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THE STRUGGLE FOR LAND IN LYDENBURG:

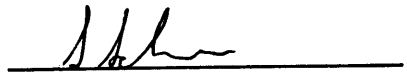
African Resistance in a White Farming District, 1930-1970

Stefan Schirmer

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Arts, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Johannesburg 1994

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university.



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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the resistance practised by Africans resident in the white farming district of Lydenburg. It shows that rural transformations in these 'white' areas were partly shaped by the actions of African tenants and land-owners. The argument is made within a framework that concentrates mainly on one farming district, and on the period 1930 to 1970. A narrow regional focus allows the thesis to delve deeply into the actions and motivations of people on the ground. They were white farmers, local officials, African tenants and members of land-owning communities, who cooperated and clashed during a period that produced important phases of growth in white agriculture and more determined interventions by the state. On the one hand, these changes worked against Africans in white farming districts, but, on the other hand, African struggles for land and wages constantly influenced the way the economy and the state developed. Even successful state attempts to remove Africans from the land were affected by African reactions. The thesis concludes that transformations occurred in the Lydenburg district within a process of an ongoing struggle which has had a profound influence on the shape of South Africa's agricultural areas.

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ABBREVIATIONS

NAD	Native Affairs Department
SAAU	South African Agricultural Union
TAU	Transvaal Agricultural Union
ANC	African National Congress
ICU	Industrial & Commercial Workers Union

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My parents gave me financial assistance, love and understanding, for which I repaid them by being in a bad mood for the past four years. Hopefully I can make it up to them in the years to come. These comments apply doubly to my wife, Kay,

who helped a lot but, by being there, sometimes hindered my progress. She also suffered through my moods, and I am sure she is looking forward to the post-thesis years with eager anticipation. My brother and sister also did their best to encourage me.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis focuses on the struggles waged by African tenants and land-owners in a white farming district during the period 1930 to 1970. These years were marked by numerous spurts of quite dramatic economic growth, some of which was to the detriment of Africans on the land. They were further disadvantaged when growth was coupled with the effects of Apartheid, but Africans were not simply overwhelmed by the forces stacked against them. Contradictions and ambiguities infused both the processes of economic growth and state attempts to advance the aspirations of white farmers. Tensions and divisions within the racially defined ruling class were thus always apparent, which provided Africans with the opportunity to defend their interests.

African interests were invariably diverse. Firstly, they changed over time in response to new contexts. Secondly, they were mediated by class, gender, age and ethnic divisions. As a result African resistance often had contradictory effects. On the one hand, African families on white farms sought to retain access to both their land and the freedom to utilise this land without white interference; the pursuit of this objective had the effect of restricting African participation in the industrial economy centred around the Witwatersrand. On the other hand, African integration into the economy was promoted when conflicts within the family undermined the fight for land, and youths and women sought urban alternatives to patriarchal control. This thesis examines the complex interplay of these two processes. It also shows how both types of resistance undermined state attempts to create a bureaucratised labour market.

The struggles described below were not large scale, revolutionary movements, but regional, mostly minor daily conflicts that nevertheless had an important cumulative impact.[1] The analysis of these conflicts has been sketchy because of a widespread assumption that, since 1930, domination has been unchallenged in white rural districts.[2] The period before 1930 has received recent attention in books by Keegan, Krikler and Bradford, and in two stimulating articles by Van Onselen.[3] But, for the period after 1930, such conflicts have remained largely unstudied.

This thesis illuminates some of the processes that shaped white farming districts after 1930 by focusing on the district of Lydenburg, and by emphasising African resistance. The concentration on one district is useful for methodological reasons that will be discussed below. The focus on rural Africans grew out of a concern to bring to light the hidden past of this section of the, until recently, disenfranchised majority. Although the political situation is changing at the time of writing, a new, democratic dispensation will not necessarily empower rural Africans who have been ignored by many academics and by most political movements. By regarding the daily struggles of these people as part of 'History', the thesis makes a contribution towards recognising their concerns and highlighting their condition.[4]

RESISTANCE AND CULTURE

The approach adopted here is influenced by a number of South African historians

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The importance of such a cumulative impact is demonstrated by E. P. Thompson, 'The Moral Economy of the Crowd', in *Customs in Common* (London, Merlin Press, 1991), pp. 238-246.

See J. Lonsdale, 'From Colony to Industrial State: South African historiography as seen from England', in *Social Dynamics*, 9(1), 1983, p. 70.

T. Keegan, *Rural Transformations in Industrializing South Africa: The southern highveld to 1914* (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1986); H. Bradford, *A Taste of Freedom: The ICU in rural South Africa 1924-1930* (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1987); J. Krikler, *Revolution From Above, Rebellion From Below: The agrarian Transvaal at the turn of the century* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1993); C. van Onselen, 'The Social and Economic Underpinnings of Paternalism and Violence on the Maize Farms of the South-Western Transvaal, 1900-1950', *Journal of Historical Sociology* Vol. 5, No. 2, June 1992; C. Van Onselen, 'Race and Class in the South African Countryside: Cultural Osmosis and Social Relations in the Sharecropping Economy of the South-Western Transvaal, 1900-1950', in *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 95, No. 1, February 1990.

It is true that the discipline of History grew out of 'Euro-american society', but the African people interviewed in this thesis supported the idea of creating a history that was relevant to Africans, and could be studied by their children or grand-children at school. See E. Wilmsen, *A Land Full of Flies* (Chicago, Univ. of Chicago Press, 1989), p. xiii.

who point to the dynamic, changeable character of white domination and to the impact of African initiatives on the social and political processes that made up South Africa.[5] The work of James C. Scott is also important because he demonstrates the significance of ordinary peoples' everyday resistance. As Scott puts it, a 'struggle ... marked less by massive and defiant confrontations than by a quiet evasion ... is equally massive and often far more effective'.[6] Resistance, in this sense, is a concept that encapsulates the way ordinary people shaped history as they reacted to the demands made on them by more powerful people in the state and the ruling classes.

From this perspective one must reject the starkness of a dichotomy between 'resistance' and 'collaboration', which privileges certain responses over others.[7] When ordinary people collaborate, they often do so in unforseen ways which, in turn, has an effect on how a society moves forward in time. 'Resistance' and 'collaboration' can be embodied in the same action, and it is therefore not necessary to regard one as more important than the other.

Scott, drawing to some extent on E.P. Thompson, also demonstrates that resistance is shaped by 'cultures', moralities and values that reflect social divisions and allow less powerful people to take up an oppositional stance. In *Weapons of the Weak* Scott quotes Thompson's observation that 'every class struggle is at the same time a struggle over values', and in *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* he broadens this equation to include power relations based on caste and race.[8] This approach, in which African resistance is located within a cultural framework,

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5 The most important books on the state are: S. Dubow, *Racial Segregation and the Origins of Apartheid in South Africa 1919-36* (London, Macmillan Press, 1989); D. Posel, *The Making of Apartheid 1948-1961: Conflict and Compromise* (Oxford, Clarendon, 1991). The work that had the greatest influence on this thesis is contained in P. Delius, 'Sebatakgomo; Migrant Organisation, The ANC and the Sekhukhuneland Revolt', in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 4, October 1989.

6 J.C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday forms of peasant resistance* (New Haven, Yale Univ. Press, 1985), p. 32.

7 W. Beinart & C. Bundy, *Hidden Struggles in Rural South Africa: Politics & popular movements in the Transkei & eastern Cape, 1890-1930* (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1987), p. 27.

8 E.P. Thompson quoted in Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, p. 1; J.C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden transcripts* (New Haven, Yale Univ. Press 1990).

is also adopted here. At the same time, the concept of culture is used cautiously, in order to distance the thesis from any form of cultural determinism. Cultures are dynamic; they change constantly in response to new contexts and interaction with other ideas. Further, the 'culture' of any given 'group' consists of a complex collection of values and is infused with contradictions and differences.[9] Cultures always contain the ideological material for internal conflicts and for the constitution of new sub-groups.

African resistance is a topic that in itself is interesting and important. However, the African initiatives and reactions described below did not have an independent life of their own. While Africans shaped the society in which they worked and lived, their values and actions were also moulded by the social context and continually modified by interaction with white farmers and the state. Thus, despite the focus on Africans, the thesis also provides an analysis of white farmers and the state in order to present resistance as part of an interactive historical process.

John Lonsdale's work on state formation in Kenya employs a similar approach. He cites a Kikuyu elder who felt that the changes wrought by the entrenched power and enlarged markets of colonial rule turned Kenya into a 'new country that was unknown to us'.[10] But, as Lonsdale points out, colonial Kenya was not entirely new:

> 'For the embryo state was not only *built*, as a deliberate means to contain and direct power for the benefit of the few. It was also *formed* out of the anonymous actions of many. In evading servitudes ancient and modern the weaker members of African society used novel forms of association to regain old personal freedoms.'[11]

Everyday forms of resistance operated in, and were shaped by, circumstances that were mainly determined by state policy and white economic advancement. At the same time, the direction of these advances and policies was deflected at modified

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9 E.P. Thompson, *Customs in Common*, p. 13.

10 J. Lonsdale, 'The Conquest State of Kenya 1895-1905', in B. Berman & J. Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya & Africa, Book One* (London, James Currey, 1992), p. 14.

11 Lonsdale, 'The Conquest State', p. 15.

angles whenever they were steered towards Africans in white farming districts. State policy and capital accumulation could not proceed as though Africans did not exist.

RURAL RESISTANCE IN SOUTH AFRICAN HISTORIOGRAPHY

Many of the questions raised in this thesis are part of an ongoing debate which centres on the characterisation of South Africa's rural areas and the position of Africans within them. In most historiographical overviews the debate has been depicted as being between liberals and marxists. The essential difference between these two 'schools' is the way they conceive the relationship between race and economic progress. Liberals argue that racial barriers impeded economic progress, whereas marxists see racial laws as an integral part of effective capitalist accumulation. From these starting points, liberals often regard white farming districts as centres of racial oppression and economic inefficiency, while marxists emphasise the rural capital accumulation made possible by state assistance.[12]

However, despite these differences, there are also important similarities between the marxist and liberal approach. In both descriptions Africans are portrayed as minor actors, and are essentially regarded as victims. Van der Horst, a contemporary liberal, argued in 1941 that labour tenancy 'still suited some Natives'; but she also speculated that the abolition of the system might have helped those who were ignorant of better conditions elsewhere.[13] Van der Horst was more subtle than many other liberals of the time, who tended to regard labour tenancy as an archaic form of oppression tantamount to slavery. De Kiewiet, also in the 1940s, argued that although labour tenancy was being replaced 'with exceeding slowness', it was doomed to vanish as a consequence of economic development.[14] The view that 'the penury and moral degradation that [labour

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12 K. Smith, *The Changing Past: Trends in South African historical writing* (Johannesburg, Southern Book, 1988); C. Saunders, *The Making of the South African Past* (Cape Town, David Phillip, 1988). For an overview and alternative approach see, B. Bozzoli & P. Delius, 'Radical History and South African Society', in *Radical History Review*, 46/7, 1990.

13 S.T. Van Der Horst, *Native Labour in South Africa (Cape Town, Oxford Univ. Press, 1942), p. 295.*

14 C.W. De Kiewiet, *A History of South Africa: Social and economic* (London, Oxford Univ Press, 1957), p. 205.

tenancy] brings about in the unfortunate rural underlings is a sore spot and a blot on our rural economic system', was widely held in the 1940s.[15] Later opponents of Apartheid, although sometimes less committed to the broader liberal framework, nevertheless used the same terms of reference. Patrick Duncan, for example, maintained that the labour tenant system was a bad practice within, what he called, 'the worst farm labour system in the world'.[16] Labour tenancy, he argued, led to forced child labour, and placed the 'black man' completely in the power of the 'white man'.[17] A.W.G. Champion took a similar line in 1959. He argued that labour tenancy was imposed on Africans by the 1913 Land Act, and 'reduced our Native people to a position not far removed from slavery'.[18]

The liberal view of Africans on white farms emerged out of a particular vision of South African industrialisation in which economic growth had inevitable outcomes like rising *per capita* earnings and racial integration. For similar reasons more recent marxist analyses do not differ greatly in their treatment of African labour tenants. Marxists reject the positive consequences emphasised by the liberals, but they too are convinced that industrialisation contained numerous pre-determined effects. The leading marxist scholars on the subject of white rural areas do not therefore seriously challenge the notion that Africans were victims. Morris, Lacey, and Marcus concentrate instead on proving that rural South Africa was capitalist, which meant that labour relationships were inevitably transformed to suit the interests of different 'fractions of capital'. Thus Morris rejects the very idea that the 'subjective self-perceptions' of rural Africans should be taken seriously, and Lacey argues that the National Party, acting in the interest of 'farming capital', tied two million Africans to the 'white rural sector' in 1932; a process in which African labour tenants were mere pawns, forced to work for nothing.[19] Marcus,

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15 Wits Historical Papers Library (WHPL), AD843, B6.2.2., J. Lefeaux, 'Manorialism in South Africa', 8 July 1942; Rheinallt Jones strongly supported this view. See Chapter Three, p. 129.

16 P. Duncan, *South Africa's Rule of Violence* (London, Methuen, 1964), p. 121.

17 Duncan, *Rule of Violence*, p. 124.

18 Central Archives Depot (CAD), Native Affairs Department (NTS), No. 97/362, Vol. 8836, A.W.G. Champion to the Inter-Departmental Committee on Labour Tenancy, 2 December 1959.

19 M. Morris, 'The Development of Capitalism in South African Agriculture: Class struggle in the countryside', in *Economy and Society*, Vol. 5, 1976; M. Morris, 'The State and the Development of Capitalist Social Relations in the South African Countryside.', Unpublished PhD Thesis, Univ. Sussex, 1979; M. Lacey, *Working for Boroko* (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1980), pp. 169; 180.

who examines the 'super-exploitation' of farm workers from the 1930s to the 1980s, also regards these workers as the objects of 'agricultural restructuring', which was determined by the logic of 'colonial-like' capitalism.[20]

The teleologies of marxism and liberalism caused Africans in rural areas to be largely ignored.[21] Colin Bundy addresses this issue in *The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry*. He demonstrates that African producers responded effectively to market opportunities created by the mineral discoveries of the 1870s and 1880s.[22] Their productivity produced a systematic response from white farmers and the state and in this instance Africans clearly played a crucial role in determining the course of South African history. Unfortunately Bundy locates his descriptions in a theoretical framework which views the underdevelopment of the peasantry as an inevitable consequence of international capitalism's progress. From this perspective, the rise and fall of the peasantry was a short lived episode with very little long term consequence. Thus it is the work of Beinart, Delius and Harries that comprehensively proves that rural Africans helped to shape modern South Africa. They show that groups within Pondo, Pedi and Tsonga societies fought to maintain their coherence as they responded to job opportunities in the mineral centres, and in this way played a central role in the development of the migrant labour system.[23]

A broader attempt to demonstrate the extent to which rural Africans shaped South Africa was undertaken in *Hidden Struggles in Rural South Africa* by Beinart and Bundy. This is an important book because its detailed regional studies present rich information on the perceptions and initiatives of Africans in the Transkei and surrounding districts during the period 1870 to 1930. But it did not go far enough.

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20 T. Marcus, *Modernising Super-Exploitation: Restructuring South African Agriculture* (London, Zed Books, 1989), p. 5.

21 See J. Lonsdale, 'From Colony to Industrial State', p. 70.

22 C. Bundy, *The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry, Second Ed.* (Cape Town, David Philip, 1988).

23 W. Beinart, '*Joyini Inkomo*: Cattle advances and the origins of migrancy from Pondoland', in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 1979; P. Delius, 'Migrant Labour and the Pedi', in S. Marks & A. Atmore, eds., *Economy and Society in Pre-Industrial South Africa* (London, Longman, 1980); P. Harries, 'Kinship, Ideology and the Nature of Pre-colonial Labour Migration', in Marks & Rathbone, eds., *Industrialisation and Social Change*.

Despite arguing that rural 'preferences and pressures' had to be accommodated by the South African state, the authors concentrate more on the political *potential* of rural resistance. They argue that this resistance was ambiguous, and *could* be transformative if channelled in the right way.[24] While this issue is not unimportant, an emphasis on what might have been undermines the importance of the effects that the resistance actually had. Beinart and Bundy did not give a clear indication of how the rural areas should be characterised, and this made it difficult to locate resistance within a broader process. They do refer, in passing, to the subjects of their book as a 'class-in-transition', which suggests that the 'backward looking' responses they describe were merely temporary phenomena soon to be replaced by a more constructive politics once Transkeians became 'fully proletarianised'.[25] Beinart and Bundy do not effectively situate their 'hidden struggles' within a theoretical framework in which 'there is no inevitability about the direction of change'.[26] Thus they fail to give African resistance its full status as one of the factors in 'complex struggles over specific resources and perceived advantage', whose unpredictable outcome 'determined the direction of history'.[27]

Beinart, Delius and Trapido's *Putting a Plough to the Ground*, on the other hand, successfully deals with precisely these issues.[28] The book is directly concerned with the problem of 'transition' and attempts to fit the African resistance outlined in some of their case studies within a broader process of change. Although the authors offer no detailed solutions, they do assert, firstly, that the direction of change was not pre-determined and, secondly, that there was no simple transition from pre-capitalism to capitalism. From these starting points it is possible to

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24 Beinart & Bundy, *Hidden Struggles*, p. 39.

25 Beinart & Bundy, *Hidden Struggles*, p. 30; A clear version of this approach is advanced by T. Lodge in his Foreword to M. Basner, *Am I An African? The political memoirs of H.M. Basner* (Johannesburg, Wits Univ Press, 1993), p. xii: 'In the early stages of industrial revolutions the wellsprings of revolt are often stronger in social groups threatened with extinction than among those in the process of being born. Basner directed his exhortations at the people who were being crushed by the emerging capitalist social relations in the countryside, the "flotsam and jetsam" left behind by the defeated African peasantry.'

26 S. Marks & R. Rathbone, 'The History of the Family in Africa: Introduction', in *Journal of African History*, 24, (1983), p. 153.

27 Marks & Rathbone, 'The History of the Family in Africa', p. 153.

28 W. Beinart, P. Delius, S. Trapido, *Putting a Plough To the Ground* (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1986).

conceptualise rural societies as products of unpredictable conflicts between different groups of people. These people were constrained by the structures of their time and place but they nevertheless acted on the world in terms of values in which they believed.[29] Their unpredictable actions and interactions ensured that white farming districts did not move unavoidably along a path traversed by European capitalist models. Instead, although affected by international developments, rural South Africa was continuously pushed in peculiar directions by, among other factors, African resistance.

The recent literature dealing with white farming districts has reflected the growing acceptance that Africans were important historical actors. These works have provided us with a much clearer sense of the complex processes that produced particular South African conditions, but some are still influenced by teleological approaches. Krikler is particularly guilty of this. He demonstrates that African communities in the Transvaal fought to regain their land during the Boer War, and he depicts farm labour relations in its aftermath. But his account is marred by his reductionist framework which insists on pre-determined stages and places very narrow limits on the possible outcomes of rural conflict. Krikler also asserts that the struggle between black tenants and white landlords was a class struggle in which the consciousness of the participants was irrelevant.[30] Apart from representing an extremely problematic separation between action and ideas, this approach also ignores the racism that allowed white farmers to regard

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29 If a theoretical justification for human agency is to be achieved it is necessary to conceive of a dynamic interaction between social and ideological spheres. J.C. Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1976), p. 166, provided us with such a perspective. He argued that poor people's needs are not necessarily met by the ideas handed down by elites. A peasant's need to assure subsistence, for example, is embedded within, 'a fund of moral values, a set of concrete social relationships, a pattern of expectations about the behaviour of others, and a sense of how those in his culture have proceeded to similar goals in the past'. But when contradictions arise between his needs and his values, the peasant will start to look for new ideas, or re-interpret existing ones. This re-interpretation, Scott argued, is a creative process undertaken during conversations between people who share the same circumstances. Within this framework values and ideas are passed on between people, from institutions to individuals, and, often through the family, from one generation to the next. People act on and transform the world according to values that are transferred in this way. On the other hand, their actions are limited by the nature of the 'productive forces' and by competition with others who have different values. As people act on the world so their values are influenced by interactions with the opportunities and obstacles inherent within any new context.

30 Krikler, *Revolution From Above*, p. 36.

themselves as different from Africans and to set up racial structures of domination that cannot be equated with class.

Keegan, in his recent book on rural transformations on the highveld before 1915, applies a much more subtle and open-ended approach to similar processes. Keegan argues that share-cropping was 'a bridge to more explicitly capitalist agriculture in which there was no place for black household production'.[31] He also describes labour tenancy as a 'solution to the problems of labour supervision and control in the face of black tenants' determination to maintain some kind of independent productive base'.[32] These two relationships clearly grew out of a process of conflict and compromise between blacks and whites. Further, sharecropping's demise was brought about by racism that was promoted by white farmers and supported, to some extent, by the state. State intervention on behalf of white farmers was, in fact, the instrument that allowed the latter group to establish their dominance. Therefore racism enabled the 'more explicitly capitalist agriculture' to emerge during the twentieth century, and elements of state support and racism continued, Keegan argues, to have an influence well into the 1980s.[33]

Bradford's study of the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU) deals with resistance in white farming districts throughout South Africa during the 1920s, and, although her approach is much more subtle than Krikler's, she too assumes that the outcome of rural conflicts can be predicted. She deals with a type of African resistance that was organised and fairly dramatic. During the period of her study some farmers were expanding their production and, consequently, were intensifying the demands they made on labour tenant families. Others were using land on farms that had previously been occupied only by Africans.[34] These were processes that would continue after the 1920s but, due to the ICU's intervention, they were opposed openly, in a dramatic fashion, at that particular time. A rural resistance movement on the same scale did not emerge in the following four

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31 Keegan, *Rural Transformations*, p. 198.
32 Keegan, *Rural Transformations*, p. 205.
33 Keegan, *Rural Transformations*, p. 206.
34 Bradford, *A Taste of Freedom*, p. 262.

decades. Nevertheless, in individual districts, struggles continued around the issues that attracted the ICU's rural support in the 1920s. Bradford does not deal adequately with this fact and its implications for South African history. She argues instead that the revolts of the 1920s were a futile attempt to resist 'Africans' forced march into the working class' and that their value lay primarily in the lessons for future attempts to overthrow the racist state and the capitalist system.[35]

Bradford's tendency towards a teleological approach is even more apparent in her assessment of white farming areas after 1930. She claims in 'Highways, Byways and Culs-de-sac' that the transition from pre-capitalism to a 'specifically capitalist mode of production in its developed form' was drawn out, complex and uneven, but nevertheless inevitable. She regards the 1930s and 40s as crucial decades in the transition, and, although Africans in the 1980s behaved in a non-capitalist manner, this, in her view, merely illustrates the length of the period of transition. From this perspective the struggles of the period 1930 to 1980 provide material for an interesting historiography, but had no effect on the eventual outcome.[36]

In *Putting a Plough to the Ground* Beinart and Delius argue that capitalism should be used as a heuristic device.[37] This line of argument is strongly supported here and extended to other concepts, such as proletarianisation. Such abstractions are only useful if they refer to general trends that help us to make sense of the particular.[38] There were forces that limited farm workers' access to land and undermined the coherence of rural family structures, which pushed Africans on farms closer to the status of 'free proletarians', but white and African opposition often prevented 'full proletarianisation', producing very different social

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35 Bradford, *A Taste of Freedom*, pp. 266; 278.

36 H. Bradford, 'Highways, Byways, and Culs-de-sac: The transition to agrarian Capitalism in revisionist South African history', in J. Brown *et al*, *History From South Africa: Alternative visions and practices* (Philadelphia, Temple Univ. Press, 1991), pp. 46-47.

37 Beinart *et al*, *Putting a Plough*, p. 17; See also R. Albritton, 'Did Agrarian Capitalism Exist?', in *The Journal of Peasant Studies* Vol. 20, No. 3, April 1993, pp. 437-438: 'I do not reject the term [agrarian capitalism] lightly, for it does serve a certain heuristic purpose in underscoring the very important need to focus ... on class formation ... It is not a sufficiently accurate conceptual instrument to clearly understand the process of change that it labels ...'.

38 D. Sayer, *The Violence of Abstraction* (New York, Basil Blackwell, 1987).

relations instead. Variations in the constellation of forces and the unpredictability of human agency led to an infinite variety of development paths whose outcome was never an abstract 'Capitalism' but rather relations of production specific to their time and place.[39]

Van Onselen has suggested ways of conceiving the specific character of agrarian relations in some parts of South Africa. His work on 'Cultural Osmosis' shows that the interactions between black share-croppers and white farmers affected the practices and beliefs of both 'races'.[40] Thus, even at the cultural level, conflicts and compromises produced new formations that had particular effects on subsequent historical developments. In a more recent paper, Van Onselen offers a deeper analysis of the structures of racial interaction. He argues that relationships on white farms in the western Transvaal were often formulated within a paternalist framework, in which African family structures were harnessed by white farmers looking for a cheap and controlled labour source.[41] These relationships, and the particular form they took in the Lydenburg district, are at the centre of the analysis presented in this thesis.

PERIOD AND REGION

Apart from Van Onselen's coverage of the western Transvaal in the 1940s and Bradford's overview, which is not based on new research, no detailed assessment of white farming districts after 1930 has emerged. This thesis intends to fill the gap by applying the arguments developed in the literature survey above to a study of African resistance in the Transvaal district of Lydenburg. This district has been chosen as the focus of the thesis for a number of reasons. Firstly, Lydenburg forms part of a region that I have labelled 'the mid-eastern Transvaal' about which very little is known. The authors who have done work on eastern Transvaal agriculture in the twentieth century have concentrated on highveld regions which, due to good

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39 J. Harriss, *Capitalism and Peasant Farming* (Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 1, quotes Lenin to the effect that 'Infinitely diverse combinations of elements of this or that type of capitalist evolution are possible'.

40 Van Onselen, 'Race and Class in the South African Countryside'.

41 C. van Onselen, 'The Social and Economic Underpinnings of Paternalism'. See also Keegan, *Rural Transformations*, p. 157.

soils, their closeness to Johannesburg and some farmers' exceptional access to capital, grew much faster than the districts lying further east.[42] The more successful eastern Transvaal farmers were in Bethal, Standerton, Southern Middelburg and parts of Ermelo. The less wealthy mid-eastern Transvaal consisted of Lydenburg, Belfast, Carolina, Northern Middelburg and the rest of Ermelo.

Further, Lydenburg is an important region because it is situated alongside Sekhukhuneland. This produced many perceptible linkages to developments in the 'reserve', which allows the thesis to demonstrate the similarities and the differences between African resistance in the two administrative regions. Lydenburg was also the only district to be proclaimed in terms of the pre-Apartheid version of Chapter Four of the 1936 Land Act, resulting in an interesting and important local conflict. Lastly, a number of large scale removals occurred in Lydenburg that have not yet received any academic attention. The district therefore yields sufficient information for a detailed analysis of African resistance. The other districts of the mid-eastern Transvaal provide a regional context and allow for an occasional broadening of the picture.

This study does not intend to follow the example of regional studies like *Black Mountain*, which presents a detailed history of one district.[43] What is undertaken here is not a 'History of Lydenburg' but a focus on that district in order to demonstrate how, within the framework of this specific regional economy, Africans responded to broader processes of domination and exploitation. The thesis is therefore concerned to make claims about rural processes that reach beyond the mid-eastern Transvaal. Conflicts and compromises in other regions will be influenced by different rhythms of accumulation, and variations in culture, but the vitality of African responses and the issues that they regarded as important will,

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42 See especially H. Bradford, 'Getting Away with Murder: "Mealie Kings", the State and foreigners in the eastern Transvaal, c1918-1950', in P. Bonner, *et al*, *Apartheid's Genesis* (Johannesburg, Ravan & Wits University Press, 1993), pp. 96-119.

43 C. Murray, *Black Mountain: Land, class and power in the eastern Orange Free State, 1880s-1980s* (Johannesburg, Wits Univ. Press, 1992).

for example, be broadly similar. Therefore, the concern here is to raise new questions about rural processes which can then be applied to an investigation of African resistance in other regions.

My analysis of these rural processes traverses a number of key episodes in the relationship between whites and blacks on the land in Lydenburg. 1930 forms the backbone of the study because the arrival of the Native Economic Commission in Lydenburg gave white farmers and labour tenants the opportunity to express their grievances and to provide a detailed account of social conditions on the land. Both parties indicated that gradual economic growth had placed strain on the relations between white farmers and their tenants. The existing labour tenancy contracts gave tenant families access to land, cattle and the space to cultivate their crops and herd their cattle. Farmers who expanded their production attempted to draw the extra labour that they needed from the African families already living on the farms. This threatened to undermine the agricultural activities of tenant families and they responded by defending the aspects of African independence that existed within the labour tenant system.

Economic growth was interrupted by the Great Depression but appeared to be back on track in 1937 when tenants and farmers once again complained about the difficulties created by new labour requirements. In 1938 the white farmers of Lydenburg enlisted the help of the state to solve these difficulties in their favour. This led to the proclamation of Chapter Four of the 1936 Land Act, which had the potential to boost farmers' control over tenants. However, the proclamation of the Chapter produced a widespread reaction from tenants which induced the state to suspend the Chapter in 1939. The outbreak of World War Two during that year created the danger of food shortages in South Africa and prompted the state to encourage local agriculture to a greater extent through the marketing structures established in the 1930s. Lydenburg farmers responded by expanding and diversifying production. Many became more prosperous during the war and post-war years. This white prosperity was enhanced even further by the coming to power of the National Party in 1948. The post-1948 state gave farmers greater

assistance with marketing and labour problems. In this context, some labour tenants continued to defend the remnants of their independent access to land, but others became disillusioned with a rural lifestyle and sought alternatives in the cities.

The state then intervened more and more decisively, making it extremely difficult for Africans to pursue either strategy. From 1949 to 1961, rent-tenant and land-owning communities - the most independent land occupiers in Lydenburg - were forced out of the district. After 1955, labour bureaux and pass laws undermined the ability of labour tenants to choose their employers within the rural areas, and to move between rural and urban areas. Africans nevertheless continued to resist, and the state, frustrated by its inability to create a harmonious, bureaucratically regulated, rural labour market, decided in 1960 that the only way to overcome the resistance of labour tenants was to legislate them out of existence. During the next decade a growing number of tenants were evicted. Many left of their own accord, and, although some farmers remained concerned about remaining tenants struggling against the destruction of labour tenancy, the state put the final nail in the system's coffin in 1970. In August of that year the state prohibited the registration of any new tenant contracts in Lydenburg. The study ends at this point as the ban marked the discontinuation of the state's attempts to distribute farm labour evenly. (The first attempt to evenly distribute labour in the Transvaal was the Squatters Law of 1887.) After 1970 the state strove to turn farm labourers into closely controlled migrants housed in economically decimated 'reserves'. The implementation of these policies produced a new set of contradictions and struggles.

THEMES

The thesis describes transformations in which the centralised control of the state increased steadily, in which white farmers gained both economic and political power and in which Africans lost their hold over land in white farming districts. This transformation was not inevitable and was shaped instead by conflicts and compromises at numerous levels. Central to understanding this process of conflict

and compromise is an approach which emphasises human agency. The thesis therefore employs assumptions about the nature of capitalism, racism, and culture that permit an analysis in which people play a central role in making their own history. Capitalism, for example, is not regarded as the inevitable outcome of a 'path' determined by the laws of progress. It is argued here that capitalism consists of both a relation of production and a set of values that favour particular forms of accumulation. Although the two are related they do not necessarily exist in correspondence to each other. Capitalist values are a cultural phenomenon, and they have influenced the actions of individuals who settled in parts of the world that were completely devoid of capitalist relations of production. Capitalism is therefore not an abstract 'motor of history' that exists independently of people's ideas. Instead, it is people who introduce and support capitalism against the opposition of other people; and it is people who in this social framework subsequently react to economic conditions in a capitalist (or non-capitalist) way.

This argument is informed by a number of comparative perspectives. In the Southern United States, Genovese shows, the absence of capitalist relations of production, in which workers are separated from the means of production, introduced particular distortions, or contradictions, into a society where capitalist accumulation was venerated.[44] But, as Denoon, Elkins and Carr have argued, the capitalist values of white settlers in South Africa, the Southern States of America and Mexico, had a crucial influence on the way these settlers responded to economic opportunities and technological changes.[45] The capitalist values described by these authors consisted of an acceptance that the market should determine people's economic behaviour and a respect for 'business for the sake of business'. These values grew out of the societies from which the settlers came and were sustained by a growing international market that promoted such values.[46]

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44 E. Genovese, 'The Slave South: An Interpretation', in A. Weinstein & F.O. Gatell, eds., *American Negro Slavery* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1979), p. 295; E. Genovese, *The World the Slave Holders Made* (London, A. Lane, 1970), p. 11.

45 D. Denoon, *Settler Capitalism* (Oxford, Clarendon, 1983); R. Carr, 'Mexican Agrarian Reform 1910-1960', in E.L. Jones & S.J. Woolf, eds., *Agrarian Change and Economic Development* (London, Methuen, 1969), pp. 153 - 154; S. M. Elkins, 'Review of Genovese's Political Economy of Slavery', in Weinstein & Gatell, eds., *American Negro Slavery*, p. 345.

46 Elkins, 'Review of Genovese's Political Economy', p. 345.

They were not destroyed by colonial contexts that mitigated against their realisation. As Weber exclaimed when he examined Benjamin Franklin's teachings:

> 'In the backwoods small bourgeois circumstances of Pennsylvania in the eighteenth century, where business threatened for simple lack of money to fall back into barter, where there was hardly a sign of large enterprise, where only the earliest beginnings of banking were to be found, the [spirit of capitalist accumulation] was considered the essence of moral conduct, even commanded in the name of duty.'[47]

This study explores how, in a context where material conditions and notions of a racial community contradicted capitalist values, the latter nevertheless influenced the actions of both white farmers and state officials.

Racism - based on constructed notions of biological differences - was another prominent ideological component of most settlers' consciousness. It helped to shape the character of society by introducing the factor of race into conflicts between white landlords and African tenants. These racial factors, it is argued, cannot be reduced to, or explained by, abstract economic interests.

The approach adopted here thus rejects Krikler's recent attempt to regard agrarian conflicts purely in class terms. Krikler, in fact, makes an important point in suggesting that African share-croppers and prosperous rent-tenants represented an alternative route to 'Capitalism' in the countryside.[48] This is important because, as Keegan demonstrates, it was *racist* fears and the *racially* defined political power of white farmers that prevented these prosperous Africans from progressing and capitalising.[49] White farmers repeatedly objected to black competition and demanded subservient, cheap labour. These demands reinforced racism at a social and political level, prevented the establishment of a free labour market, and shaped the response of Africans. Africans were aware that they were victimised because they were black and that whites had political, and increasingly economic, power because they were white. Consequently Africans perceived themselves to be involved in a racial struggle, which had a crucial impact on their

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47 G. Marshall, *In Search of the Spirit of Capitalism* (London, Hutchinson, 1982), p. 54.
48 Krikler, *Revolution from Above, p. 126.*
49 Keegan, *Rural Transformations*, pp. 35; 95; 159.

behaviour and resistance.

The liberal/marxist debate outlined above has frequently been referred to as the 'race/class debate' - by which is meant that liberals believed race to be the prime determinant of South African society, while marxists opted for class. Neither premise is adopted here. Instead the approach is in broad agreement with Posel's criticisms of both positions and her stress on 'the tensions and contradictions between racial policy and capitalism, ... and the irreducible importance of political and ideological factors'.[50] Bradford and Keegan have referred to the importance of race but they do not spell out clearly how they build this into their theoretical approach. Thus, by not challenging the class bias of the marxist tradition to which they both pledge allegiance, they undermine, to some extent, the significance of race in their narratives.[51]

The 'irreducible importance of ideological factors' is applied further to African resistance by taking seriously the cultural framework in which much of this opposition was expressed. African ideas and cultures have not received a great deal of attention in much of the historical literature because the written documents that most historians rely on do not, as a rule, present first-hand African accounts of events. Anthropologists have for a long time overcome this problem through the methodology of participant observation, and there are therefore a number of interesting insights in the anthropological literature that have not, until recently, found their way into the historiography.[52] Social historians have sought to overcome these shortcomings through oral sources. Keegan and Bradford have used interviews to provide some insights into the world-views that motivated African tenants and share-croppers to resist.[53] I will expand on, and give greater emphasis to, the discussion of these world-views.

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50 D. Posel, 'Rethinking the "Race-Class Debate" in South African Historiography', in *Social Dynamics*, 9(1), 1983, p. 63.

51 Keegan, *Rural Transformations*, p. 205; Bradford, *A Taste of Freedom*, p. 45.

52 See for example J. & J. Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution* (Chicago, Univ. of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 245, for crucial insights on African perceptions of whites. Delius, 'Sebatakgomo', p. 586, has come up with similar observations based on oral interviews.

53 See Bradford, *A Taste of Freedom*, pp. 45-49.

The emphasis on the specificity of African resistance brings into sharp relief, not only the 'Africaness' of various responses, but also the divisions and inequalities within African societies. These divisions are important for two reasons: they had their own influence on African reactions to state policy and exploitation; and the attempt within communities to mend these divisions or to prevent them from becoming manifest involved the constant reformulation of institutions like the household, the chieftaincy and the ethnic community. The household was the most important unit of organisation amongst the Africans studied here. Its specific forms and in-built conflicts are examined in detail in this thesis. The importance of this institution has often been alluded to in the historical literature but a detailed exploration of its various configurations has yet to be undertaken. In filling this gap, the thesis relies to a large extent on the work of anthropologists who, although they often lack a historical perspective, have emphasised the changing character of rural households and the various forms of resistance within individual households.[54]

If Africans were internally divided then so were whites. White farmers were economically stratified and frequently clashed over the kind of state assistance they required. Further, the state, although responsive to its white constituents, was pulled in various directions by internal conflicts and concern with its legitimacy amongst the disenfranchised majority. In order to accommodate these complex processes the thesis draws on the competing views of Dubow and Bradford. Dubow argues that the state was reluctant to help farmers who sought controlled, cheap labour because involvement in these practices undermined the

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[54] See D. James, 'Land Shortage and Inheritance in a Lebowa Village', in *Social Dynamics* 14(2) 1988; D. James, 'A Question of Ethnicity: Ndzunza Ndebele in a Lebowa village', in *JSAS*, Vol. 16, No. 1, March 1990, p. 37; D. James, '"Hit him on the nose when he is cheeky" - Women Workers, Ethnicity and new Conceptions of Gender', Unpublished paper presented as Symposium on Work, Class & Culture (Univ. of Wits, June, 1993); See also, I. Niehaus, 'Disharmonious Spouses and Harmonious Siblings', Unpublished Seminar Paper; L. Bank, 'Angry Men and Working Women', Unpublished Seminar Paper; H. O. Mönnig, *The Pedi* (Pretoria, Von Schaik, 1967); J. Stadler, 'Bridewealth and the Deferral of Marriage', in *Africa Perspective*, Vol. 2, No. 1, December 1993. The term household is preferred over homestead because much of the anthropological literature cited above uses the term, and because the term household seems to fit more clearly than homestead with the kind of division of labour that existed in labour tenant contracts. Keegan, *Rural Transformations*, pp. 138-139, also uses household.

state's legitimacy amongst Africans. Bradford counters that Dubow fails to realise that the state dealt differently with richer and poorer farmers and that, because the former played an important role in the economy, the state was often prepared to compromise its concern with legitimacy in order to help these farmers gain access to labourers.[55] Bradford's paper succeeds in pointing to the limited autonomy of the state. States have invariably been concerned with economic growth and, short of completely taking over the economy, have tried to accommodate leading economic accumulators. But states were also concerned about control and social order. As Dubow's work indicates, this concern is important, because the way states perceive order, and how to maintain it, has had an important influence on the way they dealt with economic accumulation.[56] This thesis therefore argues that the state dealt differently with different farmers and that the state had its own concerns, which influenced the extent to which any farmer could expect state assistance with coercive labour practices.

METHODOLOGY

This introduction has concentrated so far on describing the ideas and arguments that influenced the narrative presented in the following chapters. But the method used to gather the material that forms the substance of that narrative must also be explained. This is the task undertaken below.

Let us firstly return to the issue of concentrating on one district. I found a narrow regional focus useful because it facilitated in-depth research. It was possible to scour the archives and thus to use a solid and broad base of evidence for the construction of the regional economy of Lydenburg. By combining the evidence that emerges from the Department of Agriculture, government commissions, the *Lydenburg News* and various other disparate sources, it was possible to get a sense of economic developments more nuanced and detailed than would have been

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55 S. Dubow, *Racial Segregation and the Origins of Apartheid in South Africa, 1919-36* (Oxford, Clarendon, 1989), pp. 64; 120; H. Bradford, 'Getting Away with Murder', pp. 96-119.

56 For an application of this argument to nineteenth century European States, see C. Trebilcock, *The Industrialisation of the Continental Powers, 1780-1914* (London, Longman, 1981).

possible in a broader study.[57]

The greatest advantage, however, lies in the gathering of oral evidence, since the narrow focus allowed me to work in one area where I could tap into local networks. Rather than moving around the country, establishing links with the community from scratch in every new locality, I spent time in one area, where I established myself, and thus gained easier access to both numbers of people and quality of information. 'Getting known' in one area made it easier for me to establish some basis for trust, which ensured that local people were willing to talk.

Despite these advantages, the gathering of oral and archival evidence still presented a number of difficulties, many of which could not be overcome completely. In order to discuss these problems the evidence has to be divided into two categories: information on people's actions and information on the ideas that motivated people to act. The former kind of information is easier to gather, but even here there are problems. Descriptions of events by observers are fallible, influenced by biases and selective memories. These problems are present in archival evidence but are even more prevalent during oral interviews, in which the interviewee is required to remember an event that happened a long time ago, the revival of which is subject to new pressures in the present. Although the differences between oral and written evidence can be exaggerated,[58] the historian must handle the evidence with care, and heed the advice of Vansina, who points to the problems of selectivity and interpretation:

> 'Selectivity implies discarding certain information one has about the past and from that pool of information keeping only what is still significant in the present. However, the information that is retained, still comes from the past. Interpretation means to alter information from the past to give it new meaning and as interpretation is more creative than selection it is also more dangerous, but not to the point that all is to be rejected.'[59]

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57 There were however problems in filling some of the gaps that these sources did not fill. Unfortunately I was unable to fill these gaps with extensive interviews or Lydenburg archives such as the cooperative. See Appendix, p. 321.

58 See C. Van Onselen, 'The Reconstruction of Rural Life from Oral Testimony', in *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 3, April 1993, for a penetrative discussion on the similarities and differences between oral and written evidence.

