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UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND

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THE AFRIKANER BROEDERBOND 1927-1948 : CLASS VANGUARD OF AFRIKANER NATIONALISM *

by

Dan O'Meara

* [I am grateful to Professor T. Dunbar Moodie of the University of the Witwatersrand for generous access to his research material. My understanding of the organisation has benefited from discussions with both Professor Moodie and John Davies of Wisconsin University whose research on Christian National Education involves a close knowledge of the Broederbond. Neither bears any responsibility for possible errors of fact in this paper and both disagree with my interpretation.]

'We repeat the view we expressed a year ago - namely that the Broederbond is an arrogant, self-chosen elite, operating by stealth and intrigue, its early cultural aspirations swamped by its neo-Fascist ideas on race and colour. It is a cancerous growth in the living body of South Africa and as such its influence is deadly.' (1)

'The Bond is a service organisation intended to serve the Afrikaner. Its sphere of operations is the work of the Afrikaner people as a separate historical, Protestant-Christian language and cultural community. The activities with which the Bond occupies itself from time to time are determined by the needs of the Afrikaner people at that historical moment.' (2)

A secret society with the professed aim of the 'promotion of all the interests of the Afrikaner nation', (3) the Afrikaner Broederbond (hereafter the A.B. or Bond) has long been the bogeyman of South African politics. Its operations are attacked as detailed and lurid conspiracies, and defended as the innocent, confidential actions of public-spirited men. In the process, though much authoritative data on the Bond exists, its nature, functions and role have been thoroughly mystified. At the outset it must be stated that the A.B. has exerted a profound influence at all levels of South African politics. This paper attempts the beginnings of a demystification of the Bond's operations and an assessment of its role up till 1948. Given its secret nature, this is necessarily sketchy and schematic. Yet such an assessment requires more than

ideological forms with those of the new capitalism. Yet at the very moment that such accommodations were taking place, the preeminent agrarian formation was both on the verge of collapse and of transformation. Nevertheless, the political accommodation of the large landowners who had previously dominated the social order of the Transvaal was perceived as necessary by the new British colonial regime. This was both because of their continued capacity to resist the new states incursion upon (or neglect of) their interests, and because these landowners were seen as necessary in containing the proletariat emerging from within the white as well as the black peasantry. Although in the past it was usual to assume that this accommodation inhibited the development of capitalism in South Africa, it seems more likely that its effects were limited to determining which of the several paths this development might take.

I

The merchant capitalism which dominated the evolution of the agrarian relations of production in South Africa began in the form of the 17th and 18th century D.E.I.C. This company was intent on extracting commodities, mainly cattle and to a lesser extent cereals and other crops and was not concerned with the circulation of goods. Moreover the indigenous societies from which these goods were to be extracted were unwilling to exchange more than a very limited number of their cattle. In this situation the merchant company extracted commodities by force and below the cost of reproduction in numbers which were beyond the capacity of the societies to reproduce themselves. Because this was self-defeating this company permitted a colonial settlement intended to supplement production.[2]

The size of the market was, however, limited and prices offered by the company were low.[3] The settler households therefore turned in on themselves and only sold as much as was needed to acquire the income for goods which were both socially necessary and could not be produced within the household.[4] Such households often maintained their income by loans which left them deeper in debt.[5] The company, therefore, found it necessary to provide a limited number of settlers with an incentive to organise the flow of goods for the market. This led to the creation of a class of landowner-merchants. In their turn these merchants presented an additional obstacle to households without privileged access to the market created by the company.[6]

At the same time, a certain level of consumption was socially necessary. This consumption included arms and ammunition because warfare was intrinsically linked with the evolution of the social formation. Equally consumption to maintain certain cultural and material standards which in turn helped link households to society was also necessary. The loss of these cultural and material links led men to be deemed heathen and barbarian and placed outside of those stratum of the society which could be given unimpeded access to arms and ammunition.[7] Impoverishment of this kind was however avoided by the customary device which evolved enabling households without cattle to be

sustained by those with a sufficiency so long as they returned half of the natural increase.[8] This form of indebtedness created its own obligations not the least being to provide military support. 'A little nearer the frontier' a well-known official wrote in 1813, 'the proprietor of a place is mostly obliged to get several other farmers to live with him for mutual protection against the savages and the wild beasts - bywoners, as they are called.'[9]

This need for clients made it necessary for both cheaper and alternative sources of income to be found. This income was to come primarily from hunting and trading with autonomous peoples at a distance. But they too were unwilling to exchange more than a very small number of the sought-after goods or to surrender rights over game and their products. The result was that trading and hunting were both infused with violence and the distinction on the one hand between trading and hunting expeditions, and on the other, between the warband, (the commando) was primarily one of function.[10] This violence, when it was successful, produced not only booty or goods exchanged below their value, but captives. Captives, most often women and children, played an important part in the productive capacity of the settler (Boer) households and were expected to provide for their own reproduction. In the last quarter of the 18th century the capacity of settler households to generate a surplus declined significantly as the increase in stock - which made their disposal even more difficult - combined the diminution of ivory and other game products. This probably resulted in a more brutal attempt to force labour from captives than was the case at any other time.[11]

The capacity to organise violence was ultimately determined by the size of a patron's following and leadership went to those with economic pre-eminence. Foremost among these leaders were the merchant butchers of Cape Town whose interests were linked to the distant frontier zones and who therefore played a crucial military as well as economic and political role in maintaining the settler presence at the colonies periphery.[12] These leaders found themselves threatened in the early 19th century by the British annexation which brought in its train new mercantile groups and ended existing mercantile monopolies. It also led to a partial introduction of new relationships of production and greatly undermined the ability of Boer leaders to organise autonomous violence. These substantial alterations in their social environment were combined with an increasing inability of the settlers on the periphery to sell their stock at any price.[13] At the same time a series of severe droughts in the first three decades of the 19th century replaced the cycle of above average rainfall of the last quarter of the 18th century.[14] The combination of all these factors led some Boer leaders to attempt to withdraw from British political and economic dominance in the hope that they might reconstitute their social organisation free of those forces which appeared to be undermining their capacity to survive.

In reconstituting their social structures in the Transvaal, Boer leaders and their following set out to re-establish their previously existing systems of appropriation and production. At the same time they sought to establish a monopoly over trade, land and violence in the territories to which they laid claim. It very soon became apparent that specialised trading was beyond the resources of most Boer settlers. This was in spite of the widespread attempts of Boer notables, in their dual capacity as officials of the state and as traders, to use their powers to limit entry to the market to members of their own communities.[15] In spite of the harassment suffered by the early British and other foreign traders, the credit facilities given them by the coastal merchant houses, (and which were not available to Boer traders), meant that they were able to establish themselves at the expense of their local rivals. Once established, a familiar process was set in motion. 'Farmers were really forced to pay the firms with which they dealt in wool and hides which were then forwarded to the coastal merchants who had supplied these firms. Farmers bought on credit and paid in produce from time to time. They bought at extortionate prices and sold their produce at the dealers own figure because their produce was all they possessed with which to settle their liabilities.'[16]

The Boer notables might try to break out of this cycle by printing money but this made them more and not less vulnerable particularly as the only backing for their currency was land. Both the debts of the state and private individuals resulted in large tracts of land falling into the hands of absentee merchant landlords.[17] The resolve to exclude foreigners from owning land had, therefore, also failed and this was to have extremely important consequences for determining the way in which the surplus was to be extracted from the African population who were incorporated in this newly created settler enclave. In many respects it can be argued that the Afrikaner settlers were worse off in the Transvaal because the merchant capital which dominated their economic lives had less interest in their survival than the merchants of the earlier Dutch period.

Violence, therefore, remained the Boer notables' greatest asset, though their state was never to monopolise it at any time in the course of its entire history. Violence was essential if appropriations from other societies - in the form of captives, tribute or booty - were to be made. There was a circularity in their activities. The migrations of the Boer communities had been made necessary because such appropriations were becoming increasingly difficult. But the migrations had led to the loss of clients and the impoverishment of followers and therefore these appropriations became doubly necessary for their continued survival.

The relative importance of different forms of appropriation would have to be measured against the different needs of the Boer communities at different stages of their colonisation of the interior. The carrying-off of crops was of greatest importance while the migrations were still taking place, or while the Boer colonists remained collected together as little more than pastoral warbands. These collectivities were also well placed to engage in cattle raiding.[18] The exaction of tribute acquired greater significance as the settlers began to disperse although the ability to call on the armed band remained essential to this form of appropriation. 'The [...] towns already exhausted of young men who had gone to herd, were called upon to furnish 10, 20, 30 or 40 men as the case required. These were sent by the Veld Cornets and other officials hither and thither to any man who had work to be done ... At Rustenburg we saw 25 women pass with their corn-sacks for food on their heads to gather the Veld Cornets corn. Three days after they returned.'[19]

The effect of being sent hither and thither must have been to undermine the capacity of the tributary society to reproduce itself. This relationship could not remain stable and vassal households must either come to accept the obligations of labour for particular households in return for its protection or have escaped from the reaches of the Boer communities. For a household to attempt to put itself beyond Boer exactions could prove disastrous and provide the occasion for the commando to be used to seize cattle and then to compel those so impoverished into full time service with Boer households.[20] The alternative would be for families to accept the protection of individual Boer households. This course was encouraged by those with the most substantial capacity for violence since they afforded not only the most protection, but generally being the largest landowners, were most likely to provide dependants with the most substantial access to grazing and arable land. Presumably the significant difference between those who surrendered to the inevitable, and those who arrived as prisoners-of-war, devoid of property - often of family - was that the former maintained control over some part of what they produced. In time this control over some of their surplus product might give them new strength with which to renegotiate their relationship with their landlords.

