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UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND

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Title: The Mpondo Revolt 1960

by: J Copelyn

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THE MPONDO REVOLT 1960.

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SECTION 1. On the Causes of the Revolt.

In accounting for the growth of militancy in Eastern Pondoland in 1960, it is necessary to analyse a number of changes enforced in the reserves by the Government in the 1950's. Most prominent of these are the intensification of 'betterment' schemes and the institution of the Bantu Authorities system of local government. This section of the paper then, is largely concerned with radical critique of these two pillars of rural administration.

A central fallacy of much writing on South Africa is that the reserves are commonly accorded an 'independent' status. While this is most explicitly expressed in pro-Apartheid publications, the approach is equally prominent as an implicit assumption of much liberal writing. In particular the 'dual economy' thesis employed for example, by Professor D. Hobart Houghton (1) and A. P. Walshe must be mentioned. To quote the latter :

> 'The reserves, occupying approximately 13 per cent of the geographical area of South Africa but about 20 per cent of what is potentially the best agricultural land, display a decaying subsistence agriculture.
>
> Scattered across the map, they were established where the southward-moving tribes were defeated and confined by the Boers and British. In this new environment, where there was only a fixed supply of land, the old pastoral and arable methods, suitable to a system of shifting agriculture and unlimited land, produced acute soil erosion accompanied by declining output. The developing economy based on European initiative eventually came to provide the only means to an existence above abject poverty and the only means to the satisfaction of new wants'. (2)

The decline of the reserves in the twentieth century had, then, very little connexion with the development of the 'developing economy' except insofar as it provided work for those seeking it. Conversely the development of the capitalist sectors had very little to do with the decline of the reserves except insofar as Boers and British 'confined' the 'southward moving tribes'.

The weaknesses of this position have been convincingly demonstrated, among others, by Bundy, and Harold Wolpe (3) and therefore require no great emphasis. It should, however, be mentioned that

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1. Perhaps the most consistent offender is Professor D. Hobart Houghton. For a short explication and critique of his position, see BUNDY, Colin : 'The Emergence and Decline of a South African Peasantry.' African Affairs Vol. 71 No. 285 pp. 369-388. Oct. 1972 : esp. pp. 369-370.

2. WALSHE, A.P. 'The Changing Content of Apartheid' Review of Politics, Vol. 25 pp. 343-361, 1963 : p. 344.

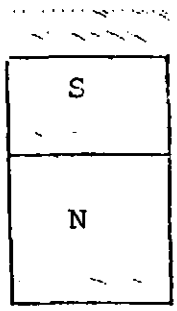
3. BUNDY : op cit and WOLPE, Harold : 'Capitalism and Cheap labour-power in South Africa : From Segregation to Apartheid' Economy and Society Vol. 1 No. 4 pp. 425-456, Nov. 1972, pp. 432-437, et passim.

it fails to grasp the fundamental point that the reserves were created and maintained not as a result of the 'Kaffir wars" but in response to (a) African competition in agriculture and (b) a demand for a particular kind of labour force.

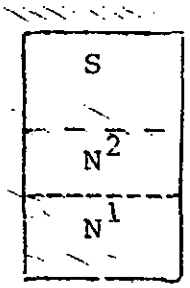
The major interest that imposed itself on African life in the first half of this century has undoubtedly been that of the demand for migrant labour for primary capitalist sectors. This demand could presumably have been met by the creation of rural and urban proletariat wholly dependent on wages for its existence rather than the mode of exploitation actually adopted. Useful insight into the relative efficiency of these alternatives in exactiong profits may be derived from a schema offered by Wolpe.

The relative proportion of surplus to necessary labour in the Capitalist sector where :

(a) The working class is wholly dependent upon wages for its reproduction.



(b) The working class derives a proportion of its means of reproduction from the Reserve Economy.



Where S = surplus labour time/product
N = labour time/product necessary for reproduction of labour power
N^1 = the decreased proportion of labour time/product devoted to the reproduction by the capitalist sector where a portion of the necessary means of subsustence is provided by the Reserve Economy, N^2. (4)

The effect of the migrant labour system was to depress African wages to a sub-sistence level, the balance being provided by 'subsistence agriculture' in the reserves. 'Market forces' were precluded from causing wage rises, despite chronic shortages of labour, by a combination of labour repressive techniques, most notably the 'maximum average' system, the recruiting monopsony and servile labour measures. (5) This coupled with the creation of a market structure which made it increasingly difficult for Africans to compete effectively with white farmers precluded the re-emergence of signigicant surpluses in the reserves. From this perspective it is possible to appreciate Bundy's point that :

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4. The terms 'surplus' and 'necessary' labour are used in the conventional Marxist sense. The schema is taken from a revised version of the previously cited Wolpe article. See WOLPE H. 'Ideology and Capitalism in South Africa' in BENEWICK R, BERKI R,N, PAREKH G : Knowledge and Belief in Politics London Allen and Unwin 1973 : p.287.

5. See JOHNSTONE F. 'Class Conflict and Colour Bars in the South African Mining Industry, 1910-1926' Institute of Commonwealth Studies Unpublished Seminar Paper Feb. 1970.

'Within the space of a few years an agricultural revolution has taken place in the Transkei chiefly brought about through the agency of Bantu and White agricultural officers who can truly be said to have saved the Transkeian soil from destruction.' (14)

to the more common :

'The Native Affairs Department has provided about 1 500 boreholes and wells whith pumping plants and 1 000 stock dams, in addition to 1 680 small dams. Many springs have been fenced, protected and developed.' (15)

While it seems generally agreed (16) that the pace of 'stabilization' measures was increased quite substantially in the late 1950's it should not be thought that this in itself constitutes anything approximating a programme of development. Tomlinson estimated it would take 245 years to 'stabilize' land in 'scheduled' areas at the pace set in the early 1950's. (17) At the time of the 1960 revolt the Government had found it necessary to allocate only £3,5 million of the £104 million suggested by the Tomlinson Commission. (18)

In analyzing the nature of this 'betterment' programme, particularly as regards the period 1955-1960, 'stablization' and 'reclamation' work must be distinguished. The former indicates measures designed to prevent further erosion, while the latter refers to the more intensive process of improving the state of the land. The rapid increase in acreage brought under the 'betterment' works in the above period was very much the consequence of emphasizing 'stabilization' rather than 'reclamation'. The Minister of Native Affairs, Dr. Verwoed, discussed the advantages of the new 'betterment' programme over the 'old system . . . of spoon feeding' in Parliament :

"Since 1952 . . . I have tried to adopt a different course, and that fits in with the institution of Bantu Authorities in terms of which the responsibility was thrown on to the Bantu himself. It fits in with his shouldering of burdens and the result will be that improvements can be brought about on a tremendously larger scale and thereafter they can be left in the hands of the Bantu himself, subject to some supervision. That

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14. Digest of South African Affairs Vol. 9; No. 2 pp.19-20, 22 Jan. 1962'

15. ROBERTS H.R. and COLEMAN K.G. Betterment for the Bantu issued by the Department of Native Affairs. (n.d.)

16. See HORRELL Muriel : The Economic Development of the 'Reserves'. The extent to which the Tomlinson Commission recommendations are being implemented. Johannesburg South African Institute of Race Relations : Fact Paper No. 3 1959 p.12.

17. Tomlinson Report : op cit p. 75.

18. NIEWENHUYSEN J.P. 'Economic Policy in the Reserves since the Tomlinson Report', South African Journal of Economics Vol. 32 pp 3-25 1964.