59 J. Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History* (London, James Currey, 1985), p. 191.

Vansina urges the historian to discover as many versions of one story as possible in order to get a full picture and to avoid relying on accounts that merely emerge out of the imagination of the interviewee.[60]

Of course this does not guarantee objectivity, and the selection of events that are deemed important is determined, finally, by the historian's interests. Nevertheless, I tried to be open to interpretations suggested by the evidence. Shifts in my approach were produced by documents and interviews which emphasised events that I had not previously considered as important.

The interpretation of ideas is more difficult because, in this particular project, it involved me in an attempt to understand and reconstruct an unfamiliar culture. Ginzburg points to some of the difficulties involved in this exercise. The two main problems identified by Ginzburg are the lack of evidence on the culture of the 'lower classes' and, where there is some evidence, the difficulty of separating 'popular culture' from the culture that dominates the written forms in which the evidence survives.[61] This perception can be supplemented with Scott's notion of the 'hidden transcript', which suggests that people represent themselves in a certain way to figures of authority and in a quite different way when in the exclusive company of social equals.[62] These factors clearly make it difficult for the researcher, as an 'outsider', adequately to grasp the elements of the culture that motivated resistance. The written documents used in this thesis most prominently displayed these problems. The documents of Government Departments rarely gave Africans a voice, and the commissions, although often revealing candid African assertions, must be treated with care because of their authoritative and formal character.

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60 P. Irwin, *Liptako Speaks* (Princeton University Press, 1981); J. Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History*, p. 147. A further reason for this caution is the difficult of distinguishing between the forms of consciousness held by the interviewee at the time of his or her narration and the consciousness that existed in the past. The historian must, therefore, back up his assumptions about what kind of ideas existed in the past with other evidence that suggests that such a way of thinking was indeed plausible at such a time.

61 C. Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a sixteenth century miller* (London, Routledge, 1980).

62 Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance.*

These silences were tackled through oral interviews with people who remembered the conflicts in Lydenburg. But interviews are not conducted in a neutral arena, producing pristine examples of African consciousness. A white male researcher like myself is regarded as an outsider and is often associated, initially, with structures of authority when he enters a 'black area' like Sekhukhuneland. These perceptions have to be overcome to some extent if any progress is to be made in an interview, and one of the factors that facilitated this was a cross-cutting, common South African identity that I shared with those I interviewed. But, like my own biases, the differences and suspicions can never be overcome entirely. As Grele notes, oral interviews are often a battle between what the interviewer wants to know and what the interviewee wants to tell.[63]

Nevertheless, there were numerous occasions when, after some resistance, I allowed my prejudices to be penetrated. Often I would become frustrated, believing that I could not find the information I wanted because the interviewees were recalcitrant, until a particularly articulate person would force me to realise that the frustration was in fact rooted in my own mistaken assumptions about the past. Such a realisation led to a re-examination of earlier interviews and to the discovery of rich information on historical processes in Lydenburg. This is what makes oral research so valuable. The 'perspective from below' can radically alter accepted wisdoms which are often generated by academics working with theoretical models derived from Europe, and are usually based on documentary evidence produced by the state.

THESIS STRUCTURE

The narrative below is divided into eight chapters. Chapter One deals with the conflicts and compromises that prior to 1930 produced the social relations and boundaries of Lydenburg. The chapter emphasises the ideas and practices that caused local residents to identify themselves as white farmers, Africans and state officials. Despite their dynamic, changeable nature, these identities nevertheless

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63 R. Grele, 'History and the Languages of History in the Oral History Interview', Unpublished History Workshop Paper, 1990, p. 5.

played a crucial role in shaping subsequent historical processes.

Chapter Two outlines the changing economic context in which Africans fought for their interests. The chapter examines the economic development of the district and demonstrates the importance of state intervention in this process. Economic divisions amongst white farmers are also scrutinised.

Chapter Three looks at the resistance of labour tenants during the 1930s, focusing mostly on the widespread and determined opposition to the 1936 Land Act. The chapter demonstrates that, despite conflicts within families, tenant families nevertheless stuck together, ardently defending their land and independence.

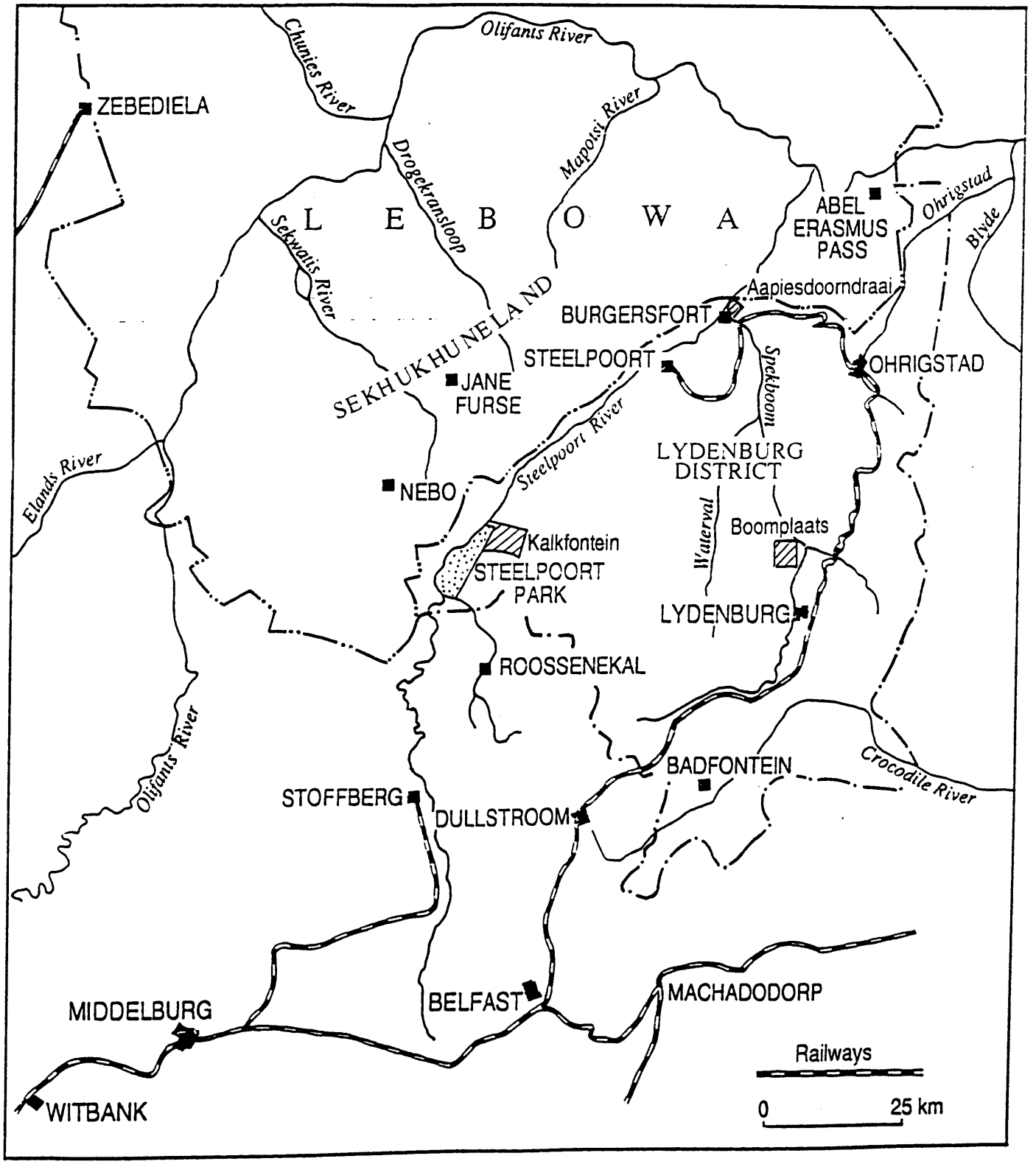
Chapter Four describes the ambiguous relationship between the state and white farmers in the mid-eastern Transvaal. This ambiguity allowed labour tenant resistance to have a decisive impact. However, after 1948 the balance of power shifted because of changes within the state and a strengthening of the state's commitment to poorer farmers.

Chapter Five shows that after 1939 the struggle for land in Lydenburg was also weakened by the urban employment opportunities that emerged at a time when many farmers increased their labour demands. Struggles within African families became more intense, which made it difficult for tenants to sustain a strong commitment to a rural lifestyle based on land and some independence.

Chapter Six shows that rent tenants and African land owners were the first to feel the brunt of more determined state interventions. Most lost their land in Lydenburg but their resistance nevertheless had lasting effects.

Chapters Seven and Eight describe the state initiatives launched against labour tenants in the 1950s and 1960s. The chapters show that these initiatives were constantly reshaped and influenced by African reactions. However, by 1970 African land occupation in Lydenburg was all but destroyed.

THE LYDENBURG DISTRICT AFTER 1922[1]



[1] In 1922 the Lydenburg district lost the eastern lowveld areas, which became the Pilgrims Rest district.

CHAPTER ONE

THE MAKING OF LYDENBURG: SOCIAL RELATIONS AND BOUNDARIES BEFORE 1930

> 'Travelling on the Pietersburg road through the beautiful fertile Waterfall Valley until it opens out upon vast stretches of bush covered country, the writer soon found himself under the towering heights of the Marone Mountains, at the foot of which lies the area known as Burgersfort. Crossing the Steelpoort, a sharp turn to the right leads into the road to Penge Asbestos Mine. Spinning along over the fairly good surface, rolling plains unfold to the left ending abruptly against gigantic hills of rugged grandeur, the krantzen of many hues and numerous Euphorbia trees complete the picture set in a maze of bushy flats.'[1]

The district described above begins on the western side of the Drakensberg mountains, at the top of the Long-Tom Pass, and extends westwards to the Steelpoort River. The town of Lydenburg is situated just beyond the apex of the pass. A few kilometres westwards the altitude drops again through the Waterfall, Spekboom and Steelpoort Valleys, on the route described above. To the south of the town the land gradually rises and forms part of the eastern Transvaal highveld. The Ohrigstad Valley is situated in the north-east, at the end of which the altitude rapidly drops into the lowveld via the Abel Erasmus pass. The Crocodile River Valley is squashed into the south eastern corner of the district. All these valleys are dissected by rivers that are dependable and can be used for irrigation.[2]

These physical features now fall within a district called Lydenburg; a fairly recent administrative invention. This chapter describes the districts' origins and places an emphasis on the ideas that came to define and motivate Africans, white farmers and state officials within the gradually established boundaries of Lydenburg. The identities and values created during the formation of Lydenburg

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1 *Lydenburg News*, 26 April 1940.
2 Central Archives Depot (CAD), Soil Conservation (BB), No. H5100/LYD, Vol. 878, Reports, 7 August 1948 - 25 March 1958.

are delineated here because they strongly influenced the processes of the post-1930 period. It is true that ideas were modified in response to changing economic, social and political circumstances, but people nevertheless responded to these changes in terms of an existing cultural framework. Comprehending the historical character of this framework is therefore of crucial importance.

The analysis of Lydenburg's creation starts with the arrival of white settlers in the eastern Transvaal. Whites encountered well established African settlements, and attempted to force these Africans to accept a new, racially stratified order. White endeavours were based on ideas and practices that had not previously existed in the eastern Transvaal. Their origins are therefore explored in the chapter.

The establishment of a 'white district' named Lydenburg is then analyzed. Within this district a number of labour relations began to emerge between white employers and African workers. These relations were initiated by white labour needs but the form they acquired was also determined by African interests. The character of these interests is examined before the chapter moves on to the Boer War, which defined Lydenburg's transition from the nineteenth to the twentieth century. The Boer War brought many of the tensions between whites and Africans out into the open. Africans attempted to rid themselves of white domination, but their attempts to re-establish chiefly and household independence were thwarted by the policies of the Milner state. The creation of this state in 1902 introduced a new factor into the processes that shaped Lydenburg. At first the new state reinforced the position of white settlers, and continued to be responsive to their demands. But, at a regional level, the Milner administration introduced Native Commissioners influenced by a paternalist attitude towards disenfranchised Africans. The Commissioners tried to protect their African 'charges' from abuse, and therefore often worked against white farmers.

In the early twentieth century conflicting interests within Lydenburg continued to modify the district's social structure and boundary. The chapter demonstrates this by examining the balance of power at the beginning of the twentieth century,

and by assessing African and white views of appropriate relations on the land. The chapter then shows how these attitudes were translated into action during the 1910s and 1920s. This action took the form of conflict and compromises which were crucially influenced by the interventions of the state at both a local and a central level.

LYDENBURG BEFORE THE ARRIVAL OF WHITE SETTLERS

The area that became the 'white Lydenburg district' in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was occupied from at least the sixth century A.D. by African farmers who used iron tools to till the soil.[3] Many of the early African settlements were situated in the area where the town of Lydenburg became established, alongside the rivers that later also attracted whites. During the fifteenth century a new group of people, culturally related to the Sotho/Tswana group of today, assimilated the early iron age settlers and established extensive settlements on the eastern escarpment.[4] Then, in the 1650s, the Maroteng moved from the Pretoria district to the Steelpoort Valley in the north western part of Lydenburg where they later established the foundations of the Pedi polity. The formation of this Pedi state was accompanied by a fair amount of conflict which, possibly as the result of declining trade opportunities, escalated during the late eighteenth century.[5] The uncertainty produced by this conflict may explain why the settlements on the eastern escarpment do not feature in the evidence of assimilation and wars of conquest that led to the formation of the Pedi state. The eastern parts of the district are more open and less mountainous than the western parts, and it is possible that most people were consequently concentrated in the more defendable parts of the west, with only scattered settlements remaining in

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3 M. Hall, *The Changing Past: Farmers, Kings and Traders in Southern Africa, 200-1860* (Cape Town, David Phillip, 1987), p. 41; T. Evers, 'Excavations at the Lydenburg Heads Site, Eastern Transvaal, South Africa', in *The South African Archaeological Bulletin*, 37, 1982. For details on settlement and farming practices, see M.E. Marker & T.M. Evers, 'Iron Age Settlement and Soil Erosion in the Eastern Transvaal, South Africa, in *The South African Archaeological Bulletin*, 31, 1976, p. 159.

4 T.M. Evers, 'Recent Iron age Research in the Eastern Transvaal South Africa, in *South African Archaeological Bulletin*, 30, 1975; T.M. Evers, 'Oori or Moloko? The Origins of the Sotho-Tswana on the evidence of the Iron Age in the Transvaal', in *South African Journal of Science*, Vol. 79, July 1983.

5 P. Delius, *The Land Belongs to Us: The Pedi polity, the Boers and the British in nineteenth century Transvaal*, (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1983), p. 15.

the east. This tendency was reinforced by the *difaqane*, which pushed the focus of the Pedi state westwards across the Steelpoort River and probably made settlement on the escarpment, in the path of Ndwandwe, Swazi and Zulu armies on their way to skirmishes with the Pedi, extremely difficult.[6] Nevertheless, despite the disruption of African political authority on the Lydenburg side of the Steelpoort, during the 1840s and 1850s numerous scattered communities almost certainly remained throughout the area that later became Lydenburg.[7]

WHITE SETTLERS: THEIR ORIGINS AND VALUES

These settlements faced a new and more permanent threat when white settlers arrived from the Cape in 1845. The settlers established themselves in the northern and eastern parts of the district, just beyond the effective control of the weakened Pedi polity, and then set about reshaping the area. The ideas for their initiatives were derived to some extent from the society that the settlers had left behind in the Cape. Not all settlers were committed to the same ideas in the same way, and there were numerous contradictions within settler culture. But even if this cultural framework was an 'uneasy and contradictory compound - of old answers interacting with new imperatives, in a dynamic web of symbols and talismans', settlers nevertheless interpreted their world from within this complex framework.[8]

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6 Delius, *The Land Belongs to Us*, pp. 20-30; Marker & Evers, 'Iron Age Settlement And Soil Erosion in the Eastern Transvaal, South Africa', credit the Mfecane with disrupting the Iron Age settlements in Lydenburg. On the controversy of the *Mfecane* and *Difaqane*, I follow the recent arguments proposed by J.D. Omer Cooper, 'Has the Mfecane a Future? A Response to the Cobbing Critique', and J.B. Peires, 'Paradigm Deleted: The Materialist Interpretation of the Mfecane', both in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 2, June 1993.

7 See T.M. Evers, 'Three Iron Age Industrial Sites in the Eastern Transvaal', unpublished M.A. Thesis, Johannesburg, Univ of Wits, 1974, p. 73: 'An end date ca. 1890 can be given for the Badfontein tradition'; Personal communication: P. Delius, February 1994; This would also fit with recent reinterpretations that claim the Mfecane was not as disruptive as previously supposed. See J.D. Omer Cooper, 'Has the Mfecane a Future?' See also A.P. van der Merwe, 'Die Naturelle en die Maatskappy te Ohrigstad en Lydenburg, 1845-1857', in *Historiese Studies*, Vol. 2, July 1940-May 1941, p.87; p. 101: 'The other side of the native policy in Ohrigstad was concerned with the treatment of natives whose homes lay within the boundary. They seem to have been of the same type as those encountered in Natal and Western Transvaal, refugees, *scattered kraals and small tribes* who preferred the rule of the farmers to that of Sekwati or Mannikoos.'(My emphasis).

8 J. Lazar, 'Conformity and Conflict: Afrikaner Nationalist Politics in South Africa, 1948-1961', Unpublished PhD Thesis, Oxford, 1987, p. 337.

One element of the ideological compound that had a particularly strong influence on richer, more enterprising farmers in the Cape was the capitalist notion that accumulation was separate from, and more important than, social considerations. The work of Ross has shown that, despite the prominence of slave relations of production, capitalist values were certainly at work in the Cape. Ross describes capital reinvestment to achieve agricultural expansion, a credit rating system and the ruling classes' accumulation of capital in order to maintain their class dominance over other less successful accumulators.[9] Ross' work on the Cape reinforces the view that, 'no slave society in modern times could free itself totally from the economic, social and moral influence of modern capitalism.'[10]

Most of the whites who participated in the 'trek' to the north had not, however, benefitted greatly from these processes of capital accumulation. They were roving pastoralists known as 'trekboers', who were marginally linked to the market orientated, commercial environment of the Cape. They sometimes moved up into the ranks of the more successful producers, but usually struggled to make ends meet and consequently emphasised values that championed security rather than profits.[11] The trekboers stressed their right to land on the basis of their skin colour. Apparently trekboers often stayed on farms that could no longer be maintained productively because they regarded land as a way to avoid proletarianisation or 'serving for hire'.[12] The isolation of the farms shielded children who grew up in this environment from exposure to alternative ways of life. They thus found it difficult to conceive of a life outside farming. The children

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9 R. Ross, 'The Origins of Capitalist Agriculture: A Survey', in W. Beinart, P. Delius, S. Trapido, *Putting a Plough to the Ground* (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1986), pp. 70; 87. For the theory of what constitutes capitalist values see G. Marshall, *In Search of the Spirit of Capitalism* (London, Hutchison, 1982), pp. 55 - 56; 141: Both Marx and Weber stressed the accumulation of capital as an end in itself. Apart from, perhaps, the Puritans studied by Weber in *The Protestant Ethic*, very few capitalists have subscribed exclusively to these principals. They usually do regard money as a means to satisfy personal desires. But, in capitalist societies, these concerns are subjugated to the idea that money is an end in itself, and accumulation is primarily determined by the 'rationality' of the market. See also M. Godelier, *The Mental and the Material* (London, Verso, 1986), p. 42.

10 E. Genovese, *The World the Slave Holders Made* (London, A. Lane, 1970), p. viii.

11 R. Ross, 'The Origins of Capitalist Agriculture', p. 63.

12 Quoted in P.J. Van Der Merwe, *Die Trekboer in die Geskiedenis van die Kaapkolonie* (Cape Town, Nasionale Pers, 1938), p. 192; H. Giliomee, 'Processes in Development of the Southern African Frontier', in H. Lamar & L. Thompson, eds., *The Frontier in History* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1981), p. 81.

did not receive any specific training and were ill equipped to take up a trade in the towns. In addition, inheritance was passed down in the form of cattle or sheep. As a trekboer explained in 1834: '... every child is a Boer, and gets his inheritance in stock, and in what country will people serve for hire, if they can live [as] their own masters?'[13] But these farmers were not only their 'own masters'; they were also masters over subservient black labour in terms of a relationship based on racist assumptions. The trekboers regarded manual-labour as degrading because it was an activity for slaves. Slaves were seen as members of a lesser race, and any activity at their level was 'unsuitable for a white person'.[14] Land-ownership and domination over subservient labour were regarded as natural attributes of being white, which placed racism and slavery at the centre of the rural lifestyle that many white farmers regarded as superior to 'city life'.[15]

Most Transvaal settlers were influenced in some way by both capitalism and racism. They believed that whites were racially superior, and that they were 'true Christians', whereas blacks were 'heathens'.[16] They sustained a common culture because they spoke the same language and derived an identity from religion and the Bible.[17] Undoubtedly, not all white settlers were committed to racism in the same way, and their allegiance to racism waxed and waned in response to different interactions with Africans.[18] Nevertheless, a pre-existing racial consciousness caused many whites to see themselves as different from Africans.

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13 Quoted in Van Der Merwe, *Die Trekboer in die Geskiedenis*, p. 192.

14 Van der Merwe, *Die Trekboer in die Geskiedenis*, p. 186; P. Naude, 'Boerdery in die Souid-Afrikaanse Republiek', 2 Vols. (Unpublished D. Litt. Thesis, University of South Africa, 1954), p. 105. Naude also points out that not all 'trekkers' were trekboers. See, p. 21; Ross, 'The Origins of Capitalist Agriculture', p. 63.

15 Van der Merwe, *Die Trekboer in die Geskiedenis*, p. 186.

16 A. Du Toit, 'No Chosen People: The Myth of the Calvinist Origins of Afrikaner Nationalism and Racial Ideology', in *American Historical Review*, Vol. 88, 1983, p. 931; Giliomee, 'the Southern African Frontier', p. 89.

17 Du Toit, 'No Chosen People', p. 944, argues that after 1830 the need to legitimate white racism and exploitation led the settlers to elaborate their Christianity; A. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1986), p. 157, argues that religion contributes to a sense of community because it provides a focus for the elaboration of 'the collective myths and symbols and memories which provide the axis of identification and entitlement for successive generations of the community'; See also J. Templin, *Ideology on a Frontier: The Theological Foundations of Afrikaner Nationalism 1652-1910* (Westport, Greenwood Press, 1984), pp. 284-85.

18 Interview with Mashupje, Modipa & Moela, Mashishing, 11 April 1992; R. Mkhabela, Cottondale, 15 November 1993; Van der Merwe, 'Die Naturelle en die Maatskappy te Ohrigstad en Lydenburg', p. 95, cites the case of 'Swart' Adriaan de Lange who was 'deur en deur kaffergesind'.

They perceived their economic interests in terms of whites competing with blacks, although the acceptance of capitalist values allowed ambitious accumulators to override and undermine notions of white solidarity.[19]

ESTABLISHING A WHITE DISTRICT IN THE EASTERN TRANSVAAL

Because the settlers arrived in the Transvaal with a sense that they belonged to a white community, and that Africans were different, they sought to establish an area with which they could identify; a physical space that would strengthen the communal identity and facilitate greater control over interactions between the community and outsiders.[20] For example, in 1847 the first white governing body in the eastern Transvaal, the *Ohrigstadse Volksraad*, declared that 'any coloured person or persons, be they Kaffirs, Bushmen, Mantatee, or whatever nation, Bastards, etc.' could not be citizens of the Ohrigstad community, nor could they own land in the area under that community's control.[21] In his analysis of the eastern Transvaal settlers, Delius shows that divisions did emerge amongst whites but he nevertheless identifies a broader white community that clashed with various African polities.[22] There were instances of cooperation between whites and blacks, but this collaboration was either between two distinct groups, or initiated by whites who felt vulnerable and found it necessary to cooperate with African polities in order to survive.[23]

These breakdowns in racial solidarity were curbed through the provision of security and material benefits to the members of the community. The provision of

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19 B.J. Krüger, 'Diskussies en Wetgewing rondom die Landelike Arbeidsvraagstuk in die Suid-Afrikaanse Republiek, Met besondere verwysing na die Plakkerswette 1885-1899', Unpublished Masters Thesis, Univ. of South Africa, 1965, pp. 65; 79; C. Bundy, *The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry, Second Edition* (Cape Town, David Philip, 1988), pp. 206-207.

20 Van der Merwe, 'Die Naturelle en die Maatskappy te Ohrigstad en Lydenburg', p. 100; Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, p. 93; See also T. Kanogo, *Squatters and the Roots of Mau Mau* (London, James Currey, 1987), p. 173; she shows that such conflicts were crucial in the white highlands of Kenya. Initially, the conflicts there were racial, between whites and Africans. However, when land became available for African settlement, conflicts emerged between Kikuyu, Kalenjin, Luo and other ethnic groups.

21 W.A. Stals, 'Die Kwessie van Naturelleeiendomsreg op Grond in die Transvaal, 1838-1884, in *Archives Year Book* (Pretoria, Government Printer, 1977), p. 2.

22 Delius, *The Land Belongs to Us*, pp. 30; 37; See also, Naude, 'Boerdery in die Suid-Afrikaanse Republiek', p. 346.

23 W.A. Stals, 'Die Kwessie van Naturelleeiendomsreg', p. 2.

land was crucial in this process, and was linked to the belief that land occupation was a racially defined right. As Delius points out, 'the view taken was that all men who had participated in the Trek were entitled to two farms'.[24] This was restricted to whites; the blacks who participated in the 'Trek' were never allocated such a right.[25] However, while beliefs about white land rights preserved some settlers' loyalty to their race, notions of private property and self-enrichment undermined the 'right to land' of many whites. By placing accumulation above the needs of the culturally defined community, capitalist values promoted speculation and the concentration of land in the hands of wealthier whites.[26]

The notions of capitalist enrichment and racial entitlement outlined above endured as contradictions in the eastern Transvaal. Despite processes of stratification, a sometimes ambivalent but, nevertheless widely accepted, allegiance to the racial community allowed poorer whites to demand protection and land from the state and wealthier landowners. Thus the state allocated land to poor whites but only if that land was not coveted by more enterprising or capitalised farmers. Landless tenants were given access to land by large landowners, where they existed as *bywoners* enhancing the capacity and status of their patron but only if the patron did not put the land to commercial use.[27] Consequently, Trapido argues, the commitment to the racial community diminished as the opportunities for accumulation gradually expanded during the nineteenth century. However, in the areas where commercial agriculture failed to make significant inroads, where many settlers lacked the implements to engage in any farming at all and where throughout the nineteenth century most agriculture remained at a fairly low productive level, notions of a racial community and racial obligations retained their vitality.[28]

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24 Delius, *The Land Belongs to Us*, p. 127.
25 Stals 'Die Kwessie van Naturelleeiendomsreg', pp. 2; 4.
26 S. Trapido, 'Reflections on Land, Office and Wealth in the South African Republic, 1850 - 1900', in S. Marks & A. Atmore, eds, *Economy and Society in Pre-Industrial South Africa* (London, Longman, 1980), p. 356; Naude, 'Boerdery in die Souid-Afrikaanse Republiek', pp. 104-105.
27 S. Trapido, 'Reflections on Land, Office and Wealth', pp. 358-359.
28 See, Naude, 'Boerdery in die Suid-Afrikaanse Republiek, 1858-1899', pp. 17; 21; 23; 40; 493.

This was particularly true of the eastern Transvaal area that became the district of Lydenburg. There commercial farming occurred only to a limited degree. According to Delius, trade in the products of the hunt began to decline in the 1860s. Sheep were kept on the highveld and some wool was traded in the region. 'Agricultural products also played a part in exchange, but in the absence of local markets, the Lydenburgers were dependent on Orange Free State sheep farmers as purchasers for their wheat, tobacco and dried fruit.'[29] Even by Transvaal standards, Delius argues, Lydenburg 'remained an economic backwater'.

In these circumstances the majority of farmers were unlikely to be profit maximising entrepreneurs. Enterprising farmers like Abel Erasmus did exist in the 1880s but he was the exception rather than the rule. He is described as 'one of the most progressive farmers in the Transvaal' but, as Delius shows, Erasmus mainly accumulated capital in his capacity as Native Commissioner.[30] He therefore had capital to invest in irrigation dams and cattle improvements and could afford to take risks in agriculture because he did not depend exclusively on the land.[31] Most farmers were more dependent on their land, especially after the decline of the ivory trade, and for these people land was not merely an instrument for the more important maximisation of profits.[32] These farmers, as is shown below, emphasised their rights, as white citizens, to land, patronage and subservient African labour.

In 1852 the whites of Lydenburg formalised their control over an area of land. They designated the Steelpoort River as the boundary between the white and Pedi sphere of control. On the eastern side of the river whites entrenched the private ownership of land and a racially defined community, while the Pedi paramount Sekwati controlled the land on the western side. But white settlers were not

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29 Delius, *The Land Belongs to Us*, p. 127.

30 *Bantu*, February 1955, P. Delius, 'Abel Erasmus: Power and profit in the eastern Transvaal', in Beinart *et al*, eds., *Putting a Plough*, p. 189.

31 *Bantu*, February 1955.

32 See Naude, 'Boerdery in die Suid-Afrikaanse Republiek', pp. 23; 494; 500. The evidence presented by Naude indicates that many farmers avoided taking risks because, after much experience with the destructions of nature, they wanted to avoid 'false hope'.

satisfied with this situation, mainly because of a shortage of labour.[33] They therefore pushed into areas of African control. The settlers hoped to turn Africans into farm labourers by undermining the independence of African societies. In the 1860s, after looking southwards with limited success, whites began to claim land on the western side of the Steelpoort. This move can be seen as a symbolic first step in the complex processes that led to the defeat of the Pedi polity in 1879.

After the defeat, the Pedi paramount's official area of control was restricted to a 'fragment of the former Pedi domain', which in 1885 became known as 'Geluks Location' and fell within the area that was now called the Lydenburg district.[34] Nevertheless, despite the disappearance of Pedi land off the official maps drawn in Pretoria, Pedi chiefs continued to control most of the land on the western side of the Steelpoort and white farmers were still concentrated on the eastern side.[35] The remaining land was owned by land-companies and the state and was occupied by African rent tenants.[36]

Within the area of white control, a general disapproval of independent African land occupation prevailed. This was most clearly demonstrated by the continuous hostility levelled against the African community under Johannes Dinkwanyane, a Christian convert of royal blood who had been expelled from Sekhukhuneland in 1864 and eventually settled on a farm in Lydenburg's Waterfall Valley. Delius explains the friction between the Dinkwanyane community and white settlers in terms of the community's avoidance of tax and labour demands, as well as their capacity to absorb Africans who left white farms.[37] However, as Krüger shows, white objections to African land occupation in the Transvaal were often formulated within, and informed by, a racist discourse. Krüger examines numerous petitions

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33 Delius, *The Land Belongs to Us*, pp. 152; 200.

34 P. Delius, 'Abel Erasmus', p. 186.

35 This chapter focuses on the eastern side, which, for most of the period covered in this thesis, constituted the white farming district. The 1913 Land Act more formally separated the black and white areas, but the Lydenburg district only officially stopped near the Steelpoort when Sekhukhuneland became part of Lebowa in the 1950s. In 1922 the lowveld areas to the east became the Pilgrims Rest District.

36 Delius, 'Abel Erasmus', p. 186.

37 Delius, *The Land Belongs to Us*, p. 177.

drawn up by farmers in various Transvaal districts, including Lydenburg, during the period 1885 and 1899. He concludes that the white citizens of the Transvaal believed that farm work should be performed by blacks and that they should be forced to perform this work through direct or indirect means.[38] An African's exclusive dependence on the produce of the land was regarded as an unsuitable activity for a person of 'this race', and a figure of no lesser stature than Jan Smuts expressed the idea clearly in 1899: 'The boer inhabitants are the people [Volk] of the land, and kaffirs should be made servants to the land, that is their calling.'[39] A strong current within white racism denied Africans any rights to land and regarded it as 'natural' that whites should own farms on which Africans were subservient labourers.[40]

It is difficult to assess the causal impact of these ideas. Many of them were expressed during the 1880s and 1890s when massive new market opportunities had emerged in the form of gold mines, and it can therefore be argued that racist ideas merely reflected the competition between whites and blacks for access to these opportunities; or that whites needed cheap labour in order to produce for these markets and therefore used this racism to force Africans into farm labour. However, as Engels once said, the fact that ideas are linked to, and change with, economic circumstances, does not negate the possibility of ideas having a causal impact.[41] Thus it is argued here that racism probably became entrenched as a result of the economic processes outlined above, but the pre-existence of racist ideas nevertheless motivated farmers to formulate their interests in terms of a racist logic.

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38 Krüger, 'Die Landelike Arbeidsvraagstuk', p. 91.

39 Krüger, 'Die Landelike Arbeidsvraagstuk', p. 213.

40 An interesting example of racism that had no link to land was expressed by Lydenburg's most prominent politician in the nineteenth century, Schalk Burger. He opposed a proposal to allow civil marriages between Africans as 'practically amounting to equality of blacks and whites in the eyes of the civil law'. See C.T. Gordon, *The Growth of Boer Opposition to Kruger, 1890-1895* (Cape Town, Oxford Univ. Press, 1970), p. 3.

41 D. Sayer, *The Violence of Abstraction* (New York, Basil Blackwell, 1987), p. 90. For the same argument using Weber, see G. Marshall, *Presbyteries and Profits: Calvinism and the development of Capitalism in Scotland, 1560-1707* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1980), pp. 251-252.

EMERGING LABOUR RELATIONS AND AFRICAN INITIATIVES BEFORE 1900

Additional proof that ideas had a causal impact is provided by racism's vitality in Lydenburg despite the slow economic progress experienced by the district during the period outlined above. Lydenburg farmers found it extremely difficult to benefit from the commercial opportunities provided by the Witwatersrand. The discovery of gold at nearby Pilgrims Rest in 1873 had a much more important, if temporary, effect on the economy of the district.[42] Further, the construction of a railway in 1892 allowed Orange Free State farmers to supply the Witwatersrand with wheat, an important Lydenburg product, at a far cheaper rate.[43] Lydenburg received a railway link to the Rand only in 1909, and during the 1890s the farming community in Lydenburg was reportedly 'not in very affluent circumstances'.[44]

Nevertheless, some economic progress did occur, and Lydenburg farmers were among those who frequently complained of labour shortages in the two decades before the Boer War.[45] The labour shortage - already a problem in the 1860s - pushed farmers into accepting the practice of labour tenancy, which gave Africans access to land within the white district in return for their labour. During the period of Pedi independence farmers relied mostly on indentured and migrant labour but, after the discovery of minerals, migrants went to the towns rather than the capital starved farms, and farmers consequently began to rely increasingly on tenants.[46] This probably originated on farms claimed by whites but already occupied by Africans. On these farms Africans were able to retain some land but were unable to avoid white demands for rent, which mainly took

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42 Delius, 'Abel Erasmus', p. 179; *Lydenburg News*, 20 May 1954.
43 Naude, 'Boerdery in die Suid Afrikaanse Republiek', p. 154.
44 Delius, 'Abel Erasmus', p. 180.
45 Krüger, 'Die Landelike Arbeidsvraagstuk', p. 109; *Lydenburg News*, 28 May 1954, A farmer remembered Lydenburg as a boom town in the 1880s. Naude, 'Boerdery in die Suid-Afrikaanse Republiek', p. 114, prices at Barberton were the best in the country in the 1880s.
46 Delius, *The Land Belongs to Us*, p. 150; Delius, 'Abel Erasmus', p. 187, shows that labour tenancy was dominant in the 1880s, although some seasonal migrant labour still occurred; See also Krüger, 'Die Landelike Arbeidsvraagstuk', p. 109.

the form of labour.[47] The practice then spread to those farmers who were able to attract African settlers, a prospect significantly boosted by laws passed in the early 1870s which exempted Africans from tax if they worked for a farmer.[48]

These examples suggest that in Lydenburg labour tenancy first originated on the eastern escarpment farms where late iron age dwellers continued to occupy villages.[49] Labour tenancy spread to the west as white farmers took over African occupied land in that area, and the gradual acceptance of this system by farmers then provided the context that allowed Africans moving onto the farms from other areas to demand access to land in return for their labour.

Africans played an important role in shaping the emerging labour system as they fought to retain access to the means of production and a degree of independence from white control. These motives emerge, to some extent, from the experiences of Africans who migrated to Lydenburg after whites had settled there. Not all of the migrations were voluntary. The Ndzundza Ndebele were forced onto the farms when Boer forces defeated the Ndzundza Polity in 1883 and distributed Ndzundza 'families' amongst the whites who had participated in the military expedition.[50] Many of these 'families' settled on farms in Lydenburg and neighbouring Middelburg, where their conditions of employment approximated labour tenancy. They were required to work without receiving any wage and were given access to plots of land on which they were expected to produce their subsistence needs. Despite having little choice in becoming part of this farm labour system, Ndebele began to shape the system to suit their interests almost immediately after their

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47 Delius, *The Land Belongs to Us*, pp. 135; 136. T. Keegan, *Rural Transformations in Industrialising South Africa* (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1986), p. 88

48 Delius, *The Land Belongs to Us*, p. 151.

49 No direct evidence of this has emerged. The people interviewed by the author either remembered moving to Lydenburg after whites had arrived, or did not know how they came to be in Lydenburg. This can, I believe, be explained by the scattered iron age settlements' inability to generate oral traditions strong enough to compete with the traditions generated by the formation of the Pedi state, and the dramatic migrations produced by the *difaqane*.

50 The concept of the family used by the Boers was based on the nuclear family, which caused considerable dislocation and hardship for extended Ndzunza families, see P. Delius, 'The Ndzunza Ndebele: Indenture and the making of ethnic identity, 1883-1914', in P. Bonner, *et al*, *Holding their Ground* (Johannesburg, WUP & Ravan Press, 1989), p. 234.

arrival in Lydenburg. In actions that paralleled much of the African resistance described throughout this thesis, Ndebele left the smaller farms and settled on larger farms where more land was available. The larger farms also contained proportionately more labour, and individual tenants therefore found it easier to satisfy the farmer's labour needs.[51]

Other Africans moved to Lydenburg from areas marked by violence and insecurity, which undermined their ability to determine their conditions of settlement. White farmers could provide protection and security and were thus able to attract Africans from areas affected, for example, by tension and conflict between the Swazi and Zulu kingdoms.[52] As a result, farmers probably had the upper hand in negotiating the conditions of tenancy. Some Swazi speakers interviewed by the author have told stories about their 'grandfathers' who migrated from an area around Utrecht or Majuba in Natal. It is said that they were moving away from a war-torn area and settled on white farms in Lydenburg for security. This probably occurred in the 1870s, although the interviews provide very little clarity about dates or about the character of the arrangement they made with white farmers.[53]

Tsonga speakers - who had been in contact with the district as traders during the eighteenth century - were forced by similar circumstances to settle in larger numbers in the northern parts of Lydenburg.[54] A newspaper report of 1866 noted the existence of Tsonga groups in the northern parts; it is probable that many of these were Hlanganu who had fled the ravages of a succession dispute that broke out in Mozambique during 1856.[55] Others were Tsonga speakers who had left Mozambique in the early nineteenth century, and moved to present-day Venda.

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51 Delius, 'Ndzunza Ndebele', p. 238.

52 P. Bonner, *Kings Commoners and Concessionaires: The Evolution and Dissolution of the Nineteenth Century Swazi State* (Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1983), p. 153: Shows how this tension affected the Utrecht area.

53 Interview with Simon Mbiba, Jane Furse, 8 November 1993; Maria Chauke, Praktiseer, 13 June 1993.

54 Delius, *The Land Belongs to Us*, p. 18.

55 CAD, ART, No. 14/3/12, Vol. 137, *The Transvaal Argus*, 2 August 1866; E. Ritchken, 'Leadership and Conflict in Bushbuckridge: Struggles to Define Moral Economies within the context of rapidly Transforming Political Economies, 1978-1990', Unpublished Thesis, p. 40.

After a number of succession disputes that drove groups of people southwards, one section, the Mkhontos, settled in Lydenburg.[56] They were reportedly attracted to the area by the fertile land, and at first gained independent access to land in the Ohrigstad Valley.[57] It is unclear when they became labourers under the control of white farmers, but this possibly only occurred after the Boer War.[58]

Many of those who settled in the sphere of white control sacrificed some independence, but their lives were not as regulated as one might expect. During the nineteenth century Africans working on white farms were exempt from tax, and white farmers often made very few demands. Information on these conditions is provided by Mrs Makua, who was born on a farm in Lydenburg shortly after the turn of the century. Her parents originated from an area called Shaga (present day Rietfontein north of Lydenburg) under a chief named Petla. Her parents left Shaga before she was born and settled on a white farm. During that time, Mrs Makua explained, life on white farms gave Africans large amounts of independence. She remembered that during her childhood,

> 'we would sell some of our mealies and sorghum to get money to buy clothes. In those days things were affordable. We would sell a bag of mealies for ten shillings and that was enough to buy some clothes. ... The farmers did not restrict us from having cattle. We had a lot of cattle and goats. We used our own cattle to plough.'[59]

These particular conditions attracted Mkenyi Mkhabela's parents from Ermelo. Mkhabela was born at approximately the same time as Mrs Makua, and his parents left Ermelo to move to Lydenburg, because they 'wanted to escape the harsh boers'.[60]

Settling on 'white land' in a district like Lydenburg, where commercial farming was only gradually making inroads, did not necessarily place an African under the

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56 Interview with Harry Maluleke, Green Valley, 17 November 1993; Nellie Ngwana, Cottondale, 14 November 1993.

57 See also Evidence of Natives Land (Beaumont) Commission (U.G. 22-16) (Cape Town, Government Printer, 1916), p. 399, Evidence of Chief Manok.

58 Wits Historical Papers Library (WHPL), A1655 B61, Census for the year 1898 as compiled by Mr Stiemens; Interview with Nellie Ngwana, Cottondale, 14 November 1993.

59 Interview with Mrs Makua, Mashishing, 25 January 1992.

60 Interview with Mkenyi Mkhabela, Jane Furse, 20 December 1990.

direct control of a white landlord, and the district could therefore serve as a destination for people who wanted to 'escape Boers'. This is borne out further by people who remember labour tenancy as something that was gradually imposed on them after they were already settled in a white farming district.[61] The experiences of Mrs Moela - who is reputedly over 100 years old - clearly illustrate the initial patchiness of white control in Lydenburg. Mrs Moela was also born at Shaga but her family's land there was claimed by a white who charged rent. In response the family moved to land that bordered on the town of Lydenburg, in the centre of the white area, because the 'town presented a market and we tried to get closer to it so we could sell our produce'.[62] In this 'white heartland' they farmed without interference. The only whites they saw were traders. They could plough as much land as they wanted, there was no boundary.