This suggests a significant difference between these two subordinate groups. Nevertheless, there is a view which would have us describe them all as dependents, all as clients. It may be that the 19th century missionary view that they were slaves is unacceptable if by that we mean that a slave mode of production existed. Yet for the process by which this particular colonial system of exploitation was formed and reformed, notions of clientage and dependence provide a less than satisfactory vantage point from which to view the relationship which was established between captive and the household to which he or she was ultimately assigned. Captives became part of Boer households, either as prisoners-of-war, or as the result of

being exchanged or sold into such households. In the 1840s they were most likely to have been Boer prisoners-of-war, distributed by the commando. By the 1850s they were likely to have been sold by Boer traders, who might have received them from Swazi notables in return for political favours. By the 1860s Swazi-Boer transactions were straightforward commercial arrangements. Such transactions, it is well known, were contrary to the constitutions of the Boer republics.[20] But more significant than the illegality of these transactions was the acknowledgement which these constitutions made that Boer society included African children detached from their families.[21] This formal acknowledgement was, of course, forced upon the Boer settlements by a British colonial administration mostly concerned to have a formula which would serve both to placate anti-slavery pressure groups in Britain, and to provide legal grounds for intervening in their affairs, should they choose to do so.[22] It therefore denied the Boer states that legal code which is generally necessary for a slave mode of production. It did not, on the other hand, prevent captives from being inherited.[23] It would, perhaps, be tempting to portray the social structures which emerged as a stalled slavery created by the specific conditions of 19th century merchant capitalism. But in the end we must recognise that slavery was only one of several labour systems to be found in the emigrant societies. It was, however, to be seen with related forms of appropriation - the taking of booty and tribute. In addition we should remember that from the 1850s members of African societies periodically presented themselves for wage labour.

Captive children - and young women - were in theory under the supervision of the state. They had to be registered - ingeboek - by an official, and they were known as inbookselings rather than apprentices of the contemporary English documentation.[24] That most inbookselings were children stemmed from the fact that they presented little or no threat to the security of the household, found it more difficult than adults to escape when first secured by the household, and it became progressively more difficult to return to their place of origin as they grew older. All this added up to their domestication.[25] Their captivity or inboeking was, according to the law, for a limited period of time. Women were to be released at the age of 21, men at the age of 25.[26] But there were no mechanisms for setting captives free or for informing them that their captivity was over.[27] Moreover, as an added precaution, the estimate of the inbookseling's age at his registration was likely to be much below his apparent age in order to ensure additional years of service in the unlikely event of the apprentice claiming to have served his time. 'The boy is evidently above fifteen years of age' a British official noted of an apprentice in Republican Natal, 'and speaks Dutch remarkably well. By underrating his age, they are, of course, enabled to retain his compulsory service much longer.'[28] But in addition to having no method for setting the inboekseling free, the laws of the Boer state denied them the right to be masterless. Africans who could not claim the protection of a chief were obliged to accept whatever service was imposed upon them.[29]

As we have already noted there was a trade in captives and within Boer society there were specialised dealers.[30] For the most part the sale of inboekselings was illegal but the law (not to mention its administration) was sufficiently imprecise to make its evasion commonplace. Evasion was assisted by the distinction being made between veruilen which was illegal, and inruilen which was not. Exchange for profit (veruilen) was illegal, but if no more than reimbursement for the keep of the captive was asked this was defined as inruilen and permitted.[31] It seems unlikely that the different activities could always be distinguished. Moreover, when a young woman reached marriageable age it was necessary for permission to be given before she could be married and her suitor had to pay for her either in cash or cattle, or by providing labour.[32]

If captives could be obtained by some form of barter the institutions of captivity were nevertheless surrounded by laws which had the effect of limiting the number of captives within the society as a whole. Captives could only be taken by official commandos and hunting and trading bands were prohibited from doing so though again the law was as likely as not evaded. Nevertheless it was necessary to attempt to inhibit these unsanctioned raids in order to prevent freebooting expeditions provoking either counter raids or obstructions to legitimate trade and hunting. While weak chiefdoms or those at a great distance might be attacked for captives, those who could retaliate or provide important allies had to be treated with care.[33]

Since the number of captives, as well as the age of those taken, was limited by considerations of both internal and external security, their distribution was of some importance. There is evidence to show that the notables of the Boer society, already men of substance, were likely to receive a disproportionate share of captives. Andries Pretorius, leader of the Voortrekker commando, which had defeated Dingane in 1838, had taken eight orphans for himself (but only registered them in his name three years later), even though this early commando had agreed that, in order that the children should be shared equally between the commando and other members of the community, no more than two children should be given to each emigrant. One commando of Hendrik Potgieter's returned with 'little kaffirs as part of its booty'. 'Of these last' Thomas Baines was told, 'Potgieter has, according to Andries, fifteen, and a Mr. Devenae not less than ten ... All who have been on commando have some ...'. The household of Martinus Wessels Pretorius acquired numbers of inboekselings in 1854. Pretorius was most certainly engaged in the trading of captives in the 1860s. The German missionary, Albert Nachtigal, whose evidence confirms these acquisitions of the younger Pretorius, also reported that the Lydenburg landdrost, H.T. Burhman, had registered 16 children in his own name. His successor as landdrost, C. Potgieter, registered children under his own name on at least three different occasions. One of the most persistent claims made for the system was that the children were only given to 'respectable men'.[34]

For those who would argue that the inboekselings were not slaves, the most telling argument is to be found in their life cycle. As adults, when they had established their own families they became tenants of the dominant household, obliged to provide labour, generally that of their own children, for their tenancies. Yet it can be argued that this was no more than a form of manumission which is an essential mechanism of social control and which all slave-owning societies had to be able to offer. Most slave-owning societies had to replenish their slave population from one generation to another. For the relatively weak households of Boer society the transformation of inboekselings into clients - the so-called Oorlams kaffirs - offered the best form of security. Although Oorlam families provided labour the need to replenish their households with new captives was therefore necessary. The capacity of Boer society (and of its major trading partners, the Swazi) to acquire captives was not consistent. By the 1870s and before the British annexation of 1877, the supply of captives had diminished significantly as African chiefdoms recuperated from their earlier position of weakness. The parlous financial and military state of Boer society in the years immediately before British intervention, which was probably brought about by the decline of the ivory trade, can only have been aggravated by the decreasing ability to obtain captives. Only after the British annexation had brought with it the defeat of the major enemies of the republic - the Zulu and the Pedi - and then reformed the administrative capacity of the S.A.R. was it able to engage on large scale excursions which resulted in large numbers of captives - probably more than ever before - being taken. But this is to anticipate later events.

II

If child captives were preferred because their age made escape difficult, this is not to claim that no inboekseling ever made such an escape. In the 1850s and 1860s there was a continuous stream of run-aways.[35] But escape from Boer society did not mean that they were able to extract themselves from the new economic order or that they altered their subordinate position. Walter Inglis who could rejoice at the escape of a captive could nevertheless report, 'She is still in our service'.[36] Sometimes escape from a Boer household meant becoming an unwilling member of an African household. This seems to have been the fate of the apprentice Mozane, son of one of Dinganes' subordinate chiefs, Phoko, who escaped from the household of Hermanus Steyn in about 1852. Mozane or Valentyn as he was known to the Steyn household found that once he escaped he was hardly a free agent. 'He did not wish to go to his still living father Phobo' he later told the missionary - Nachtigal, 'as he had become used to the good life with his master and did not wish to return to the uncivilised kaffirs.'[37]

Eventually he reached a group of 'Maferi kaffirs' but they provided no haven and he seems to have been held captive once again. Even before he reached the Maferi, Valentyn regretted his action. Since he had to leave his wife this was understandable, but his new insecurity led him to recall Hermanus Steyn - with whom he had grown up - with some fondness. When, therefore, he found himself on a trading expedition to Mosheshwe he took advantage of a group of passing Boers and attached himself to their expedition and eventually returned to the household in which he had been raised. As Marc Bloch observed of medieval Europe, it was less difficult to accept a master than to live in fear of finding oneself without a defender.[38] Eventually Valentyn and his wife, Lys, having 'come to God' decided that their children should be educated. To achieve this end they proposed to go to Natal because the Boers would not educate black children - but before they set out they discovered that Nachtigal had recently established a mission school and in January 1867 they moved on to the mission farm and enrolled their two eldest children.[39]

For those who did not break away from the Boer household, there was as we have already noted, the prospect of the use of land for their own production. Captive children, like other children of the household, had been given a heifer when they first entered the household and this with its increase meant that they were able to provide for the families which they made.[40] In some respects captives became perpetual cadet members of the dominant household. 'He is my child' Andreas Pretorius had said of his inboekseling which he acknowledged buying for eighty (rix) dollars. For Pretorius corroboration of the nature of the relationship was to be found in the contraband horse and a gun he had given the youth.[41] To the extent that the Boer household prospered so the inboekselings prospered. Tributary households, however, may have had a greater say in determining the size of their surplus product if for no other reason than that the women of these households provided much less labour to the dominant white family. As late as 1893 an Anglican missionary working in the Potchefstroom district could write: 'The Caffre women who live on the farms with Boers are not brought into contact with the Boers or their womenfolk, and so they do not learn to speak Dutch, or to do white women's work, such as sewing and mending'.[42] In addition, the necessary expenditure of the inboekselings was much greater. They often lived in square mud brick houses rather than in thatched huts and 'dressed like Europeans and had food like Europeans, even to the drinking of early morning coffee'. More important their relationship with the dominant household and the tasks they performed were markedly different from those of other African households who now rented land from the white farmer rather than receiving it from a chief.