> means colossal savings and great expedition. In this process, also, care was taken that instead of what is is called improvements or reclamation work, certain principles of stabilization came into the picture. That means that instead of intensive soil conservation works and the improvement of small areas, less intensive and more extensive work is done in a larger area by stabilizing against deterioration.' (19)

In Eastern Pondoland as in many other areas these schemes met with much antagonism. While virtually all sources concede this, most understand this to be reactionary and short-sighted resistance to essentially progressive change. (20) It is, of course, not unusual for farmers to be antagonistic towards soil conservation measures. Professor Thompson, for example has noted of White farmers :

> 'The farmers were very often unwilling and generally ill-equipped to make the neccessary adjustments to their farming methods, and it was to be more than two decades before the conservatism of farmers could be sufficiently overcome for Parliament to pass the Soil Conservation Act in 1946.' (21)

The case in the reserves, however, appears to justify closer scrutiny.

The Mpondo argued firstly 'that the cure' to their poverty 'was not reduction of stock or fencing, (22) but the allocation of more land'. (23) The point needs no amplification, the problem of over utilization of the land obviously has two solutions. While the stabilization programme involves the establishment of better land : cattle ratios, it entirely ignore the problem of people : land ratios. Figures compiled in 1968 of land allocation in Bizana bear witness to the fact that land stabilization in no way alleviates land shortage. Over sixty per cent of households were allocated between one and six acres of land. The average allocation in Bizana was one third the allotment recommended by the Tomlinson Report. (24)

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19. Union of South Africa House of Assembly Debates, Vol. 91 14 May, 1956, col. 5301. See also The Senate of the Union of South Africa Debates 26 May, 1956 cols 3866-3867. The 'stabilization' programme consists of the division of the land into residential, arable and grazing areas; fencing and the reduction of stock.

20 It should be pointed out that such agreement is more a reflection of the narrow range of literature available on rural development in South Africa than conclusive evidence of African shortsightedness.

21. WILSON M. and THOMPSON L. (eds.) : op cit p.137.

22. Although this point could not be confirmed the implications of the Minister's statement (see page 5/6) are that fencing is erected by unpaid labour, which would certainly have created considerable resentment.

23. WILSON M; and THOMPSON L. (eds.) op cit p. 62.

24. Tomlinson Report op cit pp. 85, 118. See also BOARD C; op cit on this point.

involved transference of a number of functions of local government from the magistrates office to that of the Chief. (27)

Debate on the merits and demerits of the system has, by and large, remained on amost general level and some of it is frankly unintelligible. (28) In this paper discussion has therefore been related specifically to the implementation of the system in Pondoland.

The formation of Tribal Authorities in Eastern Pondoland presumably offered peasants their first opportunity to hear about the new system. Useful insight into the manner in which the Mpondo were 'consulted' (29) in 1957 can be derived from a letter written by T. D. Ramsay, Chief Magistrate of the Transkeian Territories at the time, to the Daily News.

Numerous meetings were held in Eastern Pondoland at which Mr. Ramsay and 'a committee of delegates from each district appointed by Botha Sigcau, and also by the members of the old General Council, exhaustively explained to the people' the new system. (30)

According to Mr. Ramsay, not one objection was raised by the Mpondo at meetings he addressed. (31) Although this does not appear to be entirely the case with speeches made by other 'committee' members (32)

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27. On both these points see HAMMOND - TOOKE W.D. 'The Transkeian Council System 1895-1955 : An Appraisal' Journal of African History, vol.9 No.3, pp.455-477 1968 esp. 464 and 474, and HORRELL M. 'Bantu Authorities and Self Government. An Evaluation and Interim Report' Race Relations Journal Vol.26 No.24 April-June 1959 pp.41-61.

28. For example RAUTENBACH Dr. P.S. :'Secondary and Tertiary Development of the Bantu Areas in South Africa' Journal of Racial Affairs Vol.12 No.1 pp.22-35 Oct.1960: P.27 argues that one of the main advantages of the Bantu Authorities system is that 'it is educationally sound in that it evolves from the known to the unknown.'

29. Proclamation 180 op cit, section 10(i) lays down that :'The Governor-General may, with due regard to Native law and custom and after consultation with every tribe and community concerned, establish . . a Bantu tribal or community authority provided that such consultation shall be deemed to have been effected when each local chief in the area of such tribe . . . has, upon the direction of the Native Commissioner, held a meeting with the members of such tribe . . . p.4.

30. Letter from Ramsay to the Daily News 6 Sept.1960 p.16 cols 8-9

31. An allegation disputed by New Age 8 Sept.1960 p.1 cols 3-5

32. See Regina v. Dilisha Maqutswana and Nineteen others : Bloemfontein Appeal Court Records 243/61 : evidence of Chief Makosonke Sigcau p. 47, who admitted that the majority of people in his location were against Bantu Authorities from the start.

it is quite probable that very few objections were raised at initial meetings. It must be borne in mind, however, that these meetings were administrative lectures. The topic was unfamiliar to the Mpondo and many weaknesses of the system only became apparent later, once they experienced the rule of Chiefs.

At no stage, however, in the formation of the Tribal Authority can the mass of Mpondo peasants be said to have actively participated. In other districts of the Transkei, general taxpayers elected 27,7 per cent of the councillors for these authorities. In Pondoland, however, the Paramount appointed 75 per cent and the Native Commissioner the rest.

TABLE 2. THE FORMATION OF 'TRIBAL AUTHORITIES' IN THE TRANSKEI.

COUNCILLORS APPOINTED BY :	IN PONDOLAND	OUT OF PONDOLAND
TAXPAYER	0%	27,7%
PARAMOUNT	75%	0%
NATIVE COMMISSIONER	25%	13,9%
HEADMEN	0%	58,4%
Total	100%	100%

SOURCE: Tribal Authority Schedules published in Government Gazettes : 1957: No. 5879 p.11; No. 5883 pp.67-70; No. 5900 p.32; No. 5904 pp.2-22; No. 5917 pp.39-40; No. 5921 pp. 24-25. 1958 : No. 6049 p.27 and No.6093 p.15.

The total inability of the system to cater for objection from below was well expressed by Chief Makosonke Sigcau, a state witness at a trial following the murder of one of his headmen. Hearing that the Mpondo in his area were 'telling the other people untruthful stories'about Bantu Authorites in 1959, he called a metting ot discuss the matter. At this meeting :

> 'I spoke, and after speaking I closed the meeting . . . I said the Bantu Authorities were passed in Parliament and then sent from Pretoria and from Pretoria they told the Paramount Chief Bota Sigcau about it and I told them that Paramount Chief Bota Sigcau has called many meetings to explain these Bantu Authorities to them. It was not thrust upon them.' (33)

'There was a lot of noise' and the meeting broke up in disorder.

The offensive features of the system stem not only from the manner in which it was introduced, but from the power it invested in the Chiefs. Traditionally there were a number of checks on the power of the Chief. Of these Monica Wilson has stressed :

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33. Regina versus Dilisha Maqutswana and Nineteen Others : op cit p. 42.

'the necessity of (the chief) keeping on good terms with his people. Men were an asset and every chief was anxious to benefit by his troubles, and increase their following by accepting deserters from him.' (34)

The traditional functions of the chief were more those of concensus gatherer and ritual leader than administrator. Executive decisions were made in conjunction with a group of counsellors or elders. The Reminiscences of Sir Walter Stanford 1850-1929, for examp give much evidence to suggest such elders had considerable influence in policy formulation. (35) These two major checks on the powers of the chief made it very difficult for a chief to propogate policy perceived by his subjects to be against their interests.

