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The effect of influx control on tthe African middle class

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their professional affiliations enjoyed automatic exemption from the operation of influx control but, in addition to this category, there was room for the non-exempted new middle class to manipulate the system. Thus while the law in theory was the same for all people from the rural areas except for exempted professionals, the new middle class was so economically placed that it could more easily circumvent the law than the working class, rural or urban.

The old middle class did not enjoy the same advantages as the new middle class when it came to circumvention of the law. In their case direct contravention of the law was necessary in most cases before they could gain access to housing and business opportunities in the urban areas. In many cases the breaking of the influx control regulations involved much more than simply the geographical movement of a person from the rural to the urban area: it meant breaking other laws regulating employment, self-employment and accommodation. What emerged in the findings was the existence of structures of corruption in the network of regulations and bureaucratic practices surrounding the attempts to control migration. Another interesting finding concerns the number of old middle class interviewees who originally came to the urban areas as migrant workers but who found ways of establishing themselves illegally as entrepreneurs, thus assuming a different class position. Among the new middle class I also found examples of people using their educational base to establish themselves in business ventures.

2. The road to town

The procedure to be followed by any person except exempted people from the rural areas seeking to migrate to the urban area was the same. This procedure has been discussed in chapter 4.

My findings indicate that there are two groups of the old middle class in the urban areas; one group consists of people who were already established as part of the old middle class in terms of possessing capital while still in the rural areas. The other group consists of people who came to the urban areas as migrant labour and who accumulated capital and business knowhow while employed in the urban areas.

In the case of those who already possessed capital in the rural area the process of self-recruitment was direct and involved breaking of the laws in order to acquire business licences, premises and accommodation.

Those who originally came as migrant labourers began the road to the urban areas within the legal procedures but once in town saw opportunities which induced them to break the laws. However before one was in a position to use these opportunities one would have needed to achieve some capital, expertise and contacts. This altered position may be seen as a shift in class position.

In the case of the new middle class not exempted from influx control their recruitment involved direct contact between them as potential employees and employers, usually companies. Sometimes the approach was made to them at university and sometimes they would apply for jobs independently and directly to companies. Such a strategy did not involve breaking the law, merely finding a way around it. Where the law was bent was in their preferential access to accommodation either in the townships or in the prescribed areas where in fact they were contravening the Group Areas Act.

Where the old middle class had to resort to corruption and bribery of officials, etc, in order to gain business licences, etc, the new middle class had the weight of capital behind it in smoothing their dealings with bureaucrats.

3. Housing

One of the two preconditions to be met before one might migrate to the urban area was access to accommodation. Given the information provided in Chapter 3 about the backlog in the provision of housing, especially low cost housing, the disadvantages of the working class, urban or rural, are clear. In the case of the middle class three distinct patterns emerge. The exempted new middle class qualified automatically for housing and often were in

receipt of housing subsidies: in any case because of their relatively high incomes they were able to afford middle class housing whether in the townships or in the prescribed areas. What emerges from their accounts is that they were often treated preferentially which is an indication of the structure of corruption referred to earlier. The non-exempted new middle class employed by companies often had company accommodation because they did not qualify to rent or own houses in the townships. The acquisition of Section 10(1)(d) only allowed them to sublet accommodation in the townships. However, because of their incomes, and because of their occupational status, such people often live in the prescribed areas, such as flats in town or in houses in the suburbs where influx control was not applicable but the Group Areas Act did apply. It is clear that steps were taken to contravene the operation of this legislation, for example by using nominees or close corporations to lease or buy accommodation.

The third group with its distinct patterns in housing is the self-employed old middle class. There are difference in this class dependent on the level of wealth. These people, as with non-exempted new middle class, do not qualify to own or rent accommodation in the townships. They are obliged to sublet accommodation in the townships or, as in the case of the new middle class, to rent flats in the prescribed areas. They differ from the new middle class in that they do not have the influence of capital to

assist in getting exemptions or in acquiring Section 10(1) (a) (b) or (c) rights. Thus they remain illegally accommodated where vast numbers of the new middle class have been able to regularise their position if not to have acquired legal access to housing.

Finally the research made me sensitive to certain more covert issues that perhaps could warrant further research.