Valentyn and Lys, when they were about to set off for Natal, bought a wagon and they already possessed a team of oxen. Adults (or just adult men?) had fewer demands made of them by the dominant households. They would it is true have been expected to go on the hunt but for all its hardships this was an event of great conviviality for Boer men as well as the inboekselings. Moreover, some commercial hunting parties were made the sole responsibility of the apprentice. John Aylard, a pro-Boer Irishman observed a class of African farm families who had been 'groot gemaacht' (made big) as a result of being brought up 'from childhood amongst the families whom they now willingly served'. 'Husbands and fathers' Alyard wrote, 'had a bit of land and locations of their own on the farms, and put in their off-time as wagon-drivers, ploughmen and herds.' The women of these families, he wrote, did service in the landlord's house. 'I have gone into the huts of hundreds of families of these "tame" people, and have rarely seen one where there was not a gun and ammunition ready to be used, willingly and faithfully, for the defence of the flocks and herds of the maligned Boer. These folk, or "maacht volk" (sic) as they were usually called, were perfectly free to come and go.'[43] It was not simply that the Oorlams Kaffer defended the flocks against wild animals and rustlers, but ultimately they acted as armed supervisors, scrutinising the herding activities of migrant workers who were periodically employed and who could not be relied upon.[44] As important they served in a variety of capacities on commandos and unlike Africans in households which survived continuously through the Boer occupation of their territory, they played a part in Boer resistance during the South African War of 1899-1902. While the Oorlams Kaffers sustained Boer guerillas in the field, other African tenants, the plakkers or squatters, resisted the Boer commandos and helped limit their capacity for resistance by driving off their cattle and denying access to foodstuffs and to the cover which their regions provided.[45]

III

By the early 1870s, at much the same time that African chiefdoms reasserted themselves, and as the flow of captives and ivory declined, a growth of new markets took place. Potentially the households of the western Transvaal could benefit from the Griqualand West diamond fields, and the goldfields of Pilgrims Rest, Lydenburg and Barberton offered similar opportunities to the households of the eastern Transvaal. These markets required increasing amounts of foodstuff, both arable as well as pastoral production. But for an increase in arable production there would have to be a change in the kind of labour which was set to work. Child labour, though it continued to be of value in herding cattle and domestic work, could not be used in the more arduous tasks of agriculture. There

had, of course, always been supplementary sources of labour available for some seasonal activities and we have already pointed to the existence of tribute as well as migrant labour. In addition men and women from autonomous African societies had come to do such tasks as build dams, thatch roofs, dig irrigation ditches in addition to weeding and harvesting crops. Mrs. Hecford was told in 1877 that it was possible to get labour for 1/6d a day in the Magaliesberg area. Her own experience, however, suggests that adult male labour was more expensive. She had been asked 2/- a day plus three meat meals but this may have been both because the element of immediate coercion was absent in her negotiations and that times were unsettled politically. Women employed in harvesting were paid less.

> 'Parties of Kaffir girls' she wrote, 'used to come from a different kraals, some thirty miles distant, to pull the fruit and spread it on things made of wood and reeds, called stellsells, that looked like stretchers. Each girl would bring a large conical shaped basket on her head; into this she would put the fruit, and she expected to be allowed to fill it once for her own benefit as payment.'[46]

If the new mining districts created a potential market for agricultural products it also created an actual market for labour. The seasonal labour sent out from the independent chiefdoms - and as we shall see from the mission stations - now made its way to the mining camps where wages were not only higher but where that most important of commodities, ammunition and rifles, were to be purchased.[47] Unable to compete with the labour market Boer households had to find alternative ways of obtaining labour. The most common alternative had always been to extend the area in which coercion could be used to set labour to work. This extension must come either by an increasing hold over new territory or by extending the sway of individual households by increasing rent or tribute from groups already falling within their orbit. But as we have already suggested the chiefdoms were regaining lost strength, and the same was probably true for individual households caught by the earlier tributary relationship. Where these relationships had been transformed into tenancies with an obligation to provide labour, the new market conditions of the 1870s were likely to impose strains upon such relationships. Thus at one and the same time that there was a need to increase the amount of labour available, there was a continuing need to defend and maintain the existing writ of the Boer household and there was, therefore, an ebb and flow of political-cum-economic power.

Republican law may have forbidden Boer households from establishing themselves in the vicinity of African homesteads, but the breach of such law was probably commonplace.[48] A process of encroachment by degrees then followed. To begin with permission for seasonal grazing was obtained. Continuous occupation was then construed as the granting of ownership and this was then enforced by the armed support of mobile neighbours. They

in turn would be given the support of the state by the involvement of the most important neighbour, the veldkornet.[49] The Boer squatter turned landlord then used such power as he could call upon to force neighbouring African households to provide labour or face the prospect of being forced off the land. Men and boys might be given a small cash payment when commandeered for harvesting, but women, who could be ordered to weed or 'scoffle' were given a basket of peaches when fruit was ripe but nothing at other times. Since these families continued to work their own land conflict was likely, particularly if the landlord wanted the tenant's services at the same moment that the tenant wished to work his own land. On one such occasion a Boer squatter, called 'Do'Kruger (possibly Doss Kruger, Paul Kruger's brother), called on his new-found 'tenants' to allow irrigation water to be channelled on to his land, but he complained the kaffirs persisted in spending their time letting it on theirs. Kruger having decided to 'make an example' of one or other of these tenants called his Boer neighbours together and then rode to the African homesteads. Only one of the adult tenants responded to the arrival of this Boer force and he was ordered to channel irrigation water on to Kruger's land. Then we are told:

> 'The Kaffir replied that he would do so after he had watered his own ... Upon this the Boers leapt off their horses and made a rush for the hut, forced their way in, overturning a small child, and seized the man who was particularly obnoxious to them; but just as Do entered the house a man of the name of Manell hit him over the head with a stick with a heavy knob at the end ...'
>
> In this way Do Kruger met an untimely end.[50]

This incident took place in the western Transvaal just before the British annexation in 1877 and it was probably unusual only in its leading to the death of the landlord. Elsewhere at this time, there are reports of chiefdoms reasserting themselves and ordering farmers to leave land which they were now reclaiming as their own. From the Harts River area in the west, Lydenberg in the east and the Zoutansberg in the north there are reports of people seizing land occupied by Boers and ploughing and sowing on them themselves. President Thomas Burgers complained that he was asked to release Boer taxpayers from their obligations because they had been driven off their farms by the surrounding Africans. To this he might have added that on the fringes of Boer society where its writ did not run, some Boer households retained their land only by paying tribute to the local chiefs. 'The Boers themselves live in the district on sufferance' a missionary in the Northern Transvaal had written, 'Instead of the Kaffirs paying taxes, the farmers pay blackmail to them.' A similar process had been observed by Sir Garnet Wolsey when he wrote 'now that the Native possesses a gun as well as Meinheer, the latter being no

longer able to shoot him down with impunity, he is even beginning to recognise a master in the blackman. This is shown by the number of Boers who in recent years have been paying taxes to Native Chiefs in consideration of being protected by them'. In several districts the Government was powerless to help those who gave it their allegiance and when they complained to Pretoria of stock thefts they were told to seek the good offices of the local chief.[51]

The British annexation of the Transvaal probably halted this process and left the central state stronger than it had ever been. It acquired a new capacity to raise taxes which gave it a military capability which it had previously lacked. At the same time Britain's intervention in Southern Africa also led to the defeat of the Zulu and Pedi, both of whom had constrained and threatened the S.A. republic throughout its existence.[52] Freed of these two major enemies the Boers could successfully embark upon a series of major campaigns - against the Mapoch in 1883, the Malaboch in 1894 and the Venda in 1898 - which enabled the South African Republic to claim and reclaim new land and dependent labour. But military victory and the capacity to set defeated people to work are substantially different processes. This is most effectively demonstrated in the case of the Mapoch people. The Mapoch who had defeated the Boers in the 1850s were again drawn into a war with the republic because of its new-found administrative zeal. Intent on establishing the boundaries of the Mapoch chiefdom, the Native Location Commission had surveyed their land. The subordinate status which this implied was rejected by the Mapoch who destroyed the beacons and refused to accept Boer tax collectors. In addition they would not give up a fugitive whom the Boers were demanding from them.[53] This led to a war which lasted nine months and cost the republican treasury £30,000. That it could afford so expensive a venture was a measure of the British administration's reforms because prior to its annexation the republic had been all but bankrupt. Having defeated the Mapoch it was decided that the security of the state required that they should forfeit their land and that they be dispersed <u>throughout the state</u>. The Mapoch - between 8,000 and 10,000 women and children - were to be indentured though as a precaution against British intervention it was now official policy that families were not to be broken up. These families were to go to the Boers who had served on the commando and those who had no black families already in their homesteads were to be given preference. The indenture was to be for five years and the family was to receive up to £3.00 a year in food, clothing and cash. The exact amount they were to receive was to be determined by the <u>Native Commissioner</u> of the district.[54] The families were in addition to pay those taxes for which they were deemed to be in arrears as well as a fine of £5.00 for their having rebelled against lawful authority.[55]

These conditions, had they been fulfilled, must certainly have amounted to a form of peonage and the British High Commissioner suggested that the indenture be limited to one year. The advice of his subordinate in the Transvaal was that there was no need to intervene since it was unlikely that any indenture would last longer than twelve months. Within weeks he was reporting cases of desertion coupled with an inability on the part of the state to prevent these desertions. There seems to have been a general resignation to the fact that the state possessed no means to follow up and recover runaways. If they were reported at all it was because the Boers to whom they had been indentured had made themselves responsible for the collecting of taxes and fines and were now making sure that they rid themselves of the responsibility.[56] The Mapoch case was not, however, exceptional. In 1898 the Gold Fields News reported that families were being rounded up by the notorious Native Commissioner for Lydenburg, Abel Erasmus. The Gold Fields News drew on the report of an African informant named Gobela who claimed that he and his three wives and seven children had been rounded up after their homestead had been destroyed and their poultry killed and their grain burnt. Together with other families they had been sent to a farm near Machadadorp from where they had been divided among local farmers. 'I went with my family to one Flack, a Boer living at the head of the Crocodile Valley. He paid us no wages during the two and a half months that we worked for him. Then we ran away, and it is three and a half months since then.'[57]

The Mapoch saga had, however, a more dramatic conclusion. Another attempt to indenture Mapoch prisoners-of-war was made and this turned out to be more successful. Even so the Standard and Diggers News carried this startling paragraph in March 1892:

> 'The continued disappearance of the Mapoch Kaffirs who were apprenticed out three years ago after the war is causing grave fears in government circles. The Superintendent of Natives says that never in the course of his whole life has he come across a case so remarkable. Thousands of Kaffirs have disappeared from service within the last two months, and although he has given urgent instructions to all field cornets and commissioners to find out where the natives go, no trace has been discovered of them. Native spies are being employed all over the country, but all traces of the vanishing Kaffirs are lost.'[58]

There was, of course, nothing mysterious about 'vanishing Kaffirs'. As dispossessed peasants the Mapoch, and others like them, would seek to escape from a service which they entered unwillingly. Unlike the captives of earlier decades, the return to a pre-conquest economy was not necessarily an exchange of one dependent relationship for another of identical dimensions. The collective resources of a family would sustain them and give them greater resources in a dependent relationship. On the other hand the effects of conquest, though they might be altered, were virtually impossible to reverse, particularly as the chiefdoms were, by the end of

the 19th century, suffering from a shortage of land.[59] The alternative at this time was to find a new landlord, who would offer a different relationship which entailed more than different treatment.