The Bantu Authorities system substituted for these checks, measures to safeguard a very different set of interests. As a step in a politics of domestic colonialism the most prominent ties on all levels are between the Department of Bantu Administration and Development and the various Bantu Authorities. To these must be coupled concessions to chiefs by way of increased salaries. Paramount Botha Sigcau for example had his salary increased from £700p.a to £1 500 p.a. (36) on accepting the new system. Whatever the price, it remained a fact that chiefs could not be relied upon to represent Mpondo interests to the Government, but rather had turned round in their stools and were prepared to implement state interests independently of general Mpondo sentiments.

This did not necessarily imply direct conflict between chief and subject. In western Pondoland, where precisely the same pattern can be seen, the personal prestige of Paramount Chief Victor Poto coupled with exercise of far more restraint and tact by his subordinate chiefs, largely averted such conflict. (37)

In Eastern Pondoland, Paramount Chief Botha Sigcau had no such prestige. He was regarded by many Mpondo as a usurper. (38)

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34. HUNTER (Wilson) Monica: Reaction to Conquest. Effects of Contact with Europeans on the Pondo of South Africa, London Oxford University Press 1936 p.393.

35. See MACQUARRIE J.W. (ed.) : The Reminiscences of Sir Walter Stanford : 1850-1929 Vol.2 1885-1929 Cape Town. The Van Riebeck Society 1962 p.42, et passin, on the role of Umlangaso.

36. The Star: 23 Nov. 1960 p.1 col.6. See also CHURCHILL Rhona: White Man's God London Hodder and Stoughton 1962, p.64, who suggests his salary with perks as being £3 000 p.a.

37. Nevertheless even in Western Pondoland there were outbreaks of militant opposition: most notably the murder of a Chief and headman in district of Port St. Johns, see Daily Despatch 28 Sept.1960 p.1.col.1 For evidence on other incidents see Evening Post 6 Oct. 1960 p.3 col.4 ; Rand Daily Mail 14 March 1961 p.3 col.7 and New Age 23 March 1961 p.1 cols. 2-4.

38. Botha was the eldest son of the Right Hand wife of Chief Marelane. His half brother, Nelson, who appears to have been a son of a minor house attached to the Great House, disputed the claim. In a most controversial judgment Botha was installed as the Paramount. Evidence taken from a letter from the Secretary for Native Affairs, Mr. H. Rogers, to Advocate D.M. Buchanan, (Nelson's lawyer) dated Feb.12 1940 is somewhat suggestive of extra-genealogical con-

Although he had been in power since 1938, and had officially been 'reconciled' (39) with the contesting party, his rule was still unpopular in 1960. The Mpondo were most determined to have him removed from the Paramountcy. (40)

Further, the newly acquired powers of the chiefs and headmen were badly abused in Eastern Pondoland, among other things, chiefs began charging a fee for allocating land, 'introducing' their subjects to the Native Commissioner, and allowing grass to be cut for thatching. There were suggestions of corruption in the chiefs' courts and on school boards. (41)

Such practices were not unheard of before Bantu Authorities were introduced. Monica Wilson, for example, gives evidence of headmen imposing a charge for recommending allocation of land to the Native Commissioner. (42) In a series of articles on the causes of the Mpondo revolt, Eldred Green argued that :

> 'a gift to a person in a position of strength is not necessarily a bribe. In a purely social context it may in some circumstances be obligatory.' (43)

There can be little doubt, however, that the degree of such corruption increased sharply. While Monica Wilson was able to state in the 1930's : 'I never heard any gossip suggesting that bribery occurred' in the chiefs' courts, (44) the position had changed markedly

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siderations. Justifying his refusal to consider reopening the issue, Mr. Rogers argued that 'a very strong and able Board of Enquiry' had gone into the question 'thoroughly' and 'were unanimous in their finding that not only was Botha the rightful heir, but the more suitable person to appoint as chief.' Personal files of Professor W.D. Hammond-Tooke. Uncatalogued.

39. Bantu Informal Publication of the Department of Bantu Administration and Development Vol. 7 No. 7 July 1960 p.423.

40. See for example CHURCHILL R; op cit. p.64 on this point.

41. See New Age 8 Sept. 1960 p.1 cols 3-5; concluding comments of chairman at Bizana Civic Association Extraordinary Meeting Oct.11 1960; 'memorandum of the Hill Committee to the United Nations Organisation' (reported in Sunday Times 25 Sept. 1960 p.1 cols. 7-9; Report of the Interdepartmental Commission of Enquiry into Disturbances in Pondoland, reported Daily Despatch 12 Oct. 1960 p.3 cols.3-4 Evening Post 8 Oct. 1960 p.4 col.3 and Regina v. Dilisha Maqutswana and Nineteen Others : op cit evidence of Masfisini Mahlebe p.24.

42. HUNTER M. op cit p. 114.

43. Daily News 29 Dec. 1960 p.11 cols 8-9'

44.HUNTER M : op cit p. 426.

by 1960. The scope open to chiefs and headmen for such practices under the new system was remarkably wide. The case of Chief Stanford Nomagqwatekana, though extreme, bears comment. He was surrounded by an armed guard of 'stock thieves and criminals'. Elders of the tribe were unable to curtail his association with these people, not was the tribe able to curtain their activities substantially, despite the fact that 'the tribe as a whole (was) upset' and 'the peoples' stock were getting finished'. (45)

It is not suggested that chiefs and headmen were the epitome of corruption, but it is intended to provide some factual background to substantiate Mpondo grievances in this respect. It was very difficult for peasants to bring charges against such authorities, particularly when these chiefs and headmen were given the power of allocating land, and a variety of other functions of local government. In the absence of traditional checks, there were virtually no avenues open to limit the abuse of such power. We can therefore, appreciate teh frustration of an Mpondo spokesman who told the Government Commission of Inquiry :

> 'If you wish to see peace and rest in this country take this message with you : We don't want Bantu Authorities. Take the Paramount Chief and his supporters away' Take him where he can administer affairs away from us.' (46)

In concluding this sector, it remains to make explicit the pattern of rural administration and its concomitant set of mass grievance.

Through the Bantu Authorities system the Government divested itself of functions of local government. More importantly, however, the newly instituted system of local government functioned ideologically to conceal the paucity of government funds apportioned to the development of the reserves in general. (47)

The system of education, for example, was classified as a function of local government. While the state extended a rigid control over both teacher and syllabus (48), it also provided itself with a justification for transferring a greater degree of the financial burden on to African taxpayers. (49)

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45. Regina v. Barnabas Magqwana and 29 others : op cit evidence of Pantsi Patekile p.19 et passim.

46. Natal Mercury, 26 July 1960 p.2 cols. 5-6.

47. 'We begin to treat our adversary's views as ideologies only when we no longer consider them as calculated lies and when we sense in his total behaviour an unreliability which we regard as a function of the social situation in which he finds himself'. MANNHEIM Karl: Ideology and Utopia an Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge, London Routledge and Kegan Paul 1936 p.54.

48. Evidence on this point can be found in the recommendations of the Eiselen Commission and Bantu Education Act, No.47 of 1953 (as amended) : see HORRELL M. Bantu Education to 1968. Johannesburg South African Institute of Race Relations, Decl 1968, esp. pp.8-22.