The first issue is that when people feel that they are being subjected to unfair and unjust laws they are likely to resort to illegal and subversive strategies to enable them to pursue their interests. Similarities can be seen between the middle class and its use of economic strategies to resist the restrictions that legally set out to prevent them from pursuing an ordinary course of life, and the underground political strategies pursued by the liberation movements (led predominantly by members of the middle class) in order to resist the restrictions imposed by laws that set out to prevent them from practising and lobbying for political, economic and social change in South Africa. Both political and economic activities opposing the laws seemed to emerge more strongly during the reform period and the possibility of a relationship between these two areas of action would be an interesting theme to follow. It has been suggested(5) that it is clearly in the interests of both the state and capital to promote and co-opt the black middle class. What is of interest to me is the involvement of the middle class in resistance politics and their leadership role in a broad

spectrum of economic, political and social organisations affiliated with a wide range of political sentiments.

The second issue is the emergence of a differentiated life style based on economic criteria for the working and middle classes in the urban areas. The middle class aspire to and can afford comfortable houses, ownership of cars above the standard of the usual township "jalopy", better education for their children achieved by sending them to multi-racial or independent schools (which is also a way of ensuring the perpetuation of their class privilege), leisure activities that remove them from the township culture of soccer and put them into contact with their white counterparts (for example playing golf and travelling overseas on holiday).

An interesting observation is that this differentiation has not apparently alienated the working class from the middle class: the working class continue to look to some of the middle class for leadership and guidance.

As apartheid erodes, class cleavages seem to be emerging as the new means of structuring the divisions of South African society. Influx control has provided one indicator of the move away from racial, geographical and ethnic divisions and the substitution of economic criteria as dominant in determining the patterns of development in this society. The abolition of the laws governing influx control has allowed this trend to become even more apparent.

Finally, it must be reiterated that the 1948 Nationalist government ushered in severe political restrictions on the african middle clas. This state polity to suppress both the old and the new african middle class in the 1950's and 60's, was to be reversed during the period of reform in the 1970's. Though these marked a turning point in state policy to promote the african middle class this class still experiences problems in its growth. Some of these problems will be discussed briefly hereafter.

1. <u>CONTINUING POLITICAL SUPPRESSION OF THE AFRICAN MIDDLE CLASS DURING THE 1950'S AND 60'S UNTIL THE REFORM PERIOD IN THE SECOND HALF OF 1970'S</u>

The accession to power by the Nationalist Party in 1948 brought a host of severe legal restrictions to bear on the african middle class.

(a) <u>The Traditional African Middle Class</u>

(i) The traditional african middle class were legally prevented from entering the main economic stream in South Africa: for instance they could not own mines, manufacturing industries, banks, etc.

(ii) They could only engage in small scale business activities. These were mainly traiding operations.

(iii) The business enterprises were limited to one per businessman and there were restrictions imposed on the growth and scope of the venture (e.g. only basic necessities could be sold; there were limits to the size of the store).

(iv) Black businessmen were confined to operating their small businesses in the black residential areas in the townships and homelands.

(v) In the urban area, because they were not allowed to own property, black businessmen were at a disadvantage in raising credit loans from financial institutions.

(vi) Black businessmen had to fulfil requirements of influx control in order to acquire business licences in the urban area.

(vii) Businessmen were not allowed to employ any wage earning workers whether managerial or menial.

(viii) They were not allowed to be assisted by members of family (wives and other dependants).

These are some of the main legal measures that were designed to suppress the growth of the traditional african middle class in order to promote and protect white business. The repression of the traditional

african middle class has been detailed under discussion in chapter 3 section 1.

(b) <u>The New African Middle Class</u>

(i) The National Party adopted the strategy of using education as an ideological mechanism to suppress the new african middle class. Bantu Education as discussed in instrument of social control designed to make Africans less competitive in the labour market render the ideology of white supremacy unchallengeable.

(ii) The new african middle class was suppressed in the labour market in terms of the policy of job reservation. Africans were not allowed to occupy jobs above a certain rank. For example they were not allowed to be managers and supervisors.

(iii) Africans were not allowed to occupy certain professions. They could not practice as chattered accountants, engineers, pilots, etc.

The suppression of the new african middle class is discussed in chapter 4 section 1.

2. THE REFORM PERIOD AND THE LIFTING OF LEGAL RESTRICTIONS ON THE AFRICAN MIDDLE CLASS BOTH OLD AND NEW

The reform period brought about the lifting of legal restrictions on the african middle class. The reform period has already been discussed under chapter 3 section 2.

It must however be underlined that though it was state policy to promote the african middle class during the reform period, there were still problems that the african middle class faced which retarded the process of its growth. For an example, it still did not have franchise rights and therefore could not and cannot use the main political arena for the promotion of its interests.

(a) The Traditional African Middle Class

(i) Though many restrictions have been abolished, one of the main business barrier that confronts the black businessman is to compete against white capital which has enjoyed state protection for a long period. For example white businesses like OK, Checkers, Pick-'n-Pay sells more cheaply than retailing stores in the townships because as nation wide businesses they have the advantage of buying from manufacturers and wholesalers in bulk and therefore are able to negotiate discount and credit which enables them to sell more cheaply.