But things changed for Mrs Moela's family when the number of white farmers began gradually to increase. Someone bought the land on which they were living, while other whites became their neighbours and interfered in the family's activities. This interference was, in Mrs Moela's opinion, designed to undermine her family's independence and culminated in the Native Commissioner's culling of their cattle during a rinderpest epidemic. The culling reduced their wealth and was, in Mrs Moela's mind, the symbolic end of their independence, perpetrated by whites who were jealous of African productivity. Soon after, they were forced to accept a formal labour tenant contract when, 'the first baas came and fenced the area. He told us that we were living on his farm and as such we should start working for him.'[63]

It is difficult to date these memories but, in Mrs Moela's case, it appears that most of the events she described occurred in the nineteenth century.[64] Corroborating

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61 African Studies Institute (ASI), Oral History Project (OHP), Tape No. 24A, Interview with Mrs Josephine Jiyane, 1979.

62 Interview with Mrs Moela and Philip Mbiba, Jane Furse, 7 September 1991.

63 Interview with Mrs Moela, Jane Furse, 7 February 1991; See also ASI, OHP, Interview with July Lusiba, for similar memories.

64 She claims to remember the establishment of the first shops in Lydenburg. The rinderpest epidemic was probably in 1896/7.

evidence on the lack of white control or interest in land during this time is provided by Johan Steyn, who remembered that his wife's grandfather bought a huge and fertile farm near the town 'for a cart and two mules in the previous century. But land was free then, you see.'[65] This also suggests that transport riding, for which two mules and a cart would be used, was regarded by some as more profitable than farming.

THE IMPACT OF THE BOER WAR

The processes described above produced an African majority on the land under white control. A 'census report' conducted in 1898 presents a valuable, albeit somewhat sketchy, picture of the number of African land occupiers in Lydenburg, just before the Boer War broke out. The report concentrates on communities under people like chief Micha Dinkwanyane - the son of above mentioned Johannes Dinkwanyane - whose 'people are Bapedi and live on the Mission farm Mosterthoek, west of Lydenburg'. The report also looked 'along the Steelpoort River on the farm Ventershoek close to Kalkfontein [where] a clan of Bapedi under the petty chief Mpyani live: they are under the authority of Sekukuni (sic)'. The most detailed information in the report concerns the area 'along the Ohrigstad Valley, as far as the Olifants River, [where there] are scattered numbers of natives living on private farms under the authority of petty chiefs or indunas. They belong to the Mapulaners, The Bathonga, the Maroka and the Baswazi'. The census stated that 'there are 7814 people in the Ohrigstad Valley'.[66]

It appears that this report did not count individual labour tenant families, and it is unclear whether the groups in the Ohrigstad Valley lived on white land under rent or labour tenant conditions. What is clear, however, is that the status of these people was radically, if briefly, affected by the outbreak of the Boer War in 1898. During the war, African tenants were changed from relatively passive residents who resented encroachments on their independence and moved around to avoid

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[65] Interview with Johan Steyn, Lydenburg, 1990. Rent tenancies were probably also readily available for Africans during this time because of the relative importance of land speculation as an economic activity.

[66] WHPL, A1655 B61, Census for the year 1898 as compiled by Mr Stiemens.

harsh landowners, into aggressors who violently asserted their right to land. In the Ohrigstad Valley, a report of 1901 explained,

> 'A bitter war is raging between master and servant in which quarter is unknown. The domestics, knowing the locality well, come forth at night to plunder and murder, and many comparatively innocent people have been the victims. The natives are frequently barbarous.'[67]

Micha Dinkwanyane and his followers left the mission farm Mosterthoek and moved back into the Waterfall Valley, where Johannes had occupied a farm in the 1870s. 'By his action [Micha] blocked all the wagon routes which the Boers could have used to transport grain from the Ohrigstad Valley to Dullstroom and Roos Senekal, and from there to the commandos on the highveld'.[68] Micha and his followers therefore claimed and defended the Waterfall Valley, asserting their right to this land through force.[69]

Krikler examines the widespread conflicts that emerged between Africans and whites during the Boer War and argues that these were class conflicts without class consciousness.[70] It is, however, much more likely that the belligerence described above had to do with an African rejection of white land claims that were seen as illegitimate. The Pedi regarded white land claims as illegal because they were based largely on a Swazi concession made at a time when the Swazis had no jurisdiction over Lydenburg.[71] The Swazis and Tsongas who had arrived in the area more recently were probably less assertive about their claim to land but nevertheless resented the extension of white control over their lives.[72]

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67 P. Warwick, *Black People and the South African War 1899 -1902* (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1983), p. 101.

68 Warwick, *Black People and the South African War*, p. 101.

69 Beaumont, p. 399, Evidence of Chief Micha; See also *Minutes of Evidence of the Eastern Transvaal Natives Land* (Stubbs) *Committee* (U.G. 32-18) (Cape Town, Government Printer, 1918), p. 28, Evidence of Micha Duikwana (sic).

70 J. Krikler, *Revolution from Above, Rebellion from Below: The agrarian Transvaal at the turn of the century* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1993).

71 Delius, *The Land Belongs to Us*, p. 32.

72 Interview with Kunana Sehale, Praktiseer, 13 June 1993; Sarah Shabangu, Acornhoek, 15 November 1993; Beaumont Commission, p. 399, Evidence of Chief Micha.

Krikler is correct to emphasise the sense of power that the Boer War gave Africans, allowing them to reject white claims to land.[73] Krikler's class struggle argument, on the other hand, is problematic. It implies that these Africans were bound together by a common economic position yet the Africans who attacked white farms were either labour tenants, rent tenants or peasant communities under chiefs. What bound them together was not a common class position but their defeat, domination and exploitation by *whites*. As Africans they saw the Boer War as an opportunity to resist *white* intrusions and return to 'their old lands [in the belief that] white owners had been expelled forever from their farms and habitations'.[74] The Boer War was therefore a time when Africans reasserted previous claims to land and re-established chiefly and household independence from whites.

LABOUR AND POWER AFTER THE BOER WAR

After the complete surrender of Boer farmers to the British in 1902, the former were gradually able to re-assert their dominance over Africans. As Warwick shows, this process was initially facilitated by the British administration, which deprived blacks of any military advantage by enforcing the 'complete disarmament of black communities in the Transvaal, and under the provisions of Ordinance 13 of 1902 all black people were called upon to surrender their arms and ammunition'.[75] A number of these arms were subsequently distributed amongst Afrikaner farmers; a display of unity that guaranteed white domination over blacks.

The Milner administration's support for returning Boers' re-occupation of land was experienced by many Africans as a direct form of land alienation.[76] Micha Dinkwanyane had to abandon his claim to the Waterfall Valley, and he and his followers were forced once again to take up rent tenancy on the Berlin Mission

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73 ASI, OHP, Interview with T.R. Molotsi.
74 Krikler, *Revolution from Above*, p. 21.
75 Warwick, *Black People and the South African War*, p. 165.
76 Krikler, *Revolution from Above*, pp. 22-23.

farm outside the town of Lydenburg.[77] British policy also caused many Africans to lose their cattle as 'disputes concerning the ownership of cattle were ... sorted out in the courts, where white claimants were usually able to win their cases.'[78] Rent tenants like Dinkwanyane and his followers resented the higher taxes imposed by the new administration. The tenants on the Berlin Mission farm signed a petition calling for a return to conditions in the 'days of Kruger'.[79]

Although this oppression by the new state essentially restored the balance of power that had existed before the Boer War, Africans were far from resigned to their fate. For example, in the post-war situation the Pedi Paramount was able to consolidate his power. He demonstrated his control in 1902 when many Pedi farm workers refused to return to their former employers because 'they have instructions from Sekhukhune not to work till he gives them the orders to do so.'[80] Some Pedi did return to the farms in late 1902, but the boycott left a lasting legacy in that Africans living on the western side of the Steelpoort continued to be extremely reluctant to accept employment on white farms over the river.[81] This is clearly illustrated in a report submitted in 1910:

> 'Nearly all the farmers complain of a shortage of labour, but unfortunately there is no disposition among Natives to remove with their families to reside on farms occupied by whites; it is only under the most exceptional circumstances that they will do so. Farmers pay their boys pay in kind rather in money, but in most instances, it is customary for the Native family to render service for the privilege of residing on and using the farm. The farmers are in favour of the Pass Law being stringently enforced, in order to prevent their labourers loafing about and attending beer drinks in neighbouring stads.'[82]

During this time labour tenancy was the dominant farm labour form in the eastern Transvaal. Most landlords who occupied their farms demanded some sort of labour payment from their tenants, although the extent of the period fluctuated widely.[83] The Native Commissioner for the region reported in 1903 that farmers

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77 WHPL, A1655, AB1659, Private Correspondence of D.R. Hunt.
78 Warwick, *Black People and the South African War*, p. 166.
79 Transvaal Archive Depot (TAD), Secretary of Native Affairs (SNA), No. NA935/06, Vol. 64, Mission Station Dist. Lydenburg to Native Commissioner, 22 February 1906.
80 Warwick, *Black People and the South African War*, p. 102.
81 Those who did move were often compelled by a shortage of land on the western side of the Steelpoort. See Stubbs, p. 31; Evidence of Chief Maude.
82 *Blue Book on Native Affairs* (Cape Town, Government Printer, 1910), p. 251.
83 Krikler, *Revolution from Above*, p. 105; *Assembly Debates*, 27 February 1925: Mr Nieuwenhuize.

in Lydenburg who double cropped with wheat in winter and maize in summer demanded labour for the whole year from all the members of the labour tenant family.[84] The arrangement appeared very exploitative to the Commissioner, and to subsequent analysts, but it was in fact extremely flexible.[85] Rather than representing an extension of the three month labour period - which state officials later regarded as the norm - to a twelve month period, this was a different kind of arrangement, framed in less formal terms, requiring labour tenants to be available for work throughout the year.[86]

The more flexible twelve month arrangement in fact preceded the establishment of the more formal and clearly defined three month period. The three month period was forced upon farmers and tenants after 1902 by the taxes that were imposed on farm labourers and collected with increasing efficiency.[87] In order to allow tenants to earn money to pay tax, farmers now gave them nine 'free' months to find employment on the mines. But not all the farmers in Lydenburg responded to the new tax in this way. Those who could afford to, paid the tax of their tenants and thus continued to employ their tenants throughout the year.[88]

The farmers who paid their tenants' taxes were usually wealthier and owned larger amounts of land.[89] They were able to accommodate more tenants, could offer more, often irrigated, land to their tenants and reportedly never had trouble

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84 Krikler, *Revolution from Above*, p. 105.

85 See Krikler, *Revolution from Above* pp. 105-106; He tries to argue that this arrangement was so exploitative that the Commissioner must have been mistaken. But Krikler's book contains important clues on how vague and flexible these contracts really were. See pp. 134; 117. See also Interview with Mrs Makua, Mashishing, 25 January 1992.

86 Evidence of the precise length of the labour period during this time is unavailable, but more detailed assessments of these year long contracts is undertaken in Chapters Three and Five. The contract fits with Keegan's description of the typical contract on the Highveld at the turn of the century: 'a loose verbal agreement that the household head and/or members of his family had to perform certain duties when called upon by the farmer.' *Rural Transformations*, p. 131

87 Beaumont, Lydenburg, 29 May 1914: Mr. D.R. Hunt; For the increasing efficiency of tax collecting see Krikler, *Revolution from Above*, pp. 166-167.

88 See H. Bradford, *A Taste of Freedom: The ICU in rural South Africa, 1924-1930* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1987), p. 43; For a later period in Lydenburg, see CAD, NTS, No. 97/362, Vol. 8837, Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas), 'Notes on a visit to Lydenburg', 1 July 1938.

89 See Chapter Two p. 69, for Lydenburg farmers' tendency to invest in land.

attracting sufficient labour.[90] Although these farmers demanded labour all year round, tenants worked for themselves at the same time, which allowed them to benefit directly from the fruits of their labour.[91] Tenants also found it fairly easy to avoid farmers' demands when these were considered excessive. The Native Commissioner for the Eastern Transvaal said in 1903 that farmers in his area constantly complained about tenants' failure to fulfil the terms of their contract.[92] W. Clark from the Middelburg district complained that it was 'always difficult to get his tenants to arrive for work', especially during harvest time.[93] When the conflict between farmers and tenants came to a head, the latter would often move to another farm, or to company owned or government land.[94]

AFRICAN ATTITUDES TO LAND: THE QUEST FOR INDEPENDENCE

Krikler argues that these examples of resistance prove that it was 'independence from their landlord which these peasants primarily desired'.[95] This is essentially accurate and undeniable. However, why this was the case has to be carefully analyzed and cannot be reduced to Krikler's explanation: 'Because they were peasants'. This formulation once again ignores the centrality of racial domination. Africans perceived themselves to be in conflict with victorious whites, and thus sought to avoid white domination as far as possible. A defeated African in the colony of Rhodesia described these motives and echoed the rationality of many Africans in Lydenburg:

> 'Now that my people were under foreign rule, they believed even more firmly than they had before that self-sufficiency in their own food supplies was essential for their limited freedom. As long as they grew enough food for themselves they were

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90 *Sunday Times*, 18 March 1920: 'The squatting class of farm native is quick to recognise a farm that will furnish good grazing and watering for their stock ...'; CAD, NTS, No. 9/280, Vol. 2009, Native Commissioner Middelburg to Secretary of Native Affairs, 21 April 1920; Stubbs Commission, p. 181, Evidence of Colonel Damant: 'so far as the substantial farmers are concerned they get as much labour as they require'; Krüger, 'Die Landelike Arbeidsvraagstuk', p. 181.

91 Stubbs, p. 186, Evidence of Mr. van Deventer; Interview with Elise Mdluli, Marulaneng, 6 June 1992.

92 See Krikler, *Revolution from Above*, p. 105, n46; CAD, NTS, No. 10/280, Vol. 2010, NAD Memoranda on a Farm Labour Deputation from Waterberg Farmers Union, 6 December 1922.

93 Krikler, *Revolution from Above*, p. 215.

94 TAD, SNA, No. G828/06, Vol. 517, Veldkornet, Crocodile Area to Magistrate Lydenburg, 8 April 1909; CAD, NTS, No. 10/280, Vol. 2010, M. van Rooyen to Minister of Native Affairs, 7 September 1927; Johannes Dicke to Sub-Native Commissioner Tzaneen, 13 September 1926; J. Schultze to Sub-Native Commissioner Haernetzburg, 13 September 1920.

95 Krikler, *Revolution from Above*, p. 214.

spared the humiliation of working for white men.'[96]

In Lydenburg, Africans on farms repeatedly expressed their resentment of white supervision.[97] Whites were seen by Africans as outsiders and different.[98] White farmers were often described as lazy, violent and unjust.[99] They were also seen as devious and greedy because they stole African land and used African men's cattle and women.[100] Because they perceived whites in these terms, Africans sought to stay away from 'the world of the whites'.[101] On farms this meant avoiding white labour demands as far as possible.

The quest for independence and avoidance of the white man's world must, furthermore, be situated within the structures of African society. In that society adult men were allocated power over their wives and children - and within the extended household various and complex hierarchies of power existed.[102] These spheres of power therefore served as an alternative to white domination and proletarianisation. Thus, in the same way that white trekboers stayed on their farms because they preferred to be masters over their slaves, so African males sought access to land in order to be masters in their household.[103] The position of women and youths, on the other hand, was much more ambiguous. They also sought refuge in some of the reciprocal structures of the African family, but their commitment to life on the land was more ambivalent than the commitment of adult men.[104]

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96 Quoted in R. Palmer, *Land & Racial Domination in Rhodesia* (London, Heineman, 1977), p. 71.

97 See for example, Interview with Sekwatane Mosehla, Jane Furse, 22 January 1992.

98 J. & J. Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution, Vol. 1.* (University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 245.

99 ASI, OHP, Interview with Josephine Jiyani by Vusi Nkumane, 3 September 1979; ASI, OHP, Interview with Solomon Mhlongo, Barberton, April\May 1981.

100 Interview with Ephraim Mosehla, Jane Furse, 22 January 1992.

101 Comaroffs, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, p. 141; P. Delius, 'Sebatakgomo; Migrant Organisation, the ANC and the Sekhukhuneland Revolt', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 4, October 1989, p. 586.

102 See D. James, 'Land Shortage and Inheritance in a Lebowa Village', in *Social Dynamics* 14(2) 1988; D. James, 'A Question of Ethnicity: Ndzunza Ndebele in a Lebowa village', in *JSAS*, Vol. 16, No. 1, March 1990, p. 37; W. Beinart & P. Delius, 'The family and early migrancy in Southern Africa', paper given at Institute of Commonwealth Studies African History Seminar, 9 May 1979, p. 7; C. van Onselen, 'The Social and Economic Underpinnings of Paternalism and Violence on the Maize Farms of the South-Western Transvaal, 1900-1950', in *Historical Sociology*, Vol. 5, No. 2, June 1992.

103 Keegan, *Rural Transformations*, p. 134; Krikler, *Revolution from Above*, pp. 184-185.

104 See Bradford, *A Taste of Freedom*, pp. 45-46, which points to the important role that women played in sustaining family structures; Keegan, *Rural Transformations*, p. 134, and P. Mayer & I Mayer, *Townsmen or Tribesmen* (Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 230, on the other hand point to women

WHITE ATTITUDES TO LAND

The Chapter has demonstrated that the racist prejudices and economic 'needs' of whites played a crucial role in shaping the conflicts that defined Lydenburg during the nineteenth century. In the early twentieth century, not surprisingly, racism continued to have a definite influence on the behaviour of white farmers, as the views on land occupation expressed by the Transvaal Agricultural Union (TAU) in 1904 clearly suggest. The TAU representatives explained that they were opposed to Africans buying land: firstly, because 'if they get very rich the Natives will be buying up the whole country ... they can buy out Europeans by the tribal system' and, secondly, because 'African land ownership leads to equality with whites.'[105] The representatives also expressed opposition to African independence. They reasoned that independent Africans are 'lazy and they do not go anywhere to work.'[106]

These views set farmers in opposition to both African land owners and labour tenants. Land owners were a threat to white supremacy and privileged access to land, while labour tenants had access to too much independence. On labour tenants, J. Nieuwenhuize, the Member of Parliament for Lydenburg, explained in 1925:

> 'those [whites] farming on a big scale with agriculture ... would have to give up their farming were it not for their squatters- for the natives residing on their farms. Should one go the round of the farms in my district one will find that every owner of a farm, at any rate each "farming farmer" (boerende boer), has at least three, four or five kaffirs living there. ... I think that 80 per cent. of the farmers, if the question were put to them whether they would rather work with labourers or squatters, would prefer labourers, but we cannot get them, and therefore have to be satisfied with the kaffirs on our farms.'[107]

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and youths who left the land to escape male control. These issues are explored in much greater depth in Chapter Three and Five.

105 South African Native Affairs Commission, 1903-1905 (SANAC), (Cape Town, Government Printer, 1905), p. 537; In Lydenburg the identical views were expressed by Abel Erasmus.

106 SANAC, p. 541; Bundy, *The Rise and Fall*, pp. 206-207; R. Morrell, 'Rural Transformations in the Transvaal: The Middelburg District 1919 - 1930', Unpublished Masters Thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 1983, p. 121; See also CAD, NTS, No. 10/280, Vol. 2010, P.J. Fishbert to Secretary of Native Affairs, 12 August 1918: 'As to the native's quality as labourer; we all know they are the most careless, indifferent, filthy, empty headed and wasteful. They are the biggest drunkards and finest organisers of beer orgies in the world.'

107 *Assembly Debates*, Nieuwenhuize, 1925; Stubbs Commission p. 324.

Some farmers declared that labour tenancy was the best way to keep African labourers happy but few came out in favour of the system as something they would have chosen.[108]

Opposition to African land purchases existed both at the local level, and at the level of the state.[109] Stals shows that the Republican state in the Transvaal generally prohibited African land purchases and, in those instances where purchases were permitted, they were regarded as special concessions.[110] After the Boer War the administration believed until 1905 that African purchases were illegal, but even after a 1905 court case overturned that notion, they still discouraged these purchases as far as possible.[111]

The difficulties involved in purchasing land in Lydenburg are illustrated by the case of Jacobus Zwane. His father, Sikhonyane Zwane, reportedly fled from an area in present day Zimbabwe that, during 1856, was affected by the war of succession in Mozambique.[112] The Zwane family settled on a mission station in the northern Transvaal, where the young Jacobus learnt to speak Afrikaans. After 1876, the family moved to the Berlin Mission Station in Lydenburg known as Stasie. There Jacobus worked with the white Native Commissioner as both constable and, during meetings with Sekhukhune, as an interpreter.[113] Jacobus decided to buy Aapiesdoorndraai, a farm on the eastern side of the Steelpoort, in 1902.[114] In order to overcome the legal difficulties and white prejudice against African land ownership, a local lawyer advised Jacobus to change his surname to Manok. This name was racially neutral, the lawyer argued, so that whites or

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108 CAD, NTS, No. 2209/280, Vol. 2009, C.J. Maritz to General Hertzog, 17 January 1925; White opposition to labour tenancy was also expressed by various farmers to the Beaumont and Stubbs Commissions of 1914 and 1918 respectively, See Beaumont, p. 321, J.S. Preddy; Stubbs, pp. 83, 183, F. Van Deventer; Mr Dicke.

109 See also Beaumont, p. 396; Evidence of J. Nieuwenhuize.

110 Stals, 'Die Kwessie van Naturelleeiendomsreg', p. 76.

111 T.R.H. Davenport, *South Africa: A Modern History, Fourth Edition* (London, Macmillan, 1992), p. 165.

112 H.A. Junod, *The Life of a South African Tribe* (London, Macmillan, 1927), p. 28.

113 Interview with L.S. Kgane & Chief Hendrik Manok, Aapiesdoorndraai, 15 April 1993; WHPL, AD843.B53.7., Interview by Edith Jones with Chief Christian Manok, Aapiesdoorndraai, February 1941.

114 CAD, NTS, No. 136/308, Vol. 3464, Jacobus Manok to Native Commissioner Lydenburg, October 1902.

administrators who saw the title deed, or any other correspondence, would think that the owner of Aapiesdoorndraai was white. Jacobus also made a sworn statement in which he declared: 'I did not buy this farm to make it a sort of location'; this was clearly an attempt to allay white prejudices and fears.[115]

After 1905 it was recognised that Africans could legally buy land but the Dinkwanyane community still experienced many difficulties in their attempt to purchase the farm Boomplaats in 1906. The farm was sold to the Africans by Mariano De Souza, one of the first white settlers in Lydenburg. De Souza was probably motivated by the high price he could obtain from Africans for a relatively barren piece of land.[116] The scarcity of land available for African purchase forced Dinkwanyane and his followers to pay £5000 for the 2209 morgen farm.[117] This price was hugely in excess of the 25/- per morgen that the Native Commissioner regarded as 'the utmost value of the farm'.[118]

The Native Commissioner, F.H. Damant, expressed repugnance over De Souza's readiness to exploit the Dinkwanyane's desperation but he also showed himself to be worried about the effect that Micha's Boomplaats 'location' would have on the local labour supply.[119] The Secretary of Native Affairs was opposed to the purchase. He argued that 'we cannot be a party to the establishment of locations contrary to the spirit of the squatters law'.[120] The Dinkwanyane community managed to purchase Boomplaats despite this opposition but there were clearly numerous obstacles in the way of African land purchases at the turn of the century. This helps to explain why Aapiesdoorndraai and Boomplaats were the only two farms purchased by Africans in Lydenburg.

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115 CAD, NTS, No. 136/308, Vol. 3464, Sworn Statement Made by Jacobus Manok, 23 December 1902.
116 Bundy, *The Rise and Fall*, p. 204; Davenport, *South Africa*, p. 165.
117 See TAD, SNA, No. NA1053/06, Vol. 64, Native Commissioner Lydenburg to Secretary for Native Affairs, 12 April 1906.
118 TAD, SNA, No. NA1053/06, Vol. 64, Magistrate Lydenburg to Secretary for Native Affairs, 3 April 1906.
119 TAD, SNA, No. 1053, Vol. 64, Magistrate, Lydenburg, to Secretary of Native Affairs, 3 April 1906.
120 TAD, SNA, No. 1053, Vol. 64, Secretary of Native Affairs to Native Commissioner, Lydenburg, 12 April 1906.

THE NEW NATIVE COMMISSIONERS

The post-Boer War state's attitude to African land purchases was, in many ways, similar to the direction taken by the previous state. The local Native Commissioners appointed by the new state did sympathise with the plight of African communities searching for land. This is apparent from the Commissioner's opposition to De Souza taking advantage of the Dinkwanyane's vulnerability. But it is also clear that the Commissioner opposed African settlements that violated segregationist principles. Further, the secretary of Native Affairs' reference to the 'squatters law' - which was designed by the Boer state to distribute farm labour evenly - shows that the Department was concerned with white farmers' labour problems. Despite this apparently helpful attitude, farmers often appeared not to appreciate the efforts of officials. In 1904, for example, a farmer explained that he was opposed to Native Commissioners from outside the Transvaal because 'they don't understand local Natives'.[121] At that time most Commissioners were from outside the Transvaal. Farmers also complained that the 'Government should supply farmers with labourers according to their needs', but the new British administration refused to undertake such direct interventions in the labour market.[122]

Farmers continually made disparaging comparisons between the unhelpful British officials and officials of the Republican State. In 1904 H.L. Hall, the owner of numerous farms in Barberton and Lydenburg, was reportedly wistful for the more direct interventions of the old Republican Field-cornets.[123] In Lydenburg, before the Boer War, Abel Erasmus had been exactly such a Field-cornet and Native Commissioner, using direct and often arbitrary force against Africans and playing a central role in supplying farmers with labour. He too was a farmer and therefore understood intimately the requirements and idiosyncrasies of his white colleagues in Lydenburg. In 1904 Erasmus expressed his philosophy of African labour in the following terms:

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121 SANAC, p. 566.
122 SANAC p. 539.
123 Krikler, *Revolution from Above* p. 215.

> 'The Native should be made to work. ... I am of the opinion that an increase of wages would not materially increase the supply of labour. In this district, a Native is in no danger of starvation; he will manage to subsist on roots and on what he can get from his friends. They have no desire to work, and they simply will not do so. ... Christianity has made the Native more unreliable and less trustworthy ... Personally, I have never taken a Christian into my employ.'[124]

Clearly then, Erasmus, like many of the farmers cited above, favoured a coercive labour system which would force Africans to work and to be subservient.

The post-Boer War Milner administration disrupted the close relationship between officials and farmers by professionalising the bureaucracy, and by introducing a new administrative ethos. The new Native Commissioners were usually English speaking, permanent members of the bureaucracy, whose first loyalty was not to white farmers, but to the state.[125] These officials also worked within a much more clearly defined 'segregationist policy' which incorporated a paternalist ethos. In the words of Milner himself, the policy aimed gradually to raise 'the black man - not to our level of civilisation - which it is doubtful wether he would ever attain - but to a much higher level than that which he at present occupies.'[126]

In Kenya, Berman argues, the British, public school background of colonial administrators promoted the development of a paternalist ethos within the colonial state.[127] Officials believed that British supervision was beneficial to colonial subjects. They also regarded serving the empire as an honourable activity which conferred status on its practitioners. In South Africa a very similar ethos has been identified within the Milner state, but the origins of this ethos have not yet been adequately explained. Denoon argues that the British officials who took up positions in the post-Boer war state played a central role in developing this ethos.[128] But neither Denoon nor Dubow - who examines the paternalism of the

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124 SANAC, p. 214.

125 Krikler, *Revolution from Above*, pp 56-59.

126 S. Marks & S. Trapido, *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa* (London, Longman, 1987), p. 27.

127 B.Berman, *Control and Crisis in Colonial Kenya: The Dialectic of Domination* (London, James Currey, 1990), p. 114.

128 D. Denoon, *A Grand Illusion* (London, Longman, 1972); P. Hetherington, *British Paternalism and Africa 1920-1940* (Frank Cass, 1978); See also A. Ashforth, *The Politics of Official Discourse in Twentieth Century South Africa* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 28.

post-1910 Native Affairs Department (NAD) - have provided adequate details on who these officials were and how their backgrounds influenced their administrative methods.[129] In the context of Lydenburg such details have emerged for a Native Commissioner who served both in the Milner state and in the post-1910 NAD. An examination of his life addresses some of the gaps in the literature and develops our understanding of the state's role in the Lydenburg region.

The official's name was Major Donald Rolfe Hunt, one of the first and longest serving Sub-native Commissioners in Sekhukhuneland, who was born in London on 2 May 1875. He grew up in a middle class family in Norfolk, attended a public school, and then joined the army.[130] His enlistment in the army was predictable since he had a number of older brothers and there was no prospect of inheriting the family property. Moreover, he had distinguished himself in school as the Senior Cadet Lieutenant in the Rifle Corps. Hunt came to South Africa in 1896 to join the Cape Mounted Rifles. Judging by the sentiments expressed in his letters, his decision to come to South Africa was based on a search for adventure and an opportunity to accumulate wealth.[131] He saw South Africa as a place of opportunity, where his poverty and lowly origins could be partially overcome. He hoped that South African capital and social standing would buy him both property and acceptability for a comfortable retirement in England.

His initial impressions of South Africa were not favourable. He was assigned to Namaqualand to help control an outbreak of Rinderpest and during this first experience of 'working amongst the Natives', he displayed racial prejudice and

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129 S. Dubow, *Racial Segregation*, p. 100, argues that the sons of missionaries were important in this regard. This seems applicable mainly in the Cape, and ignores the importance of the Milner officials in the Transvaal.

130 WHPL, A1655/Aa, 'Excerpts From the Memoirs of Donald Rolfe Hunt'. The school he went to was called Haileybury College.

131 WHPL, A1655, Aa1, 'Memoirs of Donald Rolfe Hunt': After 'being at a loose end' he was 'itching to get away to a more adventurous and soldiery life'.

distaste for the whole job. He described the episode in the following words:

> 'I have been out all day burying rinderpest oxen, not a cheerful job, bossing up my boys and bringing all my diplomatic powers to bear to prevail upon the thickheaded skulls of grumbling niggers. If it were not for financial reasons and an old fashioned out of date sense of duty I would have chucked it all long ago.'[132]

After active duty during the Boer War, he managed to find employment in Godfrey Lagden's new Native Affairs Department based on his brief experience with rinderpest and 'natives'. The Milner state was desperate to find 'native administrators' with any experience and some loyalty to the British administration. Hunt's first job in the NAD was as a mine labour inspector and he was extremely unhappy in this position. In December of 1902 he was given the position of Sub-Native Commissioner in Lichtenburg and his outlook rapidly became positive. He tackled the job with enthusiasm, learnt the local languages, and administered justice with a sense of righteousness. It was here, and a few years later in Sekhukhuneland, that Hunt found a calling, power, and, as an 'imperial official', social status.[133] As the paternal administrator, who understood his charges and defended them against 'Dutch farmers', Hunt found fulfilment.[134] It is in this role that we find him described in Dubow's recent book on the state:

> 'Hunt was one of those "enthusiastic survivors from the days of Milner". His brand of sympathetic paternalism is revealed in a nostalgia for the "olden days" when he used to tour the district in a Cape cart, pausing every few miles "under a tree for a couple of hours" to talk with "all the old fellows from the kraals".'[135]

Hunt, living on the western side of the Steelpoort and interacting mainly with Africans, was out of touch with white farmers, whom he generally distrusted.[136] The Native Commissioner in Lydenburg, Colonel Frederick Hugh Damant - a British citizen born in the Cape in 1864 - was in a very different position. He was also the Magistrate of the district and lived in the white town. He had daily interactions with white farmers, and one would expect him to be slightly less

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132 WHPL, A1655, Ab1, Donald Hunt to 'Tom', 4 August 1897.
133 WHPL, A1655, AB1659, Private Correspondence of D.R. Hunt: When he started in the Pilansberg he proudly proclaimed: 'I have started the new order of things here.'
134 WHPL, A1655, Aa1, 'Memoirs of Donald Rolfe Hunt', he called the Africans in his district 'My people'.
135 S. Dubow, *Racial Segregation*, p. 106.
136 WHPL, A1655, AB1659, Private Correspondence of D.R. Hunt.

concerned with the interests of Africans. However, the two Commissioners were apparently good friends and Damant expressed solidarity with Hunt on a number of occasions.[137] Damant's administrative philosophy was, in his own words, to try to cause 'as little [disturbance] as possible of black or white'.[138] Consequently he believed strongly in Segregation: He considered it as 'most desirable' to reduce 'the points of contact between white and black'.[139] He also believed that the Dinkwanyane and Manok communities would have to move to the 'black area'.[140]

Damant certainly subscribed to the paternalist ethos of the NAD, and he regarded the 'official view' as an important counterbalance to the self-serving interests promoted by white farmers.[141] Native Commissioners in Lydenburg undoubtedly took their work seriously and identified with their fellow officials on the other side of the Steelpoort. Their position, however, was much more ambiguous and they spent most of their time tending to the needs of white farmers.[142] The English speaking officials in the Lydenburg Magistrates office were constantly urged to improve their Afrikaans, revealing the administration's concern to appease white farmers.[143] The Magistrate was on the committee of the school and hospital boards, making him an active, integrated member of Lydenburg's white community.

SHAPING LYDENBURG'S BORDERS

The role of the state and its officials in shaping the Lydenburg district was

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137 Stubbs, p. 181.
138 Stubbs, p. 182.
139 Stubbs, p. 181.
140 Stubbs, p. 183.
141 For an in-depth discussion of this ethos see, Dubow, *Racial Segregation*; See also, CAD, NTS, No. 10/280, Vol. 2010, Secretary of Native Affairs to Mijnart and Mackenzie, Carolina, 9 March 1920; Secretary of Native Affairs to T. Humphries, 20 April 1920.
142 See CAD, JUS, No. 3/234/21, Vol. 310, Inspection Report of Magistrates Office, Lydenburg, 12 August 1927: In that year the Native Affairs section of the Lydenburg Magistrates office was run by one second-grade clerk, one interpreter/messenger, and seven 'Native constables', and their work was largely 'confined to the collection of tax and the issue of passes'.
143 CAD, JUS, No. 3/234/21, Vol. 310, Inspecting Magistrates Report, 10 November 1911; No. 552/29, Vol. 462, Secretary of Justice to Magistrate of Lydenburg, undated; No. 21/67/1, Vol. 1076, Public Service Commission Inspection Report, 23 October 1934; Native Affairs officials were also required to speak African languages. See, CAD, TES, No. F39/49/18, Vol. 5784, Secretary of Justice to Secretary of Finance, 27 April 1920.

enlarged considerably in 1913 when the Land Act was passed in order to define the conditions under which Africans could occupy land.[144] Black and white areas were clearly demarcated, Africans could only buy land in black areas and *vice versa*. Labour tenancy was defined, but 'squatting' was left alone for the time being. Share-cropping was only prohibited in the Orange Free State.[145]

The Act had very little immediate impact on Lydenburg but it did turn the western border of the district into a contested area. Feinberg argues that the Act was quickly passed by the South African Party in order to appease the radical supporters of Hertzog, who was contemplating breaking away from the Party.[146] But Native Affairs officials were still gathering information on how best to divide the country and, as a concession to them, the Act appointed a commission that could redefine the amount of land 'scheduled' for African occupation. Thus the Beaumont commission was established and came to Lydenburg in 1914 in order to divide the Steelpoort Valley between whites and blacks.

The area on either side of the Steelpoort River did not contain a neat division between white and black spheres. Although the River still represented the most natural boundary, whites had moved over the river and claimed farms on the western side, while Africans remained in occupation of vast tracts of land on the east.[147] J. Nieuwenhuize, the Lydenburg M.P. mentioned above, was also a leading Steelpoort farmer and he made a proposal for a more precise border on behalf of white farmers. He acknowledged that numerous African families occupied the land on the eastern side but he nevertheless asked that the entire valley, including the two rows of farms on the western side of the River, be included in the white area.[148] Nieuwenhuize was intent on reserving all the riparian land which could possibly be irrigated for white occupation.[149] He also wanted the

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144 H.M. Feinberg, 'The 1913 Natives Land Act in South Africa: Politics, Race, and Segregation in the early twentieth century', in *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 26,1 (1993), p. 68.
145 Feinberg, 'The 1913 Natives Land Act', p. 68.
146 *Ibid.*
147 CAD, LDB, No. R1074/5/14, Vol. 951, J. Nieuwenhuize to Under-Secretary of Agriculture, 12 August 1917.
148 Beaumont, p. 394.
149 See also Stubbs, p. 33, Evidence of Gerhardus Cornelis Schoeman.

5000 non-labour tenant Africans in the area to be removed to the black area. The Native Commissioners, Hunt and Damant, and the Africans, represented by Chief Kgoloko, claimed the Steelpoort River as a boundary.[150] But, according to Hunt, the prominent Lydenburger Schalk Burger, who was on the Beaumont Commission, ensured that Nieuwenhuize's position prevailed.[151]

The Stubbs Committee, on the instigation of the part-time Minister of Native Affairs, F.S. Malan, a Cape Liberal who expressed reservations about the equity of the 1913 Land Act and later openly opposed the 1936 Representation of Natives Act, returned to the area in 1917 to re-examine the land allocations.[152] The Committee found that the left bank of the Steelpoort was occupied mainly by Africans; that these Africans 'depended entirely on the river for the watering of their stock'; and that the left bank was 'in no way comparable to the right bank, which is reserved for Europeans'.[153] The committee argued further that irrigation prospects were doubtful on the left side of the river because the banks were extremely steep. It also emerged from Nieuwenhuize's testimony that only two out of ten farms bordering on the left side of the Steelpoort were occupied by their owners. The rest were rented out to African tenants, except for Boschkloof and Eerste Geluk, both of which were rented to whites, and Doornbosch, whose owner moved there with his cattle in winter.[154] As a result of these findings, the Stubbs committee defined the Steelpoort River as the boundary between Lydenburg and Sekhukhuneland.

SHAPING RACIAL RELATIONS INSIDE LYDENBURG

The Steelpoort Valley was in fact an area which, although claimed by whites since the defeat of the Pedi in 1879, was only now being gradually occupied by whites.

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150 Beaumont Commission, p. 398.

151 WHPL, A1655, Ad2, Hunt's Notes on the Native Trust and Land Bill, undated; See Footnote No. 40 for Burger's earlier racism.

152 *Majority Report of the Eastern Transvaal Natives Land Committee* (U.G. 31-18) (Cape Town, Government Printer, 1918), pp 21-22; CAD, NTS, No. 298/308, Vol. 3504, Minister of Native Affairs to Minister of Lands, 28 September 1922; Dubow, *Racial Segregation*, p. 171; B. Cloete, *Die Lewe van Senator F.S. Malan* (Johannesburg, Afrikaanse Pers Boekhandel, 1946), pp. 404-415.

153 WHPL, A1655, Ad2, Hunt's Notes on the Native Trust and Land Bill, undated.

154 Stubbs, pp. 25-26.

Nieuwenhuize regarded it as an area that should be set aside for future white colonisation, and his reasoning is a blunt rendering of white racism in Lydenburg:

> 'It is true that the farms along the river have only recently been taken up by white people, except as grazing farms. In another ten years they will all be taken up and occupied by whites. ... I do not say that natives ought to be excluded from all opportunities of irrigation, but they should not be given such opportunities at the cost of white people. Europeans should not be prejudiced with regard to any irrigation schemes in the district. I think that where natives are living on land that is capable of irrigation that portion of land should be given to white people. ... Natives never improve their lands. They never fertilise, and when they have exhausted one land they simply leave it and plough another.'[155]

Other farmers expressed similar opinions in their opposition to the Dinkwanyane community on Boomplaats. In 1921, A. Op t' Hof, a prominent local farmer, led a delegation against Boomplaats. He claimed that the farm was becoming 'a nest of Kaffirs', and he accused the Boomplaats residents of stealing cattle and sheep.[156] He was also indignant about the fact that Boomplaats was absorbing a number of labour tenants who were being given permission to move from white farms by the local Native Commissioner. When the Commissioner claimed that he could not prevent this movement because Micha Dinkwanyane was a legitimate land owner, Op't Hof was outraged. He asked the Commissioner in disbelief: 'Would you treat the kaffir with the same consideration as a white farmer who produces something for society, while Micha and his bunch have to buy food every year?'[157]

Thus farmers aggressively pursued their racial interests but did not always have their own way. In the confrontation over Boomplaats, and in the recommendations made by the Stubbs committee, the views of the administrators - and the Africans they sought to 'protect' - prevailed. On the eastern side of the Steelpoort River, furthermore, Africans, with the help of administrators, were able to maintain independent access to land.

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155 Stubbs, pp. 26-27; See also *Assembly Debates*, 25 March 1925: 'We should not proceed to give up our best land to the natives, with the consequence that the land will be lying useless. Where can you find a native that takes any trouble to do any irrigation?' This was reportedly a widely supported opinion amongst whites in Lydenburg.

156 CAD, NTS, No. 274/323, Vol. 7109, A. Op't Hof to Minister of Native Affairs, 5 September 1921.

157 CAD, NTS, No. 274/323, Vol. 7109, A. Op t' Hof to Minister of Native Affairs, 5 September 1921 (Trans. in Text): 'Wil u dan die kaffer met die selfde konsiderasie behandel as 'n blanke boer die iets produseer vir die maatskappij, terwyl Micha met sy lot elke jaar moet kos koop.'

The best example of the clash between white and black land claims along the river is provided by the struggle for the farm Steelpoortpark.[158] An African community, under headman Ngoanatsomane, saw this farm as 'their old original home'.[159] They were reportedly driven away from it during the middle of the nineteenth century, but returned again to settle down permanently in 1877. Unfortunately the state had decided in 1912 to allocate this farm to whites under the Land Settlement Act. Hunt explained to his superiors that the Africans did not have anywhere to go and that they should be left alone until the land commissions had defined the white and black areas more clearly. This gave the African community a reprieve until 1919, when the Secretary of Land received numerous white enquiries about the farm and decided that it should now be regarded as falling within the white area.[160] But Hunt opposed this decision and the matter was once again left in abeyance until 1929, when the Secretary of Lands instructed the NAD: 'Due to numerous representations made to this Department that [Steelpoortpark] should be made available for European settlement, we have decided to advertise [the farm] in terms of the Land Settlement Act'.[161] The Secretary of Native Affairs responded to this by instructing Hunt to give 'the squatters' three months notice. Hunt, however, opposed this instruction on the grounds that

> 'the removal of this group of Baphuti without provision being made for them would cause considerable dissatisfaction and alarm among other Baphuti sections and have its reflex not only in this district, but elsewhere in the Transvaal.'[162]

In response to Hunt's 'cogent reasons' the Secretary changed his mind and refused to cooperate with the Department of Lands. The Secretary of Lands responded

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158 For other examples see CAD, NTS, 298/308, Vol. 3504, Native Commissioner Sekhukhuneland to Secretary of Native Affairs, 13 March 1929; & to Native Commissioner Lydenburg, 30 November 1920: when Hunt and Damant actually clashed over the racial allocation of a farm in the Steelpoort Valley.