There were three different white landowning groups in the Transvaal, each deriving their claim - though in different degrees - for their property from the state of the South African Republic. Accordingly the expropriations of the peasants' surplus product differed from one group to another. The three different landowners were the Boer households, the land companies and the missionary societies. Boer households did not reproduce a single relationship for the appropriation of the peasants' surplus product because Boer society was itself stratified. Those with the large landholdings set peasants to work in a way which differed from those with a limited amount of land. (By the 1880s Boer society included in addition to peasants with tenant holdings an increasing number of Afrikaners without access to land.) The strategy employed by large landowners was to accommodate as large a number of tenants as was possible. One clear purpose in accumulating large landholdings was to limit the direct demands which were made on those who were given access to land. Some members of a peasant household might have to work for their landlord but, we are told, the work was not 'oppressive'. 'For this ploughing, sowing and harvesting, the chief labour, they have each lands assigned them sufficient to support their families in their simple wants, and abundance of time for themselves ... and the natives are not bound to the soil ... The Boers are obliged in self-defence to treat their people leniently.'[60]

When a landlord rented land to a white farmer, he only did so on conditions that he 'retained the right to Kaffirs living there'.[61] The labour produced from such tenancies was meagre. For example, the Native Commissioner in the Eastern Transvaal reported that one landlord with forty tenant families could only call upon the full time services of three young men, while another twenty men provided two months' service. Johannes Rissik, sometime Surveyor-General of the S.A.R., director of the Transvaal Land and Exploration Company and the future Minister of Lands in Louis Botha's first government, was reported to have 100 families on his farm.[62] Louis Botha told the 1903 Transvaal Labour Commission that before the South African War he was 'usually' able to call upon the labour of 30 to 35 men.[63] The Native Commissioner for the Central Division of the Transvaal, H.M. Taberer (his division included Pretoria, Hamans Kraal and Heidelberg), told the same post-war commission that he thought the white-owned farms in his district had double the number of adult men that they required.[64] Tenants of large landlords might, however, be called on to provide a cash as well as a labour rent.

> 'The majority of farmers that have three, four or five families on their farms make an agreement with these natives the day they take them, that they will plough such and such a piece of ground with their own oxen, or have it ploughed for them, and besides that they could have ploughed as much as they like, but for that the native must then give three of four of his children to the farmer to work for him and perhaps one or two of the other men to look after the cattle. You must understand that if a native gets a farm by paying say £15 a year, he makes perhaps £30, £40 or £50 out of the farm for that year. The natives have seen that it is much better for them to remain on the farm under these conditions rather than work for £1-10s per month.'[65]

Alternatively, landlords might commute their tenants' services in return for going to work on the goldmines. Although Taberer claimed that the farms in his district had double the number of men required for agricultural purposes, he also acknowledged that almost half of these had worked on the goldmines in the previous year.[66] The landlord then received, instead of labour or cash rent, a recruiting fee.[67]

It is a feature of landlord-tenant relationships in this period - unlike the 1920s and 1930s - that relatively dense settlement did not automatically denote a community of the impoverished. On the contrary, it was because the landowner or occupier with a limited amount of land who, because he needed all the labour time he could get from such tenants as he had, was forced to impose a rigorous regime on those who worked for him. With a limited amount of land and therefore with a small number of labour-tenants, the small farmer had to set his tenants to work at more regular intervals. The resulting drudgery would not only be unbearable but it would reduce the peasants' surplus product substantially. 'I do not think their masters would put up with the natives growing rich off their lands when they themselves make no progress.'[68]

Nevertheless, such households were not reduced to mere subsistence. In the late 1880s, in the south-western Transvaal, in the vicinity of Potchefstroom, an area 'dotted over with Dutch farms on many of which there (were) hamlets of natives',[69] labour tenants sustained an autonomous social life. Sometimes those labour-tenants were associated with established Christian sects, sometimes they were led by 'self-taught and self-supporting' evangelists. Some of these evangelists accepted a role within the Anglican Church and called themselves 'foremen'. But if they acted as intermediaries - one of these was a man named Christian Pretorius who was probably a former inboekseling - they did not surrender their wish to lead their own following. A white cleric complained that these evangelists felt that 'the Church belonged to them and the missionary must be subservient to their will'.[70] Christian and non-Christian tenants continued to live side by side. Families living in these 'hamlets' owned cattle, ploughs and sometimes wagons and draft animals. The Christians among their number were beginning to have new expenditures not only for education but for such events as weddings. We get some inkling of the surplus product of these labour-tenants

from the buildings they constructed. These were used as chapels, schools and in general as meeting houses to which people came from miles around. Just after the South African War the missionary Edwin Farmer reported 15 such buildings in his district but they were also observed before the war.[71]

The drudgery imposed by the Boer farmer with a limited amount of land and the limited surplus production that could be allowed the black labour-tenant meant that the small farmer was always in danger of losing his labour-tenants to the large landowners. The small settler farmer was always hard-pressed to find labour apart from immediate kin. It was to small farmers that the Mapoch families were indentured and it was from them that they fled.[72] There was in the last twenty years of the 19th century much lamenting that Afrikaner children and women had to be employed on such arduous tasks as ploughing and harvesting as well as minding stock.[73] The inability of these families to acquire labour contributed in no small way to their failure to survive as economic entities. As for the black peasant families who sought refuge on large farms, it must often have been the case in these two decades that they were able to determine how much they would produce with relatively little interference from their landlord. Moreover, the peasant household usually sent only its adolescent sons to work for the landlord. This meant that the physically strongest members of the family were not working for the white farmer and, in addition, those who did come to work had little or no experience of the techniques or disciplines of labour.[74] When we add to these difficulties the special problems of the 'pioneer' settler, then we may move some way towards explaining the low productivity of white agriculture at this time. In many cases farmers were unable to communicate simple instructions to their workers. '[O]ne of the peculiar difficulties of the life', one English settler wrote, 'was that of having to explain to my Native servants all the work that had had to be done in a language that I had not learnt. This was a great handicap. I could never give an order quickly - in fact, I could not give an order at all very often because I did not know the words in which to give it.'[75]

The paradox which, therefore, emerges from Owen Thomas' report where on the one hand he berates the African as a farm labourer - 'the Kaffir is a bad third' - yet on the other hand he acknowledges 'the Kaffir as the best and wisest cultivator of the soil in South Africa' comes to be seen an unreal.[76]

The large landlord had another advantage when it came to acquiring labour. Because of their relative wealth they were often local office holders. In their capacity as veld kornet, commandant or native commissioner they had in the past been able to use compulsion to extract labour from peasants in their districts and they continued to receive this labour service from the followers of chiefs and missionaries.[77] Such labour was provided in order to maintain cordial relations with these officials. Equally their office gave Boer notables the best access to land and this

more often than not meant proximity to land occupied under some form of communal tenure. The advantage gained from this proximity was that it ensured that those who went abroad to look for additional income would be induced, at least for a time, to work on the landowner's farm.[78] But officials benefitted in another and far more important way from their office. They were tax collectors. From their earliest settlement Boer communities had claimed the right to tax people they found themselves amongst, but their claim was rarely made good. In 1870 the Volksraad had decided that a hut tax was to be paid by all Africans in the republic. It would be 2/6d for those living on a farm but providing labour for the Boer household, 5/- for those who provided labour but did not live on a white-owned farm and 10/- for those who provided no labour at all. This was amended in 1876. The distinction was now made between great locations, that is land occupied independently of white landlords, and small locations, which was land held from landlords. Those on great locations were required to pay 10/- for every inhabited hut and 10/- for every adult over twenty years of age. Those on small locations had to pay 5/- per hut and 1/- for every male over 20 years of age but anyone working for a white farmer was exempted from paying tax.[79] In practice, tax collecting was sporadic and arbitrary and took the form of expeditions which seized cattle when cash was not immediately made available (and possibly even when it was offered). The cattle were then grossly undervalued and the tax-collector took the difference between what was realised on the cattle and the tax which was sent on to the central authority.[80] The activities of the tax-collectors (and the traders who followed in their wake) was observed at various times between the 1870s and the 1890s. It was graphically described by David MacKay Wilson, an official in the mining town of Barbeton, who reported the methods of the Landdrost of Lydenburg, Abel Erasmus:

> 'He would arrive unexpectedly in a Kaffir kraal, and demand payment of hut tax, ten shillings for each hut. Now, a kaffir's bank is always some secret hiding place, to which he goes only at night, or when certain that he is unobserved; so when suddenly called upon to produce his half sovereign he would ask time to obtain it. This was just what Erasmus wanted. The required delay would be peremptorily refused, and the escort ordered to seize an ox or a cow. It was in vain that the Kaffir pleaded for even an hour's delay. I have seen them bring the money within an hour or two of the seizure. Erasmus refused to accept the tender. The ox, worth £5 on average, would be driven to the commissioner's farm, with perhaps fifty others similarly escorted, and ten shillings per head may have been remitted to Pretoria.'[81]

The depredations of the tax-collector could be avoided by having cash always available in case he called. But having the cash available was not necessarily going to prevent livestock being plundered. The tax-exemption which was offered to those cultivators who accepted land on a Boer farm and provided labour in return is best understood as a method of fending off the raids. Accepting land from a white farmer was one means of acquiring protection against arbitrary and rapacious tax raids. In return for providing protection

the peasant family committed itself to providing labour or earning the recruiting fee by going to work on the mines.[82]

The absentee landlord and the land company offered an alternative to tenancies on Boer farms. The advantage for the tenant was that while protection was afforded the tenant, the landlord, at least to begin with, rarely intervened in determining production. Tenants could have a greater autonomy in deciding on the extent to which their marketable surplus product should exceed the needs of rent and taxation. The amount and form which rent took varied both from district to district, and from one period to another. To begin with, the collection of rent was extremely difficult. It is doubtful whether absentee landlords were able to collect much rent before 1880 and for more than a decade after that date there were companies who complained that they could not get access to their land.[83] Rents might be as little as 10/- per person per year and 5/- for grazing and water. It might be £1 per household per year, or as the capacity for collecting rent increased so the rent might increase to £1 for each wife. If the land was close to markets rent would be paid in kind as well as in cash, and cash rents were much higher, sometimes being as much as £10 per household or even for every adult male in the decade before 1900.[84] Within the same district the landlord might require a fixed amount of produce, for example, 25 bags or he might demand a share of the crops. The advantage to the male tenant was that the landlord rarely interfered with his social relationships. There was no missionary to forbid polygamy, no landlord to prohibit beer drinking. The constant theme of white farmers' petitions may be reduced to this single but often heard theme: 'These natives are not under supervision and do exactly as they like'.[85]

Within the Land Company sector a whole range of productive relationships existed. At one pole a simple redistributive economy was maintained. Then there were the leases taken by a headman who acquired wealthy in his own right while calling on his followers to provide him with communal services. At the other extreme the Lewis and Marks Company, whose activities were, of course, not limited to being rentiers, (and possibly for this reason) and whose activities were entirely South African based, helped their tenants to acquire better farming equipment and seed contributing to their greater productivity. In between these two extremes was the peasant entrepreneur who enraged his white competitors by being able to call on labour in a way which, for both economic and cultural reasons, they could not compete. 'For the last two seasons', their complaint read, 'this native has reaped over 800 bags of mealies and Kaffir corn. He pays a rent of £10 per annum and has all his cultivation done by beer drinkers. This is of course a hopeless state of affairs for the white man to try and compete against.'[86]

If, to begin with, land companies complained that they could not get access to their land, or that their tenants would not pay their rent,[87] those with associations with the mining companies were, by the end of the

19th century, able to extract an additional obligation from their tenants. In return for rights to land they were required to work for the mines.