(ii) Monopoly capital which is white dominated in the economic sectors such as mining industries, manufacturing industry and commerce will be very difficult for african middle class to break into and dominate.

(b) <u>The New African Middle Class</u>

(i) Bantu Education remains one of the main problems towards the growth of the new african middle class. Inadequate allocation of education resources coupled with the educational crisis, are major problems in this area.

(ii) Though job reservation has been abolished, there is still informal apartheid which discriminates against the new african middle class in industry.

(iii) Lack of experience due to previous deprivations prevents the new african middle class from moving into high occupational categories in the economy.

It remains to be seen whether the african middle class has indeed arrived too late to enter into the main economic stream.

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SECTION E

Corporations and companies consulted on a wide variety of issues, such as employment policy and accommodation

1. Anglo American Corporation of South Africa Limited.

2. Anglo-Vaal Limited.

3. British Petroleum (Pty) Ltd.

4. IBM - International Business Machines (Pty) Ltd later
   ISM - International Service Machines (Pty) Ltd.

5. Johnson and Johnsons (edms) BPK.

6. South African Permanent Building Society.

7. Standard Bank of South Africa Ltd.

8. Shell South Africa (Pty) Ltd.

SECTION F

Case histories, personal interviews

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2. Lefakane - 1989 and telephone interview 1990.

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(b) Star

17-05-1988; 18-05-1988; 18-01-1989 and 15-02-1989.

2. Corruption: housing and business sites.

(a) Sowetan

07-10-1988; 10-01-1989; 13-02-1989; 14-02-1989; 20-04-1989; 21-04-1989; 28-04-1989; 27-09-1989; 07-11-1989 and 23-11-1989.

(b) Star

05-01-1989; 21-02-1989; 25-04-1989; 26-04-1989; 18-08-1989; 02-10-1989 and 22-10-1989.

(c) City Press

23-03-1989; 15-03-1989; 18-05-1989; 28-05-1989; 03-09-1989; 12-11-1989 and 10-12-1989.

(d) Business Day

15-11-1989 and 29-11-1989.

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(a) African Business

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(b) Rand Daily Mail

06-09-1982; 04-11-1983; 12-04-1984; 19-04-1984 and 26-06-1984.

(c) Sunday Times

08-07-1984.

(d) Business Day

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(e) New Nation

29-10-1987

(d) The Weekly Mail

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III. INTERVIEWS

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SECTION A

Influx control: policy, implementation and abolition

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SECTION C

Corruption (specifically)

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SECTION D

Housing and Business Sites and Income Generation

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3. Eric Mafuna - 1990.

4. Nthato Motlana - 1989.

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SECTION G

General interviews with middle class. Interviews with members of the old african middle class between 1985 and 1990 whose identity is protected by the use of pseudonyms - in all, one hundred and sixty people were interviewed.

Interviews with members of the new african middle class between 1984 and 1990, also largely anonymous - in all, eighty people were interviewed.

Questionnaire administered to nurses and followed by telephonic and face-to-face interviews, included where interviews were conducted is the number of interviews given for new african middle class (above).

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Development of black business opportunities and the promotion of the black middle class

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APPENDIX Abbreviations

1. ACTSTOP - Action Stop.

2. Anglo American Corporation of South Africa Limited.

3. Anglo-Vaal Limited.

4. ANC - African National Congress

5. ASSA - Association for Sociology of South Africa.

6. AZASM - Azanian Student Movement.

7. BP - British Petroleum (Pty) Ltd.

8. BLF - Black Management Forum.

9. CBD - Central Business Development.

10. COSAS - Congress of South African Students.

11. COSATU -Congress of South African Trade Unions.

12. EEC -European Economic Community.

13. IBM - International Business Machines.
    ISM - International Service Machines.

14. Johnson and Johnson (edms) BPK.

15. MDM - Mass Democratic Movement.

16. MK - Umkhonto-We-Sizwe.

17. NACTU - National Congress of Trade Unions.

18. NAFCOC - National African Federated Chamber of Commerce.

19. SABTA - South African Black Taxi Association.

20. SACC - South African Council of Churches.

21. SACOS - South African Congress of Sports.

22. South African Permanent Building Society.

23. SBDC - Small Business Development Corporation.

24. SCA - Student Christian Association.

25. Shell South Africa (Pty) Ltd.

26. SOYCO - Soweto Youth Congress.

27. Standard Bank of South Africa (Ltd).

28. UDF - United Democratic Front.

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