49. The basic trend can be demonstrated by calculations based on figures from HORRELL M: Bantu Education to 1968 op cit p.35. The percentage contribution of Africans to Bantu Education in South Africa over the period 1955-1969 increases as follows: 1955-1956: 23,8 per cent; 1960-61: 32 per cent; 1965-66: 38,2 per cent and 1968-69 44,5 per (estimated) 44,5 per cent

A similar case must be made for the economic 'development' of the reserves. This can perhaps be most directly illustrated from a speech by the Minister of Native Affairs justifying the reduction of the Tomlinson Commission's figure of £27,4 million to be spent on soil reclamation over ten years to £1 million in the first year. He argued that the figure recommended by Tomlinson:

> 'did not take account of the modern method of working through Bantu Authorities, in terms of which the people do the work themselves under the supervision of the Trust.' (50)

This approach to local government in the reserves was not without repercussions for reserve inhabitants. The effect on African taxation in the Transkei is instructive. The General tax was increased 75 per cent to £1 15s. as from 1 January 1959; stock rates on each head of cattle were introduced into the Transkei on 30 May 1958. The average Transkeian household probably contributed about £4.10s. to direct taxes by 1959. Of this sum almost half was imposed during the period 1955-59. This meant that such a household contributed more than four times the amount of their White, Coloured and Asian counterparts. (51)

It would be misleading to suggest that a 'simple economic interpretation' of deterioration in the situation of the Mpondo under the impact of expanding capitalist sectors could account for the outbreak of a revolt. Barrington Moore, basing his conclusion on numerous case studies of peasant revolts suggests this as a theory 'it has been necessary to discard' with the qualification 'where such deterioration has occurred on a marked scale, it seems plausible to expect revolutionary outbreaks.' (52) Trotsky pinpointed the weakness of oversimplified explanation in the context of the Russian Revolution:

> 'In reality the mere existence of privation is not enough to cause an insurrection; if it were the masses would be always in revolt.' (53)

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50. South African Parliament : House of Assembly Debates, Vol. 94, March 28, 1957, cols. 3749/50. No further 'special amounts' of this nature were allocated during the next four years; see NIEWENHUYSEN, J.P. 'Economic Policy in the Reserves, since the Tomlinson Report', op.cit., p.10.

51. All information on taxation used above is derived from African Taxation Its Relation to African Social Services, Fact Paper No.4, Johannesburg SAIRR 1960. See esp. pp. 3-4 and 11-12.

52. MOORE, Barrington: Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy Lord and Peasant in the making of the Modern World. Harmondsworth, Penguin University Books, 1973.

53. TROTSKY, Leon, EASTMAN, Max (translator) History of the Russian Revolution. London Sphere Books 1967, Vol.2, p.12.

In a direct sense, the cause of revolt lies in a change in the consciousness of the villagers. The growth of militancy involves the development of consciousness whereby the 'bankruptcy of the social regime' is in some sense 'conclusively revealed'. (54) Patterns of social consciousness are not easily reduced to logical responses, yet this is not to deny that consciousness does not lie 'outside the real process of history.' 'Consciousness does not have to be introduced into the world by philosophers.' (55)

The complex set of grievances that emerged in Eastern Pondoland in the late 1950s has been analysed in terms other than actual Mpondo perceptions. While the vast majority of these people had no sense of the totality, they did have an acute awareness of their immediate interests.

Further, the newly instituted system of local government was seen clearly to threaten those interests. The reforms instituted through local administration, coupled with the authoritarian way in which they were executed, galvanised mass resentment into an intensive critique of local authority.

Section 2. ORGANIZATION AND MOBILIZATION

Eric Wolf has commented that peasant revolts of the twentieth century are not 'simple responses to local problems'. They are, rather, he argues '... but the parochial reactions to major social dislocations set in motion by overwhelming societal change'. (56) It would seem, from analysis of the causes of Mpondo dissatisfaction, that the revolt must be understood as the complex conjunction of both 'local problems' and 'major social dislocations'.

By mid-1959 mass frustration in Eastern Pondoland culminated in spontaneous militancy. In Amandengane location in the Bizana District, for example, a mob descended on a Dutch Reform Mission with the aim of 'chasing away' the Evangelist and his family - 'because these people have accepted the Bantu Authorities.' (57) In February 1960 the Natal Mercury reported an incident where 'a riotous mob of more than 100 Native men and women ... threatened to burn all (traders) property in the area. All day the Natives marched along the roads... hounding' traders and 'telling them to "get out"'.

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54. Ibid.

55. LUKACS, Georg; LIVINGSTONE, Rodney (Translator), History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics, London, Merlin Press, 1968.

56. WOLF, Eric R.: 'On Peasant Rebellions' in SHANIN Teodor (ed) Peasants and Peasant Societies Victoria Penguin Books 1971, pp. 264-276 : p.273.

57. State v. Dilisha Maqutswana and Nineteen Others, op.cit., pp.39-42. Natal Mercury, 17 Feb. 1960 p.1. col.9.

Such activity, however, is more remarkable for its futility than anything else and can hardly be conceived of as a strategy for effecting change. In many ways it conforms to what Talcott Parsons has termed an 'expresive orientation where there is no calculated attempt to confront problems directly.

> 'The essential point is the primacy of "acting out" the need disposition itself rather than subordinating gratification to a goal outside the immediate situation.' (58)

The characteristic which came to distinguish the Mpondo struggle from these early sporadic outbursts, however, was the consolidation of frustration in a disciplined organization. The structural significance of this feature cannot be overstressed, for it imparted an entirely new orientation to the expression of grievance - namely an instrumental one.

Istvan Meszaros has posed the decisive hurdle for mass movements to confront most succinctly:

> However much one might wish the contrary the question of political organization cannot be by-passed. The real issue is therefore the creation of organizational forms which are adequate to the ... strategic objectives considering
> a) the socio-historic limitations that objectively circumscribe the possibilities of action in every epoch and
> b) the necessary limits and distortionary effects of the institutional form itself. (59)

If the strengths and weaknesses of Mpondo strategy adopted during the revolt are to be assessed in these terms the pattern of polical mobilization must be related to the growth of the new structures of authority that emerged in Eastern Pondoland in 1960.

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58. PARSONS, T. : The Social System, Glencoe, The Free Press 1951, p.348 cited by FERNANDEZ, J.W. : 'African Religious Movements' in ROBERTSON, Roland (ed.) : Sociology of Religion, London Penguin Books, 1969 pp.384-404, p.388. The expressive - instrumental continuum as employed by Fernandez has certain additional elements which are not applicable here. A characteristic of expressive movements, for example, is that they 'often spontaneously produce supernatural and visionary experiences in persons of charismatic qualities,' (ibid. p.388) of which there is no trace in the Mpondo struggle. Nevertheless the basic distinction between a 'realistic and goal-minded' instrumental movement and an expressive one are useful here and the terms have therefore been used.

59. MESZAROS, Istvan : 'Contingent and Necessary Class Consciousness' in MESZAROS, I. (ed.) : Aspects of History and Class Consciousness, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul 1971 pp.89-117 : p.101.

In March 1960 they began holding meetings in various locations in the Bizana district to discuss possible solutions to their difficulties. These meetings soon became more formalized. Groups of between 10 and 20 men would meet virtually every night at each others kraals. From this a local leadership in each group of kraals emerged, which enabled larger gatherings to be co-ordinated. (60) By May virtually each location in Bizana was holding regular political meetings in defiance of both chiefs and police and despatching representatives to neighbouring locations. The outcome was a hierarchical district organization that formed and rapidly spread into Lusikisiki and Flagstaff.

Communication between central and peripheral groups depended on messengers travelling between meetings by foot or on horseback. This limited centralization of the movement. In each district, however, one meeting place came to dominate activities in surrounding locations. (61) Leadership in Flagstaff and Lusikisiki retained considerable autonomy but came increasingly to rely on Bizana for suggestions. This relatively centralized organization was initially called the Hill, and came to dominate the lives of perhaps 180,000 people spread over an area covering almost 4,000 square kilometres.