> 'As I explained to you', Sammy Marks wrote to Lagden, 'one of the conditions upon which these natives are allowed to settle on our land is that, when not employed in agricultural pursuits, the able-bodied men are obliged to work in our coal mines, a few elderly men always remaining behind to keep order in the settlements, to look after the families and to superintend the work necessary to be done on the lands.'

The most interesting records which have so far come to hand are those of the Vereening Estates and Land Company (VELC) owned by the Lewis and Marks group. The Company owned 15 farms in the Transvaal and Orange Free State on opposite banks of the Vaal River. The estate manager of the Company, I.M. Kok, prepared a Tenants Census and Report in 1903 at the request of Sir Godfrey Lagden.[88] Kok's report suggests an intense degree of cultivation amongst both its white and black tenants. The black tenants, who were 'allowed to take as much ground as they pleased and to cultivate it in their own way' and 'according to their own ideas',[89] including 240 adult men, 276 adult women, 140 boys and 183 girls over the age of twelve. In addition, there were 700 children under the age of twelve living on the VELC farms. Of the 219 married tenants 22 had two wives, three had five but the majority had only one wife. In return for access to land 380 males over the age of twelve worked on the mines and plantations of the Company. In addition, sixty men who were either in poor health or too old to work also lived on the VELC farms. The able-bodied men were away from the land except for periods when ploughing had to be done. This meant that the women and girls and young children played a crucial part in the cultivation of crops. Planting, weeding and the picking of crops were left to them. In addition, white tenants who had relatively small households, probably employed some of the women and children on the land they rented from the company.

In December 1903 the VELC farms had 20,506 acres under cultivation in the two ex-republics. White tenants and their families - in all, 105 men, women and children - cultivated 3,210 acres. Black tenants cultivated 16,296 acres. These black tenants had 10,400 acres under maize. This required 520 bags of seed and cost £623. The cost of the seed was advanced to the tenants by the Company. At the same time white tenants planted 135 bags of maize seed on 2,785 acres and the seed, also an advance from the Company, cost £147. The Company had anticipated that their tenants' maize crop would total 39,500 (200 lb.) bags in 1903 but the drought of the growing season led them to conclude that actual yields would be lower. Assuming that their estimates were, therefore, a third too high (although farms on the Vaal would be able to have some land irrigated) and that five-sixths of all production came from African tenants who received the very low price of 7/6d a bag, then their gross income from maize was approximately £8,500. Since rent accounted

for a half share, black tenants might be expected to receive at least £4,000 on their maize crop which would have been almost enough to pay off their debts on their cattle purchases. In addition most of the kaffir corn planted that year came from African production on the farms. Black tenants planted 5892 acres while white tenants limited their production to 324 acres. The company anticipated 24,864 bags of sorghum being produced but again allowances had to be made for the drought. Even so income from sorghum would not have been insubstantial.[90]

Production on the company's farms had increased substantially in the short while between 1897 and 1903. In 1897 the number of black heads of household was 114. This rose to 152 the next year and had increased to 219 by 1903. In 1897 and 1898 the combined production of maize and kaffir corn was approximately 12,000 bags. By 1903 anticipated production was five times as high. Black tenants owned 174 ploughs in 1903 and of these 61 had been purchased that year with loans from the company. (£334) In addition 400 of the 1369 cattle owned by black tenants were draught animals needed for ploughing and for taking the waggons to market.[91]

Since land companies received both rent and labour from its black tenants it is not surprising that they preferred them to certain groups of white tenants. But this preference would have existed even if black tenants had not accepted the obligations to work in gold mines as part of the conditions of their tenancies. Those whites excluded from the possibility of tenancies were generally poorer and landless Afrikaners. They were more likely to graze cattle extensively - that is where cattle survived - and unlike black tenants they were not subjected to extra economic coercion and therefore less likely to have adopted cash crops. The pattern of relatively close settlement which black tenants were willing to accept meant that even though the rents of individual black households were low, their combined rent for the area they occupied was greater than could be obtained from the smaller number of white tenants farming the same acreage. 'No white tenant is prepared to pay a rental equal to what is secured from a farm upon which fifty to a hundred native families are squatting.'[92] Similarly, in and around the new mining grounds rights to cultivation were given to black but not white tenants presumably because this was seen as a means of retaining mine labour. Thus, in the Benoni district while Africans were allowed to rent land from the Van Ryn (mining) Company and to cultivate it for 30 bags of maize or £10 a year per adult male, the secretary of the local Afrikaner nationalist organization Het Volk complained that 'poor people, who have stands on the grounds are not even allowed to make a small garden in front of their homes, whereas the natives plant all over the grounds.'[93] In addition, however, there was one other reason for land companies giving preference to black rather than white tenants. The more intensive cultivation of black peasants meant that within a short while veld, whether grassland or bush, would be cleared and the value of the land transformed. The company or the absentee landlord would then be able to offer this land for sale to white owners at a much higher price than it would have previously obtained.[94]

The lands owned by missionaries went further towards transforming the relations of production than either the Boer household or the land companies. Missionaries in

the Transvaal, like their contemporaries elsewhere, saw their secular activities sustaining their spiritual tasks. "Bid en werk" went hand in hand. Moreover, through evangelical work, one of them told the Commissioner of Native Affairs, "een land voor beschaving veel beter geopen word als door wagen en krijgsmacht" ("land would be more readily opened up for settlements than through the use of weapons and warfare).

To accomplish their primary function missionaries had to construct stable communities, and they took it for granted that such stability required labour from whose production goods would go to the market. This did not mean that they automatically assumed that such labour had to be sold to others. "Er wordt al al te veel gedacht dat wanneer een naturel voor zeide zelven arbeid het geen werk is maar dan alleen wanneer hij voor een witte man arbeid" ("It was all too often thought that when a native worked for himself this was not work and that only when he worked for a white man was he employed"). So long as labour produced commodities for the market missionaries were satisfied that they were making progress.[95] In setting peasants to work in this way they had one major advantage in an environment which at some levels was extremely hostile to mission work. The constitution of the South African Republic forbad the purchase of land by Africans but custom and convention permitted them to make such purchases through an intermediary, and the mostcommonintermediary was a missionary.

Many mission stations, it seems, had been peopled with ex-inboekselings. In that event the inhabitants were more amenable to the pressures to conform both because their choice was reduced - there was no lineage or tribal land to return to - and because the social relationships they were now entering were already familiar to them. On the other hand Alexander Merensky, of the Berlin Missionary Society, and probably the best known missionary in the Transvaal in the second half of the 19th century, thought that his ultimate goal of mass conversion was more likely to be interfered with if the bulk of his initial work was undertaken with a declasse group. Merensky therefore rejected applications from ex-inboekselings for permission to settle on his station but his colleague and near neighbour Albert Nachtigal was ready to accept ex-captives and former farm servants.[96] In very many instances it seems, however, that the mission station was established as a result of an arrangement of convenience between a missionary and an African group who already occupied or sought to reoccupy land now 'owned' by a settler. While the displaced group organised the collection of the purchase price, the missionary arranged for the sale and the registration of the land in his own name since republican law forbad Africans from buying land on their own account.[97] The missionaries' power varied from district to district and station to station. In some cases missionaries had no leverage over those who lived on their station.

'I regret to say' wrote the Anglican missionary the Reverend C. Clulee, "that the chief of the natives in Molote has broken all his promises with regard to placing the baptised and the interests of the church on a favourable and satisfactory footing. He is not content with being paramount in authority as regards secular matters, but he holds us all in such a dependent state as is unworthy of our relative positions, and will not allow my converts from other places to settle on the station except immediately in the vicinity of his own kraal, or village, which is a violation of his agreement with

me when I first bought the place at his request'.[98]

In other cases the missionary had either a political or economic base which gave them some bargaining power with the local settler community and this increased their capacity to put pressure on those living on the mission station. Thus Merensky's trading activities meant that his credit with the local bank was in the 1870's greater than that of the state itself.[99] These missionaries were men of their age. They not only bought land on behalf of their converts - or would be converts - but they were not beyond engaging in land speculation[100] themselves or of converting the land entrusted to them to their own or their societies' purposes and selling land without consulting the community which doubly depended on their good faith.