159 CAD, NTS, No. 337/308, Vol. 3516, Native Commissioner Sekhukhuneland to Native Commissioner Lydenburg, 4 October 1913.

160 CAD, NTS, No. 337/308, Vol. 3516, Secretary of Lands to Secretary of Native Affairs, 8 January 1919.

161 CAD, NTS, No. 337/308, Vol. 3516, Secretary of Lands to Secretary of Native Affairs, 8 November 1929.

162 CAD, NTS, No. 337/308, Vol. 3516, Native Commissioner Sekhukhuneland to Secretary of Native Affairs, 16 November 1929.

that 'the farm is outside a released Native area and should be made available for European settlement'.[163] But a meeting between the Ministers of the two Departments in April 1930 settled the matter, temporarily, in favour of the NAD and the African community on Steelpoortpark.[164]

This conflict serves as a clear example of how state officials, Africans and white farmers interacted to determine the character of Lydenburg. White farmers, operating within a racist discourse, demanded African land and labour. The state was divided, with the Department of Lands responsive to white demands and the NAD, especially at the local level, concerned with its paternalist image amongst Africans.[165] This image had to be maintained in the face of African resistance that, like the potential 'Baphuti opposition' referred to by Hunt, threatened the legitimacy of the state.[166] The state, through its concern with legitimacy, thus gave African resistance a space in which real concessions could be won.

CONCLUSION

Neither the shape of Lydenburg, nor the power relations within, were imposed simply from above. They were determined by a dynamic process in which African resistance played a role. This chapter has described the historical origins of the process. It has demonstrated that the conflict over land between whites and blacks was deeply rooted, and, by doing so, it has provided the background for the conflicts that emerged between 1930 and 1970. In the limited space available, the chapter did not, however, provide a detailed history of Lydenburg before 1930. By pursuing a broad historical sweep and a rather narrow focus the analysis has, perhaps, exaggerated the homogeneity of groups that, in many ways, were acutely divided. Nor was a great deal of attention paid to the way that group

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163 CAD, NTS, No. 337/308, Vol. 3516, Secretary of Lands to Secretary of Native Affairs, 18 December 1929.

164 CAD, NTS, No. 337/308, Vol. 3516, Secretary of Lands to Secretary of Native Affairs, 2 April 1930.

165 Similar differences of opinion between the NAD and Department of Agriculture were discussed by, D. Duncan, *The Mills of the Gods: State Bureaucracy and African Labour in South Africa, 1918-1948.* (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Queens Univ., 1990), p. 228. For the man on the spot in Kenya see, B. Berman, 'Bureaucracy and Incumbent Violence', in B. Berman & J. Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya & Africa, Book Two: Violence and Ethnicity* (London, James Currey, 1992).

166 This was particularly the case during the ICU's ascendancy in Lydenburg. See, CAD, NTS, No. 10/280, Vol. 2010, Magistrate Lydenburg to Secretary of Native Affairs, 9 December 1927.

consciousness in Lydenburg was continually modified, even if slightly, by economic changes. The following chapters, which form the core of the thesis, will be more sensitive to these changes. Therefore, before we can examine resistance, we must first look closely at the economic developments that occurred in the district.

CHAPTER TWO

AGRICULTURE IN LYDENBURG: THE CONTEXT FOR RESISTANCE, 1900-1960

In the nineteenth century Lydenburg was dominated by farmers who found it impossible to produce consistently for a market and who saw their land primarily as a form of security.[1] These farmers took advantage of market opportunities during good years but hesitated to invest their subsequent profits in improvements that would increase the capacity of their farms. During the twentieth century, despite some severe economic depressions, the market for agricultural goods became increasingly larger, more accessible and safer. The capital channelled into agriculture by the state also grew significantly.[2] These factors combined to provide an environment in which a growing number of farmers gradually abandoned their concern with security and concentrated on efficient market production. This chapter describes the extent of the economic changes in Lydenburg and provides the context in which African resistance operated. White economic growth had crucial consequences for African tenants because successful farmers, less dependent on cheap labour and more interested in maximising their utilisation of land, threatened to restrict their tenants' access to land and cattle.

However, farmers who placed a high premium on security did not disappear as a result of economic development. This chapter shows that poorer white farmers continued to be a strong presence in Lydenburg until the late 1950s, when their

1 See Chapter One, p. 34.

2 J. Nattrass, *The South African Economy: Its Growth and Change* (Cape Town, Oxford Univ. Press, 1981), p. 119: 'Since ... 1910, government has played an increasingly large role in the development of ... South African agriculture. ... In the period 1965-70 ... state aid on average provided one-fifth of an average white farmer's income.'

numbers gradually declined as a result of urbanisation. Poorer white farmers relied heavily on cheap labour, making them receptive to African demands.[3] Like their African tenants, these farmers fought to retain access to land and often adopted migrant labour in order to do so.

Within Lydenburg the pace of the changes outlined above was influenced by the district's backwardness in relation to other parts of the Transvaal. This backwardness was evident in the nineteenth century and, despite the significant developments of the next century, no substantial catching up occurred before 1960. Little comparative analysis has been done on Transvaal districts; nevertheless, the available statistics describing the value produced by different categories of farmers in each agricultural district allow some comparative assessments to be made for 1962 (at the end of the period under discussion). At that time Lydenburg's average output per farmer placed the district in forty fifth place out of a total of fifty five agricultural districts. Lydenburg's average was less than a quarter of the average achieved in lowveld districts such as Barberton and Nelspruit and western Transvaal districts such as Lichtenburg and Schweizer Reineke.[4]

Lydenburg's first disadvantage was its distance away from any significant urban centre. For example, the distance between Lydenburg and Johannesburg is 334 kilometres. Secondly, the soils in Lydenburg are not as fertile as those in the western Transvaal maize belt and the eastern Transvaal lowveld. The latter, neighbouring, area has the additional advantage of a tropical climate that favours fruit and citrus production. Some oranges were grown in the lower lying valleys of Lydenburg, where quasi-lowveld conditions prevailed, but frost often destroyed these crops.[5]

Although the district was backward, it was not unimportant. It was a major wheat

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3 In those cases where poorer farmers were not responsive they relied heavily, and often unsuccessfully, on state coercion; see Chapter Seven, pp. 261-267. Most farmers relied on state coercion when this seemed to be forthcoming and effective, and gave in to African demands when state coercion failed to live up to expectations. See Chapter Three, p. 137.

4 Union of South Africa, *Agricultural Census No. 37, 1962* (Pretoria, Government Printer, 1967).

5 *Lydenburg News*, 4 February 1938.

producing area in the Transvaal, and one of its leading farmers, A. Op t' Hof, played a central role in the establishment of a wheat board in the 1930s.[6] Further, the sheep raised in the district were of a high quality, although their number was relatively small. Most importantly the farmers of the district can be regarded as representative of poorer, less-capitalised Transvaal farmers, who depended on labour tenants until the 1960s, and who played a crucial political role in the 1948 election. These farmers constantly pressurised the state for further protection from market forces and thus had an important influence on the South African economy.

1900-1930

In order to place these farmers in a historical context, this section examines the beginnings of Lydenburg's twentieth century economic evolution. During the period 1900-1930 the district was gradually integrated more fully into the wider South African economy. This integration was uneven because some agricultural activities were more profitable than others, and because farmers in general became increasingly stratified.

Agriculture in the district was in bad shape at the turn of the century. The outbreak of the Anglo-Boer war had disrupted trade routes - which affected both farmers and transport riders - and had eliminated the payment of mineral options. The latter was a crucial source of revenue for the landowners of Lydenburg, especially as many sold 'keep alive options' that required the buyers to pay an annual fee to keep the option alive.[7] Thus the outbreak of the war cut Lydenburg off from markets and cash. As the war dragged on, other assets were destroyed when the fighting, including attacks on farms by Africans, led to the destruction of homesteads, agricultural equipment, cattle and crops.[8] The difficult conditions of 1902 are described in the following quote:

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6 *The South African Farmer*, 3 October 1930.

7 Standard Bank Archives (SBA), General Managers Correspondence (GMC), Letters to London, p. 244, 12 July 1899.

8 P. Warwick, *Black People and the South African War 1899-1902* (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1981), p. 101.

> 'One may rightly use the term 'chaotic state' to describe this district at the present time. Only some thirteen homesteads have escaped from the ravages of fire and of the others only the bare walls are standing. Very few cattle of any description are in the district, while trees of any kind have shared in the general destruction to farm property.'[9]

In that year the Standard Bank had only two 'noteworthy debtors': Abel Erasmus Snr. and Jnr. As noted above the former made his fortune before the war, by extorting 'taxes' from Africans, and investing some capital in agriculture.[10] The rest of the white farmers, who only had their land and whose capital savings had not been large enough to survive the war, essentially had to start over. They were assisted in this endeavour by state funded 'Repatriation Boards' that compensated larger farmers for their losses and 'alleviated some of the distress among the poorer class of farmer'.[11]

State assistance reduced some of the hardship, but the regional economy in the early 1900s remained depressed as Lydenburg waited for a viable transport link to the urban markets of Johannesburg and Pretoria.[12] Because of the remoteness of markets there was a consistent tendency towards overproduction (except during those periods when locusts destroyed the crops) and the most profitable activities were transport riding and trading.[13] Transport riding was threatened by the outbreak of 'rhodesian redwater' amongst cattle in 1904, which limited transporting to those who owned donkeys. Trading was made difficult by the large number of traders, which meant that only those who had been in the district for a long time, and had access to kin and friendship networks, could be assured of a steady supply of produce. Debt also tied farmers to traders and gave the

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9 SBA, Inspection Reports (INSP), 1/1/242, Report on the Lydenburg Branch, 2 September 1902.

10 P. Delius, 'Abel Erasmus: Power and Profit in the Eastern Transvaal', in W. Beinart *et al*, eds., *Putting a Plough to the Ground* (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1986); *Bantoe*, February 1955, p. 15.

11 SBA, INSP, 1/1/242, Report on the Lydenburg Branch, 2 September 1902; T.R.H. Davenport, *South Africa: A modern history* (London, Macmillan, 1991), p. 205: 'The actual sum spent on relief and repatriation amounted to over £16 million, in grants and loans administered by a Repatriation Department in the case of whites'.

12 TAD, CT, No. FM4, Vol. 315, Chief Engineers Report and Estimates for the Lydenburg Railway, 17 February 1918: It was estimated that the railway would cause a significant increase in the districts productivity.

13 SBA, INSP, 1/1/242, Report on Lydenburg, 12 August 1904; For conditions in neighbouring Belfast see Transvaal Archive Depot (TAD), G, No. 828/06, Vol. 517, Agricultural Report, 30 October 1906.

individual trader the ability to force farmers to trade with him.[14]

In 1909 the railway reached Lydenburg from the Pretoria-Belfast line but, according to the Standard Bank inspector, this had little effect on production in the district.[15] In that year the inspector filed the following report:

> 'From a farming point of view the Lydenburg district cannot be generally classed as good. The products consist chiefly of wool, maize and wheat, but the quantities turned out are not heavy. Sheep only do well in certain parts, and the area of arable land is not large.'[16]

Despite this pessimistic view, the levels of agricultural activity did increase in the ten years after the railway came.[17] The district had the slight advantage of being less prone to droughts because it was largely a middle-veld area which received rain even when the lowveld and highveld received none.[18] Consequently the district was hardly affected by the drought of 1914, allowing local farmers to benefit fully from the expanding markets and higher prices produced by the First World War.[19] Many farmers, having escaped the ravages of drought, were able to use the extra cash generated by the bigger profits of 1915 and 1916 to pay off their debts with the Land Bank and local traders like R.J. Schurink.[20] These tendencies continued into 1919, although an outbreak of rust in the wheat crop of 1917 and the influenza epidemic of 1919 - which prevented the effective harvesting of the 1918 wheat crop and the sowing of the 1919 maize crop - hampered agriculture somewhat.[21]

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14 Central Archives Depot (CAD), Department of Agriculture (LDB), No. R2542, Vol. 1572, J.A. Theron to Department of Agriculture, c1928; Long established traders included the Dutch immigrant Schurink, and the British immigrants McGee and Morgan; SBA, INSP, 1/1/242, Report on Lydenburg, 5 September 1917. The more recent Indian traders used lower prices and barter to establish themselves in Lydenburg. See *House of Assembly Debates*, 17 March 1927.

15 SBA, INSP, 1/1/242, Report on Lydenburg, 29 August 1910; TAD, G, No. 828, Vol. 517, Magistrate Lydenburg, Report for 1909, 20 June 1909.

16 SBA, INSP, 1/1/242, Report on Lydenburg, 20 January 1909.

17 Available figures indicate a consistent upward trend in wheat and wool production, with Maize fluctuating. See *Agricultural Census 1918* (Cape Town, Gov. Printer, UG 53-1919); *Agricultural Census 1919* (Cape Town, Gov. Printer, UG 20-1920).

18 Interview with J. Mason, Isando, 1990.

19 Despite the instability caused by the 1914 Rebellion. See CAD, South African Police (SAP), No. 6/245/14/286, Vol. 24, District Commandant to Deputy Commissioner SAP, 10 April 1915.

20 SBA, INSP, 1/1/242, Report on Lydenburg, 5 September 1917.

21 CAD, LDB, No. R1074/5/14, Vol. 951, M. Jackson to Secretary of Agriculture, 6 January 1918; CAD, LDB, No. R1074/5/14, Vol. 951, S Pelbalan to Under-Secretary, Agriculture, 19 March 1917: Indicates that Sekhukhuneland was struck by a severe drought and heat-wave, which apparently did not affect Lydenburg; *Minutes of Evidence of the Eastern Transvaal Natives Land* (Stubbs)*Committee* (U.G. 32-

The depression that began in 1920 put an end to the expansion of production and the availability of capital. The evidence, although lacking precision, indicates a number of foreclosures during this period.[22] There was a leniency on the part of the Standard Bank, who felt that they would recoup their debts after conditions returned to normal.[23] Nevertheless, the population statistics show that a number of people left Lydenburg during this time and other evidence indicates a high level of indigence in the district.[24] Prices improved in 1924 but in 1925, soon after an outbreak of east coast fever amongst cattle, the district's luck *vis à vis* droughts ran out.[25] This time they were hit with a serious drought that lasted until 1928. After eight years of unfavourable circumstances it is not surprising that in 1928 there were farmers like C.J. Smit and J.P. Nel, who were creditors that the Standard Bank regarded as extremely undesirable. Smit had lost all his capital, and was permitted to occupy, on a share-cropping basis, the farm he once owned. Nel was on the verge of bankruptcy.[26]

A visiting agricultural officer's report reveals that in some parts of the district the farming community had been thrown onto the defensive. Most farmers had once again given up all hope of 'improving their farms', and concentrated instead on survival. The report on farmers in the Krugerspost area states:

> 'I visited ... Mr Van Der Merwe who is chairman of the [agricultural] society. His is a tale of woe: the society is dead or nearly so and he is in despair, for he says he can not get the members to wake up. They are, he affirms, retrogressing fast, and he has asked for a special visit from me, to see if we can not get them to wake up

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18) (Cape Town, Government Printer, 1918), Lydenburg, 22 October 1917, Evidence of G.C. Schoeman.

22 SBA, INSP, 1/1/242, Report on Lydenburg, 12 March 1928, shows four insolvencies in 1926 and three in 1927.

23 SBA, INSP, 1/1/242, Managers Reply to Inspection Report on Lydenburg, 1 December 1921.

24 Union of South Africa, *Fourth Census of the Population of the Union of South Africa, 4 May 1926* (Pretoria, Gov. Printer, UG 4-'31) shows that the population in Lydenburg (adjusted for change in size of district) only increased by 82 in the period 1921-1926; CAD, Department of Justice (JUS) Public Service Inspector's Report Lydenburg, 13 April 1929: Shows that the average annual population growth rate amongst whites in Lydenburg during 1927 and 1928 was 122; CAD, JUS, No. 21/56/1, Vol. 1076, Agreement between Department of Labour and Dutch Reformed Church, undated, c1927; CAD, Department of Lands (LDE), No. 5069, Vol. 488, T.H. Byrne to Government Attorney, 19 November 1922.

25 CAD, JUS, No. 3/234/21, Vol. 310, Inspection Report on Magistrates Office Lydenburg, 25 September 1925; *Agricultural Census No. 9, 1925* (U.G. 24-28) (Pretoria, Government Printer, 1928): 1045 farms reported losses due to weather and other conditions.

26 SBA, INSP, 1/1/242, Report on Lydenburg, 12 March 1928.

> and take a new interest in their farming - owing to drought - bad markets etc. etc. - the farmers have become low-spirited. Their farming is going the same way as at Ohrigstad and something must be done to instill new life and methods.'[27]

Poverty was even more endemic just above the Krugerspost area; on the Ohrigstad Settlement Scheme, which was established in 1907 on state owned land in order to provide farming opportunities for landless whites.[28] The scheme contained 68 settlers whose plots differed in size from six to twenty morgen.[29] Some of the settlers were able to place all twenty morgen under irrigation, planting wheat in winter and maize in summer, but this practice quickly exhausted the soil. All the settlers struggled to keep their heads above water, and half of them faced losing their plots in 1927.[30]

In other parts of Lydenburg conditions were slightly better. In the southern part of the district farmers were producing a high grade of wool, which fetched up to 27d per pound on the market. The average price for wool in 1928 was 16 to 18d.[31] Those farmers who irrigated their fields and grew wheat in winter produced 32000 bags in 1927, while some enterprising farmers diversified into barley, producing 12000 bags which they sold to the breweries.[32]

Many farmers continued to generate cash with their land, a policy that had its roots in such nineteenth century practices as selling mineral rights. During good years farmers often invested in land rather than in 'improvements' like dams and fences. They then leased this land out or acquired mortgages from the Land Bank and other Banks. Some farmers were actually highly skilled at this practice:

> 'they go around to all the banks to "raise the wind", and the balance sheets they furnish cannot be relied upon. Liabilities to other banks and merchants are not disclosed, the value of farms inflated, and, in several known cases, farmers have fraudulently misrepresented that farms, being purchased by instalments through

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27 CAD, R, No. 2543, Vol. 1572, G.H. Cock to The Principal, School of Agriculture, Potchefstroom, 9 July 1928.
28 CAD, LDE, No. 22108, Vol. 1158, Prime Ministers Minute No. 240, 12 January 1916.
29 CAD, LDB, No. R2542, Vol. 1572, Report: Ohrigstad Settlement, 19 July 1927.
30 CAD, R, No. 2542, Vol. 1572, J.A. Theron to Department of Agriculture, c1928; CAD, LDE, No. 22108, Vol. 1158, Inspection Report on Lot 21, 11 April 1919; 13 May 1925; 14 November 1928.
31 Department of Agriculture, *Crops and Markets*, October 1928, Vol. VII, No. 2.
32 SBA, INSP, 1/1/242, Report on Lydenburg, 12 March 1928.

the Land Board, were actually their freehold property'.[33]

This risky practice suggests that farmers were prepared to gamble with land ownership, but it does not necessarily mean that they were unconcerned about maintaining a rural lifestyle. Grosskopf, who conducted interviews with Transvaal farmers during 1930, showed that land ownership was often regarded as unimportant and optional while the possibilities of tenant and share-cropping arrangements were abundant.[34] As Grosskopf noted, Transvaal farmers were becoming less inclined to rent their land to *bywoners*, yet in Lydenburg the practice was still widespread in 1938.[35] *Bywoners* in the district were sometimes given as little as six morgen irrigated land and twelve morgen dry land - for which they had to pay with one third of their produce - while others received as much as 80 morgen irrigated land and 100 morgen dry land. During the period 1935-1939, 149 bywoners in Lydenburg registered for the state's Tenant Assistance Scheme.[36] Many were poor, but determined to make a living on the land. As one tenant put it: 'I opened my eyes in agriculture and I will shut them in agriculture'.[37]

Land was still abundant in the Lydenburg district as a whole. For example, in 1929, 651 farmers reported to the Department of Agriculture; they occupied farms that in total consisted of 403536 morgen. Only 21398 morgen of this land was 'under agricultural crops'.[38] Lydenburg is a mountainous district with a restricted amount of arable land and the best land limited to the soil riparian to the rivers that run through the valleys. The figures cited above nevertheless suggest that large amounts of arable land remained unused; this land was therefore still available to *bywoners*.

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33 SBA, INSP, 1/1/242, Report on Lydenburg, 12 March 1928.

34 J.F.W. Grosskopf, 'Rural Impoverishment and Rural Exodus', in *Carnegie Commission of Investigation on the Poor White Question in South Africa*, (Stellenbosch, Pro Ecclesia, 1932), pp. 37-38.

35 See also R. Morrell, *White but Poor: Essays on the History of Poor Whites in Southern Africa, 1880-1940* (Pretoria, Univ. of South Africa, 1992), p. 7.

36 CAD, VWR, No. B645/192/1, Vols. 104-106.

37 CAD, VWR, No. B645/192/1, Vol. 106, Application of G.S. Mare, 1936.

38 *Agricultural Census No. 12, 1929* (U.G. 35-30) (Gov. Printer, Pretoria, 1930).

Evidence on Lydenburg's relatively remote Steelpoort Valley indicates that by 1929 more land than before was occupied by white farmers. Nevertheless, land was not yet scarce and large tracts were either unoccupied or occupied by Africans. It was shown earlier that, in 1917, the Steelpoort Valley was slowly becoming occupied by whites, who had previously used it as winter grazing land for their cattle and sheep.[39] In 1922, The Minister of Lands, Deneys Reitz, travelled through the Steelpoort Valley and submitted the following report:

> 'The farms lying riparian to the Steelpoort River are, with one exception, privately owned [by whites], and they are all under beneficial occupation at the present moment. In travelling down along the river I was greatly struck by the tremendous development that has gone on there during recent years, and by the large tracts that have been placed under irrigation.'[40]

We can, however, assume that Reitz, whose department was sensitive to white land claims, exaggerated the extent of white occupation and cultivation in the area.[41] A report submitted by the Standard Bank inspector in 1929 presents a very different picture of the valley. The inspector claimed that, 'the potentialities of the Steelpoort Valley are well spoken of, but this area remains practically uncultivated.'[42] It appears that the extent of white control had been extended during the 1920s but it is highly unlikely that all 2800 morgen of estimated irrigable land was being put under the plough by white farmers.[43]

By 1929, when stock markets were crashing in other parts of the world, Lydenburg's economy had progressed very slowly and with great difficulty. In fact, farming in the district was finally finding its feet in 1930, at a time when the effects of the Great Depression began to manifest themselves on the produce markets. In August of that year the following detailed report was submitted on the various farming activities in Lydenburg:

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39 Chapter One, p. 58.

40 CAD, Native Affairs Department (NTS), No. 298/308 Vol. 3504, Colonel Reitz to Minister of Native Affairs, 25 September 1922; CAD, LDB, No. R1074/5/14, Vol. 951, Nieuwenhuize to Under-Secretary of Agriculture, 12 August 1917: Indicates that there were only ten white farmers in the Steelpoort valley at that time.

41 See Chapter One, p. 60, for the Department of Land's conflicts with the NAD over who should be allowed to occupy the area.

42 SBA, INSP, 1/1/294, Lydenburg Inspection Report, 30 May 1929.

43 Stubbs Commission, Lydenburg, 22 October 1917, Evidence of Mr. Yates.

'Sheep: On the highveld wooled sheep do very well, and the wool is of good quality. There are approximately 72000 wooled sheep and 17000 non-wooled sheep in the district, the latter mostly belong to Natives.
Cattle: This industry is sadly neglected, the cattle in the area being mostly "scrub"; and with the local type of farmer little improvement of the breed can be expected. The average farmer does not appear to consider it necessary to grow winter feed for his cattle. Consequently, at this time of year they are in miserably poor condition. There are 88965 head in the district, of which 63864 belong to Natives.
Wheat: This is the principal grain crop in the district, and is all grown under irrigation. Last season's crop was poor, owing to rust and hail. About 25000 bags were reaped as compared with 32000 for the previous season. This season's crop looks good, and it is estimated that approximately 40000 bags will be reaped.
Maize: This crop is not grown to any extent in the district. Last season's crop was approximately 40000 bags, and the crop just reaped is slightly in excess of that figure.
Barley: The demand by the breweries for this crop has fallen off, consequently the farmers have sown less this year. It is estimated that the total production will approximate 4000 bags, which is just half of the previous crop.'[44]

Almost on the same day that this report was filed, the Native Economic Commission (NEC) visited the Lydenburg district and heard the evidence of some local farmers. Read in isolation, the evidence given by these farmers seems to indicate that major economic advances had taken place in the district.[45] These contradictory descriptions emerged because the NEC spoke to Lydenburg's leading farmers: Elias De Souza was the chairman of the oldest and strongest farmers union, Hendrik Neethling was the chairman of the farmers organisation in the Steelpoort Valley, and Marthinus Van Rensburg had recently achieved a record yield of over 60 bags per morgen.[46] The descriptions offered by these farmers suggests that they always sought to expand their production, no matter how adverse the conditions.[47] It will be shown below, however, that this attitude was the exception rather than the rule in Lydenburg.

1930-1939

The assertions about the expansion of agriculture in Lydenburg made by farmers to the NEC at the beginning of 1930 were also based on the forthcoming crop,

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44 SBA, INSP, 1/1/304, Lydenburg Inspection Report, 25 August 1930.
45 Wits Historical Papers Library (WHPL), AD1438, Native Economic Commission (NEC), Lydenburg, 21 August 1930.
46 *Ibid.*
47 CAD, LDB, No. R1074/5/14, Vol. 951, Department of Agriculture to P.E. Swart, 13 September 1929: That there were others in the district who were similarly 'progressive' is confirmed by the activities of P.E. Swart, who doubled the area he planted with wheat in 1929, and expanded the overall area under cultivation on his farm from 274 morgen to 420 morgen.

which represented a significant jump in productivity. Farmers thus first responded to the lower prices of the depression by increasing their output. But during the following two years their spirits were clearly broken, as production dropped once again to near the 1929 levels.[48]

The farmers of Lydenburg did not, however, suffer equally during the depression. Their fortunes varied according to their resources, and according to the kinds of crops they produced.[49] For example, during 1931 and 1932 wool farmers fared particularly badly since theirs was primarily an export crop. Wool prices fell because of the depression and were reduced further by the 'gold standard crisis'.[50] Maize and Wheat prices, on the other hand, were already protected and prices therefore did not hit the same lows as wool.[51]

The overall situation in Lydenburg during 1931 was said to be 'somewhat depressed'. A survey by the Department of Inland Revenue indicated that conditions were getting worse rather than better in 1932:

> 'The district has been badly hit by the closing down of several mines in the district, while the one large asbestos mine has reduced its establishment considerably. The wheat crop at present is very promising, but on the whole the prospects in the district are not too bright. A shortfall in revenue [must be expected].'[52]

Despite the railway, many wheat and maize farmers had continued to produce for local mines and the closures thus represented an additional headache for residents already affected by lower prices.[53] During this time many wool farmers slaughtered their sheep rather than trying to sell the wool. Only 2000 bales of wool were produced during 1930 and the number of sheep was declining rapidly

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48 SBA, INSP, 1/1/331, Lydenburg Report, 15 March 1933; In 1931 the price was 22/6 per bag, SBA, INSP, 1/1/331, Lydenburg Report, 14 November 1931.

49 D.H. Houghton, *The South African Economy* (Cape Town, Oxford Univ. Press, 1973), p. 64.

50 Houghton, *South African Economy*, p. 55.

51 F. Wilson, 'Farming 1866-1966', in L. Thompson & M. Wilson, eds., *The Oxford History of South Africa* (Oxford, Clarendon, 1969), p. 137; Houghton, *South African Economy*, p. 51.

52 CAD, JUS, No. 552/29, Vol. 462, Inspection Report of Magistrate Lydenburg, 31 July 1931; CAD, JUS, No. 552/29, Vol. 462, Survey of Lydenburg conducted by Inland Revenue, 9 September 1932; The difficulties of the district are reflected in the huge number of applications for the consolidation of Land Bank loans. See CAD, TUS, No. 552/29, Vol. 462, Report of Public Service Inspector, 2 July 1931.

53 SBA, INSP, 1/1/242, Report on Lydenburg, 8 February 1915.

in 1932 as farmers were 'living on their sheep'.[54]

In 1933 Maize and Wheat production once again increased but prices dropped from 20/ to 18/ in early 1933.[55] Nevertheless, this expansion at a time when crops in other districts were wiped out by drought shows that Lydenburg managed to escape the worst effects of the devastating 1932/33 drought.[56] Consequently, the district was once again able to benefit fully from improving conditions in 1934.

The factor behind the subsequent expansion of agriculture in Lydenburg appears to be an improvement in price controls. The foundations of this process were laid in 1932 with the establishment of the Wheat Board. Wilson points out that 'the introduction of a quantitative wheat import control combined with the power to fix the price of imported wheat well above the international level forced up the price of the local product and led to a massive extension of wheat farming and a progressive reduction of wheat imports'. In the Transvaal the area under wheat increased by 8.7 per cent before 1935.[57] Wilson also claims that Maize subsidies in the 1930s led to an expansion of production.[58] Jones and Müller show, however, that these increases were not sustained after 1935. They argue that 'in volume terms there was little increase in wheat and maize production between the mid-1930s and the mid-1940s, though there were considerable annual fluctuations'.[59] The new price controls therefore only provided an initial boost, which was probably helped along by 1933's devaluation and the subsequent 'natural' rise in agricultural prices. After 1935 the controls, which were solidified by the Marketing Act of 1937, had only a limited effect and served primarily as a guarantee against the collapse of any agricultural markets. But the stabilised prices made investment in agriculture a much safer option. One would expect 'progressive farmers' to take greater advantage of this situation, which in turn

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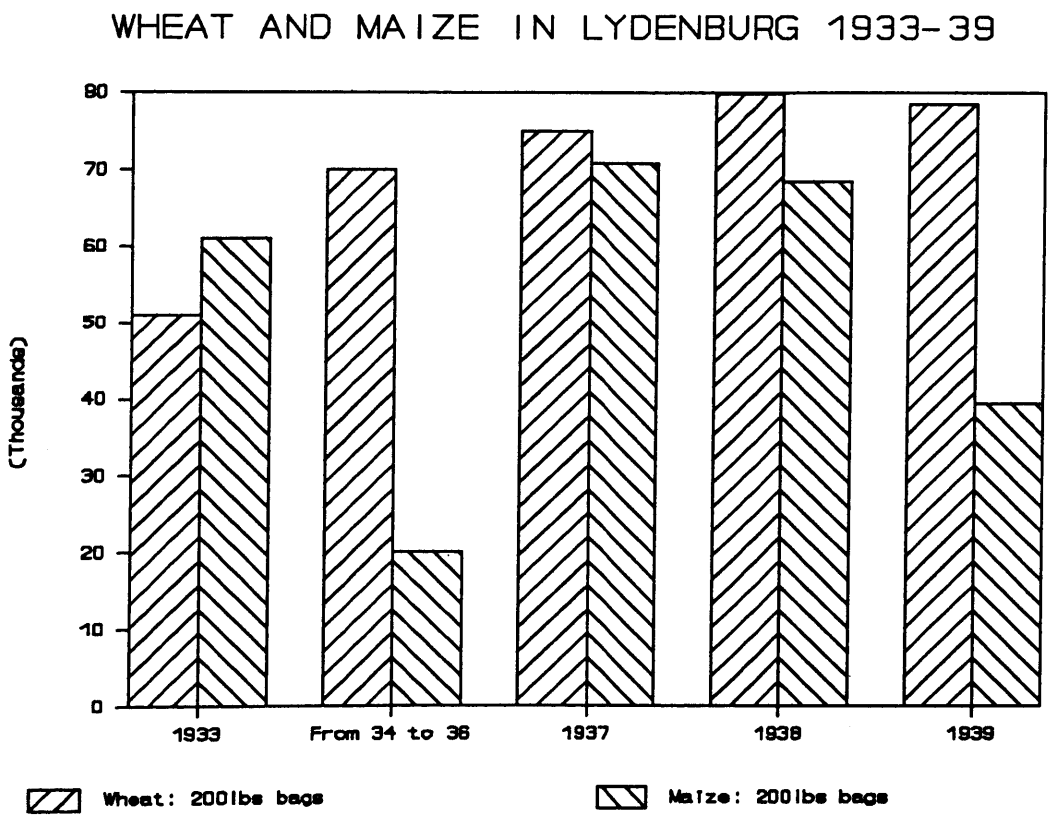
54 SBA, INSP, 1/1/331, Lydenburg Report, 15 March 1933.
55 SBA, INSP, 1/1/331, Lydenburg Report, 15 March 1933; In 1931 the price was 22/6 per bag, SBA, INSP, 1/1/331, Lydenburg Report, 14 November 1931.
56 SBA, INSP, 1/1/294, Lydenburg Inspection Reports, 30/May/1934: The rainfall for the last four years has been as follows- 1931-20.95", 1932-19.14", 1933-23.94", 1934 up to March-11.85".
57 Wilson, 'Farming', p. 137.
58 *Ibid.*
59 S. Jones & A. Müller, *The South African Economy, 1910-90* (London, Macmillan, 1992), p. 143.

would increase economic differentiation in a district like Lydenburg during the 1930s.

GRAPH NO. 1



Census figures for Lydenburg generally agree with the composite national picture outlined above. The figures reflect a significant jump in wheat production during the period 1934 to 1936, and a healthy stabilisation after that period. The price of wheat went up fairly dramatically until 1936, before steadying somewhat after the wheat surplus of that year.[60] Maize production, after the significant jump in 1933, fluctuated fairly widely because it was grown on dry-land plots, and was thus more susceptible to variable rainfall. During the 1930s Lydenburg was primarily a wheat growing area, and maize was, on the whole, a secondary crop, which contributed further to the fluctuations in maize production. The price of

[60] Department of Agriculture, *Farming in South Africa*, December 1936, p. 523.

maize during this period increased as a result of the 1931 Mealie Control Act but did not spiral to the same extent as the wheat price.[61] Graph No. 1. gives a more precise picture of these trends.[62]

The fortunes of Lydenburg's wool farmers also improved as wool prices made a dramatic recovery after the depression. The 1935/36 season opened in September 1935 with prices 15 per cent higher than the closing prices of the previous season. The price increase came about because of greater demand in some European countries and the renewal of the Union-German agreement.[63] Furthermore, the establishment of the Wool Marketing Committee stabilised wool prices and thus gave wool farmers security and an incentive to increase production. In 1935/36 48786 sheep in Lydenburg produced 275134 pounds of wool, which was still of a very good quality and again sold at some of the highest prices on the market.[64] The number of sheep in the district increased steadily as a result of these factors.[65]

Cattle were kept only to maintain the oxen used for ploughing and, to a lesser extent, for milk consumed on the farm.[66] Very little time or capital was spent on 'improving cattle' for meat or dairy production, mainly because the lower lying areas of Lydenburg were very prone to cattle diseases.[67] In 1938 it was reported that some farmers were improving their herds, but they were mainly from the higher, southern portions of Lydenburg.[68]

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61 Department of Agriculture, *Farming in South Africa*, December 1936, p. 522.

62 Average figures for 1934-36 from, SBA, INSP, 1/1/362, Lydenburg Report, 25 April 1936; Figures for 1937-39, *Agricultural Census Nos. 17-19, 1937-39* (U.G. 18-39 - 27-41).

63 Department of Agriculture, *Farming in South Africa*, December/1936, p. 514: This agreement 'extended certain exchange facilities to German buyers for the purchase of South African products to the value of £30000000, of which the majority proportion is allocated to agricultural products, primarily wool'.

64 SBA, INSP, 1/1/362, Lydenburg Report, 25 April 1936.

65 From 48786 in 1936 to 51800 in 1938, see *Agricultural Census No. 16, 1936* (U.G. 59-37); *No. 18, 1938* (U.G. 31-40).

66 Interview with Mrs. Kloppers, Lydenburg, 1990

67 Interview with Johan Steyn, Lydenburg, 1990; Magistrates Reports, Lydenburg (LLY), Circular from Land and Agricultural Bank of South Africa, 24 October 1934; CAD, NTS, No. 3/371, Vol. 9257, TAU Annual Congress, 1938.

68 *Farmers Weekly*, 26 February 1936; *Lydenburg New*, 15 April 1954; Highveld sheep farmers like H.F. Hannan, see SBA, INSP, 1/1/400, Lydenburg Report, 26 October 1943.

The 1930s were clearly a period of significant agricultural development in the district of Lydenburg. This is borne out further by the increase in the land placed under cultivation from 21398 morgen, of which 11450 was irrigated in 1930, to 25576 morgen of which 13928 was irrigated in 1937.[69] But, as predicted earlier, not everybody participated in the expansion and growing prosperity. W.J Fouche, for example, reduced the area under cultivation on his farm from 41 to 34 morgen in 1937.[70] White settlers on the Ohrigstad Settlement, who had been reduced to 42 settlers by 1933, were still mostly concerned with survival and were not involved in any substantial expansion of production.[71] Settlers on the Spekboom Irrigation Scheme also struggled for survival. Their position in 1938 was described in the following terms: 'As a result of crop-failure the position of the settlers at the Spekboom Scheme is awful. Very little has changed during this year.'[72]

Numerous *bywoners* also complained of poverty and of their inability to make a living on the small plots and shares that they were allocated. A large percentage of those who registered with the State's Assistance Scheme had worked on the roads and the railways temporarily, as a means to get by while they searched for farm land that they could rent.[73] Although the evidence on their future plans is thin, it nevertheless suggests that, while many *bywoners* clung to a rural lifestyle, others were desperate to leave the land. For example, W.C. Meyer, who lived in the house of farm-owner Johan Steyn, helped with the farm work. He had tried to leave Lydenburg to get a job elsewhere but the train in which he travelled failed to stop at the place of his new employment. In desperation he jumped from the moving train and was badly injured. Back in Lydenburg Johan Steyn described him as having no belongings, disheartened and depressed. Steyn was helping him 'to get away from this place'.[74]

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69 *Agricultural Census No. 13, 1930* (U.G. 12-32); *No. 17, 1937.*
70 CAD, LDB, No. R1074/5/14, Vol. 952, Crop Report W.J. Fouche, 26 January 1937.
71 CAD, LDE, No. 22108, Vol. 1158, Inspection Report of Lot 21, 2 April 1932 & 11 May 1936; CAD, LDE, No. 22108, Vol. 1158, Secretary for Lands to The Receiver of Revenue, 24 March 1936.
72 CAD, LON, No. 157/3, Vol. 268, Annual Report on Spekboom Irrigation Scheme, 1938.
73 CAD, VWR, No. B645/192/1, Vols. 104-106.
74 CAD, VWR, No. B645/192/1, Vol. 105, Application of W.C. Meyer.

This picture of poverty and lack of progress amongst significant portions of Lydenburg's white farming population is given further weight by the reports of the Standard Bank inspector, who pointed to the existence of a large number of farmers who made very little headway in the 1930s.[75] The inspector described Lydenburg's farmers as 'of the backward type', 'satisfied with conditions that suited their forefathers', working on farm properties that were 'small and heavily bonded'.[76]

However, a look at Lydenburg's leading farmers completely contradicts the Bank Inspector's assessment, confirming the highly differentiated character of the farming community in the 1930s. In order to assess the nature and causes of this differentiation the chapter will describe the background and agricultural practices of some of Lydenburg's leading farmers. The prominence of Abel Erasmus before the Boer War suggests that leading farmers at that time usually had access to capital outside of agriculture. In the 1930s this situation had not changed. The farmers described below all had other steady sources of income, which meant that capital investments in agriculture were, for them, less risky than for those whose only source of income was the farm on which they lived.

Lydenburg's leading personality during the 1930s was Elias de Souza. He had trained as a lawyer in Holland, under a bursary scheme set up by Kruger's government. The Boer War broke out six months before he was to write his final exam, so he returned to Lydenburg to fight against the English. After the war he decided to take up farming rather than return to his studies and 'being the only educated man in the district he was a natural leader'.[77] De Souza also had an additional advantage in that his father, who was one of the first traders in the district, had accumulated substantial landed property, which his sons inherited on his death in 1910. Elias and his brother Louis inherited property in town, and Louis especially derived a steady income from this because the property he

[75] SBA, INSP, 1/1/373, Lydenburg Report, 16 June 1938.
[76] SBA, INSP, 1/1/373, Lydenburg Report, 25 April 1936.
[77] Interview with Johan Steyn, Lydenburg, 1990; *Lydenburg News*, 23 February 1951.

inherited was rented by the Standard Bank.[78] The first contribution that Elias made as a leader of the community was the establishment of the Lydenburg Cooperative Agricultural Society in 1909. Once again the family's trading background was an advantage in this venture. Louis De Souza 'had worked in his father's shop, so he had book-keeping knowledge'.[79] He took over the management of the Cooperative in 1910. Elias De Souza, on the other hand, took his leadership role further by becoming Lydenburg's representative, first in the Provincial Council and then, from 1929 to 1938, in the House of Assembly.

Thus, apart from inheriting capital, Elias De Souza also had access to steady salaries as both the chairman of the Cooperative and as a successful politician. He supplemented this with the profits he made as a successful farmer. De Souza was the leading wool farmer in Lydenburg from at least 1916.[80] His farm Boschoek consisted of 1000 hectares and was situated in three climatic regions, allowing him to produce wheat and maize and to move his sheep to the lowveld regions of the farm during winter.[81] Both Elias and Louis were considered amongst the leading and largest farmers in Lydenburg.[82]

The other leader of the farming community in Lydenburg, already mentioned in connection with the establishment of the wheat board, was A. Op t' Hof. He was a teacher, born and educated in Holland, who settled in Lydenburg in 1895. He continued to work as a teacher until 1928, when he retired. He married the daughter of Schalk Burger - Lydenburg's most influential and powerful politician in the nineteenth century - which gave him additional financial security.[83] Op t' Hof was regarded by state officials as a prime example of a progressive farmer, both in his forward looking ideas and in his dealings with labour. The Native

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78 CAD, HNG, No. 16147, Death Notice of Mariano De Souza; SBA, INSP, Report on Lydenburg, 6 September 1910.