The nature of the organization must be clearly distinguished from that heralding nineteenth century revolts on the continent. Traditional structures of mobilization centering around the chief did not occur naturally. Further, there was notable absence of mystic leadership of the type discussed, for example, by T.O. Ranger in his analysis of the mobilization of Shona and Matebele impi in the 1896-1897 Southern Rhodesian uprisings. (62) Although Mpondo meetings like the cult centres relied on inaccessible venues for secrecy, there was nothing in the Hill's nature that could be construed as esoteric. Meetings were public and all were encouraged to attend and contribute to the process of decision-making. While a hierarchical leadership structure developed, leaders owed their authority neither to contact with Mwari, nor to traditional status but to the fact that their resourcefulness and clear sightedness were generally accepted.

The nature of the Hill, was nevertheless, in some ways paradoxical. The bulk of its activities were directed against traditional power holders. The contempt in which chiefs, particularly the Paramount chief, were held is apparent from even the most cursory glance at the material available. Furthermore the goals articulated by Hill spokesmen could not possibly be defined 'as a looking back, a desire to return to old customs and institutions.' (63)

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60. Interview with Mr. M.W. NGZIKI - a reporter who covered the revolt for the Evening Post - on 3 July 1973.

61. Viz. Ngquza Hill in Lusikisiki; Nklovu Hill in Bizana; and Ngqindilili Hill in Flagstaff.

62. RANGER, T.O. : Revolt in Southern Rhodesia, London, Heinemann 1967, pp.142-161 and 200-226 et passim. Compare for example RANGER, T.O. ibid. pp.145-146 with Sunday Times, 27 Nov.1960, p.3, cols. 2-4.

63. WILLIS, J.R. : 'Jihad Fi Sabil Allah : Its doctrinal basis in Islam and some aspects of its evolution in Nineteenth Century West Africa' Journal of African History, Vol.8, No.3 1967 pp.395-415; p.395 defines revivalism in these terms. In this loose sense a revivalist orientation is often attributed to rural resistance in Africa. The small holders are seen as struggling to disentangle themselves from their involvement with the wider economy, and therefore glorifying a former age when they were more isolated communities.

In July 1960 for example, 'a gaunt and grey-haired old man' informed the Van Heerden Commission:

> 'When the vote was taken away from us the Bantu people were not allowed to sit side by side with the white man in Parliament. This unrest has come to stay as long as the Bantu people have no representative in Parliament to voice their grievances.' (64)

Yet Wolf's comment that the smallholders are 'the main bearers of peasant tradition', (65) is just as applicable to the Mpondo as to other peasant societies. The Hill operated very much within the framework of traditional norms. The resultant combination of traditional and acculturated roles can be illustrated on a ritual level. The following account of a Hill Meeting held in Lusikisiki in about May 1960 was given in court by a police informer.

The headman of the location had been converted to the movement, and people assembled at his kraal before sunrise.

> 'At the headman's kraal I found a big pot with liquid medicine. We all had to put our fingers in the water and suck the medicine and another person was making crosses and incisions on our foreheads ... It was said we should first take this medicine because we are going to Ngquza Hill.' (66)

They assembled at Ngquza Hill at sunrise, together with many others from various locations. There, among other things, they were addressed by a Mpondo who had come 'from Ndlovu Hill' in Bizana. He impressed upon them the need for unity and 'said we should act as decided upon at Ndlovu Hill'. (67)

Inter-district organization had barely begun in May 1960, and popular leaders from Bizana would presumably not have been well known in Lusikisiki. The use of traditional ritual as a means of conferring legitimacy on the new organization is not without significance. Nevertheless it is probable such rites were employed only rarely. There does not appear to be any other evidence in this vein. More commonly meetings were opened with a prayer. In fact of the five central leaders of the revolt, two-Mbambeni Madikizela and Nkosana Mbodla - had been lay preachers. Occasionally the pulpit was utilized as an opportunity to encourage people to attend meetings of the Hill. Thus the day before Chief Vakuibambe Sigcau was killed 'Mzozoyana (a lay preacher) in church reminded the people again that they have to go to Ngquindilili Hill'. (68)

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64. Natal Mercury : 26 July 1960 p.1 col.7. The date is significant, as it was before contact with 'outside agitators' was established and thus goes some way to damn the official explanation that the revolt was entirely a local issue that could have been settled through established channels had the Mpondo not been manipulated.

65. WOLF, E. : 'On Peasant Rebellions' : op.cit., p.269.

66. State v. Kaka Rubele and 35 others : Grahamstown Appeal Court Records 366/61 : evidence of Vovadliwe Kuseni pp. 1-2; see also pp.22,63.

67. Ibid., p.4.

68. Regina v. Mkatazo Mvongana and 29 others; Bloemfontein Appeal Court Records 191/61, evidence of Mabona Caza p.100. See also evidence of Dodd Mzozoyana esp. p.102.

to leave unmolested before Vakuibambe and the two indunas were killed. (75). Such disturbances led to much misconceived comment. Supreme court records abound with evidence suggesting:

> 'The basis of the whole unlawful organization was intimidation. They had to intimade the residents in order to get their co-operation. The message or the religion brought to the people is ... "those who are not with us are against us" and they must be liquidated, their kraals must be burned and they must be killed.' (76)

Court records are, however, plainly misleading in this respect. The total number of murders resulting from the revolt was about twenty-two. Of these most were headmen, chiefs, or their bodyguards. The remaining five victims were police informers. (77) Some alternative speculations must be suggested on the relationship between political organization and violence at this point if a more adequate understanding of the revolt is to be achieved.

Any political organization hoping to exercise control requires some means of regulating social behaviour. Such means invariably involve the use of violence or at least the threat thereof. In conformity with the work of S.I. Benn and R.S. Peters this may be termed 'power'. (78) While ability to exercise power is perhaps necessary for the maintenance of any system of social regulations it is not a sufficient condition in itself. Some form of legitimacy is required. Writings on the nature of legitimacy tend to lie in the shadow of Max Weber's exposition, and it is sufficient merely to adopt his formulation of the concept of authority. (79) Given these two concepts the conclusion reached by Benn and Peters would seem to follow:

> 'It is only when a system of authority breaks down or a given individual loses his authority that there must be recourse to power if conformity is to be ensured.' (80)

The 'system of authority' very clearly broke down in Pondoland. It was to a greater or lesser extent replaced by a new system of authority. Stress on the coercive nature of the Hill is misleading

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76. State v. Kekani Gudlulwayo and one other, Bloemfontein Appeal Court Records 27/1962 : evidence of Mr. J.J. Swartz, p.196.

77. Figures were compiled from court records and newspapers. Official figures differ somewhat. In reply to a question put in Parliament, the Minister of Bantu Administration and Development, Mr. De Wet Nel, said that two chiefs, two sub-headmen, four 'counsellors' and seventeen others 'were murdered by their fellow Bantu.' Union of South Africa House of Assembly Debates, Vol.106, col.438, 31 Jan.1961.

78. BENN, S.I. and PETERS, R.S.: Social Principles and the Democratic State, London, Allen and Unwin 1959, esp. Part 1.

79. See WEBER, Max; PARSONS, Talcott (ed.): The Theory of Social and Economic Organization, New York, The Free Press 1964, esp. Part III.