'There are numerous Mission Societies working among the Natives', the British Native Commissioner for the Central Division of the Transvaal wrote in 1903, 'but I cannot say that the latter have been inbued with confidence by the actions of some of these societies in the past....where the natives lived for over 25 years and built houses, churches and schools upon certain lands which they considered belonging to the Society, were ordered to pay £12-10 per annum per family as rent or leave the ground. Upon enquiry, it was found that the land had been disposed of to a Company, no provision being made for the 72 Native families who had for so many years regarded their missionary as their advisor.'[101]

In the hey-day of the successful missionary, in the eighteen sixties and eighteen seventies, he was as likely to stand between the depredations of a surrounding African chiefdom, as those of Boer farmers demanding excessive labour. When chief Mapoch claimed the loyalty of the peasants on the Berlin mission society farm in the Lydenburg district, their missionary, Merensky, set his communicants to work to build 'three strong stone forts'. When there was talk in the white village of Middleburg of attacking his mission station, Merensky let it be known that if 'any injury whatever was done to a single hut or house of the station, he would have every house of every Boer who had been talking so big in Middleburg burnt to the ground and all their property destroyed'. On another occasion sheep from the station were taken by raiders from a neighbouring chiefdom. When Merensky received the news he set off with all the mounted men he could collect and since they were all armed they were able to retake the sheep when they caught up with the rustlers.[102] That Merensky's men were well armed was no accident since year after year he had required the young to go to the distant diamond fields to purchase arms.[103] Though Merensky may have been larger than life missionaries had an intermediary position between those on their stations and Boer society which was of great political importance. Like the Boer farmer who protected the tenants on his land, the missionary could fend off the tax raid. Nevertheless, the demands of the missionary were much greater than those of the Boer farmer. In addition to paying taxes to the state, the peasant mission land had to pay what Sir Garnet Wolsey called a "tythe". This went to build and maintain the church and provide for secular education. The missionary, however, required other outlays. Ploughs, new seed. European clothes, and last but not least the building of the neat symmetrical

villages constructed to the specifications of a nostalgic exile's design. This meant not only selling crops on the market (virtually every mission station reported large sales of maize, wheat, millet, poultry, fruit and wool and it must be remembered that for much of the first decade of the 20th century African peasant producers were the major source of local maize) but also employing the new skills of the blacksmith, carpenter, bricklayer, waggon builder and wheelwright. But once all this effort had been expanded, the mission stations' needs were not all met and missionary after missionary reported that the men of their villages were constantly away from the station working for additional income.

The additional income was not, however, to come from labour sold to Boer farmers but from work on the mines at Johannesburg and Kimberley and in service in towns like Pretoria. Not only did the mines pay wages in cash but because of scarcity they paid relatively high wages. For those who went to work in the mining camps and towns the church provided both support and surveillance. This was a way of attempting to ensure that morals as well as wages remained inviolate. Thus the Lutheran Bapedi Church required its youthful communicants to return with evidence that they had remained within the churches' jurisdiction while they were away working. '...if a lad comes back from work without a church certificate, he is excluded from holy communion for four times.' 'Equally important, special emphasis was given to the 'duty of the lads to support their parents'. Failing to do so might result in their being excommunicated.[104]

In the long run the mission stations were to collapse as centres of independent small peasant production. This was not so much because of the bad faithf of some missionaries - to which we have alluded - but rather because of their general response to the implementation of the 1887 Squatters Law. That law was intended to reduce the number of tenants which a white land owner or occupier could have to five families. The mission societies asked the state to exempt them from its provisions. The state was unwilling to do so although it did not move to force the relocation of tenants since it did not have the capacity to do so if only because local officials usually benefitted from the presence of mission stations in their districts. A redistribution of mission tenants would, therefore, have meant a loss of labour both for themselves and for their fellow landlords since they feared that redirected tenants were likely to flee the district.[105] Instead the government proposed that mission stations be converted into 'locations', that is they be treated as if they were communally owned lands heldon good

behaviour from the state. Land which had been purchased by its African occupants was no longer theirs to be realised on the market. Moreover, the state would acquire the right to determine the amount of land which should be allocated to each household. The effects of transforming land from mission stations to locations were not to be felt in the years immediately after the change had taken place. Ultimately, when the law came to be enforced by the British administration, the former mission holdings came more and more toresemble over-crowded tribal reserves.from which labour was regularly p ropelled.

The 1887 Squatters Law had been introduced soon after the Republic regained its independence after the first British occupation and it came in response to a populist demand for a 'dwang' (compulsory) labour law.[106] The demand came on the whole from small farmers with little or no labour and from those, like the Boers of the Zoutpansberg, who could not gain access to the land which the state's legal title claimed they owned.[107] It was, however, difficult for the Boer state to create new legislation to provide forced labour. The recently agreed to convention with the British had reiterated the codicil that there should be no slavery and new legislation might provide the British with the occasion for further intervention even if the cause lay elsewhere. Nevertheless, there was the need to meet the popular demand from the Boer population. The result was an anti-squatter law whose explicit purpose was to redistribute African households. Implicit in the legislation was the belief that this would increase the amount of labour available to Boer households. Henceforth no landowner could legally have more than five households on a farm although he was entitled to claim labour for five farms. In addition, the law conceded the right for this limit of five families to be exceeded if the landowner could show that these families were necessary for his own labour requirements. Moreover, any number of white tenants - bywoners - could claim five families for their portion of land.[108] Those who sought the law were intent on forcing labour from company farms, but as we have seen the legislation also menaced the missionary lands. Yet the legislation reenacted in 1895, was, to begin with, a dismal failure if seen from the perspective of the small landowner and others without patrons. There were several reasons for this. Firstly, just as there were regions where Boer farmers could not claim their land, let alone the labour of those who lived on it, so there were regions where they had established a delicate balance between obtaining sufficient labour without placing too great a burden on those who laboured. Disturb this balance and whole districts would be denuded of its peasant population. This was particularly the view of farmers in the Eastern Transvaal and they were opposed to the operating of the squatters' law. Similarly, within each district there were some whose labour needs were being met but who feared that if a redistribution of peasant households took place there would be a general exodus. As the Secretary of Natives despondently observed in 1897, "if a burgher really wants to use his servants as such, then wanderlust speedily shows itself and it is not long before such a farmer sits without assistance, or has to carry more kaffir-tenants" than is legal. Since the Boer households most satisfied were generally the households of notables with political office, the will to enforce the law was generally absent. But if there was an unwillingness to

enforce the law locally, there was an equal reluctance at the centre. This was not only, as Paul Kruger put it, because 'Ouma (grandmother, i.e. Queen Victoria) was watching' but because there was a genuine fear that precipitate action by some enthusiastic veld kornet, commandant, or native commissioner would lead to a full scale war. The Squatters' Law had, therefore, limits placed on local initiative and required all decisions to redistribute households to be agreed to in advance by the Superintendent of Native Affairs in Pretoria. This was a degree of centralisation which was extremely unusual in the South African Republic. The result was that anti-squatting legislation made very little impact unless there was an already existing capacity to compel labour to work.

There was one remaining area from which Boer households might have obtained labour. In addition to the land occupied by autonomous groups and conceded as being African owned (even if ultimately it was said to be held in trust by the state) there was a vast amount of land claimed by the state which went unsurveyed. Those occupying this land were not given any form of statutory recognition and in 1891 the Volksraad instructed the executive to deny them continued access to this land. They might as well have claimed the right for burghers to have two 6,000 morgen farms on the Moon. The Volksraad was not, however, put off by the impossible and in 1895 it reminded the executive of its earlier resolution. The executive was again instructed to implement the resolution out it was now told that it should now do so only as far as (was) practicable'. This was followed in 1896 and 1897 by commissions to investigate the failure to implement the resolution. Again in 1897 the Superintendent of Native Affairs issued instructions that the Volksraads resolution be carried out. Again to no effect. Finally the Superintendent acknowledged defeat.

> '...not withstanding my repeated instructions to carry out the Resolution, various Native Commissioners have unanimously given me to understand that in districts where there are many natives on Government land, it is impossible to comply therewith.....'[109]

Again, however, it would be wrong to measure policy solely by its lack of efficacy before the war. Even if the settler state found it difficult to prize loose labour during the republican period, it was preparing the ground for the success that was to follow after the war under a British administration. Throughout the eighties and nineties 'location' commissions were defining and redefining the boundaries of land occupied by African groups who continued to exist on a semi-autonomous basis after their conquest. The crucial action of republican officials was to limit the total amount of land available to each household within the jurisdiction of a given chief. Though it may often have been difficult or even impossible to enforce these limitations before the South African War, boundaries were demarcated which the British colonial state and its successor would ultimately be able to make effective. Thus groups of householders, already limited to poor grazing and arable holdings would be prevented - except for some limited opportunities for renting land - from expanding as their populations grew. The effects of this limitation would only be felt in the twenty years after 1900. But in the immediate aftermath of war Godfrey Lagden could, after some reflection on Cronje's impotence write: 'With the law on their side, the power to carry it out, and the well known desire to distribute labour in such a way that agricultural interests might derive the benefit of it, for which, indeed they were always clamouring, the only assumption is that the

difficulties and complications were such as to prohibit the application of the law'.[110]

In between Cronje's despairing conclusions and Lagden's reflections had come the cataclysmic events of the war. Landlords, already weak, lost their capacity to get their tenants to work for them. But more than this, they were everywhere faced with local rebellions, actual or in prospect. Reports from districts as far apart as Soulsport in the south-west, Waterberg in the north-west, Zoutpansberg in the north, Pretoria and Heidelberg in the south and Vryheid in the south-east revealed that Africans were convinced that the military defeat of the Boers would have them in possession of those farms which the Boers had occupied before the war. They had seen Boer homesteads destroyed, adult males taken prisoner of war, women and children rounded up and held in concentration camps and they themselves had been encouraged (if they needed encouraging) to seize Boer stock. Thus the Bakhatla 'claimed by right of conquest' the whole of the country from the Crocodile to the Elands River".[111] It was generally understood amongst themselves (that) no Boer would be allowed to cross the Elands River. It was widely believed that whatever their previous commitments to their landlords had been it was the government's intention to free them of these and thereafter to subdivide Boer farms and to give them out to African tenants who would then rent them from the state. In the Zouthansberg where it was believed that the Boers would not return Africans moved their homesteads and established new gardens on Boer land.[113] When Louis Botha, the former Commandant General of the Republican forces, returned to his farm in the Vryheid district, he was run off his own land. 'My Kaffirs told me I had no business there, and I had better leave.'[114] As late as 1907 one Vryheid farmer reported that he had had 'a lot of trouble with the natives since the war; they were disobedient and did not want to work. Before the war he had no trouble; they were all obedient and worked well. When he came back to his farm after the war they did not turn up when called upon, and when they did come they came armed. They did not greet the witness in the way they formerly did. When witness asked them whose boys they were, they said they did not know. When they were asked on whose farm they lived, they said they did not know. Time, they said, would show. They were told it was the farm of the witness, and that if they did not work they would have to go away. They refused; they said they would stay where they were. For eighteen months after the war witness had no natives in his service. Since then things had never been rectified; the natives worked just as they liked. When they were called upon they put forward excuses; some, they said, were at school, others were sick.'[115]

For the most part, however, tenancies seem to have been re-established relatively soon after the war in part because of the threat of the use of force by the British, and in part because the Boers were allowed to remain under arms until most Africans were disarmed. In addition memories of Boer resurgence after the last British occupation had ended in 1881, made the Africans reluctant to take advantage of the weakened landlord. Moreover, the reintroduction of tax collecting and labour recruiting made chiefs more willing to collaborate once more.[116]

At the same time we should remember that the major preoccupation of the incoming administration was to return the gold mines to their pre-war productivity and thereafter to create the conditions which would improve upon that productivity. The renewed call for the implementation of anti-squatting legislation was therefore unable to gain support in official quarters although the new Secretary of State for Native Affairs, Lagden did propose that it be implemented in selected districts.[117] The fear was that if anti-squatting legislation was enforced in the districts of Zoutpansberg, Waterberg, Lydenburg and Barberton, there might be a further exodus of those who provided periodic labour for the colony and who moreover produced 'a considerable amount of cereals, especially mealies used for consumption in this country'.[118] For the moment, at least, there could be no decision to support Boer rather than African production but the inaction of the new administration, particularly when it was combined on the one hand with a disposition in the rhetoric of the new ruling class to favour wage labour and cash tenancies, as well as the various measures aimed at weakening the class power of the notables might have created the belief that African market production was being given preference.