79 Municipality of Lydenburg, *Lydenburgse Eeufeesgedenkboek*, 1950, p. 82; Interview with Johan Steyn, Lydenburg, 1990.

80 *Lydenburg News*, 13 April 1951.

81 Interview with Johan Steyn, Lydenburg, 1990.

82 Municipality of Lydenburg, *Lydenburgse Eeufeesgedenkboek*, 1950, p. 82; Interview with Johan Steyn, Lydenburg, 1990; SBA, INSP, 1/1/294, Lydenburg Report, 30 May 1929.

83 *Lydenburg Eeufeesgedenkboek*, p. 82; C.T. Gordon, *The Growth of the Boer Opposition to Kruger, 1890-1895 (Cape Town, Oxford Univ. Press, 1970)*, p228.

Affairs Department described him as 'an energetic and influential man. He is always open to discuss matters, he is a fair minded man and he is himself a large employer of contented farm labour'.[84]

The two richest men in Lydenburg were Michael McGee and Rudolph Schurink. Schurink was the most established trader in the district, and in 1914 it was reported that he was a source of credit comparable to the Land Bank. In 1917 his 'turnover amounted to £65000', and he was reputed to have '£80000 invested in bonds on farm properties in the district'.[85] On his death in 1942, Schurink was described as a prime example of the 'improving' farmer:

> 'Through the planting of trees, the building of dams, bridges, the erection of sheep kraals, sheds and the application of mixed farming, he converted the original farm into a pleasure resort of scientific farming.'[86]

Thus Schurink, like Abel Erasmus, was separated from the average farmer in the district by his willingness to invest in agriculture and 'improve' his farm. The same was true of Michael McGee, who started off as a gold prospector in Pilgrims Rest and eventually became the only substantial miller in Lydenburg. McGee was 'progressive' both as a townsman and as a farmer on his farm Sterkspruit, which bordered on the town:

> 'Mr McGee must be regarded as the Father of our Agricultural society as he was the first person to moot the idea of starting such a society here. His services were in this connection were justly recognised in the Life-membership which was bestowed on him. He also served the town for a fair number of years as Mayor, was the first to originate the idea of a dipping tank and also the first to make the hard fight for the installation of electric power. When this proved of no avail owing to strong opposition, he installed the first privately owned electric light plant on his farm Sterkspruit'.[87]

All these farmers also had some background in Europe, and their interaction with European ideas may have fuelled their 'progressive' nature. Nevertheless, their access to steady capital outside of agriculture was surely the factor that enabled them to give vent to their forward-looking ideals.

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84 CAD, NTS, No. 30/280, Vol. 2027, Under-Secretary of Native Affairs to Lydenburg North Farmers Union, 2 June 1921.
85 SBA, INSP, 1/1/242, Report on Lydenburg, 5 September 1917.
86 *Lydenburg News*, 14 August 1942.
87 *Lydenburg News*, 17 November 1939.

The majority of farmers, on the other hand, were not prepared to raise their production costs and risk their average profit margins.[88] Land Bank loans were a source of capital - for those who owned enough land for security - but usually only for long term loans.[89] The interest rates on these loans were lower than at other banks, but there was probably a stronger obligation on farmers to pay the instalments on these loans in the 1930s, than, say, in the 1960s.[90] Land Bank loans also further discouraged a steady investment in agriculture as the instalments often encompassed a large proportion of a farmer's disposable income.[91] Tampering with secure profit margins therefore meant entering the risk of losing one's land, as failure to pay an instalment might lead to foreclosure on mortgages. Credit societies that issued short term loans were first noted in 1930 but appear to have had little effect on the fact that most farmers were 'badly off financially' in 1936.[92] Short term loans became more readily available after 1938, when the Land Bank became directly involved, but it was the increase in loans to Cooperatives that substantially affected farmers' access to working capital. This became significant only in the 1940s.[93]

Even when small farmers got access to capital they were loath to tamper with secure profit margins because raising production costs made farmers more vulnerable to losing their land.[94] The attachment to land as a way of avoiding

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88 SBA, INSP, 1/1/373, Lydenburg Report, 25 April 1936. See also Grosskopf, 'Rural Impoverishment', p. I-116.

89 Even in 1959 some farmers were unable to acquire mortgages. See *Report into Agricultural Credit* (De Swart), (U.G. 16, '61, Pretoria, Government Printer, 1961), p. 66.

90 P.L. Wickins, 'Agriculture', in F.L. Coleman, ed., *Economic History of South Africa* (Pretoria, HAUM, 1983), p. 82; This argument is based on the fact that Land Bank Loans were harder to come by in the 1930s and the Bank was more vulnerable because it had less capital reserves. However, only 521 foreclosures were undertaken by the Land Bank itself during the period 1912-1959. See De Swart, p. 66.

91 SBA, INSP, 1/1/294, Lydenburg Report, 30 May 1929: 'The district is heavily bonded, and many farmers are finding it difficulty in meeting interest charges. The majority of loans are obtained from the Land Bank.' This situation deteriorated during depression, but the Bank was more lenient during that time. One can assume that these difficulties continued throughout the 1930s.

92 SBA, INSP, 1/1/304, Lydenburg Report, 25 August 1930; 25 April 1936.

93 See De Swart, p. 50; Union of South Africa, *Report of the Land and Agricultural Bank of South Africa* (U.G. 12 '31, Pretoria, 1931), The figure for 1930 was £24931.

94 Grosskopf, 'Rural Impoverishment', p. I-116: 'In many cases it is only natural that a farmer should prefer spending the profits of a prosperous year on his pleasures, because he runs the risk of getting no returns if he invests in farming. ... It is true that unexpected disasters often ruined the richer farmer also, but as a rule the power of resistance of the small farmer was much weaker.' See Also, R. Peattie, *Struggle on the Veld* (New York, Vanguard Press, 1947), p. 180: 'There is a fatalism

'the city' - noted as important during the nineteenth century - remained an important factor in the 1930s.[95] As De Souza explained in 1934, the choice for most Lydenburgers was between being an 'independent farmer' or an unskilled labourer:

> 'If we look at the large majority of boys and girls who leave school annually after the matric, or standard VI, what chance have they of making a future for themselves. At present they can still become teachers in the Transvaal if they can go far enough. Possibly they can go into the public service, but there again the entrance is being restricted to those who have matriculated in the first class. Some can go to the mines, but what of the big mass of boys and girls who leave school? ... What chances have the boys of South Africa today of developing in the direction of commerce? In the Transvaal alone there are more or less 6000 Indian shops. In my own district there are 60 Indian shops ... There is a future awaiting us and perhaps it is not very far off, when we shall reach a time when the old inhabitants of this country will to a great extent be the labourers in their own country.'[96]

There were processes already under-way - based to a large extent on the kind of thinking outlined by De Souza above - that tried to expand the urban opportunities available to white South Africans.[97] But, during the 1930s, when the 'problems of rural education' still loomed large, access to land remained an appealing alternative compared to the risks of finding employment and accommodation in an urban centre like Johannesburg.[98]

The emergence of over-production in both maize and wheat production during the 1930s suggests that many farmers were determined to stay on the land in spite of market forces that pushed them in the direction of the city. It is true that the new agricultural control boards blunted these market forces, but only to a limited extent as many farmers at the time felt that the prices set by the boards were not

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growing out of climatic catastrophe'.

95 *Farmers Weekly*, 10 August 1932, J.M. Johnstone, Amersfoort, Transvaal; *Farmers Weekly*, 27 June 1934, 'Poor White', Transvaal: 'Why can't a law be passed that every farm must be occupied by a white man.'; *Farmers Weekly*, 12 February 1936, 'Fed Up', O.F.S.

96 *House of Assembly Debates*, 9 March 1934.

97 S. Parnell, 'Slums, Segregation and Poor Whites in Johannesburg, 1920-1934', in Morrell, *White but Poor*, p. 127.

98 *Carnegie Commission of Investigation on the Poor White Question in South Africa, Vol. 1* (Stellenbosch, Pro ecclesia, 1932), p. xxv; *Farmers Weekly*, 23 December 1936; For the unattractive conditions in the towns, see Grosskopf, 'Rural Impoverishment', pp. I-183-225: Conditions in town, Grosskopf argues, were often better, but still difficult; see also Parnell, 'Slums, Segregation and Poor Whites, pp. 124-126.

high enough to guarantee a satisfactory profit.[99] High railway rates were, for example, a source of complaint and played an important role in a district as far away from the markets as Lydenburg.[100] Op t' Hof, furthermore, disputed that the Marketing Boards operated exclusively in favour of the farmer and disregarded the consumer.[101] He explained:

> 'The farmer never has made much out of the production of wheat. The production cost of good wheat is round about £1 per bag of 200lb; so I fail to see that the farmer who grows even 500 to 1000 bags of wheat can grow fat; he barely ekes out a living when he can sell all his wheat at 22s.'[102]

Op t' Hof's argument echoes the complaints made against the maize board. Farmers often maintained that the 'small but progressive farmer' could not survive on the fixed prices, and the only farmers to prosper were the large Orange Free State producers, 'rich in land and capital', who had 'the main say in the Association'.[103] These complaints must be read in conjunction with O'Meara's assessment of the Marketing Act. He argues that the Board's stabilised prices and profits encouraged larger farms and an expansion of land under cultivation.[104] Taken together, the evidence indicates that large farmers with available land could make profits by substantially expanding their production, but small farmers continued to struggle. Those farmers in Lydenburg who, like R.J. Schurink above, already had the capital and land to invest in the construction of new canals, could expand their wheat fields under irrigation. But the poor farmers, settlers and *bywoners* of Lydenburg, who were often restricted to less than ten morgen of irrigated land and reportedly produced an annual profit of only £50, did not benefit greatly from the boards established in the 1930s. In the words of Op t' Hof, these farmers 'barely eked out a living'.[105]

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99 CAD, NTS, No. 3/371, Vol. 9257, TAU Annual Congress, 1938: Calls for higher prices to 'stop the drift to the towns'.

100 *Farmers Weekly*, 25 January 1939.

101 Wheat price went up to 28/- in 1938. See, CAD, NTS, No. 3/371, Vol. 9257, TAU Annual Congress, 1938.

102 *Farmers Weekly*, 1 February 1939; 15 February 1939; CAD, NTS, No. 3/371, Vol. 9257, TAU Annual Congress, 25 August 1939: Protest against depression of prices and increase in cost of milling.

103 *Farmers Weekly*, 12 August 1936.

104 D. O'Meara, *Volkskapitalisme: Class, capital and ideology in the development of Afrikaner nationalism 1934-1948* (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1983), p. 184.

105 Grosskopf, 'Rural Impoverishment', p. I-119.

A comparison between the farms Skaapkraal and Rietfontein shows the extent of the differences in Lydenburg farm sizes during 1938. The former was 1227 morgen in total, of which 140 was irrigated. The farm was also 'fully fenced and divided into camps'.[106] The latter contained 29 morgen of irrigated land and 40 morgen of arable land in total. The farm was 'mostly fenced in'.[107] In 1930 the average size of farms in Lydenburg was 620 morgen.[108] By 1937 the average size declined to 606 morgen, but one must assume that not all the farms in Lydenburg became smaller.[109] Unfortunately, more detailed figures for Lydenburg are not available, but the figures for the Transvaal as a whole clearly indicate that both the number of very large farms and the number of very small farms increased significantly during the 1930s. The farms between 2000 and 5000 morgen increased from 1506 in 1930 to 1577 in 1939, while the farms between 1 and 100 morgen increased from 6711 in 1930 to 7758.[110] These figures point to growing economic divisions amongst white farmers, a trend which was still evident in Lydenburg during the 1950s once regional figures became available.

1940-1948

Two important trends - agricultural diversification and mechanisation - became prominent during the 1940s. These developments had been apparent earlier, but it was only in the 1940s that they became widespread. As early as 1928 some farmers had gone in for tobacco but they remained a small minority, increasing slightly in 1939.[111] The substantial expansion in production occurred during and after World War Two: The area planted with tobacco in 1946 was more than two and a half times the size of the area planted in 1939.[112] Further, because the war led to shortages in many basic foodstuffs, a number of Lydenburg farmers began to produce vegetables in 1943.[113] In that year farmers in the district

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106 *Lydenburg News*, 28 January 1938.
107 *Lydenburg News*, 16 September 1938.
108 *Agricultural Census No. 13, 1930.*
109 *Agricultural Census No. 17, 1937.*
110 *Agricultural Census No. 13, 1930*; *Agricultural Census No. 19, 1939.*
111 *Agricultural Census No. 19, 1939.*
112 *Agricultural Census No. 20, 1946* (U.G. 77-48); SBA, INSP, 1/1/400, Lydenburg Report, 10 February 1942.
113 Interview with Johan Steyn, Lydenburg, 1990; SBA, INSP, 1/1/400, Lydenburg Report, 26 October 1943.

reaped one of the largest wheat crops in its history.[114] But the drought during the following two years caused a decline in output, and after that the farmers in Lydenburg produced less and less wheat as more farmers diversified into tobacco, vegetables and citrus fruit.[115] It was reported that the latter product was gradually becoming established in some areas in 1949, although a number of problems remained:

> 'According to E.F. Malan, of the Research Station, Nelspruit, the standard of citrus [at Marone and Waterval Valley] was outstanding. The Valley offered unlimited possibilities for citrus farming, if sufficient water could be supplied. Because frost does occur in the Valley, farmers should limit themselves, as far as the commercial market is concerned, to citrus culture only, and should not endeavour to produce all the different specie of tropical fruit.'[116]

Concentration on wheat production was also undermined by the emergence of the Orange Free State as an important dry-land wheat producing area.[117] The wheat produced in this area was cheaper because it did not involve irrigation. This had a negative effect on the trend in wheat prices and Lydenburg's expensive production methods thus became uneconomical.[118] The production of wheat in Lydenburg's valleys was condemned anyway by agricultural officers who favoured a mixed farming system. To strengthen their case these officers referred to the Spekboom River, where - like in many of Lydenburg's other valleys - farmers double-cropped with wheat and maize:

> 'It must be realised that the present system of farming in which wheat plays the major role is completely wrong. A mixed farming system involving summer crops, cattle, pigs and chickens seems to be a better alternative. ... It is apparent that during the past few years the farmers have not once achieved a decent crop. Last summer the maize crop failed as a result of too much rain and the winter weather brought an untimely cold-spell that caused great damage to the very promising wheat crop.'[119]

A few Spekboom farmers recognised the problem and made the transition to diversification in 1939 by planting soya-beans and by taking up pig farming. Thus wheat farming was becoming less important during the 1940s, even though Op t' Hof claimed in 1946 that Lydenburg was still essentially a wheat farming district,

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114 SBA, INSP, 1/1/400, Lydenburg Report, 26 September 1944.
115 SBA, INSP, 1/1/400, Lydenburg Report, 26 September 1944; 10 November 1945.
116 *Farmers Weekly*, 22 June 1949.
117 Interview with Mr Mason, Isando, 1990; *Farmers Weekly*, 8 December 1948.
118 Interview with Johan Steyn, Lydenburg 1990.
119 CAD, LON, No. 157/3, Vol. 268, Report on the Spekboom Irrigation Scheme, 1939.

and the majority of Spekboom farmers still farmed with wheat and maize in the 1950s.[120] Wool, however, remained an important product, especially as wool prices climbed steadily during the 1940s.[121]

As a result of these processes the district's agricultural character changed during the 1940s, and began to fit with the description offered by Johan Steyn, the manager of the Lydenburg Cooperative from 1937 to 1952:

> 'This district is unique because it lies in three climatic regions. The [Waterval Valley] is in the bushveld. [South-east of Lydenburg town] going through to Machadadorp is more middle-veld. Going south you have highveld again. Now that influences the type of product that people produce. In the bushveld and the lowveld, that is fairly sub-tropical, and all production there takes place under irrigation. Water comes from the highveld in rivers and they take it out in canals and dams. Their production will be sub-tropical fruits, citrus, paw-paws, avocados, and then they produce wheat and tobacco. In the middle-veld you find more maize farming, beans, sugar beans, soya beans, and cattle farming. Out to the highveld, Dullstroom, Belfast that way, that is very good sheep farming, wool sheep, and mixed farming: Sheep and cattle.'[122]

Steyn's assessment is supported by the 'first survey of the Union's natural farming regions', completed in 1947. On the survey map, the Lydenburg district falls into three different regions: 3b, 4b, and 7. The regions are described as follows:

> '3b: Eastern Transvaal Sourveld: Semi-intensive farming: factory-milk production, wooled mutton sheep, supplementary cropping and established pastures.
> 4b: Lydenburg tall grassveld area: Mixed and irrigation farming.
> 7: Natural semi-intensive farming area used for intensive production of city milk, vegetables, pig and poultry products.'[123]

This survey provides a sense of the new diversity in Lydenburg, and it also allows us to link Lydenburg to the broader mid-eastern Transvaal region, which falls mainly into area '3b'.

The principal economic activity in this area was sheep farming because the soils in the region were of 'a poor and shallow quality'.[124] The crop farmers who

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120 *Farmers Weekly*, 6 March 1946: Maize production still fluctuated drastically during the period 1940-1946; CAD, MLW, No. 312/60, Vol. 142, Spekboom Boerevereneging to Minister of Lands, 7 April 1952.

121 Houghton, *South African Economy*, p. 53.

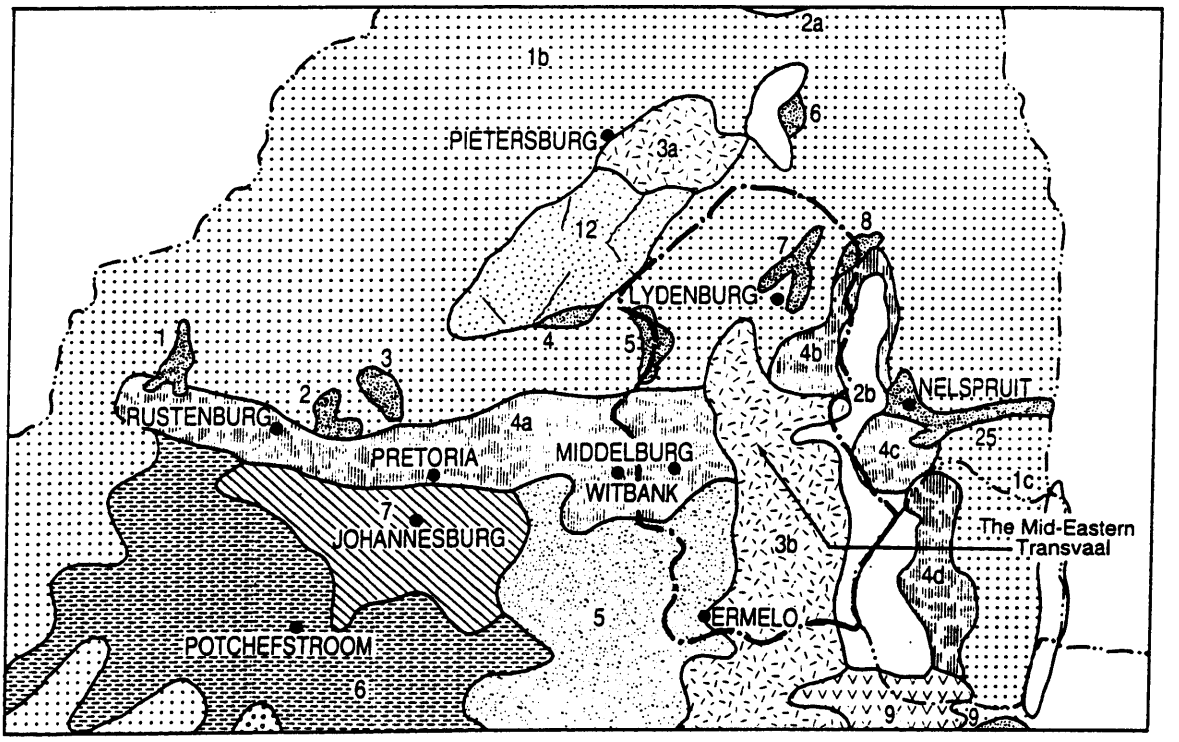
122 Interview with Johan Steyn, Lydenburg, 1990.

123 *Farmers Weekly*, 26 March 1947.

124 SBA, INSP, 1/1/370, Carolina Report, 15 September 1938; Ermelo Report, 17 November 1930.

attempted to farm in this area must be separated from the more productive farmers in the maize belt. The town of Ermelo provides a good marker to separate the two areas. To the east and the north are the poor soils, while to the west of the town, in the direction of Bethal and Standerton, 'large tracts of soil consist of black turf and chocolate loam'.[125]

THE MID-EASTERN TRANSVAAL



The difficult ecological conditions in the north-east produced farming communities that closely resembled the one in Lydenburg. Crop farmers either had to use fertilisers, which narrowed profit margins and were scarce throughout the 1940s,

[125] SBA, INSP, 1/1/301, Ermelo Report, 17 November 1930. Consequently, many of the farmers to the west of the town resembled the leading farmers of Bethal, with large labour compounds and massive maize and potato fields. See, CAD, NTS, No. 741/280, Vol. 2010, Farm labour conditions on Tweefontein, Ermelo, 28 November 1951; Farm Labour conditions on Birmingham, Middelburg, 28 November 1951.

or they had to be satisfied with low yields per morgen.[126] A high proportion of farmers were bonded to the Land Bank, and were described as being 'in a small way of business, ... they can hardly be classed as progressive'.[127] The kind of stratification outlined in Lydenburg also existed, and labour tenancy remained the dominant labour relationship in the districts of Belfast, Carolina, Ermelo and Middelburg until the 1960s.[128] Consequently, the social processes that shaped Lydenburg were largely reproduced in the rest of the mid-eastern Transvaal.[129] All the districts also reported a serious labour shortage in 1943, and then again in 1945 when the situation was reportedly worse.[130] This was part of an ongoing national situation; farmers from all over the country filled the pages of the *Farmers Weekly* with complaints about such a shortage. Some farmers, and a few liberal observers like Margaret Ballinger and Leo Marquard, believed that the solution lay in offering better treatment and conditions.[131] But the majority were of the opinion that African workers could not appreciate better conditions and that higher pay would only cause Africans to work less.[132] Most of these farmers called on the state to force Africans into farm labour, while a number of others also saw mechanisation as a solution.[133] Included amongst the latter group were agricultural officers, one of whom argued in 1944:

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126 The average yield per morgen for maize in the three above-mentioned districts during the period 1946-1949 was 5.75 bags. In Bethal the average yield per morgen was as high as 9.24 bags before 1930M. Murray, 'Slave Driving and the Poor Man's Friend: Capitalist Farming in the Bethal District, Unpublished Seminar Paper, 1993, p. 4; *Agricultural Census No. 20, 1946*.

127 SBA, INSP, 1/1/370, Carolina Report, 15 September 1938; 1/1/326, Belfast Report, 16 March 1933; 1/1/362, Middelburg Report, 23 July 1936.

128 For Example SBA, INSP, 1/1/362, Middelburg Report, 23 July 1936: 'There are several well-to-do farmers in the area, who conduct their farming operations on up-to-date lines, but on the whole the farming community are of the backward type and are not financially strong.'

129 CAD, NTS, No. 222/280, Vol. 2094, Native Commissioner Ermelo, to Secretary of Native Affairs, 27 May 1943; Native Commissioner Lydenburg to Secretary of Native Affairs, 28 May 1943; CAD, NTS, No. 10/280, Vol. 2010, Native Commissioner Nebo to Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas), 29 May 1949; Union of South Africa, *Inter-departmental Commission of Enquiry into the Labour Tenant System*, 3 Vols. (Nel Commission) (Mimeograph), Farmers Evidence, 9 August 1960.

130 CAD, NTS, No. 97/362, Vol. 8834, Native Commissioner Lydenburg to Secretary of Native Affairs, 23 April 1945; Native Commissioner Middelburg to Secretary of Native Affairs, 5 March 1945; Native Commissioner Belfast to Secretary of Native Affairs, 12 April 1945; Native Commissioner Ermelo to Secretary of Native Affairs, 19 March 1945.

131 *Farmers Weekly*, 22 April 1936: 'The Native for Replacing Failing Export Markets'; 10 January 1945: 'Better Treatment Means Smaller Profits but a Contented Staff'; WHPL, A410, B1.1.57, 'Margaret Ballinger on Farm Labour', c1951.

132 *Farmers Weekly*, 1 December 1943: 'Delinquent Natives'; 12 January 1944: 'Facing Up to the Farm Labour Problem'; 2 February 1944: 'Native Policy'; 26 September 1945: 'Ticket System to Deal with Wont-works'.

133 *Farmers Weekly*, 21 July 1948; 16 June 1946.

> 'Labour is today, in some respects, a problem. But it is rapidly disappearing. The wheat crop today does not offer any difficulty at the time of harvesting since the introduction of the combine. ... Essential labour can be retained with the ample use of machinery. With machinery one can reduce labour by 25 to 30 per cent.'[134]

The reasons given by farmers for mechanisation often centred around the notion that it enabled them to do the work themselves.[135] Mrs Baragwanath, the wife of a Lydenburg farmer, explained that they mechanised so that they did not have to depend on unreliable African labour:

> 'Unless you are with them all the time, they don't reap the mealies and they steal the mealies. At the farmer up the road, they would sit down and have beer the minute he left. And people felt it was just becoming uneconomical to employ [Africans]. So really they worked themselves out of jobs. They just have no motivation.'[136]

Mrs Kloppers, the wife of a Lydenburg farmer and the grand-daughter of Dirk Winterbach, who was one of the original white settlers in Lydenburg, explained that her husband preferred to drive the tractor himself:

> 'My husband and my son have always driven the tractor. My husband now and then used a black to help with the driving, but we have never had a permanent tractor driver. We have got three big tractors, but we have no blacks to drive the tractors.'[137]

Tractors are not necessarily labour replacing, and in South Africa as a whole machines only replaced farm labour in the 1970s once combine harvesters were used on maize farms.[138] However, if the use of tractors is to cause an increase in labour, it must be accompanied by an extension of the area under cultivation. In Lydenburg the size of the irrigated fields was limited by the amount of water available, and even where an extension was possible it would require an additional investment in a canal or dam. The statistics show that during the period 1939 to 1950 the number of tractors increased from 46 to 233, while the land under

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134 CAD, NTS, No. 10/280, Vol. 2010, The Director of Native Agriculture, undated, c1944.

135 *Farmers Weekly*, 5 March 1947, 'Natives in the Reserves and on the Farm'; 21 July 1948, 'Pros and Cons of Mechanised Farming; M. De Klerk, 'Seasons That Will Never Return: The impact of farm mechanisation on employment, incomes and population distribution in the western Transvaal', in *JSAS*, Vol. 11, No. 1, October 1984: Shows that this was the prime motivation for farmers in a different district during a later period. For similar motivations in America, see D. Grigg, *The Transformation of Agriculture in the West* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1992), p. 49.

136 Interview with Mr & Mrs Baragwanath, Lydenburg, 1990.

137 Interview with Mrs Kloppers, Lydenburg, 1990; For a history of the Winterbach family see, *Lydenburg News*, 9 August 1938.

138 De Klerk, 'Seasons That Will Never Return'.

agricultural crops increased from 25576 in 1937 to 27945 in 1947.[139] This is a fairly significant increase, probably also reflecting the growing use of fertilisers, which, according to Mr. Baragwanath, made the ploughing of dry land a much more viable option.[140] But if the expansion in land-use is divided by the number of tractors, the increase comes to a fairly modest 12.6 morgen per tractor. It is therefore highly likely that some farmers used their tractors to expand their production, while others used them to replace labour. This assumption is borne out further by the discrepancy in farm sizes at the time. During the period 1946 to 1952, of the Lydenburg farms put up for sale, most were fairly small (hardly any were bigger than 1000 morgen). Most contained an average of 20 to 30 morgen of irrigated land, but there were also many differences between the farms. Some were only 10 or 49 morgen in total size, while others extended to 780 or 1500 morgen. More importantly, some farms contained no dry-land at all, along with only 14 to 17 morgen of irrigated land, with no possibility of extending this area. Others had great potential for the extension of irrigated and dry-land, including one farm that contained as much as 250 morgen of arable land.[141] Clearly this kind of farm would allow the use of tractors to create a greater demand for labour, while on the smaller farms the adoption of tractors would generally be labour replacing, which fits with the experiences of labour tenants, most of whom remember the arrival of tractors as a time when their work-load decreased.[142]

The question that remains is why smaller farmers, who had been opposed to improving their farms in the 1930s, were now ready to invest in tractors. The answer lies in the extension of credit to the Cooperative. The Cooperative, as explained above, was formed in 1910, but it was dissolved during the depression. Prior to its collapse it had been relatively successful.[143] During 1915 and 1916 it handled between 70 and 75 per cent of the produce in Lydenburg, which was a

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139 *Agricultural Census No. 19, 1939; No. 20, 1946; No. 24, 1950* (Pretoria, Government Printer, 1952).
140 Interview with Mr & Mrs Baragwanath, Lydenburg, 1990.
141 *Lydenburg News*, 26 January 1945; 22 February 1946; 29 November 1946; 30 July 1948; 7 January 1949; 20 January 1950; 9 June 1950; 2 Feb 1951; 24 August 1951; 23 November 1951.
142 Their memories and experiences are discussed in Chapter Five, pp. 216-217.
143 *House of Assembly Debates*, 2 July 1925.

high proportion for the time.[144] But after it was revived as the Voorspoed Cooperative Ltd in 1936, in keeping with the growing tendency towards organised agriculture in South Africa as a whole, it attracted many more members. A Transvaal Agricultural Union report for 1939 gave the following synopsis of the situation:

> 'Much progress has been made lately in Lydenburg regarding the cooperation of various organisations and affiliations with the district union. I ascribe this to the application of the Marketing Act and schemes thereunder. Fortunately the antipathy towards the TAU has disappeared and we hope for wholehearted cooperation.'[145]

The Marketing Act, by making controlled marketing attractive, made it almost impossible to avoid cooperation. The other factor in this process was that 'all requirements - implements, tractors, fuel, fertiliser, packaging, fodder, veterinary medicines and so forth' were now supplied by the cooperative to its members.[146] This was facilitated by the massive extension of credit to cooperatives during the 1930s and 1940s. In 1929 the Lydenburg Cooperative received a loan of £14500. In 1930 the size of this loan increased significantly and, although figures for individual cooperatives are no longer available for the following period, it is reasonable to assume that this trend continued as Land Bank loans to cooperatives increased from £1,8 million in 1929 to £3 million in 1939 to £7,1 million in 1945.[147] Thus it became possible for the Cooperative to supply farmers with equipment at very reasonable and drawn out instalment rates. As Johan Steyn explained:

> 'They [Lydenburg's farmers] have over-capitalised because it is made attractive to them. They get easy credit, they are induced to buy by the Cooperative salesman. The salesman is given a free trip over-seas if he sells the most tractors and he does not care if the farmer can pay or not.'[148]

Apart from the increasing availability of Land Bank loans, direct state aid also expanded in the 1940s. Aid to white farmers began, in the twentieth century, with the Repatriation Boards after the Boer War. State aid then took the form of cattle

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144 SBA, INSP, 1/1/242, Lydenburg Report, 8 February 1915; 10 April 1916.
145 CAD, NTS, No. 3/371, Vol. 9257, TAU Annual Congress, 23 August 1939.
146 *Eeufeesgedenkboek*, p. 86.
147 De Swardt, p. 50; *Report of the Land and Agricultural Bank of South Africa* (U.G. 12 '31, Pretoria, 1931), The figure for 1930 was £24931.
148 Interview with Johan Steyn, Lydenburg 1990.

loan schemes, assistance with stock diseases and locusts, as well as poor white settlements in Ohrigstad, Spekboom and Steelpoort. During the period 1928 to 1931 a total of 61250 anthrax vaccines were issued to farmers in Lydenburg.[149] During the period 1947 to 1949, 349 applications under the 1935 Farmers Assistance Act were received.[150] In 1939, the year Lydenburg suffered a 'disastrous flood', it was, according to the *Lydenburg News*, 'only natural to expect the farmers in our district to turn to the one and only source whence aid might be expected, namely the Government'.[151] These expectations were duly fulfilled as 'the Government' provided farmers with both funds to reconstruct their washed away water-canals and with free maize to feed themselves and their labourers.[152]

With the passing of the Soil Conservation Act in 1946 state aid entered a new era. Under this Act, districts would, with the approval of resident farmers, be declared as 'soil conservation regions' and would then be eligible for assistance and subsidies in the interest of conserving the soil. As Wickens explained:

> 'Loans and subsidies were made available for a wide range of works for preventing soil erosion, reclaiming water and conserving the water supply. A particular interest was the preservation of the veld from overgrazing by the construction of internal fences and the provision of water points in order to facilitate rotational grazing. The results initially were disappointing. During the first twenty years of the act's operation more than 400000 works were approved and some 250000 were completed. But their construction did not necessarily mean their utilisation for the purpose for which they had been intended: conservation farming. On the contrary, many farmers took advantage of the additional watering points simply to increase their herds without making any provision for emergency feeding. When the inevitable drought came along, they appealed to the state for assistance in the purchase of fodder to keep alive herds far too large for the carrying capacity of their land.'[153]

Regions of Lydenburg were first declared in terms of this Act in 1948,[154] and many farmers began to reap the benefits in the 1950s. But, as is shown below,

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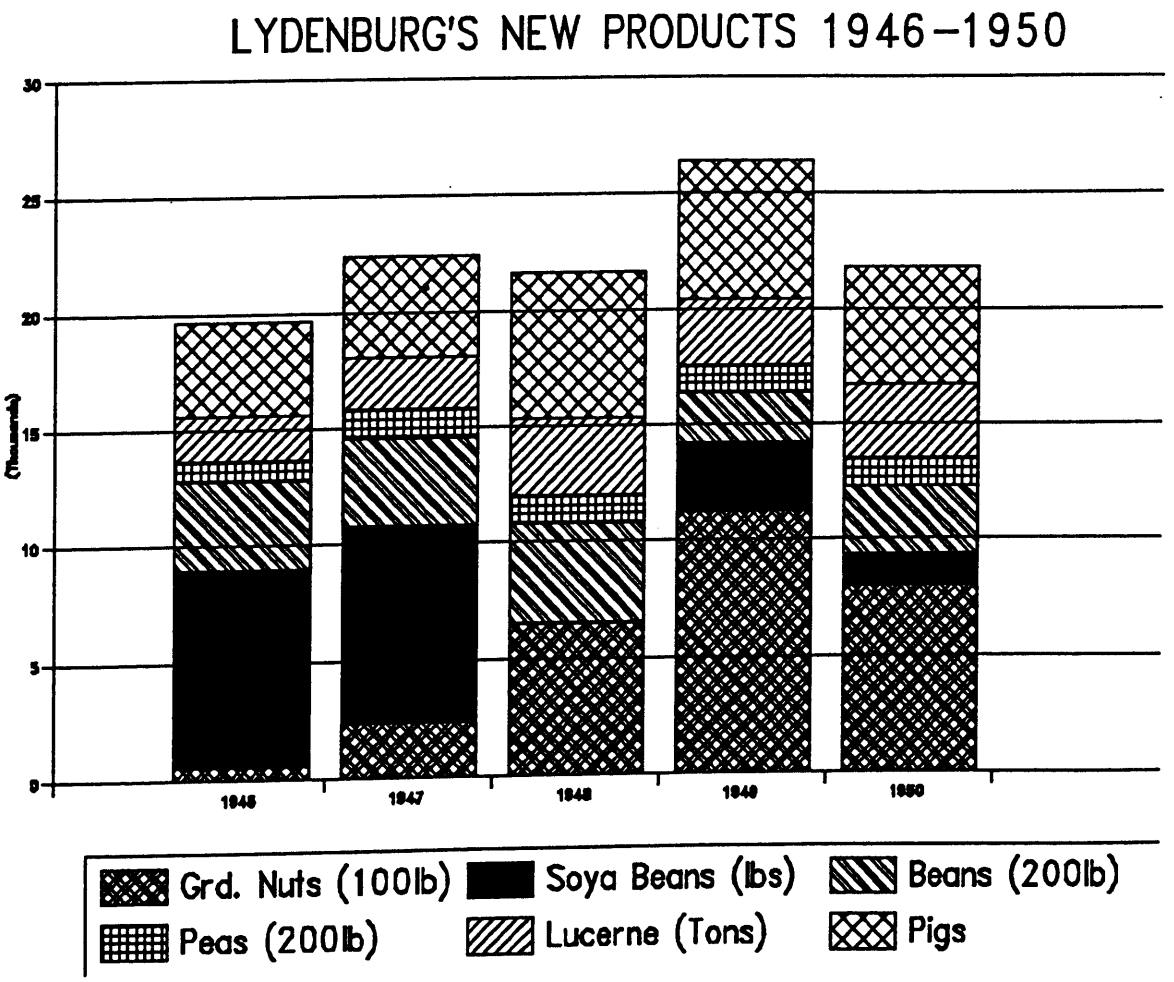
149 CAD, JUS, No. 552/29, Vol. 462, Annual Report, Lydenburg, 1929; 12 February 1932.
150 CAD, JUS, No. 21/167, Vol. 921, Annual Report, District of Lydenburg, 1949.
151 *Lydenburg News*, 17 February 1939; *Assembly Debates*, 23 February 1939.
152 CAD, HKN, No. 28/36/1, Vol. 65, 'The Relief of Flood Distress: Lydenburg', 10 November 1939; CAD, NTS, No. 136/308, Vol. 3464, Magistrate, Lydenburg to Secretary for Agriculture, 6 October 1940.
153 Wickins, 'Agriculture', p. 63; See also, Department of Agriculture, *Farming in South Africa*, December 1947; December 1950; CAD, MLD, No. 14/20, Vol. 19, 'Opposisie Hoofsprekers in Landboudebatte', 1948-1956.
154 *Lydenburg News*, 12 November 1948.

conflict emerged over this state aid as some farmers wanted to use it to extend their farming activities while others hoped to guarantee their survival on the land without increasing their risks.

The increases in state aid and credit allowed more farmers than before to benefit from agriculture, although, in keeping with national trends, it was undoubtedly the larger 'progressive' farmers that made the biggest contributions to expansions in output.[155] Graph No. 2 depicts the increases registered for products other than wheat, maize and wool.

GRAPH NO. 2



[155] *Agricultural Census No. 24, 1950*; Jones & Müller, *The South African Economy*, p. 239.

1949-1960

Agriculture was stimulated in the early 1940s by the state's war-time marketing policies and was then promoted even further in the 1950s. In 1948 a political shift occurred that significantly affected this development. The election of the National Party during that year marked the beginning of a new era that manifested itself in the 1950s. O'Meara describes the conditions that caused farmers to look to the National Party for even more assistance in 1948:

> 'The demand for agricultural commodities increased sharply during the war. Despite large increases in the volume of production, shortages of such commodities were common. In a bid to stimulate production, agricultural prices were raised by various Control Boards. These increases were further exaggerated by soaring world prices. ... These were years of prosperity for farmers. ... [But] in the period of aggravated food shortages after the war, the Control Boards were in fact used to hold down agricultural prices, and there were strong pressures from commerce and industry to extend this policy. ... The position of capitalist agriculture had improved beyond recognition. Yet, had South African agricultural prices been allowed to follow those of the world market, agricultural profits would have been even higher and capital accumulation more rapid. Farmers were acutely aware of this.'[156]

This awareness, O'Meara argues, was a crucial factor behind farmers' support for the National Party, which subsequently delivered on its promise to increase state aid to agriculture, and significantly advanced capital accumulation in the white rural areas. This argument is supported by Lazar who claims that from 1949 the government raised prices in order to 'encourage production'. He points out that during the next three years the average price per bag [of maize] was 'raised from 21s.3d to 30s. For many farmers this meant nearly doubling net profits and they responded almost immediately to the incentive. Production increased rapidly and, after that time, there were surpluses every year.'[157] The 1950s were therefore a period during which more farmers could make a profitable living from agriculture. Nevertheless, many still found it difficult to make ends meet and, as I show below, either left the rural areas or struggled hard to keep their land.

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156 O'Meara, *Volkskapitalisme*, pp. 187-188. For an index showing the increases of wool, wheat and maize and other prices, see p. 186; *Farmers Weekly*, 19 February 1947, 'Produce Market Solution'; 2 June 1948, 'Marketing Act Indictment'; *Cape Times*, 'Serious Bread Shortage on Rand', 30 March 1946; *Sunday Times*, 'New Maize Price Will Add £132000 to Mine Costs', 31 April 1946.

157 Wilson, 'Farming', p. 142.

A further indication of the state's new, unambiguous support for white agriculture can be found in the massive increase in the loans given to cooperatives, from £7,1 million in 1945 to £27,8 million in 1950, reaching £65,1 million in 1955.[158] Consequently machines and implements from the cooperative were even more readily available in the 1950s than they had been in the 1940s, which fits with the assessment of a Lydenburg resident who said: 'after the National Party came to power you could drive your old tractor into the cooperative and drive out with a brand new one without a cent changing hands.'[159] During the period 1950 to 1959 the number of tractors in Lydenburg increased from 233 to 599. An even more telling figure is the number of ploughs pulled by tractors. In 1955 there were 1214 animal drawn ploughs in the district and only 273 that were pulled by tractors. In 1960 there were still 801 of the former compared to 729 of the latter.[160] Threshing machines, which had been the earliest form of mechanisation in the district, gradually diminished during this period. Wheat farmers began to replace them with combine harvesters. There were 20 combines in the district in 1956 and although the number declined to 13 in 1960, these harvesters were mainly owned by syndicates which hired them out during the harvesting season.[161]

These inputs produced significant changes in the agricultural economy of Lydenburg during the 1950s. In 1953 the Magistrate explained that 'this district is in the process of developing. During the past few years many large properties have been sub-divided, and more intensive farming methods are being practised'.[162] It was also reported in 1953 that between 80 and 90 per cent of the irrigable land was used by white farmers.[163] This more intensive use of land clearly had consequences for labour tenants, who now found it increasingly

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158 De Swardt, p. 50.

159 Interview with Bryna Davis, Lydenburg, 1990; This was possibly linked to the Broederbond's infiltration and use of co-operative credit as a way to maintain farmer's loyalty. See D. Posel, *The Making of Apartheid, 1948-1961: Conflict and Compromise* (Oxford, Clarendon, 1991), p. 244.

160 *Agricultural Census No. 24, 1950*; *No. 29, 1955* (U.G. 49-58); *No. 34, 1960* (R.P. 18/1963).

161 Interview with Johan Steyn, Lydenburg, 1990.

162 CAD, NTS, 367/313S, Vol. 6504, Magistrate Lydenburg to Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas), 27 April 1953.