80. BENN. S.I. and PETERS, R.S., op.cit., p.21.

Georg Simmel has commented:

> 'If a mass rebels against an authority, the authority gains an immediate advantage if it succeeds in causing the mass to choose representatives who are to lead the negotiations. At least, the overwhelming smashing onslaught of mass, as such, is broken in this fashion; for the moment, the mass is checked by its own leaders in a way in which the authority itself can no longer succeed. The mass leaders exert the formal function of the authority and thus prepare for the pre-entrance of the authority into its dominating position.' (87)

The local leadership, however, was committed to initiating campaigns against Bantu Authorities and was sufficiently astute to take the initiative where possible. For example, in May a spokesman was sent from a Hill meeting to telephone the Bizana Magistrate, Mr. E. Warren, in connection with a message 'to the Government complaining that tribal Bantu Authorities should be withdrawn'. The Mpondo had previously asked the magistrate to forward their complaint to the relevant authority, and had grown wary at the lack of response this had evoked. Rather than send a delegation to the magistrate's office, the meeting insisted that the magistrate come to the Hill and explain whether he had indeed passed on the message. (88)

While the administration could afford to overlook such incidents it could hardly ignore the systematic destruction of the Bantu Authorities. In June it was decided to put an end to the meetings by force.

The police struck at Ngquza Hill on 6 June 1960. Flagstaff Mpondo had been holding regular meetings at the foot of the Hill, and did not anticipate police intervention:

> '... the Police had for three weeks been watching their meetings and had neither taken action nor given warning that action would be taken. So the men moved into the valley with a false sense of security, though many knew that eighteen police vehicles containing one hundred policemen had taken up a position three miles away at 9 a.m.' (89)

Soon after midday, when perhaps 400 Mpondo had gathered, a helicopter and two Harvard aircraft flew over the meeting and dropped tear-gas bombs into the crowd. The police, armed with revolvers and sten-guns, took up positions on the surrounding hillside. As the police descended Africans hoisted a white flag. The ensuing encounter was described by an Mpondo:

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87. WOLFF, Kurt H., The Sociology of Georg Simmel, Glencoe, The Free Press, 1950, pp.281-282 - cited by KUPER, Leo. An African Bourgeoisie Race Class and Politics in South Africa. New Haven, Yale University Press, 1965, p.31.

88. Natal Mercury, 19 Aug. 1960, p.1, col.6-7. - Report from the first trial of Mbambeni Madikizela and four other central Hill leaders - Theophilus Tshangela, Mpini Ndlela, Maveni Ntshangase and Nkosana Mbodla.

89. CHURCHILL, Rhona: op.cit., p.64.

> 'The spot was in flames. Over 200 police well-armed combed the bush, shooting everyone they came across. Those who tried to surrender themselves were without mercy shot. The women who made war-cries were thrashed, kicked and assaulted in the huts. The arrested were taken to the charge office.' (90)

Police alleged that the Mpondo had fired first, and that they had retaliated by way of self-defence. Eleven Mpondo were killed and 13 seriously wounded. Subsequent post-mortems revealed that some were shot in the back as they fled. No police were injured in any way and the attack was followed by arrests. The wounded were left to struggle six miles to Holy Cross Mission Hospital or to hide in the hills. The local magistrate refused even to hold an inquest into the shootings. (91)

The history of rural resistance in South Africa is studded with such incidents. Local tragedies at Bulhoek, Bondelswarts, Witzieshoek, Zeerust, Sekhukuneland and other areas were all fundamentally similar. (92) Kuper has commented:

> 'The police and the Government hold the initiative ... They have certainly improved the machinery for domination ...
>
> And yet official action has the same stereo-typed quality as the violence of the African masses. Presumably over the long period of contact, well tested techniques for the handling of Africans have crystallized into traditions and rituals of domination, to which the single-minded application of the doctrines of apartheid lends a sacred rigidity. Move and countermove are highly predictable, following a few set patterns.' (93)

Stereotyped state violence was, however, a miscalculation in this instance. The incident went some way to undermining the self-confidence and self-righteousness of local magistrates. The hasty exercise of power placed the Lusikisiki magistrate, for example, in the unenviable position of having to justify his flaunting of legal procedure with regard to the shootings. (94) Rather than passifying the movement it

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90. Private letter cited by DRAPER, Miss M.H., op.cit., p.3.

91. This account is based mainly on DRAPER, Miss M.H., op.cit., pp.2-3; HORRELL, Muriel. Annual Survey of Race Relations 1959-1960. Johannesburg, South African Institute of Race Relations 1961, pp.41-42; CHURCHILL, Rhona, op.cit., pp.62-66; Natal Mercury, 9 June 1960, p.2, cols.4-6; Sunday Tribune, 12 June 1960, p.2, col.4; Sunday Times, 12 June 1960, p.15, cols.1-3; Daily News, 14 June 1960, p.10, cols.6-7; Contact, 2 July 1960, p.3, cols.1-5 and an interview with the priest in charge of Holy Cross Mission Hospital at the time, Father Vaughan-Jones, on 1 Dec. 1973.

92. cf. KUPER, Leo. op.cit., p.27.

93. Ibid., p.14.

94. The role of the legalistic niceties of Apartheid is well brought out by ADAM, Heribert. op.cit., see esp.pp.65-67 where he differentiates between fascist models of dictatorship and South African modes of domination.

simply inflamed feelings. Resistance became more widespread and the campaign against Bantu Authorities was intensified. (95)

By July or August it would appear that Bantu Authorities had virtually ceased to function in Bizana, and half of Lusikisiki and Flagstaff. It is difficult to pinpoint dates precisely, but some indication of the extent of rebel control can be gathered from the position of the Bantu Affairs Commissioner at Bizana. (96)

Earlier he had been able to administer the area through the government-appointed authorities, but by the end of August he was reported to have requested a mass meeting at Ndlovu Hill to:

> '(1) Discuss the return of Government- appointed chiefs who have fled the area;
> (2) Propose tribesmen to act as chiefs in the places of those now in refuge;
> (3) Recommend representatives for appointment as enumerators in the forthcoming population census.' (97)

The meeting refused to discuss the first two questions and rejected the third. The report continued:

> 'Responsible tribesmen told me that even if they were to discuss the question of appointing acting chiefs, not a single member among them would be prepared to accept the position. I was told, "Chiefs who have fled from the area are no longer welcome here. The Government should look after them"'. (98)

This is not to suggest that the Magistrates Office declined in significance. In a sense Bantu Commissioners still determined the pace of events. Arrests were made an an increasing number of peasants found themselves standing trial for 'addressing illegal meetings', arson and occasionally even murder. The difficulties thus incurred by the rebels are adequately summarized in the Xhosa expression:

> 'Ngaphandle kwegqwetha usisisulu setilongo'
> ('The surest way of going to jail is to appear in court without a lawyer.')

Further, the magistrates' court often set bail at very high figures - £100 in cash in most cases. (99) The Hill relied initially on a nominal membership fee paid by ordinary peasants, to meet the cost of litigation. By July this was proving insufficient and the movement was facing danger of bankruptcy. The dampening effect on morale of scores of Mpondo jailed without prospects of defense by attorneys forced the leadership to react.

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95. 29 huts were razed in the two weeks following the shootings; Natal Mercury, 21 June 1960, p.1, cols.1-3.

96. The functions of District Magistrate and Bantu Commissioner were performed by a single individual. Insofar as possible, such an individual is referred to as magistrate in the context of his legal duties, and Bantu Commissioner in the context of administrative duties.