In the decade before 1900 black peasant production contributed a substantial part of the locally grown crops which found their way to the markets of the Transvaal. The extent of this market oriented production has been noted by Kruger, Bundy and Denoon among others. It comes as no surprise therefore, to discover that a 'merchant of Pretoria' could tell the Standard and Diggers News that after 'careful computation of the market books' he had concluded that 'Kafirs take away £47,000 from the local market for every £26,000 taken away by Boers'.[119] A year or two earlier the naturalist Bleloch had reported that Africans grew immense quantities of maize 'for their own consumption and for sale to the mines to feed their brothers at work there'.[120] Immediately after the war Owen Thomas made similar observations. 'The native' he wrote 'grew a very large proportion of the mealie crop and would grow much more if they had better facilities for marketing it'.[121] This production was called for because African peasants had to pay rent or taxes, or because they had to purchase commodities required of them by improving landlords or by missionaries, or because they felt the need for these commodities themselves. It may be that in this respect the black petty producer had a greater need for a cash income than the small Afrikaner cultivator. This in its turn may have been the reason for the phenomenon which the Johannesburg Star claimed to observe.

'The average Dutch farmer', the Star wrote, 'grows a certain amount with the object of making a certain profit. If prices decline, he tries to produce a little more and still obtain his fixed minimum. If prices appreciate, he takes a little less trouble, and grows a little less, still pocketing the same profit'.[122]

Two hundred years after their initial settlement, therefore, households were still turning in on themselves, still only producing as much as was needed to acquire a socially necessary income. Like their predecessors they were caught either in a spiral of increasing debts or of increasing impoverishment.

The majority of Afrikaner producers whether large landlords or small tenant cultivators, were content to acquire their incomes, either from pastoral activities

or from a variety of rents. Some farmers had long grown tobacco and orchards provided the ingredients for locally distilled brandies or for dried fruit which were sold on a wide scale. Tobacco in particular was exchanged for cattle in an earlier period.[123] The disasters of both rinderpest and war and forced Afrikaners to look to new forms of cultivation for an increased source of income. Increased cultivation might be undertaken by tenants from who increased rents were now being asked. But in order that their own income remained constant tenants had to ensure that their own disposable surplus was not decreased by the increase in rent. The stepping up of production in this way assumed, however, that the markets of the Transvaal could take as much as was offered to them. At first sight this should have been so. Were there not constant complaints about the shortages of food on the markets of the mining towns and of the high prices which shortages created?[124] Shortages there may have been but these did not ensure that crops sold on the market would realise a profit. Owen Thomsa, drew attention to the problems created by the uncertainty of markets. 'I interrogated every farmer whom I met as to why he did not grow mealies: they invariably responded that if they did the price would be too low - they had tried it:- when they were successful other farmers were also successful; and an abundant crop all over the district forced down the price of mealies to as low as 3/6d a bag. This statement was borne out by farmers not only in the Transvaal, but also in the Free State.'[125]

These observations give a certain force to the probably apocraphyl report of the Afrikaner tenant who, during the war, sold 30 bags of maize to a British army store. A British officer having paid him 20sh a bag then asked:

'Have you ever received so much for your mealies before, Johannes? No? Well then I suppose that now you see what a lot of money 30 bags bring you will go home and double the area which you have cultivated this year?'[126]

'Na Sir: but only half' the farmer replied, 'Everybody will grow more mealies next year; and there will be no price or market for them'.[126]

Thomas' view was that the Transvaal market required 800,000 bags of maize and peasant production was already sufficient to meet this requirement. The same, he thought, was true of other crops. Although there were only a small number of the possible producers supplying the Johannesburg market in January 1903, (drought and war destruction having held back the majority) there was already a serious problem of overproduction.

'At the present moment (January 1903) only a small proportion of the Transvaal farmers are able to supply produce. Yet I have been informed by the market-master of Johannesburg that at the present time some farmers sell their produce on the market at less than the cost of transport, to say nothing of the cost of production of which a free gift is thus made to the fortunate buyer. The daily returns of the produce market clearly show that the supply is already equal to the demand, and that the price obtained is, in many cases, below the cost of production and marketing charges'.[127]

With markets so unpredictable the producer was invariably thrown back upon the local trader. But the trader was part of the problem. Thomas found as he travelled through the Transvaal that he could buy maize from African producers at between 7/- and 10/- a bag

but that store purchased maize would be as high as 45/-. One storekeeper had told Thomas that the goods he exchanged (e.g. blankets) for bags of maize were generally valued at 1/- or 1/6d.[128] Afrikaner farmers were also caught in this trap of high prices for the goods they purchased and low prices for the produce which they sold.[129] Similarly, both the Boer farmer and the African peasant were caught in a debt trap produced by the uncertainty of rural production. Where debts forced African producers to sell their labour power through the trader who was also a labour recruiter, the Boer farmer was not compelled by the tax system to earn cash wages, and instead provided his land as surety. John Hobson, whose sense of conspiracy coloured his otherwise astute economic analysis, thought that Boer farmers were mortgaging their farms to an organised Jewish syndicate. "I am informed" he wrote "that a very large proportion of the Transvaal farmers are as entirely in the hands of Jewish money-lenders as is the Russian moujik or the Austrian peasant." Jewish moneylenders were only the most recent wave of creditors to attach themselves to the farmers of the Transvaal, but whatever the source of the credit there is no doubt that there was a considerable increase in the amount of indebtedness in the Transvaal in the years immediately before 1899. In 1898 alone mortgages increased by £4,874,000. At the same time the state had established its own form of credit (including £250,000 from an amortisation fund which was intended for poor burghers) and had given out loans valued at £750,000. The bulk of these loans, since they were provided from the Post Office Savings Bank and the Orphan Chamber had, therefore, to be held against realisable assets.[130]

Prior to the war Afrikaner farmers might undertake arable production for the market but only as a secondary source of income. With the destruction of their stock they were now forced to rely to a far greater extent than before on the sale of crops. The vagaries of the market must, therefore, have become more intolerable than ever. But how could greater stability be achieved? Thirty years later when political circumstances permitted, the state was to intervene to provide support prices for agricultural producers. But in the years immediately after the South African War with state power lost and the Boer notables under threat as a class, no such alternative existed. An alternative to a support price would have been to limit African competition by reducing the surplus production of these peasants. Such a strategy would have the advantage of increasing the labour supply as peasants became proletarians. But this strategy would also take a long time to work and in the meantime the rural white population of small and medium farmers would themselves be reduced to penury by poor harvests and rapacious money lenders. What was needed was a facility whose effects would be immediate. A system of credit which would free farmers from the existing commercial ties would have an immediate effect. But how could this be brought into existence? We have already noted the failure of earlier attempts on the part of the notables to free themselves from the existing systems of merchant credit. This failure had taken place even though the notables had created a state to serve their own interests. Now with this state taken from them, the prospects of throwing of the merchantile incubus must have been even less. And yet before the first decade of the 20th century was completed, those who

now controlled the state had created the basis for an alternative system of credit. This would ultimately free those farmers, who were to become the large commercial producers of the Transvaal, from a dependence on merchant capital. Seen from the perspective of the war's end , this outcome is doubly unexpected. Not only had the dominant forces in society lost control of the state - and with it easy access to the spoils which their offices could help them extract from the mining industry, as well as their control over labour - but the new colonial state seemed determined to undermine the capacity of the notables to dominate the rural Afrikaner population. The strategies which the state set itself are well known. Firstly, two different land settlement schemes were to be introduced. One would bring a class of 'yeoman' British farmers who would displace the Boer notables as the primary economic force in the countryside. (While we do not doubt the primacy of ideological and political intentions of this proposal, it appears that it also suited the needs of the land companies who could now look forward to unloading large tracts of land on to the market.)[131]

The second land settlement scheme was intended to create alternative tenancies for poor and landless Afrikaners making them 'Bijwoners of the State'.[132] This was combined with educational-cum-language policies whose purpose was to divest the notables, and their clerical compatriots, of their links with their clients and dependents.

This was an ambitious, probably impossible, programme of social engineering and would have required vast resources if it were to succeed without further violence and coercion. But these resources were not available. Moreover disruptions in the countryside were creating problems for the mining industry and the mining industry was the primary concern of the new state.

The attempt to undermine the notables, though it was to fail, coincided with their attempt to transform themselves from pastoral to arable producers. This probably hastened the already deteriorating relationships between Afrikaner landlords and their bywoner tenants. The deterioration of these relationships had begun before the war but in the post-war period the obligations of these relationships became more and more difficult to fulfil. At the very least bywoners now became an obstacle to crop production. This was not because the land which bywoners might wish to graze cattle on could be transformed into arable land, but because African tenants who were more likely to provide labour, could only be attracted to the land if they could find sufficient grazing for their own stock. But even where the bywoner was a cultivator and paid a share of his crops as rent, the breakdown of customary relationships led landlords - having themselves to sell more and more on a fickle market - to attempt to increase their rent. 'I have heard a bywoner complain' the Transvaal Indigency Commission was told 'that it would not pay them to grow more than 300 bags of mealies on account of the demand from the owners for increased rates and shares of the produce.'[133]

The result was a stream of landless Afrikaans-speaking peasants without any means of subsistence who were compelled to move to the towns. In the post-war period the towns most likely to provide them with a living were those which had grown up around the gold mines. These mines were, by their owners' reckoning, suffering from an acute shortage

of unskilled labour. Nevertheless, they were unwilling to employ these landless Afrikaners. The orthodox reason offered for this unwillingness was that these Afrikaner poor, having themselves been the employers of servile labour, were unsuitable for the arduous tasks of an underground worker. This explanation is unsatisfactory since we have already seen that many of the rural poor had undertaken their own field-work. A similar explanation rests on the supposed innate inability of these white poor to meet the needs of the mining industry. An explanation so explicitly racist hardly need detain us, particularly as these same men, were a decade later, to undertake the tasks of foreman ganger without their supposed innate inabilities standing in their way.