163 CAD, BB, No. H5100/LYD, Vol. 878, Soil Conservation Reports, 27, March 1953; 8 December 1956.

difficult to get access to productive land.[164] The utilization of grazing land also became more intensive with the growing tendency to divide land into grazing camps, a process strongly encouraged by the Soil Conservation Boards established during the 1950s.[165] Labour tenants therefore also faced constraints on the number of cattle they could maintain during this time.

There were sheep farmers in Lydenburg who, during the 1950s, still used grazing farms in winter.[166] These farmers continued to regard labour tenancy as the best system because they could offer plenty of land and free time to the tenants who lived on the grazing farms.[167] However, pressure against the labour system emerged on those sheep farms where a new system of planting clover and special grasses for winter grazing was practised. These farmers used only one farm, and needed large areas of their land to grow these grazing crops.[168]

As seen in the graph below, the district as a whole became more productive during the 1950s[169] and there was consequently an expansion of the farm labour needed in the area as a whole. This trend was reinforced by the growing tendency to abandon wheat farming completely, in order to concentrate on the production of more labour intensive crops like tobacco, lucerne and winter vegetables.[170]

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164 See Chapter Seven, p. 259.

165 CAD, BB, No. H51000LYD, Vol. 878, Soil Conservation Report, 28 February 1952; 27 March 1953; 8 December 1956.

166 Interview with Johan Steyn, Lydenburg, 1990; Wool farmers were better off than the rest of Lydenburg's farmers, but 20 per cent would experience difficulties if there was a drop in the high wool price that prevailed in 1958. For an overview of wool prices from 1910 to 1959 see, Houghton, *South African Economy*, p. 50.

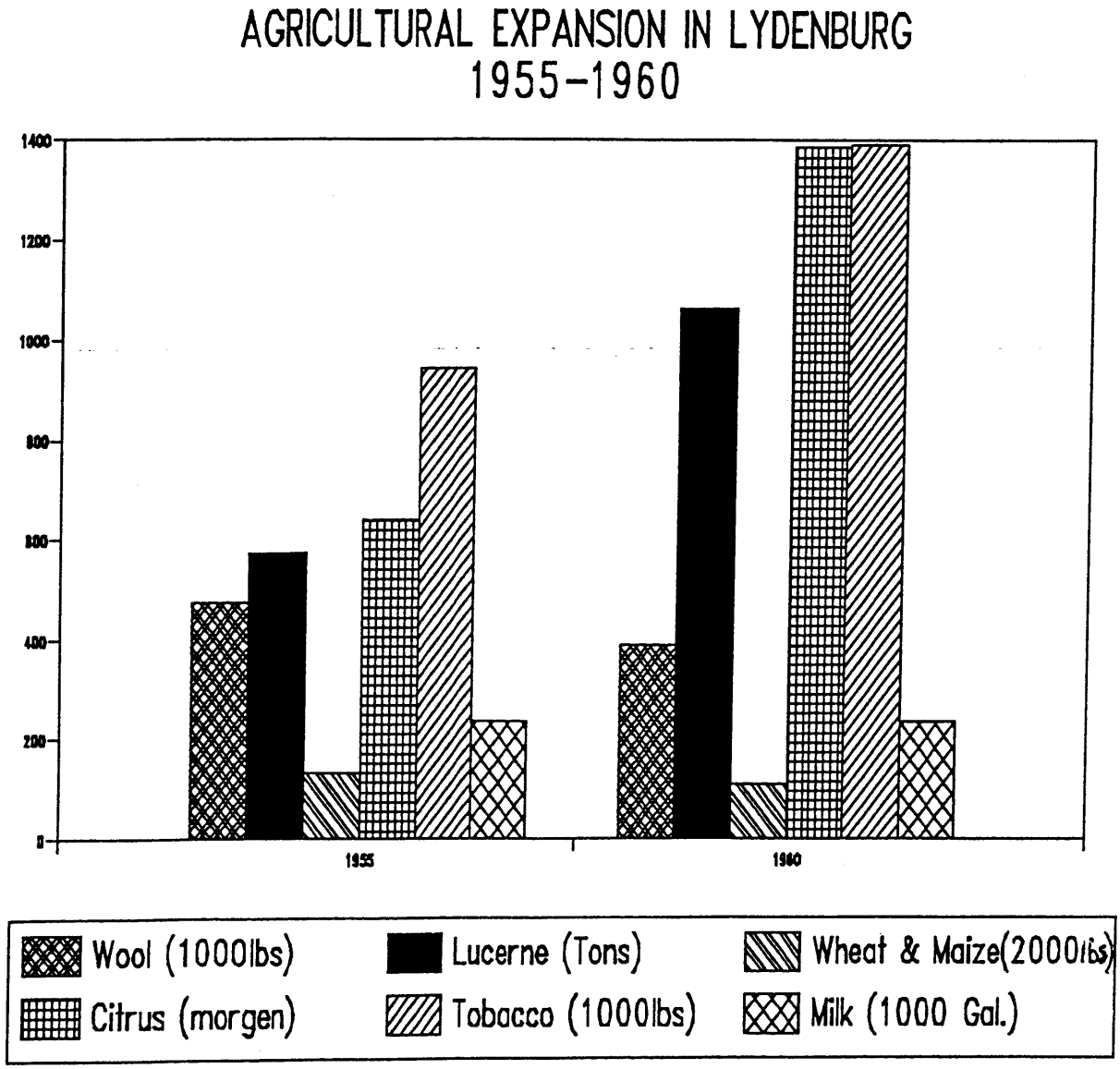
167 *Inter-departmental Commission of Enquiry into the Labour Tenant System* (Nel Commission), (Mimeograph, 1960).

168 CAD, BB, No. H51000LYD, Vol. 878, Soil Conservation Report, 17 July 1952; CAD, K, P15/6, 'Commission of Enquiry into the Depopulation of the Rural Areas', Lydenburg: Mnre. Swart, 2 Swanepoels, Bredell, Veldman, Schurink, Erlank, Davel, Joubert, Preller, 19 February 1958. The other important change that had gradually occurred was the decline in the number of absentee farmers, which further limited the available 'unused' land. In 1937 69 per cent of the farmers owned the farm on which they lived. By 1950 this had increased to 77 per cent. In 1937 14 per cent of the farms were occupied on a shares basis or managed for the owner. In 1950 this declined to 9 per cent, and in 1955 to 8 per cent.

169 *Agricultural Census, 1955-1960,* a more detailed assessment of the figures shows that these two years were not exceptional, but part of a process of growth.

170 CAD, BB, No. H51000LYD, Vol. 878, Soil Conservation Report, 27 March 1953; See Wilson *et al*, for a discussion on labour intensive crops.

GRAPH NO. 3



In addition, the average farm size expanded in Lydenburg because of a growing exodus of whites who moved to the urban areas. Some farmers left Lydenburg because they were hit with frost or hail that destroyed their crop and they could

therefore not make their payments on tractors or new irrigation facilities.[171] However, the evidence indicates that the majority of those who left in the 1950s were the sons of farmers, who were not prepared to take over from their fathers, preferring instead to look for permanent employment opportunities in the booming urban areas.[172] This exodus caused a reversal of the trend towards subdivision and smaller average farm sizes. From 1950 to 1955 the average farm size in Lydenburg grew from 605 to 667 morgen. Larger farms allowed more farmers to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by mechanisation, which led to huge increases in the area under cultivation. By 1960 the farmers of Lydenburg were putting 19352 morgen under irrigation. In addition 1809 morgen were under 'permanent crops' and 1063 morgen consisted of artificial pasture. In total 45325 morgen were under agricultural crops, which represents a massive expansion of the 27945 morgen under agricultural crops in 1947.[173] The greater labour requirements produced by these factors were met by a rapidly growing rural African population, settled in both Lydenburg and in neighbouring 'reserves' like Sekhukhuneland.[174]

However, despite the declining number of farmers and larger average farm sizes, a significant number of whites continued to occupy farms small enough to prohibit substantial profits. During 1950, 175 farms were smaller than 100 morgen; in 1954 there were 194; and in 1957 there were 151. A statistic that is even more telling is that in 1958, 362 farms yielded a profit of less than £300 per annum, while only 389 yielded more than £300. In 1959, 417 farms yielded more than £300, and a still significant 270 yielded less.[175]

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171 CAD, MLW, No. 312/60, Vol. 142, Spekboom Farmers Association to Minister of Lands, 9 August 1951; CAD, K, No. 103, Vol. 1, Middelburg Farmers to the Commission on Ontvolking van die Platteland, 19 February 1958; Interview with Arthur Gayden, Isando, 1990.

172 See Chapter Seven Mrs Fourie; CAD, K, P15/6, 'Commission of Enquiry into the Depopulation of the Rural Areas', Lydenburg: Mnre. Swart, 2 Swanepoels, Bredell, Veldman, Schurink, Erlank, Davel, Joubert, Preller, 19 February 1958; CAD, K, 103, Vol. 1, Memorandum Insake Ontvolking van Platteland, Ermelo, c1958; Ontvolking van die Platteland, Dr. L.W. Rossiter, Ermelo, Die Ontvolking van die Platteland, Bethal Farmers Union, c1958.

173 *Agricultural Census*, 1950-1960.

174 See Chapter Five and Seven.

175 *Agricultural Census*, 1958; In 1958 Lydenburg's farmers owed £628530 to the Cooperative, the Land Bank and other commercial banks.

A report compiled in 1958 suggests that in all the sub-regions of Lydenburg, there were farmers who clung tenaciously to their un-economical plots. On the highveld to the west of the town, sheep farming was the most profitable way of farming, but it required a farm that was at least 500 to 600 morgen. Many of the farms in the area had been subdivided into units that were too small to accomodate sheep. Farmers responded to this situation by trying to farm with potatoes and maize, which yielded marginal profits because much of the soil in the region was over-worked and exhausted. In the middle-veld to the north-east of the town of Lydenburg there were farmers who went to even greater lengths to retain their land. An economical farm size in the area was 1000 morgen, which facilitated a combination of irrigated crop production and cattle farming. Numerous farmers in the area only occupied 200 to 300 morgen with 20 to 30 morgen under irrigation, which did not produce a profit rate that allowed farmers to maintain their cattle herds. Consequently, many of them worked part time on the mines to earn the cash they needed to buy additional cows. In the Ohrigstad Valley the completion of the Ohrigstad Dam in 1955 had made irrigation plots of 30 morgen large enough for profitable farming. But on the poor white Ohrigstad Settlement Scheme most plots were still too small, forcing many settlers to look for temporary employment on road-works and on the mines. This practice was even more widespread in the south-eastern Crocodile Valley, considered to be the poorest area in Lydenburg. Wheat and maize was still double cropped under irrigation; the majority of plots, however, were too small and expensive for profitable production. Farmers nevertheless battled to carry on and there were no bankruptcies in the area. Some farmers left the district, though most managed to survive by finding temporary outside employment. Many went to work on the railways, often leaving farm houses periodically unoccupied.[176]

Thus many farmers, marginalised by economic development, refused to give up their farms; rather becoming migrant workers in order to keep land that did not provide them with their basic requirements. These farmers viewed state assistance

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[176] CAD, K, P15/6, 'Commission of Enquiry into the Depopulation of the Rural Areas', Lydenburg: Mnre. Swart, 2 Swanepoels, Bredell, Veldman, Schurink, Erlank, Davel, Joubert, Preller, 19 February 1958.

Thus many farmers, marginalised by economic development, refused to give up their farms; rather becoming migrant workers in order to keep land that did not provide them with their basic requirements. These farmers viewed state assistance as a crutch in their struggle to remain on the land. They were therefore wary of any aid that could make their profit margins even more risky, and as a result they often clashed with farmers who hoped to expand their production with the state's assistance. These processes are revealed in an application for a dam in terms of the Soil Conservation Act, by 44 farmers in the Spekboom Valley. The farmers who applied for the dam wanted to expand their farming enterprises by placing more land under irrigation. But the farmers who countered the petition, appealing to the state to refrain from building the dam, explained that this development would necessitate an increase in levies. Thus, although farming in the area as a whole would probably benefit from the dam, the increased costs would make it difficult for those particular farmers to continue farming.[177]

Similar conflicts arose in the Steelpoort Valley in 1952 and again in 1954, in the latter case over fencing.[178] There were numerous other examples in farming districts throughout the country.[179] A few are cited here in order to present a fuller picture of the values that motivated many white farmers. For example, in 1954 in the Western Transvaal, farmers were facing the loss of their entire crop as a result of commando-worms. They claimed that they could not invest in the equipment and chemicals necessary to avoid this disaster as they were 'already very deeply in debt'. They asked the government to save them.[180] It was in fact common for farmers to expect the state to protect them from the economic and ecological forces that threatened to separate them from their land.[181] Probably the clearest and most extreme example of the type of thinking that expected the

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177 CAD, MLW, No. 312/60, Vol. 142, 'Besproeingskema in die Boloop van die Klein Spekboomrivier', 7 April 1958; Attached Petitions.

178 CAD, MLD, No. 14/20, Vol. 19, Minister of Agriculture to J.L.V. Liebenberg, 4 June 1954; CAD, MLW, No. 312/76, Vol. 143, 'Voorgestelde Besproeingsdistrik: Steelpoort: Distrik Lydenburg', 8 January 1952.

179 CAD, MLD, No. 14/20, Vol. 19, Minister of Agriculture to J.L.V. Liebenberg, 4 June 1954.

180 CAD, MLD, No. 14/14, Vol. 17, NHG Kerk, Ottosdale to the Minister of Agriculture, 22 February 1954.

181 J. Lazar, 'Conformity and Conflict: Afrikaner Politics 1948 - 1961', (PhD thesis, Oxford University, 1987), p. 98; CAD, MLD, No. 14/13, Vol. 17, P.F. Jordaan to Minister of Agriculture, 6 July 1956.

> 'There is only one solution. The production of maize must be controlled. To do that, every farmer must only be allowed to produce a certain number of mealies at a certain price. ... Where would you find a better plan. The problem with you rich Ministers is that you only look after the rich man, and don't care a damn about us less fortunate people.'[182]

This evidence proves that while state aid enabled more and more farmers - like those in the Steelpoort and Spekboom Valleys who supported the construction of dams - to invest in agriculture and attempt to maximise their profits, there remained a significant group who saw the state as a resource in their survival on the land. Some would use funds earmarked for fighting locusts to send their children to school or to transport products to the market; they were sometimes squeezed off the land by more efficient producers, yet they continued to struggle against these processes.[183] The number of these farmers declined even further during the 1960s. However, during the 1950s they played a significant role in the Lydenburg district. They therefore provided African tenants with an alternative to the larger, more labour intensive farmers, who had profited from the favourable conditions that prevailed in the 1950s.

CONCLUSION

The graph below summarises some of the crucial economic trends in Lydenburg. From the post-Great Depression period onwards, the area cultivated by white farmers expanded steadily. This was first achieved by a growing number of farmers on smaller farms. By contrast, from the early to mid-1950s onwards, with the help of tractors and more 'scientific' methods of farming, fewer farmers produced more on bigger farms. Further, despite the huge variety in farm size and efficiency, some generalisations about the importance of state aid can also be made.[184] Farmers generally relied on state assistance in order either to survive on the land, or to expand their productive capacity. As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, Lydenburg remained a backward district within the Transvaal. The farmers of Lydenburg were therefore at a competitive disadvantage, which pushed

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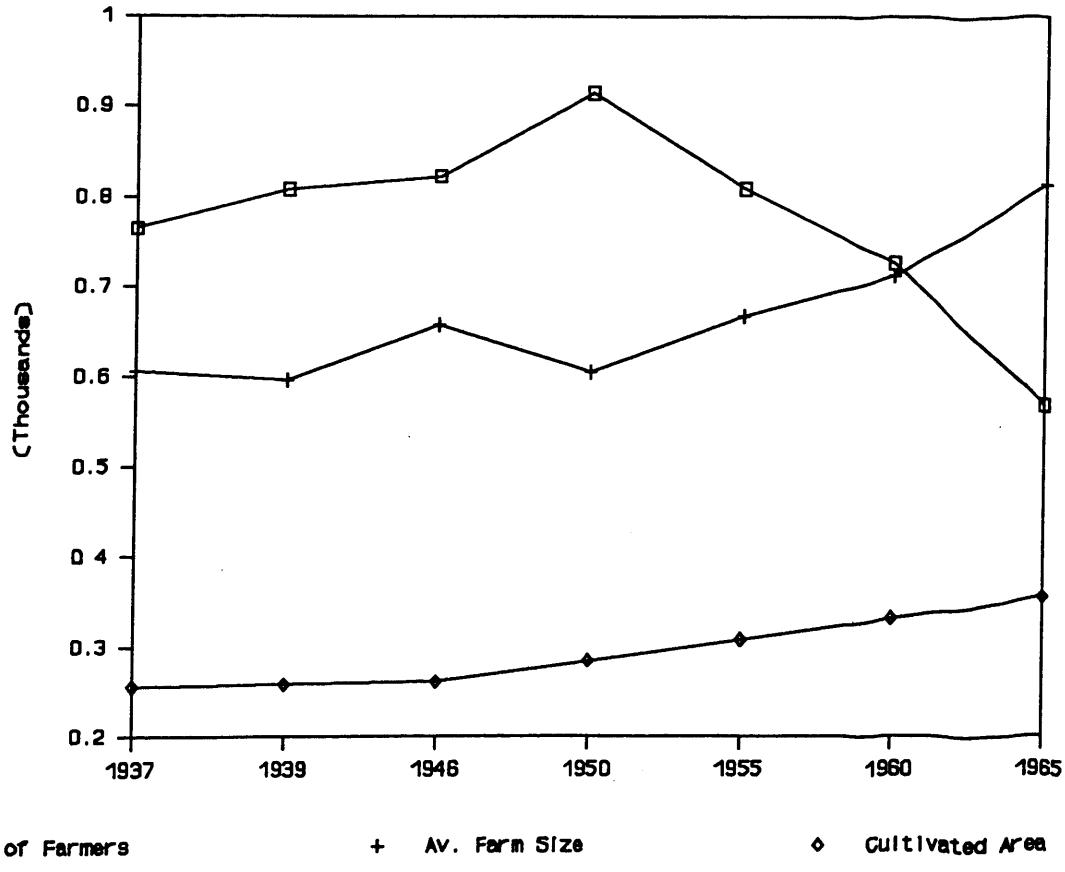
[182] CAD, MLD, No. 14/13, Vol. 17, 'n vriend' to Minister of Agriculture, c1950s.
[183] CAD, MLD, No. 14/13, Vol. 17, A. Hertzog to The Minister of Agriculture, 28 February 1951; No. 14/20, Vol. 19, M.M. Beukes to Minister of Agriculture, 19 May 1955.
[184] D.H. Houghton, *The South African Economy* (Cape Town, Oxford Univ. Press, 1973), p. 64.

them into seeking state assistance, and into relying on various cheap labour forms.

GRAPH NO. 4



But, within this broad consensus, the farmers of Lydenburg were affected by economic development in three different ways: some used the new economic opportunities to expand their production, others struggled to remain on the land and refused to take risks with their profit margins, while a third group, which became more numerous in the 1950s, decided that the city offered a better

standard of living and left the land.[185] This chapter pointed to the differences amongst white farmers, and also offered a detailed description of broader processes of economic growth. The purpose of this will become apparent in the following chapter, which analyses how, during the 1930s, the economic progress of some farmers, and the hopes of others, caused them to make new demands on the state and African tenants, and then to respond in different ways when the state encountered African resistance.

[185] CAD, MLD, No. 14/20, Vol. 19, 'Memorandum in connection with the depopulation of the rural areas', c1957.

CHAPTER THREE

FREEDOM IN LAND AND WORK: THE DEFENCE OF AFRICAN AUTONOMY IN THE 1930s

During the 1930s African tenant families defended the autonomy that remained within their labour contracts. They fought for access to land and cattle; they demanded the freedom to cultivate and herd their resources. These activities depended on tenants maintaining some control over their own labour-time, and they therefore opposed farmers' attempts to extend the time during which members of the tenant family were required for farm-work. The most dramatic instance of this opposition occurred in 1938, in response to the proclamation of the Native Trust and Land Act's Chapter Four, which attempted to entrench longer labour periods within the law. The investigation presented here concentrates on the widespread and successful defiance that broke out in 1938. However, it also looks at the family based resistance 'hidden' on individual farms before 1938 since the response to Chapter Four grew out of earlier, well-established, but scattered attempts to defend African autonomy.

The structures of authority within the family determined how African resources were used on the farms. In most instances women and children were required to undertake, to some extent, the daily tasks of maintaining the house, the field and stock in order to allow the household head to perform other tasks.[1] Thus, household heads had both to contend with the demands of white farmers and maintain patterns of dependence and control within their own families. During the 1930s the main threat to these relationships was posed by African sons who found

1 The details of these arrangements are touched on in this Chapter, but are examined more fully in Chapter Five.

employment outside the farms and acquired the ability to contribute to their own bridewealth. This reduced their dependence on fathers for this key resource and threatened to undermine a central element in fathers' control over their sons.[2] Further, the absence of sons caused labour shortage problems for both tenants and farmers. The examination of the struggle for autonomy, in which African families stuck together in defence of existing tenant arrangements, must therefore also demonstrate how household heads dealt with internal threats to the family's coherence.

RELATIONS ON THE LAND IN 1930

We begin our study of African resistance during the 1930s by looking at the various relations on the land at the beginning of the decade. It was noted earlier that the economic outlook in Lydenburg was relatively positive during 1930.[3] The effects of the Great Depression had not yet been felt. The farmers who gave evidence to the Native Economic Commission in August were convinced that they were facing a period of growth. The following two years proved them wrong, though their perception could certainly have motivated farmers to implement changes within farm labour relations. These changes emerge from the Commission's records.

In order to assess the status of the evidence collected in Lydenburg during 1930, it is necessary to examine briefly the Native Economic Commission's background. Its purpose was to formulate a coherent 'native policy' within the framework of Segregation.[4] The central focus was on how best to develop the 'reserves', but the commissioners were also interested in the plight of Africans on white farms. They were concerned to listen to a wide range of evidence and thus spoke to both farmers and labour tenants, as well as 'experts' like local missionaries and

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2 See, P. Harries, 'Kinship, Ideology and the Nature of Pre-Colonial Labour Migration', in S. Marks & R. Rathbone, *Industrialisation and Social Change in South Africa: African Class Formation, Culture and Consciousness, 1870-1930* (London, Longman, 1982), p. 148; D. James, 'Land Shortage and Inheritance in a Lebowa Village', in *Social Dynamics* 14(2), 1988, p. 44.

3 See Chapter Two, p. 72.

4 P.B. Rich, *White Power and the Liberal Conscience: Racial segregation and South African liberalism, 1921-1960* (Manchester University Press, 1984), p. 60.

resident Native Affairs (NAD) officials. The members of the Commission did not agree on the exact form that Segregation should take, though they were apparently all hostile towards the labour tenant system. Some saw it as inefficient for the farmer, while others, of a more paternalist bent, regarded it as harsh and exploitative for the African.[5] This hostility caused the Commissioners to ask many penetrating questions about the nature of labour tenancy in Lydenburg. The evidence they gathered therefore provides a valuable window onto relations on the land in 1930.

The whites who gave evidence to the Commission in Lydenburg included three farmers, a German missionary and a local official. The farmers were amongst the most prominent in Lydenburg. Marthinus Johannes van Rensburg, for example, reaped more than 250 sacks of lucerne on less than four morgen. He was clearly a leading farmer in the district. His labour practices resembled those of the 'large farmers' at the turn of the century, who were described earlier as maintaining 'January-to-January' contracts and having 'no problems' attracting labour.[6] Van Rensburg attracted his labour by offering two morgen of irrigated land per family and as much dry land as the tenants could plough.[7] He allowed the ten families on his farm to keep 230 cattle and he paid their annual tax.

While Van Rensburg had no shortage of labour, others, he explained, experienced a shortage because they could not offer sufficient land to satisfy African tenants. Van Rensburg's farm was 1300 morgen and contained an abundance of irrigated land. He described the arrangement with his tenants in the following terms:

> 'the labour tenant lives on my farm, and gets sufficient land to plough, and therefore he must come from time to time, he must work for me when I need him; he and his family are obligated to work for me under these circumstances. That is

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5 The clearest proponent of the former was Dr. A.M. Mostert, while the latter position was pushed by Dr. A.W. Roberts. For details on the Commission's mission, and Roberts and Lucas' dissenting opinions see, Rich, *White Power and the Liberal Conscience*, pp. 60-61.

6 See Chapter One, p. 47.

7 Wits Historical Papers Library (WHPL), AD 1438, Native Economic Commission, Evidence from Lydenburg, 21 August 1930: M.J. van Rensburg.

what all the families on my farm have got; that is the contract."[8]

From the women on his farm he demanded one month's labour during harvesting. However, he could extract no labour from the youths. They ran away to the nearby asbestos mines at Penge, rather than work for him. He tried to deal with the problem in co-operation with the African household-heads on his farm. With the help of the police, Van Rensburg managed to catch some of the youths for breach of contract and, in one case, when the police returned a repeat offender, the African father nearly beat the child to death. Van Rensburg claimed that the beating was so vicious, he had to intervene. These violent measures were clearly designed to serve as a deterrent to any other sons who were thinking of running away. But, while it is possible that African household-heads benefitted from this tactic, Van Rensburg did not. The youths who remained on the farms refused to work for the farmer, forcing Van Rensburg to rely on young temporary workers from Sekhukhuneland to look after his cattle. He paid them £1.10 per month.[9]

The paternalist system that Van Onselen and Keegan identify in the Western Transvaal and the Orange Free State certainly existed on Van Rensburg's farm.[10] Both the farmer and the head of the tenant family intended to keep the labour of youths on the farm. As Van Onselen puts it, 'located within the constraints of a farm dominated by a paternalistic ethos, the adolescent black male found himself in the particularly uncomfortable position of having both an 'ideological' [white] and a biological [black] father.[11] The white father was, however, the ultimate authority in this system and he too used violence to maintain discipline. Van Rensburg described his authority as strict but fair, and he clearly regarded his

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8 WHPL, AD 1438, Native Economic Commission, Evidence from Lydenburg, 21 August 1930: M.J. van Rensburg: [Trans. in Text] 'Dat hy op my plaas woon en altyd voldoende grond kry, en dat hy van tyd tot tyd kom, wanneer ek hom noodig het vir (sic) my sal werk; en hy en sy familie verplig wees om vir my onder die omstandighede te werk. Dit is wat al my volk op my plaas het. Dit is die kontrak.'

9 WHPL, AD 1438, Native Economic Commission, Evidence from Lydenburg, 21 August 1930: M.J. van Rensburg.

10 C. van Onselen, 'The Social and Economic Underpinnings of Paternalism and Violence on the Maize Farms of the South-Western Transvaal, 1900-1950', in *Journal of Historical Sociology*, Vol. 5, No. 2, June 1992; T. Keegan, *Rural Transformations in Industrializing South Africa* (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1986), pp. 132-134.

11 Van Onselen, 'Underpinnings of Paternalism and Violence', p. 11.

African workers as children. He explained,

> 'If you promise the people [volk] something, then you must carry out your promise, and if you don't do that then you will get nothing done. I promised them that if they do something wrong then I will punish them with a hiding, and I do that. [The African does not complain about the hiding because] he knows that he deserved it.'[12]

The conditions described by the other two farmer witnesses, Elias de Souza and Hendrik Neethling, were similar to those on Van Rensburg's farm. De Souza described the arrangement with his tenants in the following terms:

> 'On my farm there is nothing like the [ninety day contract]; my outas, the kaffirs that I have got, when I need them and they come to me and they say to me: "I have this or that work, I can not come", then I do what I can for them and give them leave to stay at home to do what they want to do.'[13]

Some farmers in Lydenburg had a strictly defined agreement consisting of a ninety day labour period but most farmers, De Souza explained, maintained the loose January-to-January arrangement. A few of these farmers would intermittently give their tenants a certain period of months off the farm if the tenant wanted to look for part time work elsewhere.[14]

Land was the crucial component in this arrangement. On big farms the tenants could plough as much as they liked, but on the smaller farms land was inevitably restricted. In the Steelpoort Valley, Neethling said, tenants got two morgen of irrigated land and as much dry land as they could plough. Access to this kind of land would allow the tenants to make their living off the farm and there was thus no need to look for outside employment.[15] On the smaller farms tenants had to

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12 WHPL, AD 1438, Native Economic Commission, Evidence from Lydenburg, 21 August 1930: M.J. van Rensburg: [Trans. in Text] 'As jy hier vir die volk iets beloof, dan moet jy jou belofte uitvoer, en as jy dit nie doen dan sal jy niks gedaan kry nie. Ek beloof hul dat as hul iets verkeerds doen dan sal ek hul met slae straf, en ek doen dit.'

13 WHPL, AD 1438, Native Economic Commission, Evidence from Lydenburg, 21 August 1930: Elias de Souza & Hendrik Neethling: [Trans. in Text] 'By my is daar nie sulke dinge nie; my outas, die kaffers wat ek het, wanneer ek hul nodig het en as hul by my kom en hul se vir my "Ek het die of die werk, ek kan nie kom nie", dan doen ek wat ek kan vir hul en ek gee vir hul verlof om by die huis te bly en te doen wat hul wil doen.'

14 De Souza was one of these farmers.

15 During the period 1937-1939, the average production of maize by Africans on farms was higher than during any subsequent three year period. The average was 27216 bags. Further, the number of Africans on farms in Lydenburg was estimated at 10000 in 1937, see CAD, NTS, No. 97/362, Vol. 8837, Native Commissioner Lydenburg to Secretary of Native Affairs, 29 September 1937. For subsequent figures see Chapter Seven, p. 258. For a more detailed description of tenants making a living from the land, see Chapter Five, p. 185.

seek wage employment in order to earn the cash to pay their tax, supplement their diet and buy clothes.[16]

De Souza claimed that he only used the labour of the young, unmarried women. They took turns working in the kitchen. Neethling used the same system but also admitted to using women's labour in the fields for weeding and harvesting. Both farmers claimed they had difficulties extracting labour from youths, some of whom had run away to town. Many farmers in Neethling's region were, however, reluctant to allow the youngsters to go to school, which suggests that they used the young boys as cattle herders.[17]

The Africans who spoke to the Commission complained bitterly about the conditions on the farms. The first group to give evidence consisted of residents from the Lydenburg 'township', Marambane. They explained that Africans wanted 'freedom in land and work', an aspiration that was mainly thwarted on the farms, where most labour tenants got very little free time to plough their own fields, while women and children also had to work for the farmer. They claimed further that these restrictions on independence were perpetrated by farmers who broke the terms of verbal contracts.[18] The group consisted of a teacher, a brick-layer, a minister of religion and an 'evangelist'. Their residence in the 'urban' part of Lydenburg raises some doubts about the reliability of their evidence, though Marambane was a very rural township at this time: Africans were allocated plots, kept cattle and built their own houses.[19] The 'urban' dwellers could thus identify with the concerns of labour tenants; as teachers and religious leaders they undoubtedly knew many labour tenant families.

The complaints of Africans who still lived, or who had until recently lived, on

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16 WHPL, AD 1438, Native Economic Commission, Evidence from Lydenburg, 21 August 1930: Elias de Souza & Hendrik Neethling.

17 WHPL, AD 1438, Native Economic Commission, Evidence from Lydenburg, 21 August 1930: Elias de Souza & Hendrik Neethling.

18 WHPL, AD 1438, Native Economic Commission, Lydenburg, 18 August 1930, Evidence: Onasimus Phokanoka, Stephen Nteeo, Dirk Kana, Bernard Serote.

19 WHPL, AD 1438, Native Economic Commission, Lydenburg, 18 August 1930, Evidence: W.A. Preller.

white farms, did not differ substantively from those raised by the town residents. Isaac Twale, who had recently moved to the mission station, stated:

> 'The conditions were not good. ... I just stayed on the farm ... there was no agreement. I just worked for the farmer, that was all. We worked from January to January; I, my wife and my children and the cattle that I had. There was no payment. [The land I got] was not as much as I wanted. I could only make a living on it for six months of the year. The other six months I had to scratch and scrape to live. ... I was always in debt to the farmer.'[20]

Petrus Masangu was a labour tenant on Rietfontein, the farm of Piet Coetzee. He explained that he worked from January to January and that he had to work every day except Sunday. He got no pay, except for the farmer paying his general tax. When his sons grew up they all had to work for the farmer. Two had recently run away to town because 'they were tired of working and going about naked.'[21] Masangu had access to four acres of land and owned two cows, two calves, and two oxen. The farmer sometimes gave him a pair of trousers and fed him when he worked. 'The only other help I could get', he said, 'was selling fowls and eggs. My wife did that and we had very few requirements'.[22]

Africans described labour tenancy as oppressive and exploitative, while farmers depicted the system as flexible and beneficial for Africans. Both parties argued that they were the victims of the other party's needs. When asked why he did not leave the farmer who exploited him, Petrus Masangu replied:

> 'I was afraid to leave the farm because I had nowhere else to go. I thought if I left this farm and went somewhere else I would not be better off. So far as I know, they [farmers] are all alike.'[23]

Hendrik Neethling argued, on the other hand, that farmers were 'ruled by the kaffirs': 'What can we do, they are on the farm and we can not chase them away'.

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20 WHPL, AD 1438, Native Economic Commission, Lydenburg, 18 August 1930, Evidence: Isaac Twale: [Trans. in Text] 'Daar was nie 'n ooreenkoms nie, ek het net vir die boer gewerk, dit was al. Van Januarie tot Januarie. Ek en my vrou en kinders en die vee wat ek gehad het. Daar was nie betaling nie. Nie soveel [grond] as ek wou he nie, maar net genoeg om my bestaan uit te maak vir ses maande van die jaar. Die ander ses maande het ek moet raap en skraap om te leef. Jy is altyd in skuld by die baas.'

21 WHPL, AD 1438, Native Economic Commission, Evidence from Lydenburg, 21 August 1930: Petrus Masangu.

22 *Ibid.*

23 WHPL, AD 1438, Native Economic Commission, Evidence from Lydenburg, 21 August 1930: Petrus Masangu; See also Simon Moganedi.

De Souza said, 'our problem is that if the natives move away from us, they just go to the nearest farm and the farmers there accept them ... the farmers have to be careful to keep their labour.'[24]

It was in the interest of both parties to exaggerate their problems to the Commission. Labour tenants wanted the state to protect them from farmers, while farmers wanted the state to help them attain an adequate cheap labour supply. In an effort to come closer to the true character of labour tenancy in Lydenburg we must therefore examine the evidence of more 'neutral' respondents. One such 'neutral' party was Georg Schwellnus, the leader of the Berlin Mission in Lydenburg. As a missionary we might expect him to be biased in favour of Africans, but this would be a mistake when it comes to Berlin Missionaries like Schwellnus. They always had a tendency to align themselves with existing governments, saw themselves as different from Africans in terms of a hard-line cultural determinism, and identified with Afrikaner nationalism.[25]

Nevertheless, the Berlin Mission society did attract many African followers on the farms and Schwellnus understood some of the issues that concerned labour tenants. Having lived in Lydenburg since 1910, he provided a long-term view in which conditions had gradually become worse for Africans living on the farms. He explained that 'the white man farms more intensively; and because he has more work and needs more people for his work, it causes greater dissatisfaction.' Furthermore, he argued, 'the kaffir is acquiring more and more needs. A boy (sic) on a farm wants tea and sugar and such things; he wants to wear a shirt. His needs are increasing, and naturally he feels the scarcity.'[26] He also identified a resentment of the pass laws. On a positive note, he felt that Africans living on the

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24 WHPL, AD 1438, Native Economic Commission, Evidence from Lydenburg, 21 August 1930: Elias de Souza & Hendrik Neethling.

25 P. Delius, *The Land Belongs to Us* (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1983), pp. 118-119; D.W. van der Merwe, *Die Berlynse Sendinggenootskap en Kerkstigting in Transvaal, 1904-1962* (Pretoria, Staatsdrukker, 1987), p. 90; For background on Schwellnus, see *Lydenburg News*, 22 November 1946; CAD, CES, 2226/14, SAP Lydenburg to Commissioner for Enemy Subjects, 16 February 1915; CAD, NTS, No. 841/323, Vol. 7143, Berlynse Sendinggenootskap to Minister of Native Affairs, 25 November 1937.

26 WHPL, AD 1438, Native Economic Commission, Evidence from Lydenburg, 21 August 1930: Georg Theophilius Friedrick Schwellnus.

farms had greater food security than those living in the 'reserves'.[27]

The other 'neutral' respondent was Major Hunt, the Native Commissioner whose paternalism was described earlier.[28] Hunt claimed that labour tenancy was a bad thing because tenants moved around a lot and therefore did not acquire a developed work discipline: 'The farm labour[ers] ... have the better of the Whites; they simply go from one farm to another and do not do their work properly.'[29] Some farmers, Hunt pointed out, had an abundance of labour because of the conditions they offered, while others struggled to keep labour because of a shortage of land, or ill-treatment. He also claimed that since 1908 there had been a slow but steady movement off the farms into Sekhukhuneland because, as he put it, 'it is the natural tendency on the part of the native to be free and independent, to free himself from restraint.'[30] The increasing tendency of farmers along the Steelpoort and Waterval Rivers to take up irrigation farming and have crops in both winter and summer, Hunt argued, meant that some farmers who had previously implemented a ninety day labour system, were now reverting back to the system of 'twelve months in the year, whenever called upon'. The Africans who experienced these changes, did 'not seem to like it'.[31]

The optimistic prognosis of 1930 clearly made an impact on Lydenburg and undermined the position of African household-heads in a number of ways. Farmers extended their demands on some tenant families in an effort to increase production, provoking a number of unmarried boys to run away to other employers. Other families, who had become reliant on a migrant wage, were now expected to forgo this income. But Africans were not helpless victims of these changes. By protesting with their feet they made sure that farmers took their

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27 WHPL, AD 1438, Native Economic Commission, Evidence from Lydenburg, 21 August 1930: Georg Theophilius Friedrick Schwellnus.

28 See Chapter One, p 55.

29 WHPL, AD 1438, Native Economic Commission, 18 August 1930, Evidence: Major Donald Rolfe Hunt.

30 *Ibid.*

31 *Ibid.*

interests into consideration when deciding on which labour practice to follow.[32] Parents also did not meekly accept sons' growing tendency to leave the farms. Violence was one method used by fathers to discourage this practice. Other parents were less implacable and accepted the migrancy of sons. Rather, they worked at ensuring that this practice did not lead to the complete break-down of family obligations.

AFRICAN STRATEGIES AFTER 1930

After 1930 African families adopted various strategies aimed at maintaining the coherence of the family and avoiding new labour obligations. These processes emerge from stories told to the author by ex-labour tenants, including the recollections of Sekwati Hlatswayo, who was born on a farm in the Badfontein region in the 1920s. He remembered that on the farm of his childhood only the small boys did not work. When they became slightly older they would look after the young calves and later, probably in their early teens, they herded 'all the cattle together with the cattle of the farmer.'[33] When they grew up they were expected to participate in 'all the work'. The rest of the family, apart from the very young children, were also 'involved with the work'. But, Hlatswayo recalls, 'we did not stay on one farm for a long time, we moved around a lot, because the farmers made us do hard work'.[34]

One of the moves that Hlatswayo made as a young unmarried man was to Germiston, where he worked at Union Carbide. His parents were, however, able to ensure his return to the farms because, before he left, his father had helped him enter into a matrimonial contract by paying a portion of the bridewealth for a woman in Lydenburg. Like many of the men who followed him into migrancy during the next decade, Hlatswayo obeyed the instructions of his parents; he returned to Lydenburg to get married and to settle on the farm Waterkloof, owned

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32 For a detailed report on Africans' role in determining the labour practice of western Transvaal farmers, see CAD, Department of Agriculture (R), 3633, 'Memoranda issued by the Department of Agriculture', Undated, c1930.

33 Interview with Sekwati Hlatswayo, Jane Furse, 8 February 1991.

34 *Ibid.*

by Louis de Souza.[35] On that farm he was allowed keep as much cattle as he liked and ploughed about five hectares. The arrangement with de Souza was the classically flexible, all-year round arrangement described above:

> 'We worked every day. When I was ploughing my field I was given loan cattle so I could plough. It was not a lot of time that we were given to plough. We were given a span of oxen and we would do our ploughing quickly, and when we were finished we would work on the farmers land. The farmer planted maize and wheat.'[36]

Hlatswayo liked De Souza, because he 'would come and have discussions with people, and things were resolved in that way'. He was unlike other farmers who 'would just come and [dictate], and would just decide that this is what would happen'.[37] Hlatswayo stayed on De Souza's farm until 1938.

Sekwatane Mosehla was born around 1905 on the farm of Dan Coetzee. He remembers that conditions on that farm were 'good'. There was enough food, 'because we could plough the land, there were no restrictions.'[38] Mosehla feels that conditions were better in the early-days, when he was growing up. After he got married 'conditions were still O.K.'.[39] He worked on a sheep farm, where the 'farmer did not stay with you'.[40] This farm was used as winter grazing land and very few demands were made on the tenants who occupied it. They were asked to work for three months and were free to work on their own land, or look for work elsewhere, during the other nine months. When Mosehla's sons grew up they performed the three months labour and then went to earn money for the family 'in town'. Mosehla stopped working and 'just stayed at home'. This was clearly a very favourable arrangement for the head of a tenant household. The evidence suggests that on those farms where no white farmer resided, and household-heads had access to large areas of land that they could allocate to their sons, migrancy did not present a significant threat to the coherence of the tenant family.[41]

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35 See Chapter Five, p. 211, for a more detailed assessment of how parents used marriage practices to ensure the return of their sons.
36 Interview with Sekwati Hlatswayo, Jane Furse, 8 February 1991.
37 *Ibid.*
38 Interview with Sekwatane Mosehla, Jane Furse, 22 January 1992.
39 *Ibid.*
40 *Ibid.*
41 See Chapter Five, p. 179.

Mosehla explains that he 'used to look for those farmers who were not staying on the farms, where conditions were better.'[42] The only thing that restricted his movement between farms was the difficulty of moving cattle over long distances. He therefore usually moved to 'nearby farms, like next-door'.[43]

Mr Malapo was born in 1919 on a farm that was under a chief. The people on the farm built an irrigation canal and watered their crops, but, after the death of the chief in the 1920s, a white farmer came to claim the land. He established his fields riparian to the canal and prohibited the resident Africans from using any land that could be irrigated.[44] They could use as much dry-land as they wanted, as long as they worked for the farmer when he needed them. There were, however, 'no problems when it came to ploughing, there were some people ploughing for the farmer, and there would be some others ploughing for themselves'.[45] There was, furthermore, 'no interference with cattle', and the farmer and his tenants would pool their oxen during the ploughing season. Malapo's father did not work for the white farmer and the Malapo family accepted these conditions.[46]

The conditions that these labour tenant families fought for - under the guidance of a male household-head - can be summed up as access to 'adequate' land and cattle and a degree of household independence. To some extent the three families described above could still find these things on the farms during the 1930s and they resisted by moving when these conditions became threatened.