97. Daily News, 29 Aug. 1960, p.3, cols.1-2.

98. Ibid.

99. Interview with Father Vaughan-Jones. 1 Dec. 1973.

Significantly, however, the Hill retained its systemic character. Far from being drawn into desparate activity its moves remained highly unpredictable from the point of view of the administration. The rebel organization used its increased support to develop techniques of passive resistance. Initiative was thereby gradually wrested from the magistrates office; he became progressively less able to determine the areas of conflict. The Hill turned to two other prospective sources of aid, traders and the Urban Tribal Associations, particularly in Durban and Margate. It is suggested that this move must be understood in part as the result of state pressure. It must at any rate be regarded as a significant step in the growth of the movement.

The traders were a well-organized and articulate elite. Their organ was the Civic Association and their access power on a local level was guaranteed not only by the prevailing myths inherent in colonial administration, but by their ability to formulate and articulate group interests.

In its dealings with traders, the Hill leadership evolved a strategy based on three assumptions, which may be briefly summarised as follows:

1. They presumed that traders as a group could help them in two ways - firstly by giving them money and the use of lorries (100) and secondly by taking up their grievances with the Department of Bantu Administration and Development.

2. They believed it to be within their power to pressurise traders into fulfilling these roles.

3. They hoped that, if the traders pressed their case, the government would yield.

Initially the Hill's effort was directed at individual traders who for one reason or another stood out as particularly antagonistic to their struggle. One trader in the Flagstaff district for example was boycotted in June, and was forced to close down his shop. The Mpondo were apparently incensed by the appearance of the trader's son in any army uniform. He had returned home on leave during his training very soon after the Ngquza Hill tragedy.

Even at this stage, it is interesting to correlate financial pressures on the Mpondo with their demands on traders. On the 31 Aug. 1960 for example four Mpondo were found guilty on an arson charge 'in protest against Bantu Authorities.' They were remanded on 6 September for sentence and were allowed bail of £100 each. (101) A day later the Daily News carried the following report:

> 'One trader, Mr. Gert van Niekerk, told me today that he has £5,000 worth of stock in his store ... but not one customer. He was forced to close down several weeks ago but he is hopeful that the boycott will be called off shortly. Mr. van Niekerk said that tribesmen in his area were holding a meeting today to decide whether to remove his store from the "boycott list". "Certain tribesmen demanded that I should pay £100 to end the boycott but I refused" he said.' (102)

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100. cf. pp.57-58

101. Daily News: 31 Aug.1960, p.1, col.1.

102. Daily News: 1 Sept.1960, p.3, cols.5-6.

Boycotts on traders were not unknown in Pondoland though they were extremely isolated cases. Monica Wilson, writing in 1936 mentions that a store was boycotted on the orders of the Paramount Chief fifteen years previously. (103) By mid-August 1960 three stores in the Flagstaff district and one in the Lusikisiki district were being boycotted. (104) That this was not discussed by the Bizana Civic Association is indicative of traders' belief that boycotting was unlikely to affect them as a class. This point of view was by no means naive. Given the poverty of the Mpondo it was unthinkable that they should cut themselves off from the few stores where it was possible to buy grain. (105) Boycotting even a single store in a district involved hundreds of people committing themselves to walking perhaps five or six miles to the next. It was then the mark of a highly organized popular movement that the Flagstaff Hill committee succeeded in boycotting three stores simultaneously.

Individually, traders appreciated, by September, that they were far more vulnerable. On hearing that the Hill committee was boycotting the census on 6 September 1960 only one trader in Bizana volunteered to act as an enumerator. Even he abandoned the attempt 'after receiving warnings from "friendly Pondos" that it was dangerous to do so.' (106)

The extent of Mpondo power over the individual trader is clearly demonstrated by the attempt of a trader, Keith Wicks, to have the boycott of his store lifted. He sent messages to the Hill seeking an interview to discuss the situation.

> 'I arrived with eight Pondo representatives from the area in which my store is. We left my vehicle and walked a mile up the hill. At the top, in a great circle sat 4,000 Pondos. I waited on the fringe of the circle, until it was my turn to appear before "The Hill".
>
> Then I was called to the centre of the circle. I had my hands in my pockets. One tribesman rose and said:
>
> "Even a White man must take his hands from his pockets when he comes here."
>
> They asked me many questions and eventually told me to await their judgement in my car. After the three hour wait in the rain, Pondos came to tell me "You may open your store." (107)

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103. HUNTER, Monica: op.cit., p.426.

104. Daily Despatch : 2 Sept. 1960, p.1, col.1.

105. New crops are planted in about September and while 'early patches' of sorgum and of maize ripen in December, the main crop of dry grain, maize and millet is harvested only in April, May and June. HUNTER, Monica : op.cit., p.110. As might be expected October to January are thus peak months for traders' sales of grain. See HAINES, E.S., op.cit., pp.206-207.

106. Daily Despatch, 8 Sept. 1960, p.13, cols. 1-2.

107. Rand Daily Mail, 30 Nov. 1960, p.1, cols.4-6.

The Mpondo agreed to lift the boycott on the understanding that he would 'prove himself a friend.' Thereafter he was required to transport them to and from meetings - which he did. (108)

By October, however, the force of Mpondo militancy was felt strongly by all traders. On 11 October 1960 the Bizana Civic Association held an Extraordinary Meeting. Mr. V. Leibbrandt, Chief Magistrate of the Transkei, read out the findings of the Government Commission of Inquiry and the meeting was then opened for discussion. The frustration and anxiety of the group was raised by one trader.

> 'Mr. Human : What is going to be done about the intimidation, blackmail, and threats to close trading stations down. Traders had been living under these threats for months. They had either to comply or have their stations closed down. Last time you were here you told us that the traders were in no way involved.
>
> Mr. Leibbrandt : Is your question on behalf of all traders?
>
> Mr. Human : It is on behalf of one section, all of whom are not here tonight as they were afraid to come in. While Mr. Leibbrandt was safe in Umtata we were sitting on a boiling kettle which was getting hotter and hotter.
>
> Mr. Leibbrandt : An adequate police force was on hand for defence ...' (109)

This final reply, of course, misses the point. While it was true that the police force was able to defend the village against impi armed with assegais and knobkerries, the Mpondo did not provide such a crude threat. They were well aware that traders had just bought Christmas stocks and that they were even more vulnerable than otherwise in the face of boycotts. (110)

The transition in the sentiments expressed in the BCA over the period May to October 1960 suggests strongly that Mpondo strategy was well-founded. By the end of October they had cut back the neutral ground surrounding the position of the traders, forcing them to enter the conflict. There were undoubtedly some traders who would have braved the intimidation at all costs. Others, however, were obviously wavering. Though it is impossible, on the evidence collected, to prove that traders secretly made contributions to the 'Anti-Bantu Authorities Fund' for example, (111) there are certain features of

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108. Interview with Kieth Wicks. 15 July 1973.

109. Minutes of BCA Extraordinary Meeting 11 Oct. 1960.

110. In his explanation of the Bizana boycott a Hill spokesman argued precisely this point. He was reported by the Evening Post 3 Nov. 1960 p.1 col.1 as saying : 'The traders had bought stocks for Christmas. If the boycott succeeded these stocks would not be sold.'

111. With the exception of a single minor case mentioned by the Sunday Times 6 Nov. 1960 p.12 cols.1-3. The date, however, being only a few days after the boycott of Bizana was begun, is not without interest.

developments in November 1960 that suggest the likelihood of such activity. To bring out these elements more clearly the significance of some events must first be discussed.

The central leadership of the revolt had been granted leave to appeal against an earlier conviction, and were granted bail. Despite the fact that not a single person had estreated bail, their bail was withdrawn on the grounds that they 'might take it out on informers' or might flee 'to Ghana or somewhere else.' (112) They were given a week to hand themselves over for arrest. In that week they held a number of crucial meetings. The rebels were greatly incensed by this move of the court. In addition feelings ran particularly high as a result of the obvious insensitivity of the Van Heerden Commission's findings. (113) The leadership correctly inferred that this resentment could be channeled into the most far-reaching pressures on traders.