It was their landlessness which made these Afrikaans-speaking poor unacceptable to the mining employers. The wage they required must provide not only for their own subsistence but also for their families subsistence and reproduction. Such wages would increase the cost of labour power and reduce goldmining profits.[134] Equally, not to employ them would have left the towns with a dangerous and disaffected population'.....the bulk of the poorer agriculturists' wrote Lord Selborne who had now replaced Milner as High Commissioner, 'are drifting to the towns, helping to swell the ranks of the unemployed, adding to the class of "poor white", breeding apathy, squalor, crime and discontent.'[135] At the same time the poverty which forced tenants and poor farmers off the land, also held the majority of the rural population in its grip. The state's attempt, therefore, to undermine the power of the notables forced the former republican political leaders - and the clergy - to act in their own defence. In this way they came to give direction to existing rural discontent.

Rural impoverishment and imperial intervention coincided with the Report of the Transvaal Labour Commission which concluded that there was insufficient labour in Southern Africa for the goldmines. Both the state and mining employees accepted this conclusion which had vital consequences for those seeking agricultural labour. This appraisal meant that neither the state nor mining employees would, for the moment, attempt to squeeze labour from within the region. Hence agricultural employers, who were too weak to exert pressure on their own must expect to face a shortage of labour. Cumulatively, therefore, land settlement, language and labour policies combined with the state's apparent indifference to the competition which black agricultural producers constituted, spurred notables to reconstitute their dormant political networks. This led directly to the creation of the Afrikaner populist party, Het Volk.[136]

Lord Selborne, who after all, had been a Conservative Cabinet Minister, and had been sent to South Africa because of his political acumen, was better able than Milner to distinguish between first and second order political problems. In the reordering of the Transvaal the establishment of the pre-eminence of mining capital was the essential task of the new administration. Any decision about the countryside must be subordinate to this first priority. Milner thought that both economic and political priorities would best be served by establishing a capitalist agriculture. Selborne, more pragmatic than Milner, and with the hindsight of Milner's failures, sought a less

symmetrical solution. He would secure the countryside by revitalising rather than dismantling its class structure:

'In the mind of the average Boer Farmer', Selborne wrote 'the only function of the Government is to safeguard and foster his material prosperity, and if once convinced that the existing Government fulfils that function, he will probably support it as readily as he would a purely Boer Government from which he derived less practical help'.[137]

Under Selborne's direction much now turned on restoring the welfare of the agricultural economy. 'Until that industry emerges from its present deplorable condition the Transvaal cannot really be prosperous, nor will the embers of political unrest cease to smoulder dangerously'. Once prosperity in the countryside had been achieved, then Afrikaner peasants could be restored to the land and the tide, of what Lord Selbourne called 'indigent humanity', would be turned. In this way the primary objective of safeguarding the interests of mining would be achieved. For Selbourne, therefore, a Land Bank, providing credit and other financial supports for agriculture was a proposal of 'immense political importance' and a means of 'binding the mass of the farming community to the Government'.[138]

The initiative for setting up the Land Bank was, therefore, taken by the British administration before the Transvaal became a self-governing colony. The Bank was brought into being after the colony had become self-governing but it received a £2 million loan from Britain. The populist demand that it provide credit for the poorest of the white rural population was not to prevail. Equally unsurprising, its credit went only to those who had, at least in theory, realisable assets. The poorest of the landowners and <u>bywoners</u> and tenants were excluded from its facilities. At the same time landlords made it clear to the Land Bank Commission that they would not stand surety for their tenants. It was, of course, white tenants that the landlords demurred at supporting. African tenants and landowners were not considered as potential recipients of credit.[139]

As a result <u>Het Volk</u> which seemed so threatening in 1905, was by 1908, a willing member of the alliance of gold and maize. This support given to the maize farmers of the Transvaal created a new set of complications. If the Land Bank assisted some it did so at the expense of others. From its very beginning its effect was to discriminate in the marketplace, not simply against black farmers, but against white farmers in other parts of South Africa who did not qualify for its support. That they did not qualify might have been the result of their poverty and lack of property. It might also have been that because they farmed outside the Transvaal they were not eligible for its facilities. The Land Bank assisted in creating a Maize Agency which enabled newly established marketing cooperatives to gain the custom of the major South African purchaser of maize, the Transvaal Chamber of Mines.[140] Because the Maize Agency, established in 1909, found itself in competition with large 'produce' merchants, it could only ensure sales by tendering lower prices than its competitors. At the same time the Chamber sought, and received a guarantee that the cooperatives would supply the quantities that it required. The effect of this intervention was to stabilise prices but at the cost of reducing them.

Instead of prices being low at the beginning of the season and high at its end, they were now equally low throughout the year. In 1913 prices on the Johannesburg market were lower at the end of the season than they had been at its beginning.[141] This meant that other maize producers, most prominently the larger white farmers of the Orange Free State, as well as African peasants were excluded from dealing with the largest purchaser of maize but in addition the price of maize was depressed by an institution which continued to be Transvaal oriented even after the four British colonies had been brought together in a South African Union in 1910.[142] The political implications of this situation were to be far reaching but we need not explore them now.

The effect of the already limited market being skewed by the differential intervention of state credit meant that white farmers had to find alternative ways of maintaining their income. Ever since the end of the war White farmers had seen the limiting of African production, as well as the increase of their own, as means of achieving this end. But even before the creation of the Land Bank the Transvaal Supreme Court had decided that Africans could not be prevented from purchasing land and this had created widespread dismay among white farmers. In practice the right to purchase land had always existed (albeit the land had to be held through an intermediary), but the court's decision was seen both as an immediate commercial threat as well as being contrary to the needs of a long term labour policy which the state was beginning to evolve with the 1905 Report of the South African Native Affairs Commission. Because they felt threatened by black producers, white farmers sought to prohibit land purchases by black peasants.

'It is beyond argument' the Transvaal Land Owners Association contended in its 1906 Annual Report, 'that white settlers cannot compete against natives who own land alongside them, any more than white traders can compete with coolies on similar conditions. Traders have spoken with no uncertain voice on this subject, and settlers on the land must also protect themselves. It is such a self evident proposition that it needs hardly be enlarged upon. The native utilises women and children in his production.(neither) Mixed education nor the requirements of civilization figure in his cost sheet. How then can the white settlers grow either crops or stock against such a competitor'.[143]

In order, therefore, to put an end to this competition between peasant producers and white landowners, the newly elected Het Volk Government of the Transvaal set about reversing the court decision to permit a free market in land. In spite of having a majority in favour of such legislation the Het Volk Government was pursuaded by the combined reluctance of the British High Commissioner and the largely mining oriented Opposition to stay its hand. Instead, it decided to enforce the Squatters Law, which though suspended, was still on the statute book. But the purpose of those responsible for reactivating the Plakkers Wet differed from those whose agitation had made it necessary that the Volksraad/to enact legislation in 1887 and 1895. Previously, as we have seen, legislation was intended to serve the small landowner or occupier's needs for labour. Now the Squatters' Law acquired the primary purpose of

helping the large landowner eliminate peasant competition by reducing the number of families renting land from companies or absentee landlords. This in its turn had the additional effect of increasing the number of peasants having to seek new tenancies at much increased (usually labour) rents, and making available the women and children who had previously been confined to the homestead economy. Tribute and other relationships had, of course, brought women and children to work on settler farms, but the relative waning of settler power may have decreased their ability to call out this labour. In any event as commercial farming began to take root so the call for the labour of women and children became stronger.

'We prefer women for some work'. Dicke told the Transvaal Labour Commission. 'They are cheaper and they do just the same work. For instance when plucking tobacco, or reaping mealies, it is immaterial whether the hands employed belong to a child or a woman. It is not hard labour. We want men only to take out the stumps of trees; for other work we use machinery there.'[144]

The Squatters Law did not, therefore, provide labour for the white cultivator with a limited access to land. On the contrary it reinforced the existing distribution of labour. The small white farmer with a limited number of tenants or labourers had, as we have suggested, to set his hands to work more frequently than the large landowner who could accommodate many more tenants. This made the large landowner the lesser of two evils to the peasant seeking either a tenancy or employment. This 'preference' which black tenants showed, then gave ideological support to administrators who chose to leave labour with the large landowners.

> 'Many farmers', wrote the Sub-Native Commissioner for Nylstroom, 'more especially those of the class whose unpopularity with the natives is not without justification, hoped for a general shuffling of native squatters by the Government, under which farm labourers were to be settled, willy-nilly, by the sub-commissioners on their farms.
>
> Keen disappointment became apparent amongst this class of farmer when they found that they were no better off for labour than before, and that their more fortunate neighbours, having proved to the satisfaction of the minister for Native Affairs that their agricultural operations required the services of all, if not more than the number of natives already resident on their farms, were allowed to retain considerably more than five squatters'.[145]

VII

The relationships between large landowners and their tenants, whether black or white, were by 1910, locked into a pattern which would enable the landlord to preside over the ever increasing commercialisation of agriculture. In time that agriculture would be transformed beyond mere commercial response. The growing landlessness of both peasantries fostered the accumulation of landed capital by the notables. At the same time the increasing rents demanded of tenants added to the surplus product taken by landowners. In addition the first trickle of state credit and subsidy signalled a reduction of the hold which commercial capital had on landlords. Equally the depressing effect which these subsidies and credits had on market prices reduced the capacity of black and white peasants to compete with commercially oriented farmers. In all the stage was set for the creation of a capitalist agriculture. Yet few would be surprised that the actors took some time before they accepted their cues to come on stage.