Constance Sibulele gives more details about what this resistance strategy involved. She was born in 1929 on a farm of an absentee landlord in northern Lydenburg. During the early 1930s, her parents decided that there was not enough

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42 Interview with Sekwatane Mosehla, Jane Furse, 22 January 1992.
43 *Ibid.*
44 Interview with Mr Malapo, Marulaneng, 12 April 1992; See WHPL, AD 1438, Native Economic Commission, 18 August 1930, Evidence: Major Donald Rolfe Hunt, for a very similar (or possibly the same) story.
45 Interview with Mr Malapo, Marulaneng, 12 April 1992.
46 *Ibid.*

rain in the area and the 'place was just not good for us'.[47] So they left for 'another place where we thought there would be more rain.' In order to move they needed a 'trekpass', signed by the farmer. As Sibulele explains, acquiring one of these could be a long and involved process:

> 'The farmer can complain and say "look you are not going anywhere because I need you to work here". But then we would say "even if I work here, you have given me a small piece of land, and that doesn't satisfy me. I get less food and you are not prepared to increase that, and so I feel that the best thing is for me to leave". And then maybe he would refuse and then you can go to the police and tell them the problems you are faced with.'[48]

Going to the police was not always successful because 'the police were supporting the farmer'.[49] As an alternative, Elise Mdluli argues, it was better to complain to the Native Commissioner, who 'had been there for a long time, and was quite sympathetic to people. He listened to their problems and tried to help them.'[50]

Moving around to defend tenant interests was a strategy that depended on the family's cohesion, which was largely determined by the gendered structures of authority within the family. As Sibulele explained 'it was mostly men who decided when to move'.[51] Male authority was, furthermore, a central aspect of the life styles that male labour tenants tried to defend on the farms; they frequently regarded the intrusions of farmers as a threat to their control over women. Further evidence of these male anxieties can be found in the complaints made to the Native Farm Labour Commission in 1937.

A group of Africans who submitted a 'memorandum' to the Commission called themselves the Sabie Location Advisory Board. The Board included a number of ex-labour tenants from Lydenburg. Their complaints echoed those submitted to the

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47 Interview with Constance Sibulele, Marulaneng, 7 June 1992.
48 *Ibid.*
49 *Ibid.*
50 Interview with Elise Mdluli, Marulaneng, 6 June 1992.
51 Interview with Constance Sibulele, Marulaneng, 7 June 1992; See also Interview with Maria Maphunga, Jane Furse, 24 January 1992; Interview with Mrs Dinkwanyane, Mashishing, 23 January 1992; Interview with Amie Sewele, Marulaneng, 12 April 1992; Interview with Monica Letsoane, Mashishing, 11 April 1992; Sharp & Spiegel, 'Women & Wages: Gender and the control of income in farm and Bantustan households', in *JSAS*, Vol. 16, No. 3, September 1990, p. 534.

1930 Commission. The thrust of their argument was that many farmers, over the course of time, extended their demands on the tenant's family, increased the labour period and reduced the land and cattle allocated to the tenant.[52] Nathan Modipa, representing the Lydenburg Electoral Committee, elaborated on the effects of these white intrusions:

> 'There is no one to keep the hut in order because everybody works, sometimes the man works from January to January. Thus they can not plough the land properly. Some kaffers must sell the food that they get to pay their tax because they do not get enough time to earn money for this purpose ....'[53]

Nathan Modipa and the Sabie Location Board were not labour tenants, although they had intimate access to tenant views. The Sabie residents explained that 'the [farm] natives bring their complaints to us and we discuss them.'[54] They themselves would have liked 'to work on the farms [rather] than elsewhere. The natives prefer to work on the mines today as the wages are better, but they do not bring home much money to their kraals as they have to spend it all for their various needs in the towns.'[55] Nathan Modipa lived on the African owned farm, Boomplaats. He also worked on a part time basis on a farm belonging to a shop-keeper in Lydenburg.[56] In this capacity, and as the leader of the electoral committee formed for the Native Representative elections of 1937, Modipa came into contact with many African farm residents. He was obviously in tune with tenant interests; every tenant family head in Lydenburg apparently agreed wholeheartedly with Modipa's determination to defend their households' remaining autonomy against further intrusions by white farmers.

The repetition in 1937 before the Native Farm Labour Committee of many of the concerns expressed in 1930, suggests that Africans were once again experiencing

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52 CAD, K356, 'Native Farm Labour Committee', Evidence from Lydenburg, P.J. Manzini, 19 November 1937.

53 CAD, K356, 'Native Farm Labour Committee', Evidence from Lydenburg, Nathan Modipa, 19 November 1937: [Trans. in Text] 'Daar is niemand om die hut in orde te hou want almal werk, partykeer werk die man van January tot January. Hulle kan dus nie die land behoorlik skoffel nie. Party kaffers moet hulle kos wat hulle kry verkoop om belasting te betaal omdat hulle nie genoeg tyd kry om geld te verdien daarvoor nie... .'

54 CAD, K356, 'Native Farm Labour Committee', Evidence from Lydenburg, P.J. Manzini, 19 November 1937.

55 *Ibid.*

56 Interview with Salome Makgwatsane, Green Valley, 8 November 1993.

extended demands on their labour, which must be linked to the four years of good conditions and improving markets that Lydenburg farmers experienced after the Great Depression. A further indication that this was the case is provided by the farmers themselves when they complained vehemently about a shortage of labour in 1937. Their attempts to overcome this shortage by raising the workload of labour tenant families often had the opposite effect as labour tenants responded by vacating the farm.[57] The smaller farmers, whose number had increased during the past ten years, found it particularly difficult to keep Africans on their farms.[58] Most tenants, they complained, moved to the larger farmers, who were able to offer more land.[59] Poorer farmers lost their labour, while richer farmers were forced to offer particular conditions in order to retain their attractiveness for African labour. The problem, the farmers argued, was 'not the lack of natives, but the lack of control of natives'.[60] The solution, most farmers decided, was Chapter Four of the 1936 Land Act and they called on the NAD to proclaim this law in Lydenburg.

THE CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF STATE INTERVENTION

In previous years the NAD had not been very responsive to the labour needs of farmers who refused to pay wages.[61] However, when the Department of Justice took the initiative in this matter by formulating the 1932 Native Service Contract Act, the NAD found itself in an awkward position. The 1932 Act allowed the Department of Justice to redistribute labour tenants and to remove rent tenants out of white farming districts. Officials within the NAD felt that these provisions would lead to abuses against African tenants, as they would be implemented by

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57 CAD, K356, 'Native Farm Labour Committee', Evidence from Lydenburg, P.J. Manzini, 19 November 1937.

58 See (U.G. 18) *Agricultural Census No. 17*, 1937 (Pretoria, 1939).

59 CAD, K356, 'Native Farm Labour Committee', Evidence from Lydenburg, I.J. Breytenbach & B. Mills, 19 November 1937.

60 CAD, K356, 'Native Farm Labour Committee', Evidence from Lydenburg, W.C. Malan, 19 November 1937.

61 S. Dubow, *Racial Segregation and the Origins of Apartheid in South Africa, 1919-36* (Oxford, Clarendon, 1989), pp. 64; 120; H. Bradford, 'Getting Away with Murder: "Mealie Kings", the State and foreigners in the eastern Transvaal, c1918-1950', in P. Bonner, *et al*, *Apartheid's Genesis*, pp. 96-119.

Justice officials unaccustomed to dealing with 'natives'.[62] The NAD also worried about the consequences of evicting rent-tenants and resettling them in African 'reserves'. The Department felt that this would lead to administrative problems in the already densely populated 'reserves'.[63] These issues led the NAD to take-over the provisions of the Contract Act, to modify them and to integrate them into the broad Segregationist policy contained in the 1936 Land Act.[64] It thus became the responsibility of the NAD to assist labour tenant farmers in terms of the Land Act's Chapter Four.

The Chapter contained clauses that were cautious and protected the interests of the NAD. It could only be applied by proclamation in individual districts, enabling the state to implement the potentially disruptive provisions gradually. It also contained a section (38) that gave all evicted Africans a claim on land in the 'Trust Areas'. In keeping with the logic of Segregation, which aimed to prevent racial conflict by encouraging Africans to 'develop in their own areas', this section ensured that the victims of Chapter Four would still have land on which to 'develop'.

Despite this cautiousness, the Chapter also reflected the state's growing tendency to solve 'problems' through the extension of bureaucratic regulation.[65] Labour tenants had to be registered at Native Commissioner offices and, in terms of the state regulated contracts, all tenants had to provide a minimum of four months free labour. This provision added a month to the definition contained in the 1913 Land Act. In addition, Labour Tenant Control Boards would be established in order to bring about an equal distribution of labour. The Boards could order farmers to evict surplus tenants and, as a guideline, an average farm was said to require five labour tenants who worked for six months per year. The Chapter would also phase out African rent-tenancy by requiring land-owners to pay an

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62 Dubow, *Racial Segregation*, p. 122.
63 Dubow, *Racial Segregation*, p. 121.
64 See D. Duncan, 'The State Divided: Farm labour policy in South Africa, 1924-1948', in *South African Historical Journal*, 24 (1991), pp. 75-81.
65 See Chapter Four, p. 164, for a more in-depth discussion of this process.

annual tax per 'squatter'. In proclaimed districts this tax would increase every year, until it reached five pounds after ten years.

After the Land Act was passed in 1936, the NAD decided that the first priority was to acquire the 'Trust Land' that would accommodate refugees from the rural transformations contained in Chapter Four. This process took too long for some farmers, and in 1938 delegates from Pietersburg, Louis Trichardt and Lydenburg demanded that the Chapter be applied in their districts. The NAD ruled out the first two districts because they housed thousands of 'squatters' who could not be accommodated in the surrounding 'reserves'.[66] Lydenburg had less 'squatters' and applied 'immense pressure' on the Department.[67] This pressure was exerted by Elias De Souza, Lydenburg's vociferous Member of Parliament, and members of the National Party, who would presumably use the NAD's unresponsiveness as a way to swing numerous Lydenburg votes in the following election. Although there were two rent-tenant farms in Lydenburg - with 264 'squatters' - and two African owned farms, they did not become an issue in 1938. The 'squatter' tax was never implemented and the African owned farms were exempted from the Chapter.[68] Chapter Four was thus applied in Lydenburg in order to transform labour tenancy at the request of the district's farmers.

All the farmers of Lydenburg initially supported Chapter Four because they saw it as a solution to the general labour shortage that existed in the district.[69] Many of them hoped that the Labour Tenant Control Board would control labourers and farmers alike. Farmers realised that labour tenants were able to oppose unacceptable conditions by moving between farms, because many of their fellow farmers were prepared to overlook pass laws in order to get sufficient labour. Furthermore, a number of farmers kept labour in excess of their needs because they were unwilling to interfere with labour tenant settlements in case this

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66 CAD, NTS, No. 97/362, Vol. 8636, Report of the Committee for the Application of Chapter Four, February 1939: Pietersburg 2469 'squatters', Louis Trichardt 35 630 squatters.
67 CAD, NTS, No. 97/362, Vol. 8837, Meeting of Native Affairs Commission, 2 July 1946.
68 CAD, NTS, No. 61/362, Vol. 8636, Summary of Chapter Four Committee's Recommendations, Undated.
69 CAD, NTS, No. 97/362, Vol. 8838, Native Commissioner Lydenburg, Report, c1938

jeopardised their entire labour supply.[70] As J.J. Smit put it: 'Farmers also steal labour from each other because they need the labour and do everything they can to get their hands on it.'[71] The farmers who demanded Chapter Four in 1937 hoped that, with the help of the state, they would be able to bring about a more controlled system in which labour would be evenly distributed and the ability of Africans to resist white farmers' demands would be seriously undermined.[72]

Some farmers overestimated the abilities of the Labour Tenant Control Board. Laws such as these usually became common knowledge in Lydenburg through extensive discussions amongst farmers, discussions that involved a fair amount of speculation about the provisions of the law.[73] Consequently, many farmers were under the impression that the Board could supply them directly with labour. In fact, the board was only supposed to ensure that farmers did not keep excessive numbers of labour tenants on their farms.[74]

The white farmers of Lydenburg supported Chapter Four for another erroneous reason. It was believed that all labour tenant contracts would now have to be six months long (instead of the previous three months) in order to be legal. But the new law actually required a minimum four month labour period. It was only in its guidelines to the Labour Tenant Control Boards that the law assumed an average six month labour period. The farmers mistakenly thought that these guidelines applied to all legal labour tenant contracts. Elias De Souza - who appears to have misread the law - and the Lydenburg North Farmers Union felt very strongly about enforcing an obligatory six month period. When they found out that this was not part of Chapter Four they wrote to the NAD demanding that the proclamation be withdrawn unless the required period was changed. Farmers who had for some

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70 CAD, K356, 'Native Farm Labour Committee', Evidence from Lydenburg, M.J. Erasmus, 19 November 1937.

71 CAD, K356, 'Native Farm Labour Committee', Evidence from Lydenburg, J.J. Smit, 19 November 1937: [Trans. in Text] 'Die boere steel ook arbeid van mekaar want hulle het die arbeid nodig en doen net wat hulle kan om dit in die hande te kry.'

72 CAD, K356, 'Native Farm Labour Committee', Evidence from Lydenburg, E. De Souza, 19 November 1937; See also CAD, NTS, No. 97/362, Vol. 8837, Office of the Native Commissioner Lydenburg, Undated Report.

73 CAD, NTS, No. 289/280 (3) (7), Vol. 2167, Private Secretary of Verwoerd to Mrs Fourie, 13 June 1955.

74 CAD, NTS, No. 97/362, Vol. 8837, Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas), Memo, 7 July 1938.

time demanded labour periods of six months or longer were concerned to ensure that this was demanded throughout the district so that labour tenants could not threaten to gravitate towards farms offering shorter periods.[75] Those farmers who still operated with the three month period could use the legislation to demand more labour time and thus alleviate their shortages. The extended labour period within the law could also legitimate a heavier work load demanded by farmers who used the flexible January-to-January arrangement.

Although smaller farmers who struggled to attract tenants had the most to gain from the redistribution of labour, it is clear that the law was also supported vigorously by larger, 'progressive' farmers like Elias de Souza. They hoped that the legislation would legitimate their extended labour demands and would prevent Africans from moving when farmers tried to impose these demands. As De Souza explained in 1937: 'Natives have no fixed abode. They have not any definite place to go, and are therefore wandering about. If Chapter Four is applied then this practice will come to an end, and there will be permanent settlements on the farms.'[76]

It was, in fact, the larger farmers who fought the hardest and the longest to make the Chapter work.[77] Although no clear evidence exists to explain this process, it is possible to speculate that, once tenants began to leave the farms in protest against the Chapter, the larger farmers were able to retain labour tenants because they still offered attractive portions of land. Smaller farmers were probably the first to lose tenants, which explains why their support for the Chapter was the first to wane.[78]

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75 CAD, K356, 'Native Farm Labour Committee', Evidence from Lydenburg, E. De Souza, 19 November 1937; See also CAD, K356, 'Native Farm Labour Committee', Evidence from Lydenburg, A. Op 'T Hof, 19 November 1937.

76 CAD, K356, 'Native Farm Labour Committee', Evidence from Lydenburg, E. de Souza, 19 November 1937.

77 See below, p. 137.

78 This would fit with the evidence that showed that large farmers attracted tenants by offering larger amounts of land. See above p. 106; See also CAD, NTS, No. 97/362, Vol. 8838, Mr U.M. Lambden to Minister of Native, 13 December 1938

There were some farmers, who, right from the beginning, expressed concern about the readiness of Africans to submit to the provisions of the law.[79] They opposed the move to change the Chapter to include an obligatory six month period, but could not make themselves heard above De Souza's representations, which caused the NAD in early 1938 to change the required period from four months to 180 days.[80] NAD fears that the Chapter would produce a large-scale African exodus, were also rejected by leading Lydenburg farmers. The farmer representatives assured the NAD that 'not many labourers would be displaced by the Chapter'.[81]

Contrary to these guarantees, however, the proclamation of Chapter Four produced determined African opposition. The resistance was widespread, involving nearly all of the labour tenant families in Lydenburg. More than ninety per cent of the tenants refused to be registered in terms of the Chapter.[82] By following this course they faced the risk of becoming illegal residents on the white farms where they lived, which meant eviction in terms of the new law. Many labour tenants did not wait idly for their eviction notices. They looked for alternative land outside Lydenburg. In the year that Chapter Four was proclaimed the Native Commissioner reported that '228 Natives [left the district] and elected to seek their own residences' while others applied for alternative land from the government at the rate of 10 to 12 applications a day.[83] The Native Commissioner also estimated that nearly a hundred people left the district without acquiring passes from him. He did, however, manage to monitor the exact movements of 128 families.[84] Of these, eleven moved to farming districts similar

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79 CAD, K356, 'Native Farm Labour Committee', Evidence from Lydenburg, M.J. Erasmus, 19 November 1937; For worried farmers in another district see, NTS, No. 61/362, Vol. 8636, Report of Boekenhout Farmers Association, 11 June 1932.

80 CAD, NTS, No. 97/362, Vol. 8837, Secretary of Native Affairs to Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas), 1 February 1938.

81 CAD, NTS, No. 97/362, Vol. 8837, The Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas), Memo, 1 July 1937; CAD, K356, 'Native Farm Labour Committee', Evidence from Lydenburg, B. Mills, 19 November 1937.

82 CAD, NTS, No. 97/362, Vol. 8838, Native Commissioner Lydenburg, Report, c1938: 99 per cent of the tenants voiced their opposition to the Chapter; CAD, NTS, No. 97/362, Vol. 8837, Summary of Application of Chapter Four to Lydenburg, 22 October 1938. By October 587 out of a total 6185 labour tenants had been registered.

83 CAD, NTS, No. 97/362, Vol. 8838, Native Commissioner Lydenburg, Report, c1938; CAD, NTS, 97/362 V8837, Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas), Notes on a visit to Lydenburg, 1 July 1938.

84 CAD, NTS, No. 97/362, Vol. 8838, Native Commissioner Lydenburg, Report, c1938.

to Lydenburg; nearly a hundred moved to areas containing mainly company farms and reserves, including Pilgrims Rest, Pokwani and Sekhukhuneland; three moved to Johannesburg and one to Pretoria.

Although pass laws were supposed to prevent the unregulated movement of Africans, they were clearly not very effective. Despite the difficulties of obtaining passes outlined above by Constance Sibulele, many employers were prepared to accept the labour of Africans without proper documentation, which made it almost impossible for the NAD to track down pass offenders.[85] In the context of a general farm labour shortage it was relatively easy for the people who fled Lydenburg to find white landlords who would accommodate them.[86] The persistence of rent tenancy in places like Pilgrims Rest also provided options for the migrating tenants at this time and, although Native Commissioners frequently referred to over-population in 'their' reserves, the pressure on the land there was not nearly as severe as it would become twenty years later.[87] These conditions allowed Africans to adopt effectively the strategy of protesting with their feet.

The labour tenants who explained their opposition to Chapter Four said that they mostly objected to the restrictions on their freedom and independence. In the opinion of Samson Mnisi, an African who lived on a farm in Lydenburg at the time, people left Lydenburg in the wake of Chapter Four because 'they want places where they are free'.[88] Many regarded Chapter Four as an attempt by the state and farmers to subject them to slavery. This idea originated from the provision that required all labour tenants to be registered at the Native Commissioner's office. Rumours circulated in the area that registration would make labour tenants' cattle the property of white farmers. It was also believed that registration would force tenants to work from sunrise to sunset and forever bind them to the

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85 CAD, NTS, No. 334/280, Vol. 2204, Letter to Secretary of Native Affairs, 7 June 1937; NAD to all Officers of the NAD, 18 January 1938.

86 CAD, K356, 'Native Farm Labour Committee', Evidence from Lydenburg, J.J. Smit, 19 November 1937.

87 See E. Ritchken, 'Leadership and Conflict in Bushbuckridge', Unpublished Thesis, p. 92; WHPL, AD 1438, Native Economic Commission, 18 August 1930, Evidence: Major Donald Rolfe Hunt; Chapter Six, p. 241.

88 WHPL, AD 843/RJ 101.27, Samson Mnisi to Rheinallt Jones, 12 September 1938.

farmer who paid the registration fee. The most extreme version claimed that farmers were actually buying their labour tenants for the 6d registration fee.[89]

The defence of 'freedom' - or, more accurately, aspects of autonomy consisting of spheres where Africans could produce and achieve power without depending completely on the white economy and state - was a central aspect of African consciousness in Lydenburg. Furthermore, the reference to slavery links the struggle in Lydenburg to similar conflicts in other parts of the world, where colonial domination and new commodified forms of production were also regarded with apprehension, and rejected within the same frame of reference.[90] In Kenya and pre-revolutionary Russia, for example, the resident inhabitants defended their social structures and access to the means of production against colonialism and capitalism imposed from above. In Russia in 1910, rural inhabitants 'insisted that in order to escape the slave-wage systems of the West, the Empire should retain the special relationship between the labour force and the village'.[91] In Kenya in 1929, Kikuyu 'squatters' rejected as 'slavery' the state's attempts to restrict their cattle and land.[92]

In Lydenburg the central elements of the new 'slavery' were, in the eyes of labour tenants, contained in the compulsory registration of tenant contracts and the six month labour period. Two of the tenants described in the case studies above left their farms in opposition to the new law. Sekwatane Mosehla explains, 'the six month thing was a bad thing and I think it was a good decision to leave that farm because we didn't like that'.[93] Similarly Sekwati Hlatswayo recalls, 'the only thing we disagreed with was De Souza's brother, he introduced some laws that they said we should work for six months - it used to be for three months - and that

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89 CAD, NTS, No. 97/362, Vol. 8838, Native Commissioner Lydenburg, Report, c1938.

90 S. Marks, *The Ambiguities of Dependence* (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1986), p.1; See also D. J. Parkin, *Palms, Wine, and Witnesses* (San Francisco, Chandler Publishing Company, 1972); J. C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1985).

91 C. Trebilcock, *The Industrialization of the Continental Powers 1780-1914* (Longman, London, 1981), pp. 269-270.

92 B. Berman & J. Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley, Book Two: Violence & Ethnicity* (London, James Currey, 1992), p. 393.

93 Interview with Sekwatane Mosehla, Jane Furse, 22 January 1992.

angered us and we said we can't work for that six months'.[94] Mosehla's labour period was doubled by the Chapter. Sekwati Hlatswayo, by contrast, had a January-to-January arrangement with De Souza and the six month period therefore had no direct bearing on his contract.

The fact that the chapter was opposed by tenants whose contracts were already longer than six months puzzled a number of the people involved in the events of 1938. The Native Commissioner of Lydenburg, W.B. Biddulph, reported that, 'in many cases natives who rendered seven to nine months labour refuse to be bound for 180 days per anum and object to registration'.[95] This apparent contradiction led Biddulph to conclude that 'the natives are organised to oppose the application. Their organisation is powerful as they accept from their leaders that the application is strongly against their interests ... they do not question [their leaders] in any way.'[96] The Chief Native Commissioner came to a similar conclusion. He commented that 'the unanimity of [the opposition to Chapter Four] is remarkable and makes one wonder whether this opposition is not to some extent organised'.[97] Farmers needed even less convincing that 'communist agitators' were responsible.[98]

The evidence suggests, however, that all the political movements of the time, including the Communist Party, the ANC, the ICU and the Transvaal African Congress, failed to link up to this particular grass root struggle. Biddulph actually changed his mind about a conspiracy when, after a thorough investigation, he found that there was 'no substance in [the allegations of agitators]'.[99] The ANC received a direct request to 'look into the trouble in Lydenburg' but they merely gave the feeble assurance that they would 'review the Land Act' at a later

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94 Interview with Sekwati Hlatswayo, Jane Furse, 8 February 1991.
95 CAD, NTS, No. 97/362, Vol. 8838, Native Commissioner Lydenburg, Report, c1938.
96 CAD, NTS, No. 97/362, Vol. 8838, Native Commissioner Lydenburg, Report, c1938.
97 CAD, NTS, No. 97/362, Vol. 8837, Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas), 'Notes on a visit to Lydenburg', 1 July 1938.
98 See CAD, NTS, No. 97/362, Vol. 8838, Native Commissioner Lydenburg, Report, c1938, and CAD, NTS, No. 97/362, Vol. 8838, Notes on Meeting with Farmers in Lydenburg, 25 October 1938.
99 CAD, NTS, No. 97/362, Vol. 8838, Native Commissioner Lydenburg, Report, c1938.

stage.[100] *The Guardian* revealed that Communist Party members were aware of the implications of Chapter Four. Their calls for action, however, were directed at the central state and came too late to affect the situation in Lydenburg.[101] Organising activities were undertaken by people who got involved, not as part of a coherent political strategy, but by accident, or because of the sympathy they had for the labour tenants. The Native Commissioner of Lydenburg was one such person.

W.B. Biddulph, who was both Magistrate and Native Commissioner in Lydenburg, took his NAD duties seriously. He was influenced by the paternalist and personalised tradition of administration that still had an influence in the NAD, a tradition strongly advocated by the recently retired Major D.R. Hunt.[102] Biddulph dealt with the emerging trouble around Chapter Four by holding personal meetings with the disgruntled labour tenants. He hoped to clarify the NAD's position and to dispel the rumours about the effects of the Chapter. What Biddulph succeeded in doing, however, was to provide the widely dispersed labour tenants with a forum where they could come together to declare their opposition and solidarity. Biddulph held meetings with about 1200 labour tenants and came across unanimous and deeply felt opposition: 'I think I may safely say that all these natives vented their disapproval to work the minimum period of 180 days fixed. ... the natives were infuriated and showed and expressed their anger very loudly.'[103] White farmers realised that Biddulph's administrative methods had contributed to the emerging resistance movement. Reflecting on the events of 1938, Chris Bauling, a local missionary and farmer, thought that 'the Native Commissioner was quite wrong in holding meetings and making any such explanations'.[104] Another farmer called for a return to the days before the Boer War, when Native Commissioners were local farmers rather than professional bureaucrats. 'A local man', he claimed, 'would know how to handle the natives

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100 WHPL, AD 843/RJ 2.2.6, Letter from J.A. Calata, General Secretary of the ANC to E Rheinallt Jones, 9 December 1938.
101 *The Guardian*, 20 June 1939.
102 See Dubow, *Racial Segregation*, pp. 106-107.
103 CAD, NTS, No. 97/362, Vol. 8838, Native Commissioner Lydenburg, Report, c1938.
104 WHPL, AD 843.B53.7, Interview by Edith Jones with Mr. C. Bauling, Lydenburg, February 1941.

properly'.[105]

Although the Native Commissioner did reveal a sensitivity to the problems confronted by the labour tenants, he ultimately represented the interests of whites in Lydenburg.[106] Despite ongoing conflict between farmers and the officials responsible for 'native affairs', these officials were nevertheless accepted as part of the white community of Lydenburg. For example, the wife of an ex-Magistrate visiting Lydenburg in 1943 was accommodated by Elias De Souza himself.[107] Biddulph, like the previous Magistrates, was on the governing body of the white high school and on the board of the white hospital.[108] He and his wife left many white friends behind when they left Lydenburg in 1939.[109] As an accepted member of the white community the Native Commissioner was close to, and sometimes part of, the demands made by whites. Therefore, during a conflict between whites and blacks, despite the very real consequences of the Commissioner's paternalist beliefs, he nevertheless tended to be biased in favour of whites. He demonstrated this bias when he attempted to stem the flow of labourers out of the district by trying to persuade Africans who came to his office to accept the new labour conditions and, notwithstanding farmers' claims to the contrary, he refused to give Africans passes that would enable them to leave the district legally.[110] Thus, although Biddulph had provided an early focal point for the resistance, Africans became aware of his divided loyalties and he was soon shut out and regarded as a dangerous enemy.[111]

Senator Rheinallt Jones, leader of the South African Institute of Race Relations, took over the role briefly played by the Native Commissioner, though he was able to establish a more lasting alliance. Rheinallt Jones had established links to Lydenburg during an election campaign in 1937. As a result of this campaign he

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105 WHPL, AD 843/RJ, Meeting of Farmers in the Bioscope Hall, 2 October 1938.
106 See CAD, NTS, No. 97/362, Vol. 8837, Report of the Native Commissioner Lydenburg, c1938.
107 *Lydenburg News*, 7 May 1943.
108 CAD, Department of Justice (JUS), No. 21/67/1, Vol. 1076, Public Service Commission Inspection Report, 23 October 1934.
109 *Lydenburg News*, 4 August 1939.
110 WHPL, AD 843/RJ 2.2.6, Rheinallt Jones to the Secretary of Native Affairs, 26 October 1938.
111 CAD, NTS, No. 97/362, Vol. 8838, Native Commissioner Lydenburg, Report, c1938.

was elected the 'Native Representative' for the Transvaal and Orange Free State. The campaign also produced Nathan Modipa's electoral committee in Lydenburg, whose members naturally turned to their elected representative for help in 1938. Rheinallt Jones responded to the calls by going to Lydenburg and holding meetings with those opposed to Chapter Four. He also began to promote tactics that he thought were suitable and to petition the state on behalf of the labour tenants.

Rheinallt Jones' decision to join the fight against Chapter Four was not merely an attempt to keep the support of his constituents. He harboured a deeply felt opposition to the Chapter himself because he saw it as an attempt by the state to prop-up labour tenancy. He regarded labour tenancy as an archaic, extremely oppressive labour system that was imposed by Afrikaans farmers on hapless African victims. In this opinion he was supported by liberals throughout South Africa. *The Star*, for example, carried an article that declared: 'What this Chapter of the [1936 Land] Act really amounts to is a reversion to slavery.'[112] This corresponds with the assessment made by labour tenants in Lydenburg, although Rheinallt Jones and other liberals saw the whole labour tenant system as a form of slavery. Their solution to the problem was thus to abolish labour tenancy and replace it with wage labour. For many labour tenants this was an unacceptable solution because it contradicted their most important aspirations: access to land and cattle. Despite the growing needs of African tenants, and the increasing incidence of migrancy in Lydenburg, most tenants sought to preserve an agricultural lifestyle. These concerns are articulated by ex-tenant informants who remember that: 'We preferred to live on farms rather than townships because we could plough and keep cattle.'[113] Petrus Magolego explains: 'Cattle meant a lot to us. We could get milk and butter from them, draw some wagons and even use them to pay bride-wealth.'[114] Self sufficiency was important to the labour tenants of Lydenburg: 'People could farm and eat what they have harvested. It was not

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112 *The Star*, 'Native Exodus', 17 June 1938.
113 Interview with Rose Masilela, Jane Furse, 8 February 1991.
114 Interview with Petrus Magolego, Jane Furse, 9 December 1990.

necessary to go to town and work for a living.'[115] 'My parents preferred ploughing than working for a wage because the wage was too little.'[116] While wages did feature in some of the petitions against white farmers, it is clear that the main thrust of labour tenants' opposition was aimed at establishing a system that would continue to provide land and cattle to African families.[117]

Rheinallt Jones' opposition to Chapter Four was different in content. Furthermore, he did not provide the localised struggle of Lydenburg with any links to a broader opposition that could have allowed the narrow demands of labour tenants to become part of a larger, more sustainable political movement. In fact, Rheinallt Jones supported the general thrust of Segregation, viewing the 1936 Land Act as largely a positive step.[118] He advised the labour tenants to confine themselves to peaceful opposition towards the specific provisions of Chapter Four.

Rheinallt Jones saw the opposition in Lydenburg as a tool that could be used to force NAD officials to realise the error of their ways regarding Chapter Four. He believed, with good reason, that many NAD officials felt the same way about Chapter Four as he did.[119] He was also convinced that the NAD would be forced to repeal the Chapter when it realised the implications of the labour tenants' *en masse* refusal to co-operate. The problems faced by the NAD were compounded by Section 38 which, as explained above, placed obligations on the Department to find land for any person displaced by the provisions of Chapter Four. The NAD tried to interpret the Section so that the labour tenants of Lydenburg would not fall under it. The Native Commissioner tried to persuade labour tenants that, as land was unavailable, they could not expect to be accommodated. But Rheinallt Jones made sure that the law was given its proper interpretation and he informed the labour tenants that they had a solid claim to this land.

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115 Interview with Kate Ndlozi, Jane Furse, 21 December 1990.
116 Interview with Ella Shabangu, Jane Furse, 7 February 1991.
117 See Also CAD, K356, 'Native Farm Labour Committee', Evidence from Lydenburg, Sabi Native Location Advisory Board, 19 November 1937.
118 See Rich, *White Power & the Liberal Conscience*, p. 51.
119 See WHPL, AD 843/RJ 2.2.6, The Bishop of Pretoria to Rheinallt Jones, 4 July 1938.

Rheinallt Jones played the role of intermediary between the largely illiterate world of the labour tenants and the domain of legislation and white officialdom. In 1930 labour tenants had complained: 'Our trouble with the white man is that we do not know their rules.'[120] They realised that white farmers' knowledge of the laws enabled them to interpret and enforce these laws in any way they liked, while Africans remained ignorant of their (limited) rights.[121] In 1930 labour tenants had asked for a 'white man' to be appointed who would explain the laws as they were passed. Rheinallt Jones was, in effect, this 'white man'. Although he tried to limit the implications of the opposition that broke out in 1938, his badgering of the NAD and his emphasis on the implications of Section 38 made an important contribution to the eventual repeal of Chapter Four.

Members of Modipa's electoral committee automatically became intermediaries between the labour tenants and Rheinallt Jones. They used this position to become the closest thing to a leadership that the opposition against Chapter Four managed to produce. One of the members of this committee was a labour tenant called Samson Mnisi. He took it upon himself to go from farm to farm, persuading the white residents to agree to the old minimum period of ninety days. Some farmers acceded to these demands but others became convinced that Mnisi was the agitator that they had been looking for. They threatened to take action against him if he continued to 'cause trouble'.[122] Reacting to these threats in a letter to Rheinallt Jones, Mnisi explained that it was a spontaneous mood of dissatisfaction rather than any extensive organisational activities that was causing the widespread defiance.[123]

Nathan Modipa was the most active member of the Electoral Committee. He was not directly affected by Chapter Four, since Boomplaats was excluded from the provisions by the 1938 proclamation, but he nevertheless once again articulated

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120 WHPL, AD 1438, 'Native Economic Commission', Evidence from Lydenburg, 18 August 1930.
121 CAD, K356, 'Native Farm Labour Committee', Evidence from Lydenburg, Sabi Native Location Advisory Board, 19 November 1937.
122 WHPL, AD 843/RJ 101.27, Samson Mnisi to Rheinallt Jones, 12 September 1938.
123 WHPL, AD 843/RJ 101.27, Samson Mnisi to Rheinallt Jones, 29 June 1938.

the demands of labour tenants. Modipa and James Morena drew up a list of demands in 1938 that called for the better treatment of Africans on white farms as well as for higher wages. They also called for free education, the abolition of pass laws and changing the age when Africans became liable for poll tax from eighteen to twenty one.

Modipa's concern with the plight of labour tenants reflects, not only his own connection to farm labour, but also the numerous historical links that the African land owners on Boomplaats had with tenants on the farms. Many people from Boomplaats undertook temporary work on the surrounding white farms in order to earn extra money.[124] They were thus directly concerned with the conditions offered on these farms. Furthermore, many of the original buyers were labour tenants before they bought Boomplaats, and since at least the early 1920s numerous labour tenants had left the white farms and moved to Boomplaats. The latter group of people paid rent to Chief Dinkwanyane, which meant that dissatisfied labour tenants were a potential source of income for the Chief. In 1938 the residents of Boomplaats offered pieces of land at a price of £2.10.0 per anum to a number of protesting labour tenants and thereby brought Boomplaats even closer to the conflict on the white farms.[125] However, the most important factor behind African landowners' decision to align themselves with labour tenants was the Boomplaats community's long-standing conflict with white farmers who objected to African land ownership in 'their area'. The Boomplaats residents realised that the Land Act of 1936 threatened their settlement in Lydenburg to a greater extent than before; the first demand that their committee made in 1938 was 'do not remove us'.[126] The fact that it was Elias De Souza who in the same year called on the state to remove the African owned farms in Lydenburg further strengthened the perception that labour tenants and landowners were fighting against a common enemy.

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124 African Studies Institute (ASI), Oral History Project (OHP), Tape No. 46 A/B, Interview with Kotana Stefaans Modipa, Jane Furse, 17 October 1979; Interview with Hosia Phala & Michael Mashupje, Mashishing, 2 February 1992.

125 CAD, NTS, No. 97/362, Vol. 8837, Lydenburg Magistrate to the Secretary of Native Affairs, 7 February 1938.

126 WHPL, B44/3 SAAIR, Nathan Modipa & James Morena to Rheinallt Jones, undated, c1938.

In October the NAD tried to defuse the situation in Lydenburg by proposing a compromise. They suggested that the six month period be reduced back to four months. Rheinallt Jones held meetings in Lydenburg to discuss this proposal. According to his reports the Africans in Lydenburg unanimously rejected the compromise. They were not prepared to settle for any obligatory labour period in excess of three months. At about the same time the Committee on Boomplaats embarked on its most ambitious organisational activity. Realising that the NAD felt obliged to provide land to all the unregistered labour tenants, they decided to take the initiative. At a meeting on Boomplaats a return to the three months system was demanded. If this demand was not met the labour tenants threatened to undertake a mass movement off the farms onto the Trust land to which they felt themselves to be entitled. The Committee also demanded that the NAD provide loans that would assist the people undertaking this voluntary resettlement scheme. Realising the impossibility of meeting these demands, and worried about the growing threat to the state's supposed legitimacy, the NAD approached the white farmers of Lydenburg with a view to ending the conflict caused by Chapter Four.[127]

White farmers had largely adopted a wait-and-see attitude in response to the labour tenant opposition. In June of 1938 it was reported that some farmers were becoming dissatisfied with the Chapter because of its effects, while others felt 'that it is too early to express an opinion' and were 'under the impression that the native will gradually accept the position'.[128] De Souza's Lydenburg North Farmers Union supported the latter position; they requested a postponement of the registration deadline, after which all un-registered labour tenants would become illegal residents on 'white land'. The Farmers Union explained that they needed about five or six months to persuade the labour tenants that the effects of Chapter Four were not as bad as 'their leaders' were trying to depict. The registration deadline was postponed but by October the refusal to comply with

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127 CAD, NTS, No. 97/362, Vol. 8837, Opinion of Controller of Native Settlements, 15 April 1939.
128 CAD, NTS, No. 97/362, Vol. 8837, Additional Native Commissioner Sekhukhuneland to Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas), 13 June 1938.

Chapter Four was as determined as ever.[129]

At this late stage the missionaries of Lydenburg attempted to involve themselves in the conflict. The missionaries met on the 2nd of October and expressed their concern about the drop in attendance at their schools and churches. They decided to oppose Chapter Four 'because of the grave social effects of the uprooting of Natives who would never be the same again once they left.'[130] Their opposition did not, however, have any impact on the success or failure of Chapter Four. The evidence suggests that the missions most active on the farms - the Lutheran Berlin Mission, The Catholic Mission and the Dutch Reformed Mission - concentrated their efforts during this time on expanding the number of schools for farm labourers.[131] Although this sometimes involved them in conflicts with farmers and the state,[132] the missionaries usually avoided any involvement in farm labour disputes. As Anna Ndlovu, a tenant on a farm in the Waterfall Valley and a member to the Catholic Church, explains: 'The priests could not open their mouths, because the farmers would chase them away. "This is my farm. You must not talk shit", the farmers would say. The priests were afraid to approach the farmers.'[133] The missionaries therefore played an insignificant role in the conflict over African 'land and freedom' in the 1930s.

All the organisers of the 1938 resistance in fact played a relatively minor role in

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129 CAD, NTS, No. 97/362, Vol. 8837, Summary of Application of Chapter Four to Lydenburg, 22 October 1938. By October 587 out of a total 6185 labour tenants had been registered.

130 WHPL, AD 843.B101, Meeting of Missionaries of Lydenburg District, 2 October 1938.

131 CAD, NTS, No. 265/302, Vol. 2829, J.M.B. Biddulph to Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas), 5 December 1938; 25 July 1939; D. Harber to Minister of Native Affairs, 2 November 1938; No. 247/302, Vol. 2823, Father John Riegler to Magistrate Lydenburg, 20 April 1938. Most of the African schools during this time were still situated in Lydenburg town, see CAD, NTS, No. 367/313I, Vol. 5682, Town Clerk Lydenburg to Secretary of Native Affairs, 21 April 1939. The other missions were the Norwegian Mission, the A.M.E. and the Apostolic Faith Mission. The Norwegian concentrated its efforts on Boomplaats, the A.M.E was active on a few white farms, as well as on the company farm Kalkfontein. No evidence has emerged on the Apostolic Mission. See, CAD, NTS, No. 367/313I, Vol. 5682, Report on Lydenburg Location, 11 June 1951; Interview with Willian Sewela, Jane Furse, 16 June 1993; Interview with Masha Council, Strydkraal, 15 April 1993.

132 CAD, NTS, No. 247/302, Vol. 2823, Secretary of Lands to Secretary of Native Affairs, 20 October 1938.

133 Interview with Anna Ndlovu, Jane Furse, 15 June 1993. In some instances the church on a farm was built by the tenants themselves, under the auspices of, for example, the Lutheran Church, and then run entirely by the tenants. Services would be conducted by those tenants who could read the Bible; See Interview with Moses Manana, Jane Furse, 17 April 1993.

sustaining the determined and widely supported opposition to Chapter Four. Other factors must therefore be considered as the driving force behind the opposition. One African claimed that he would have complied with the Chapter but was threatened with his life and forced to oppose registration.[134] Even in the unlikely event that this intimidation was widespread, it cannot in itself be regarded as an important causal factor. In the context of the low level of organisation that took place, intimidation could only have occurred if committed labour tenants were pressuring more compliant neighbours to oppose the Chapter. The motivations that caused labour tenants to band together and carry out uncoordinated intimidation tactics must thus be explained.