On 1 November, almost 3 000 peasants followed their leaders into Bizana to witness their arrest. The following day only a handful of Mpondo entered the village, and residents awakened to the fact that the entire village was being boycotted.

A picket was set up on the outstkirts of the village. Ten local buses that usually carried scores of people to and from the village each day 'did not appear.'(11 Government controlled buses carried only a handful of passengers.

There were at the time between 80 000 and 100 000 Mpondo residents in the Bizana district. (115) Presuming that the distribution of trading stores roughly reflects the distribution of trade, and accounting for the fact that about 60 per cent of adult males were probably on mines and white-owned farms at the time, this would imply that a population of 40 000 to 50 000 commonly relied on the village trade (116). For most of these the boycott involved walking or riding an additional five miles to a district trader outside the village. The organisation of such a boycott is a very clear indication of the capacity of the Hill in Bizana to mobilize significant support for the tasks it undertook.

The consolidation and structuring of Mpondo grievances altered the distribution of power markedly in Eastern Pondoland over the period considered. The revolt gathered its own momentum, forcing the traditional elite to abandon its position, and disorientating the petty bourgeoisie. Its success lay in its ability to channel spontaneous mass resentment into disciplined systemic action in increasing numbers of locations.

During the second week of the boycott some traders attempted to organize the temporary closing of all stores. They argued that the Mpondo would then be forced to discontinue their action or starve. Significantly they did not get even as far as calling a meeting of the BCA to discuss their proposal. (117) It would seem that most traders refused to contemplate any move which might further antagonise the Mpondo. In retrospect, it is quite probable that such action would have led to the ransacking of stores rather than to the intended effect. (118)

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112. Evening Post 9 Nov. 1960. p.1. col.5
113. See Chapter 4.
114. Daily News 2 Nov. 1960 p.1. cols. 2-3
115. Since the Mpondo boycotted the 1960 census it is not possible to be very accurate.
116. A similar figure is reached by calculating the maximum individual spending per spending day. (It was estimated by newspapers that Bizana lost £1 000 per day. See Rand Daily Mail 9 Nov. p.1 col.2)

Besides this abortive suggestion, the only organized response by Bizana residents was a deputation to the Chief Magistrate, Mr. Leibbrandt, on the 18 November, 1960. (119) The deputation was clearly to press the administration to ease their position by yielding to the Mpondo, at least temporarily.

In the same breath it must be mentioned that the boycott underlined the limit of their achievement. A meeting of 12,000 people on 5th November 1960 took a decision to extend the boycott to Flagstaff, Lusikisiki, Tabankulu and Mount Ayliff (118). This they were not able to do. Likewise the meeting's decision to boycott recruits for mines and sugar estates was ineffective. Numerous speculations may be offered as to the possibility of boycotting mines in favour of sugar estates or vice versa - certainly it must be acknowledged that with time they would have forced traders to stop recruiting by threat of boycotting Such approach would however ignore the most obvious constraint, namely the threat of police and army.

By November, there were an estimated 200 police reinforcements in the three villages of Bizana, Flagstaff and Lusikisiki. (119) Though they did not know it, orders banishing, 3 of 5 members of the central executive - Madikizela, Nkosana Mbodla and Theophilus Tshangela had been signed in October 1960. (120)

On 30 November 1960 a partial state of emergency was proclaimed in Eastern Pondoland. (121) Entry into the area was rigidly controlled. It became illegal to organise or take part in any organised boycott. Power to order the removal of any African 'without prior notice' from one district to another was granted to the Paramount Chief. The South African Police force was empowered to 'render assistance including the application for force' to Bantu Authorities, and Magistrates. 'No civil action whatsoever in respect of any cause of action ... in connection with the operation of these regulations shall be capable of being instituted against the State.

Under the protection of these regulations the police began detaining large numbers of people. (122). On 11 December 1960 the Sunday Express reported that units of the Mobile Watch, 'the most intensively trained fighting force' in the South African Defence Force was being sent to Pondoland. (123) On 14 December they were deployed to Bizana, Flagstaff and Lusikisiki and Proclamation R.400 was amended to allow for the detention and interrogation of Mpondo suspected of having committed, or intending to commit, an offence. (124) Two days later there was 'talk of the jails being crammed with prisoners and army vehicles being used to take some of them to Matatiele, Kokstad and even Maritzburg. (125) In January 1961 it was officially announced that 4 769 Africans, 2 whites and 2 of 'other races' had been arrested. (126)

Assuming (i) Real Incomes were approximately 5 per cent greater than in 1968 (Johann MAREE in "The Underutilization of Labour in the Ciskei and Transkei" unpublished seminar paper presented for discussion at the Institute of African Studies, 4 June 1973, p.13 gives this figure as R20,73 at 1968 prices).

(ii) 2 per cent p.a. increase in prices of the period 1960-1968.

(iii) an average of six people per family.

(iv) 70 per cent of migrants' wages were remitted to the reserve.

(v) 30 per cent of the resident population of Bizana was outside the district at the time.

(vi) slightly over half the total income per family was in cash.

(vii) all Mpondo money was spent at traders except for taxes. This would give a very conservative estimate of 36 000 to 40 000 Mpondo directly affected by the boycott.

117. Sunday Times 6 Nov. 1960 p. 12 cols. 1-3

118. Evening Post 8 Nov. 1960 p.3 cols. 4.

The effect on the Mpondo revolt was the complete destruction of all unofficial activity. The boycott of Bizana continued until 5 January, but the onslaught of police activity and army activity was so overwhelming that the movement ground to a standstill.

By the end of February 1961 the Rand Daily Mail reported:

'In the Lusikisiki district hundreds of tribesmen had pledged their support of Chief Botha Sigcau. Practically all able-bodied men in six locations had sought the Paramount Chief's pardon.' (127)

This more than any other humiliation symbolized the collapse of resistance.

Though this paper is in many ways incomplete, it does I hope, throw into relief some much neglected aspects of South African history. The Mpondo revolt is remarkable both for its duration and its sytemic orientation. During the nine months of its activities the Hill demonstrated an ability to manipulate local elites effectively. Further, it succeeded in defining a context for political conflict that rendered ineffectual the subtleties of rural domination. The heightened level of Mpondo political consciousness has a significance that extends far beyond the revolt itself, (and this paper). It is no coincidence, for example, that the first party formed to contest the 1963 election in the Transkei was the Eastern Pondoland Peoples Party. Further it is not surprising that despite Government harrassment this party captured seven of eight possible seats in the area.

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119 Sunday Times 27 Nov. 1960. p.1, col.10

120. The orders were not served on them until May 1962, as they were sentenced to 18 months in jail in the interim period. Natal Mercury 3 May 1962. p.1 col.3-4

121. State of Emergency proclaimed in terms of Government Gazette Extraordinary No. 6582, 30 Nov. 1960. Proc. No. R.400 pp.1-8.

122. Sunday Times, 4 Dec. 1960. p.3. cols. 7-9

123. Sunday Express, 4 Dec. 1960 p.1 cols. 1-2

124. Government Gazette No. 6594 Proc. R.413 Regulation 19.

125. Rand Daily Mail 16 Dec. 1960 p.22, col.

126. House of Assembly Debates, Vol. 99, col. 226

127. Rand Daily Mail, 28 Feb. 1961. p.2 col.2-3.