majority (QLA 1979: 237).

The conflict of interest between traders and workers on this key issue was compounded by the lack of working class organisation of the calibre of Lingangala, which facilitated an open alliance between chiefs and migrants at the time of the Witsieshoek Rebellion. The disorganisation and fragmentation of the relocated working class in Qwaqwa predisposed this group to individualistic relations of clientage (cf. chapter 5), rather than horizontal solidarity through which they could articulate common grievances and seek class allies. But this fact notwithstanding, the failure of the petty bourgeoisie to win over working class support must also be related to their inability to transcend narrow economic interests. Common problems such as bureaucratic corruption, poor amenities in residential areas, limited labour market opportunities, malpractices in tribal courts and other misuses of state power remained secondary issues for petty bourgeois political parties, which remained obsessed with their own material interests and with winning credability in urban areas.

Thirdly, by comparision to the late 1940s, the rejuvenatation of tribal political structures and the advent of homeland self-government served to mystify the sources of power and exploitation in the homeland. Debates in the late 1970s over whether certain grievances could be attributed to the local political elite or to the national ruling class, which contolled homeland finances and was able to veto local legislation, caused considerable confusion in the ranks of the opposition. This confusion was manipulated by the Qwaqwa government, which constantly used the white state as a scapegoat for its own political inepititudes. This, as we have seen, was demonstrated in the manner in which Dikwankwetla blamed Pretoria and seconded white officials for its tardiness in instituting economic reforms immediately after the 1974 election.

In view of the evidence presented here it is clear that the failure of the commercial petty bourgeoisie to overturn the Dikwankwetla party and the tribal political paradigm in Qwaqwa during the late 1970s had as much to do with its own inability to construct a viable class alliance with the rural working class as it did with attempts by the ruling regime to suppress political

opposition. From this point of view it seems unlikely that the structures of tribal politics will be seriously challenged until such time as the homeland petty bourgeosie, now increasingly located in the government bureaucracy, is able to address the realities of closer settlement life in a way meaningful to the Qwaqwa working class.

Footnotes

(1) These figures were extracted from the files of the Acting Native Commissioner, BOV 1/200-210 N2/4/3, Bloemfontein Archives.

(2) This prediction was verified in 1978 when the CED finally brought out the two remaining black bus owners and took full control of the company.

(3) After persistent shortages of the bricks in Qwaqwa throughout the 1970s the CED eventually decided to relinquish its local allies and in 1981 invited CONCOR to become the chief brick supplier in Qwaqwa.

(4) The above observations throw critical light on the long-standing debate over whether the BIC operated as a class forming agent in the homelands (cf. Molteno 1979, Hirsch 1984) or whether it simply served the broader interests of white capitalist development (Noluntshungu 1983). The evidence from Qwaqwa seems to suggest that the basic orientation of BIC was towards controlled economic development and not towards African class formation. Concessions to black entreprenuers seem to have emerged more as a consequence of pressure imposed on the state by homeland political elites, than as a result of benevolence on behalf on the Apartheid state.

(5) The active involvement of James Ngake and Dr. E. B. Tlali in the Thabong Community Council is demonstrated by Haysom (1986: 20ff) in his analysis of right-wing vigilante in South Africa. In describing conditions in the Welkom location during 1985, he associates these two ex-Qwaqwa parliamentarians with the vigilante group, the Phakathis, who perpetrated acts of violence against left-wing political activists.

(6) The introduction of Spar outlets in QDC shopping centres in the closer settlement villages did not occur under the auspices of the tripartite agreements system. These stores were instead ceded to blacks under franchise from white South African parent companies following an agreement struck with the QDC by the new Chamber of Commerce that Frasers would not be allowed to open additional stores outside of Phuthadtjhaba.

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