The opposition to Chapter Four did not emerge out of a vacuum. It was based on a long-standing African determination to defend themselves against white domination. The tenants who had worked for three months and were now suddenly expected to work for double the period had straightforward reasons for opposing the Chapter. They were fighting either for free time on their own land, or for the ability to spend nine months working on the mines. As Samson Mnisi explains: 'Three months is preferable because it gives one more time to work for oneself.'[135] Labour tenants who already worked longer than three months also had good reason to oppose the *institutionalisation* of the six month period. It threatened to destroy permanently their chance of getting a three month contract in the future and therefore undermined their bargaining position. For the labourers engaged in January-to-January contracts, who, the Native Commissioner maintained, made up about fifty per cent of Lydenburg's tenants, and who were 'quite happy' with this system, the fight was more symbolic.[136] As will become clearer in Chapter Five, which looks at the more detailed evidence available for the 1940s, there was a constant process of give and take between farmer and tenant within the all-year contracts. An abundance of three month contracts probably made it difficult for farmers to ask their tenants to spend very long

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134 CAD, NTS, No. 97/362, Vol. 8837, Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas), Notes on a visit to Sekhukhuneland and Lydenburg, 7 July 1938.

135 WHPL, AD 843/RJ 2.2.6., Samson Mnisi to Rheinallt Jones, 20 May 1938.

136 CAD, NTS, No. 97/362, Vol. 8838, Native Commissioner Lydenburg, Report, c1938.

periods of their time in the farmer's field. But, with the institutionalisation of the six month period, the concept of what constituted a reasonable labour period could have been pushed drastically upwards, thus shifting the balance of power against tenants in the constant debate over what passed as an acceptable white demand, and what would not be tolerated by Africans.

The tenants' concern with free time was closely linked to the conflict between white farmers and tenants over the control of family labour, which had intensified during the 1930s. Although Chapter Four did not contain any ruling regarding the obligations of women and children, many farmers used the proclamation as an excuse to demand labour from the whole labour tenant family.[137] They were inspired to take the initiative by the mere fact that state legislation had been passed to back up certain of their demands against labour tenants.[138] A specific instance of this process involved a white farmer named Jacobsz. He was a particularly poor farmer who employed only one labour tenant family. After the proclamation of the Chapter he eagerly went to register the labour tenant on his farm, without obtaining the latter's permission. He then returned to his farm and used the registration to demand labour from the tenant's wife. The wife, however, objected and refused to do the work, whereupon she was physically attacked by Jacobsz's wife. The labour tenant and his wife refused to submit, asserting that the registration was invalid because it had been undertaken without their consent. They decided to move from Jacobsz's farm, leaving Jacobsz and his wife to tend the farm themselves.[139]

The objections made by labour tenants and their representatives in 1930 and 1937 revealed their concern with maintaining some independence and self-sufficiency within their contracts with white farmers. These elements of independence were being threatened and gradually undermined on many farms in Lydenburg,

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137 CAD, NTS, No. 97/362, Vol. 8837, Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas), Notes on a visit to Sekhukhuneland and Lydenburg, 7 July 1938.

138 Farmers had been inspired in a similar way by the 1913 Land Act; See T. Keegan, *Rural Transformations*, p. 183.

139 CAD, NTS, No. 97/362, Vol. 8837, The Native Commissioner Lydenburg: 'Complaint by Mr A.P. Jacobsz', 7 September 1938.

producing conflict that was usually scattered across individual farms. Chapter Four was a definite intervention in a process that had previously been difficult to comprehend as a whole. The six month labour period would now be permanently enforced and the state would, by means of the registrations, monitor and enforce the new *uniform* labour system. Africans in Lydenburg found themselves with a common grievance that was easy to identify. They responded with a determination not to accept this change in their status, even if it meant leaving the area where many, like their parents before them, had lived all their lives. In the words of Rheinallt Jones, the labour tenants responded to state legislation in 1938 with 'a resounding No!'[140]

A number of farmers gave in to the resistance fairly early and reduced the period of compulsory service on their farms.[141] But, by October, leaders like De Souza were still not ready to give up their attempt to convert labour tenancy into a more controlled and exploitative relationship. The NAD's suggestion to either withdraw the proclamation in Lydenburg or to reduce the compulsory labour period to four months was rejected. Farmer representatives explained that this would be 'an admission of defeat' and would create 'an impossible situation between the farmers and the natives'.[142] Some white farmers were reluctant to concede any ground in this ongoing regional conflict between whites and blacks. But other farmers were much more concerned about how their tenants would react to such determined stubbornness. As the farmer Lambden explained:

> 'Some of the farmers talk big that they want the natives to work six months for them. But they forget that the natives have got their wives and children to support. How will they do it if they have to work fully six months for the farmer. My natives are working for four months and I have plenty of labour on my farm.'[143]

However, soon after the hard line resolution adopted by the farmer representatives the continuing exodus of Africans out of Lydenburg, and the possibility that nearly

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140 WHPL, AD 843/RJ 2.2.6., Rheinallt Jones to Chief Native Commissioner, 26 October 1938.
141 CAD, NTS, No. 97/362, Vol. 8837, Native Commissioner Lydenburg to Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas), 10 June 1938.
142 CAD, NTS, No. 97/362, Vol. 8837, NAD Correspondence, October 1938.
143 CAD, NTS, No. 97/362, Vol. 8838, Mr U.M. Lambden to Minister of Native, 13 December 1938

all the labour tenants would eventually leave, resulted in another congregation of white farmers.[144] At this meeting the farmers tried to save the situation by demanding that Chapter Four be declared in the whole Transvaal. This, it was hoped, would counter labour tenant's ability to move out of the proclaimed district. But the NAD was not prepared to consider this option because it would be unable to accommodate the expected demand for Trust land. Eventually it was decided at the meeting that:

> 'the proclamation had brought about a sudden change in the state of affairs and in order to give the natives time to adjust themselves, the Department of Justice had been asked not to prosecute the natives for any infringement of the provisions of this section. Perhaps penal sanctions would be restored at the beginning of the year.'[145]

This proposed restoration never occurred. The provisions of the Chapter remained in abeyance until early in 1940 when the proclamation was withdrawn. The state, for the time being, retreated from direct involvement in the 'white rural areas'. The organisation that had existed amongst Africans in the area faded away but the conflict between individual labour tenants and white farmers persisted. The labour tenant system continued to be an uneasy compromise; white farmers still had the upper hand and the terms were increasingly moving against tenants. In 1941 Nathan Modipa wrote:

> 'No satisfactory change has taken place in my area. Men, women and children work from January to January. The cattle owned by these people are still made use of also. There has been practically no change.'[146]

Nevertheless, by defeating Chapter Four and the control it implied, the labour tenants of Lydenburg had ensured that, at least for a while, their aspirations and demands would continue to have an important influence on the shape of farm labour relations in Lydenburg.

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144 *Lydenburg News*, 28 October 1938.
145 WHPL, AD 843/RJ 2.2.6., Meeting of Farmers in Bioscope Hall Lydenburg, 2 October 1938.
146 WHPL, AD 843/RJ C6., Nathan Modipa to Mrs Rheinallt Jones, 25 February 1941.

CONCLUSION

The resistance in Lydenburg was a dramatic moment in an ongoing conflict. The momentum for this conflict sprang from economic interests that were inextricably intertwined with racial identities, which helps to explain why farmers, although divided economically, initially stood together in support of Chapter Four. They realised that such legislation had the potential to increase their power *vis a vis* African labour tenants. The same dynamics also explain why African township residents and land-owners repeatedly aligned themselves with labour tenants, and why African women supported their husbands, even though the conflict involved a defence of male dominance.

In terms of this local racial conflict, Lydenburg's Africans achieved a significant victory in 1938. Their success also had important consequences for the rest of South Africa by affecting the policy direction of the NAD. Despite playing a central role in producing Chapter Four, the NAD had remained ambiguous about assisting undercapitalised farmers who refused to compete for labour on the market. After Chapter Four's failure that ambiguity became even more pronounced. During the 1940s all demands for the Chapter were rejected with reference to the 'disaster in Lydenburg'. This is the subject of the next chapter, which examines the uneasy relationship between the state and white farmers, as well as the important transformations ushered in by the National Party victory of 1948.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FARMERS AND THE STATE, 1939-1954

The state's response to white farmers' demands obviously had enormous implications for African tenants. The state intervention of 1938 threatened to curtail drastically the say that labour tenants still had over the terms of their employment, which would have allowed white farmers to increase the work-load and decrease the benefits of tenancy. But the state was not unambiguously committed to solving the problems of Lydenburg's farmers. The Native Affairs Department (NAD) had only reluctantly taken over the administration of Chapter Four, and had then refused to apply the Chapter on a provincial basis. This refusal was crucial in facilitating the successful resistance of Lydenburg's tenants.

The events of 1938 therefore show that African resistance must be situated within the context of an ambivalent and shifting relationship between the state and farmers. This chapter examines the relationship during the period 1939-1954, and demonstrates that a crucial change occurred in 1948, once the National Party took over the state. The focus is on policies that impacted on labour. Most of the discussion centres on the farmers of the mid-eastern Transvaal, although wealthier farmers from elsewhere in the Transvaal are also considered.

It was shown earlier that most Transvaal farmers resented the new paternalism introduced by the Milner regime.[1] This hostility, like the racist principles on which it was based, persisted and informed the interactions between farmers and

[1] See Chapter One, p. 52.

the pre-1948 state. However, different kinds of farmers had different relationships with the state. Farmers who employed labour tenants found it particularly difficult to elicit a sympathetic response, especially after the 'disaster of 1938'. They also found it harder than other farmers to understand the state's paternalism. But these were only differences of degree. Most Transvaal farmers preferred to receive a strong form of state protection. Prior to 1948, richer farmers and the state were prepared to go someway towards accommodating each other's needs, but did not, in fact, agree with each other in principle. After 1948 the state introduced a policy direction that white farmers as a whole found much more acceptable, while, at least during the 1950s, mid-eastern Transvaal farmers remained an important pillar of the National Party's rural support. They therefore found the new state to be much more sympathetic towards poorer farmers' particular interests.

STATE POLICIES AND FARMERS BEFORE 1948

Numerous factors, both ideological and economic, affected the uneasy relationship between farmers and the state before 1948. One factor that has not received much attention in the literature is the ethnic difference between mostly Afrikaans speaking farmers and mostly English speaking state officials. The clerks in the Lydenburg Magistrates office after 1910 had names like Shepstone, Richards, Murray and Jeffries, while the Magistrates were Damant, Elliot, Dalmahoy, Rushton and Biddulph.[2] Many of these officials could not speak Afrikaans.[3] Elias De Souza, on at least one occasion, demanded that officials should be 'totally bilingual'.[4]

There is no direct evidence of anti-English feeling directed against local state officials, but ethnic tensions between English and Afrikaans speakers did emerge in Lydenburg in 1938 and became more intense in 1940. These tensions, which arose in response to particular historical events, did not spring from a vacuum.

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2 Central Archives Depot (CAD), Department of Justice (JUS), No. 3/234/21, Vol. 310, Inspection Reports on Magistrates Office, 1909-1927.

3 CAD, JUS, No. 552/29, Vol. 462, Secretary of Justice to Magistrate Lydenburg, Undated.

4 CAD, JUS, No. 21/67/1, Vol. 1076, Native Commissioner Lydenburg to Secretary of Native Affairs, 1 March 1937.

They were based on well established, constructed ethnic identities.[5] The English speaking residents, based mainly in the town, interacted extensively with Afrikaans speakers but they maintained their Englishness by sending their children to English language boarding-schools, by attending the Anglican church and by marrying one another.[6] The Afrikaans speakers were taught to be Afrikaners by the Christian National minded educators that dominated the Lydenburg school.[7] Amongst adult Afrikaans speakers, ethnicity was promoted by the *Lydenburgse Afrikaanse Kulktuurvereniging*, and the *Bond van Oudstryders*, which kept alive the memory of the Boer War, and the struggle against the British.[8]

During 1938 Afrikaner ethnicity was heightened by the centenary 'trek'.[9] When the wagons reached Lydenburg they were greeted by a large congregation of people - many dressed in voortrekker outfits - singing Afrikaans songs. One witness to the event declared: 'We can not overcome! Fellow Afrikaners dare we say this now while this wagon stands near us.'[10] Two years later, overt ethnic tension broke out over South Africa's participation in World War Two. Eight hundred 'descendants of the Voortrekkers and Afrikaners' marched through the streets of Lydenburg in protest against war participation.[11] Subsequently, ethnic relationships between English and Afrikaans speakers were marked by a 'spirit of uncertainty and unrest, suspicion and even open animosity holding sway.'[12]

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5 See *House of Assembly Debates*, 30 May 1927, p. 4276: Mr. J. Nieuwenhuize.

6 *Lydenburg News*, 17 November 1939; 11 June 1948; 5 January 1951.

7 See, *Lydenburg News*, 5 April 1940: In his capacity as Chairman of the school board from 1928-1940, Ds Postma consistently promoted the importance of the Afrikaans language and the principles of Christian National Education. A fellow church leader described him in the following terms: 'Sy hart klop vir sy volk, want hy is 'n egte volksman, en hy was 'n toegewyde ondersteuner van ons kultuur'; *Lydenburg News*, 11 June 1948: A teacher at the Lydenburg Hoer Skool was of the opinion that school should primarily prepare the pupil for, 'diens van land, volk en kerk'.

8 *Lydenburg News*, 5 May 1939; 24 May 1940.

9 T. D. Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom* (Univ. of California Press, 1975), p. 180: 'The Ossewatrek made Afrikaner civil religion an integral part of the consciousness of thousands of ordinary Afrikaners.' See also, A. Grundlingh and H. Sapire, 'From feverish Festival to Repetitive Ritual: The changing fortunes of Great Trek Mythology in an Industrialising S.A. 1938 - 1988', p. 13; 16.

10 *Lydenburg News*, 9 December 1938: [Trans. in Text] 'Nie kan oorwin nie! Mede Afrikaners durf ons dit nou sê terwyl hierdie wa by ons staan.' See also *Lydenburg News*, 30 September 1938: 'Ons is almal op reis, langs die pad van Suid Afrika na ons gemeenskaplike volksfees.'

11 *Lydenburg News*, 5 July 1940.

12 *Lydenburg News*, 17 October 1941.

The Native Commissioner, Biddulph, who had been severely criticised for his administrative methods in 1938, was not around to experience this overt ethnic tension. He was transferred in 1939, possibly as a consequence of the farmers' animosity.[13] He was replaced by an Afrikaner, G.U. Grimbeek. Furthermore, although the Native Affairs office within the Magistrates headquarters was still run by an English speaking resident named Murray, he was now assisted by a clerk named J.H.G. Munnik, who was transferred from Bethlehem in the Orange Free State.[14] Afrikaans speaking bureaucrats clearly gained increasing access to the state during the 1930s, although, even after Grimbeek's appointment, most correspondence with head office was still conducted in English.[15] Ethnic differences between the state and farmers thus continued to exist. This allowed farmers to regard bureaucrats as 'the other' - outsiders to the Afrikaans community - which possibly provided a local context within which the relationship between farmers and the state was formulated.

But ethnic differences cannot provide an adequate explanation for the antagonism that farmers often felt for the state. The farmers who attacked Biddulph mainly objected to the *way* he performed his duties, which, as we saw in the previous chapter, was influenced by a paternalist tradition within the Native Affairs Department (NAD).[16] This chapter examines the character of that tradition in the 1930s.

Recent observers of the South African state have all pointed to important shifts in the 1930s. Rich argues that the Native Economic Commission Report of 1932 marked an ideological break with 'the previous emphasis upon assimilating Africans into western civilisation'.[17] The new state strategy, Rich maintains, involved a more directly interventionist approach and 'a manipulation of tribal and

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13 *Lydenburg News*, 4 August 1939.
14 CAD, JUS, No. 21/67/1, Vol. 1076, Magistrate Lydenburg to Secretary of Justice, 14 March 1938.
15 CAD, JUS, No. 21/67/1, Vol. 1076, Correspondence, 4 October 1939: The new public prosecutor in Lydenburg was P.J. Malan.
16 See also, CAD, NTS, No. 334/280, Vol. 2204, C.J. De Wet to NAD, 7 June 1937; G.R. Nel to Secretary of Native Affairs, 6 June 1938.
17 P.B. Rich, *White Power and the Liberal Conscience: Racial segregation and South African liberalism, 1921-60* (Manchester University Press, 1984), p. 59.

traditional social mechanisms as the main basis of social control'.[18] These changes occurred within a broader atmosphere of optimism about the state's power to shape society.[19] Yudelman points to the international context in which the development of the South African state occurred. During the 1930s, he argues, the new funds generated by massively increased taxes on the prosperous mining industry enabled the state to participate in the international move towards 'accelerating state interventionism'.[20] Dubow acknowledges the changes, but argues that, within the NAD, links to a previous strategy were sustained:

> 'Despite the increasingly authoritarian and bureaucratically centralised character of the NAD through the 1920s and 30s ... elements of the NAD's assimilationist and protectionist ideology remained intact.'[21]

The impression that emerges from these writings is of a state that, during the 1930s, oscillated between two methods of dominating disenfranchised Africans. Direct bureaucratic control was facilitated by the expansion of state structures and the growing acceptance that state interference was socially desirable. But the mechanisms of state control were not advanced enough for the NAD to abandon its more interactive quest for legitimacy, which involved posing as the paternalist protector of the 'Native'. At the same time there was an ambiguity in the new liberal philosophy on which the NAD drew. Rich argues that liberals like Rheinallt Jones exhibited 'an almost Fabian like belief in the power of the state', but these liberals continued to believe in an idealised vision of Capitalism, in which state intervention in the labour market was frowned upon.[22] This contradiction is captured concisely in Rheinallt Jones accepting the general thrust of the 1936 Land Act but rejecting Chapter Four on the grounds that it restricted the freedom of farm labourers. D.L. Smit, the secretary of Native Affairs, essentially shared this view, and in certain contexts other NAD officials drew on these ideas to reject

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18 Rich, *White Power and the Liberal Conscience*, p. 60.
19 Rich, *White Power and the Liberal Conscience*, p. 56.
20 D. Yudelman, *The Emergence of Modern South Africa: State, capital, and the incorporation of organized labour on the South African gold fields, 1902-1939* (Cape Town, David Philip, 1984), p. 250.
21 S. Dubow, *Racial Segregation and the Origins of Apartheid in South Africa, 1919-36* (London, Macmillan, 1989), p. 125.
22 Rich, *White Power and the Liberal Conscience*, p. 56.

requests for the extension of state control.[23]

The other development that caused state officials to look to more coercive methods of control was a growing professionalism in the bureaucracy. Officials in the departments of Native Affairs and Justice were increasingly required to possess technical qualifications; the importance of the man on the spot depreciated in relation to the value of 'scientific knowledge'.[24] In the NAD the formal discipline of Anthropology replaced the previous, vaguely defined, 'knowledge of Natives' as officials increasingly accepted the need for 'technicist solutions to political problems'.[25] The distance provided by 'scientific knowledge' allowed state officials to seek rationalised administrative solutions on the basis of theoretical principles, which, at some levels, replaced a concern with particular and various local conditions.[26] As a result the NAD sought to develop a more 'uniform native policy'.[27]

Chapter Four was, in many senses, an attempt to develop a uniform farm labour policy. But, as we saw in the previous Chapter, that piece of legislation remained 'flexible' in a number of ways, and local protests were successful partly because the NAD continued to be concerned with its image as the 'protector of the Native'.

After the failure of Chapter Four the NAD continued to search for a comprehensive solution to the 'farm labour problem' and to appease white farmers.

23 Wits Historical Papers Library (WHPL), B101, Bishop of Pretoria to Rheinallt Jones, 16 June 1938; AD 843/RJ 2.2.6, Bishop of Pretoria to Rheinallt Jones, 4 July 1938; CAD, NTS, No. 463/280, Vol. 2229, NAD Memoranda on Native Farm Labour, 13 March 1944: 'the Native is entitled to sell his labour to the best advantage'; CAD, NTS, No. 3/371, Vol. 9257, Extract from Minister of Native Affair's Senate Speech, 25 March 1943; CAD, NTS, No. 3/371, Vol. 9256, NAD Memo, 21 August 1938.

24 See D. Duncan, '"The Mills of God", State Bureaucracy and African Labour in South Africa, 1918-1948', Unpublished PhD Thesis (Kingston, Queens University, 1990), p. 58. Gaining an understanding of a particular region through experience lost its status, which is illustrated by the short tenures in Lydenburg undertaken by the Magistrates who succeeded the first Magistrate after the Boer War, Damant. CAD, JUS, No. 3/234/21, Vol. 310, Inspection Reports, 1911-1927: Damant was Magistrate from 1902-1921. Dalmahoy was Magistrate from 1922-1924. J.C. Collins was Magistrate from 1925-1927.

25 Rich, *White Power*, p. 55; Dubow, *Racial Segregation*, p. 94.

26 H.Gerth & C.W. Mills, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1948), p. 240.

27 Dubow, *Racial Segregation*, pp. 95-96.

The importance of the search was heightened by the outbreak of World War Two. The War led to an increase in African urbanisation and an exacerbation of the farm labour shortage at a time when the country's self-sufficiency in food became an issue of critical importance.[28] In response, the NAD implemented emergency farm labour measures. The first of these measures was known as the 'farm labour scheme', in terms of which the 'Department would, from time to time, recruit gangs of Natives to meet seasonal shortages on farms'.[29] This scheme directly contradicted earlier, and subsequent, statements by the NAD that the Government could not directly supply farmers with labour.[30] Officials in the Department were acutely aware of this and were very sensitive to criticisms levelled against them by African representatives.[31] They therefore sought to mitigate as far as possible the forced labour elements of the scheme.[32]

The NAD's interference and determination to ensure the fair treatment of the recruited farm labourers caused most farmers to show no interest in the scheme. The majority of farmers were not prepared to pay the NAD's minimum wage, nor to provide the kind of housing demanded by the scheme.[33] The scheme was only applied twice: once in Hammanskraal and once in Lichtenburg. It was discontinued in 1945.

Subsequent NAD attempts to deal with the 'farm labour problem' also faltered due

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28 CAD, Department of Agriculture (LDB), No. R3710, Vol.2085, Report of the Inter-departmental Farm Labour Committee, 12 July 1943; D. Hindson, *Pass Controls and the Urban African Proletariat* (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1987), p. 54; CAD, JUS, No. 1/41/42 Vol. 1555, Department of Agriculture to the Secretary for Justice, 20 June 1942.

29 CAD, Department of Native Affairs (NTS), No. 463/280, Vol. 2229, Secretary of Native Affairs to Minister of Native Affairs, 24 November 1944.

30 CAD, NTS, No. 9/280, Vol. 2009, Secretary of Native Affairs to Steyn & Lombard, 6 January 1920: 'I am directed to inform you that the government does not itself undertake the recruitment of Native Labour.' Also, CAD, NTS No. 9/280, Vol. 2009, Secretary of Native Affairs to J.W. Swannepoel, 13 August 1945: 'In antwoord op u skrywe moet ek u meedeel dat hierdie kantoor nie plaasarbeiders aan boere verskaf nie.'

31 CAD, NTS, No. 463/280, Vol. 2229, Secretary of Native Affairs to Chairman of the African National Congress (ANC), 20 August 1945.

32 CAD, NTS, No. 463/280, Vol. 2229, Secretary of Native Affairs to Minister of Native Affairs, 24 November 1944; CAD, NTS, No. 463/280, Vol. 2229, Secretary of Native Affairs to Chairman of the ANC, 20 August 1945.

33 *Farmers Weekly*, 1 August 1945: 'The [labour gang] scheme was regarded by the SAAU as impracticable and was withdrawn by the NAD'.

to a lack of support. A comprehensive statement on farm labour policy issued in 1943 was met with strong disapproval by farmers. The statement declared that there was a need 'to ensure the uniformity of practice on the farms in such matters as rations, wages, housing and other conditions of employment'.[34] These uniform conditions, it was hoped, would satisfy African labourers, make farm employment attractive and allow the state to avoid applying 'force to compel Natives to proceed to farms'.[35]

The Transvaal Agricultural Union (TAU) rejected the NAD statement on farm labour 'in toto'. They dismissed the NAD's concern with the 'attractiveness of farm labour', demanding instead that the state expand its coercive capacity. The TAU called on the Government 'to do everything in its power to make more farm labour available for farming purposes even by recruiting outside the boundaries of the Union' and by forcing 'Natives loafing in the location ... to work'. The state should also, they argued, 'erect recruiting bureaux solely for recruiting natives for farm labour'.[36]

The unanimous outcry against the NAD's farm labour policy came about chiefly as a result of the mistrust that farmers felt for the officials of the NAD. The NAD's proposal to appoint labour officers, who by means of inspection would endeavour to secure conformity with the Department's minimum standards, was overwhelmingly opposed by farmers. The farmers were 'perturbed' by the idea of an inspector visiting their farms. They felt that such an inspector would 'barge in', interfere with their labour relations and undermine the farmer's position by 'upsetting the natives'.[37]

The more specific clauses of the proposed policy - like the gradual replacement of labour tenancy with wage labour - encountered a more mixed reaction. At a

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34 CAD, NTS, No. 463/280, Vol. 2229, NAD Memoranda on Native Farm Labour, 13 March 1944.
35 *Native Farm Labour* (NAD Booklet, August 1943); CAD, NTS No. 463/280, Vol. 2229, NAD Memoranda on Native Farm Labour, 13 March 1944: The farming industry would attract sufficient workers according to the economic principles of 'competition between employers'.
36 CAD, NTS, No. 463/280, Vol. 2229, Resolutions Adopted at a Special TAU Congress, 17 August 1944.
37 CAD, NTS No. 222/280, Vol. 2095, D.L. Smit to Major Rosdeath, 10 December 1943.

meeting where the farm inspectors were roundly condemned, Mr. J.P. van der Merwe, a farmer from the Ermelo district, agreed that labour tenancy should be abolished. In its place he advocated 'the registration of labourers for twelve months service a year with reasonable holidays'.[38] He also called for a minimum monthly cash wage to be fixed in consultation with the South African Agricultural Union (SAAU). The representative for Lydenburg, A. Op t' Hof, opposed this scheme with 'fire and flame'. He claimed that many 'small farmers simply could not pay cash wages'.[39] There were thus important differences between Transvaal farmers. Some clung to the labour tenant system, while others were ready to abandon it.

These differences had a bearing on the kind of relationship that farmers established with the state. Labour tenant farmers received a less sympathetic hearing from the NAD. The Secretary of Native Affairs was of the opinion that 'the labour tenant system has certain inherent defects'. He pointed out that his Department had 'continually advocated that farmers should pay their labourers a monthly wage throughout the year'.[40]

But, despite some differences in the state's relationship with richer and poorer farmers, during World War Two most attempts to help farmers as a whole generally ended in failure, caused conflict between officials and farmers and exposed the NAD's 'ambivalent attitude to white farmers'.[41] Farmers were dissatisfied further by the NAD's inaction on a number of crucial issues. The TAU's call for a bureau that would supply farmers with labour was not implemented during the 1940s. Instead the NAD's version of a bureau, based on the proposals of the 1939 Native Farm Labour Commission, was tentatively

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38 CAD, NTS, No. 3/371, Vol. 9257, Extract form *Pretoria News*, 18 August 1944: 'Call to Abolish Squatting on Farms'.

39 CAD, NTS, No. 3/371, Vol. 9257, Extract form *Pretoria News*, 18 August 1944: 'Call to Abolish Squatting on Farms'.

40 CAD, NTS, No. 334/280, Vol. 2204, Secretary of Native Affairs to G.H.H. Schroeder, 24 March 1948.

41 D. Duncan, The State Divided: Farm labour policy in South Africa, 1924-1948, in *South African Historical Journal* 24 (1991), p. 85. Duncan also shows that the 1945 scheme to establish a recruiting bureau in the Zoutpansberg was largely a failure.

established.[42] The Commission had recommended the establishment of these bureaux in order to 'correct obvious abuses [and] ensure some degree of uniformity.'[43] The bureaux were designed to make the day to day administration of the 'farm labour problem' an easier task by establishing a forum in which the NAD could interact with farmers and farm workers. This was precisely the kind of administrative method that had caused conflict between farmers and Native Commissioner Biddulph in 1938, as well as between farmers and the NAD in 1943.

True to the spirit of the original proposals, the bureaux were set up to advise the African work seeker. Once established, they informed people looking for work that 'so many workmen are required and no more can obtain work at this place or that'.[44] While this scheme reflected a continued commitment to bureaucratization on the part of the NAD, nothing in it necessarily required an increase in coercion. In fact, at the same time that this scheme was being promoted, the NAD declared itself bound by the supposed trend in public opinion, 'towards the relaxation of the pass laws'.[45] NAD officials also expressed the opinion that, 'the migration of farm labourers to the towns is due to economic pressure and can hardly be crushed by administrative measures'.[46]

In the few areas where they were implemented, the bureaux mainly helped farmers to *get into contact* with unemployed African work seekers.[47] NAD officials were opposed to the idea of using labour bureaux to 'canalise' labour into agriculture. In their opinion this process would be out of the question and

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42 *Report of the Farm Labour Committee* (Herbst Committee), p. 81.
43 *Report of the Farm Labour Committee* (Herbst Committee), p. 81.
44 *House of Assembly Debates*, 11 February 1946.
45 CAD, NTS, No. 222/280, Vol. 2096, Secretary of Native Affairs to J.S. Marwick, 6 December 1945.
46 CAD, NTS, No. 222/280, Vol. 2096, Secretary of Native Affairs to Aliwal North Farmers Association, 23 August 1946.
47 CAD, NTS, No. 436/280, Vol. 2223, Magistrate Brandfort to Boere Vereeniging, 27 January 1943; CAD, NTS, No. 3/371, Vol. 9257, Secretary of Native Affairs to TAU, 29 September 1943: The boards were also established to promote 'a better understanding between farmers and their employees'. Under the National Party the voluntary aspect of the labour bureaux was completely removed, even for employers. See *Rand Daily Mail*, Tuesday, 7 July, 1953: 'State Machinery for Control of Labour Complete'.

impractical. Apart from harbouring ideological reservations about 'provisions under which any Native can be forced to accept employment against his will', the Department also argued that African city dwellers, forced into agriculture, 'are likely to contaminate existing farm Natives with their ideas and vices they have acquired in the worst slum environments of the cities.'[48]

The labour bureaux did not receive the farmers' approval. During 1943 they were criticised by the TAU who claimed that the bureaux were making 'no headway'.[49] Farmers were not interested in improving their relationships with Africans by means of the state. While the NAD strove to limit the state's coercive capacity, farmers were looking for ways to restrict the mobility of their labourers. They thus called on the state to tighten the pass laws.

In 1936 it was estimated that 100 Africans, of which at least 20 were farm workers, were arriving every day in Johannesburg from the rural areas without having a pass.[50] These Africans were hardly ever repatriated back to the rural areas. As a result many farmers felt that the pass laws were inefficient and that labourers left the farms whenever they pleased.[51] The effectiveness of the pass seems to have been predicated on the idea that Africans were illiterate. There was really nothing to stop Africans from making their own passes if they could read and write, and there were numerous reports of 'educated' Africans manufacturing passes.[52] Further, if an African did not have a pass, there was little the pass officer in Johannesburg could do. There was no way of finding out where the 'passless native' came from if he refused to divulge this information. In view of this difficulty, the pass officer would issue these Africans with a temporary permit, which enabled them to seek employment in the city. Once an African male acquired employment he would receive a pass from his new employer and all ties

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48 CAD, NTS, No. 3/371, Vol. 9257, NAD Memo, c1945.
49 *Ibid.*
50 CAD, NTS, No. 334/280, Vol. 2204, Letter to General Smuts, 27 October 1936.
51 CAD, NTS, No. 334/280, Vol. 2204, C.J. De Wett to NAD, 14 October 1937.
52 For example, CAD, NTS, No. 222/280, Vol. 2096, Komati Agricultural and Industrial Society to Secretary of Native Affairs, 16 November 1945; Wits Historical Papers Library (WHPL), A410 C2.1.41, A trek pass issued by R.P. Esterhuysen of Middelburg, which reveals the rudimentary nature of these passes.

with the rural areas would be eradicated.

The anonymity of 'passless natives' increased when farmers failed to supply the tax identity numbers of labour tenants who went missing. Farmers in fact did little to contribute to the coherence of the pass system.[53] In the context of an acute labour shortage, farmers accepted any labour that came their way and could not afford the luxury of refusing the services of a labourer who was not in possession of the relevant documentation. One farmer claimed that he was forced to ignore the pass laws because 'demand for these documents generally meant that native labour moved on elsewhere, where the identification document was not demanded.'[54]

Farmers of the Eastern Transvaal Agriculture Union insisted that the Government do something about this unsatisfactory state of affairs. In order to stop 'educated natives [from] writ[ing] their own passes', they demanded that 'all natives in the union should be registered with their photographs on their passes. This will greatly assist the Police and will also eliminate a number of vagabonds who are habitual criminals.'[55] Deputations of the TAU and the SAAU echoed these demands but the NAD declared itself unable to respond.[56]

The department did try to tighten up the administration of the existing pass system in 1937. Head Office issued instructions that all 'passless natives' from the rural areas should not be issued with temporary work permits and should be sent back to the farms from where they came. Railway officials were also instructed not to issue Africans with tickets unless they could produce a pass. Farmers praised the NAD for this action, but the determined offensive against pass offenders did not last very long. NAD officials complained that the action was harsh, and unfair

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53 CAD, NTS, No. 334/280, Vol. 2204, Hoof Adjunk Kommisaris, S.A.P. to Minister of Justice, undated c1936: 'As die boere net Naturelle in diens wou neem wat van 'n pas het ..., en oor die algemeen self die pas wette nakom, sou dit 'n groot verbetering teweeg. Ongelukkig doen hulle dit nie.'

54 CAD, NTS, No. 3/371, Vol. 9256, Chief Native Commissioner Northern Areas to Secretary of Native Affairs, 14 August 1936.

55 CAD, NTS, No. 334/280, Vol. 2204, The Eastern Transvaal Agricultural Union to the Minister of Justice, 5 December 1941.

56 This was partly due to the shortage of personnel in the NAD during the war years.

to Africans who had genuinely lost their passes.[57] These complaints coincided with the realisation that the measures actually undermined the NAD's control over passless Africans. Instead of returning back to the farms, Africans who were refused temporary work permits became clandestine city dwellers, totally out of sight of the NAD. Under the temporary system at least some record of the 'passless Native' existed.[58] This combination caused the NAD to retract their earlier draconian instructions. Once again, due to paternalist and administrative concerns, the NAD failed to make any headway in meeting the demands of disgruntled farmers.

The urbanisation and industrialisation of the World War Two period put pressure on the pass laws. From 1939 to the end of 1941, a total of 348907 Africans were arrested for contravening the pass laws, with 318838 being convicted.[59] The NAD responded to the subsequent problems (including complaints from urban employers) by further relaxing the pass laws.[60] In 1943 the Minister of Native Affairs, Major Pieter Van der Byl, told the senate that 'the pass laws at the moment present a thorny problem'. The public were under the impression that the pass laws had been superseded and abolished. This was not the case but, the Minister pointed out,

> 'a large number of young natives were introduced at an early age to prison life in which they came into contact with real criminals. In addition the administration of the pass laws cost a colossal amount in the losses to employers and the cost of the state. The Government had therefore decided to relax the pass laws in certain urban areas, and the police had been instructed not to demand passes or to institute prosecutions for contravention of pass laws, except where there was reasonable ground for believing that the native concerned had committed, or was about to commit, another offence.'[61]

Predictably, the process of relaxing the pass laws was not welcomed by Transvaal farmers. In 1942 the TAU issued a statement demanding 'strict control over the

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57 CAD, NTS, No. 334/280, Vol. 2204, Tuinplaats farmers Association to Secretary of Native Affairs, 17 January 1937; Waterberg District Farmers Union to Secretary of Native Affairs, 4 February 1937.

58 CAD, NTS, No. 334/280, Vol. 2204, Secretary of Native Affairs to all Officers of the NAD, 26 January 1940.

59 *The Star*, 2 February 1943: 'Plans For Improving Native's Living Conditions'.

60 D. Posel, *The Making of Apartheid, 1948-1961: Conflict and Compromise* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 44.

61 *The Star*, 2 February 1943: 'Plans For Improving Native's Living Conditions'.

movements of natives whether by pass laws or any other system. The delegates were very hot; they attacked the Department severely for relaxing the pass laws.'[62] In reply to these attacks the NAD expressed the opinion that 'there is little doubt that pass laws have now outlived their usefulness'.[63]

Most of the old National Party representatives left the Government during World War Two and thus re-established the dominance of Smuts' more flexible version of Segregation.[64] Consequently, Piet van der Byl was appointed Minister of Native Affairs. As a long-suffering SAP supporter and staunch admirer of Smuts, he had been opposed to the National Party in all its forms. Van Der Byl described himself as 'a strong party-political animal, believer in free-enterprise and capitalism'.[65] To familiarise himself with the workings of the Department he put himself under the tutelage, and thus influence, of D.L. Smit, who, during the conflict over Chapter Four, had agreed with many of the liberal convictions of Rheinallt Jones. The beliefs to which these men subscribed meant that, when circumstance seemed to demand it, they were ready to relax labour regulations, like the pass laws, as these interfered with the capitalist principle that workers should be able to sell their labour freely.

Van der Byl was also a farmer, and he believed that better relations between the NAD and farmers could be established. In an attempt to create an atmosphere of trust, Van Der Byl proposed the holding of regular, coordinated meetings between the NAD and a special Liaison Committee of the SAAU. Before the meetings were called, however, the NAD made certain crucial policy statements that defined the parameters of the subsequent meetings. In speeches addressed to gatherings of both the TAU and the SAAU the Minister clearly set out the position of the NAD. He stated emphatically that he was not going to become the unambiguous instrument of the farmers. Instead, he emphasised his role as:

> 'The Trustee of the Natives, and as such I have to watch and protect their

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62 CAD, NTS, No. 3/371, Vol. 9257, NAD Memo, c1942.
63 CAD, NTS, No. 3/371, Vol. 9257, Secretary of Native Affairs to TAU, c1942.
64 Dubow, *Racial Segregation*, p. 44.
65 P. Van Der Byl, *Top Hat to Velskoen* (Cape Town, Timmins, 1973), p. 186.

> legitimate interests. If I did not do this as a member of the Government in charge of Native Affairs, then I would be betraying my Trusteeship and would be neglecting my duty.'[66]

The Minister also regretted if certain farmers labelled him 'a Kaffir Boetie', but rather than let these allegations worry him, he emphasised his conviction that: 'The Native, like any other individual in this country, has the right to sell his services on the highest market and which is to his best advantage.'[67] These statements, together with Smit's determination that 'we can not employ coercion in order to induce Natives to remain on the farms', exercised a strong influence on the subsequent Liaison Committee meetings.[68]

The Liaison Committee drew its membership from a particular farming class. The leadership of the SAAU consisted largely of wealthy, progressive farmers who spurned practices like labour tenancy. The Liaison Committee representative from the Transvaal, Mr. Theo Wassenaar, had revealed himself as particularly unconcerned with the interests of labour tenant farmers. At a TAU meeting in 1944 he had declared himself to be unmoved by the 'plight of the small farmer'. He claimed that the labour tenant system was 'uneconomic'. 'Farmers who could not pay cash wages', he argued, 'should not be entitled to have numbers of squatters ruining the land with their farming methods.'[69]

In the press statement on the first meeting of the Committee it was reported that 'a very helpful and co-operative spirit was manifest'.[70] A remarkable degree of agreement was reported: 'The farmer representatives acknowledged that the natives must be treated with consideration and that it was necessary to attract the labour to the farming industry. The Conference expressed itself in favour of the principle that all farm labour should, throughout their period of service,

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66 WHPL, AD 843 B10.4, Address of Minister of Native Affairs to SAAU Conference, 15 September 1944.

67 WHPL, AD 843 B10.4, Address of Minister of Native Affairs to SAAU Conference, 15 September 1944.

68 CAD, NTS, No. 463/280, Vol. 2229, NAD Memo, 13 March 1944.

69 CAD, NTS, No. 3/371, Vol. 9257, Extract form *Pretoria News*, 18 August 1944: 'Call to Abolish Squatting on Farms'.

70 This press statement was drafted and agreed to by all the reps (NAD and SAAU) at the first liaison committee conference.

receive a cash wage in addition to the other benefits usually given on farms.'[71] Labour tenant farmers did not support such recommendations. They hardly ever paid wages and left it up to their labourers to build their own houses.[72] These were elements of the labour tenant system that worked in the farmers' favour and those who relied on the system where unlikely to give up these benefits. This was recognised by Smuts himself. In an interview with D.L. Smit, he declared: 'The views put forward by the Farmers Union are the views of the progressive farmers, men like ourselves; but many farmers depend on labour tenants and there will be a great deal of opposition.'[73]

There is thus some credence in Bradford's recent claim that the resolutions of the Liaison Committee reflect a compatibility between agreeable partners.[74] The agreement was, however, circumscribed by the NAD's stand on certain principles. The SAAU's call for the division of Africans into full-time farm and industrial workers was initially opposed by the NAD. In a memo to the Minister, Smit rejected the division and suggested that: 'The real solution is the improvement of conditions on farms, and no artificial barriers against movement from one area or occupation to another will be effective.'[75] In the face of this impasse the two groups reached a compromise. Under the heading of the original SAAU resolution, the NAD decided to move 'tentatively and experimentally' in the direction of recognising a permanent African urban population, realising that this represented a significant shift away from the idea of Segregation. The resolution was stripped of the coercive elements that would have tied farm workers to the rural areas. The SAAU leaders seem to have supported this because they saw it as contributing to

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71 CAD, NTS, No. 463/280, Vol. 2229, Press Statement about SAAU/NAD Conference, September 1944.

72 CAD, NTS, No. 97/362, Vol. 8838, Native Commissioner Lydenburg, Report, c1938: 'Approximately 90 per cent of the farmers in the district rely solely on the labour tenants for labour. In very few cases do they employ labour on a wage basis. ... the small landowner can definitely not afford to pay a wage.'

73 CAD, NTS, No. 463/280, Vol. 2229, D.L. Smit, Interview with Prime Minister, 2 March 1945.

74 H. Bradford, 'Getting Away with Murder: "Mealie Kings", the State and foreigners in the eastern Transvaal, c1918-1950', in P. Bonner, *et al*, *Apartheid's Genesis* (Johannesburg, Ravan & Wits University Press, 1993), p. 110.

75 CAD, NTS, No. 463/280, Vol. 2229, Secretary of Native Affairs to Minister of Native Affairs, 24 November 1944.

the stability of the African population as a whole.[76] Van der Byl expressed delight with this agreement, surprised that a body of farmers would agree to such a 'liberal' resolution.[77] The resolution was eventually incorporated into the Fagan Report.[78]

O'Meara argues that the Fagan report's 'insistence that the industrial reserve army should be permanently reproduced in the urban areas by allowing families to settle in the cities, was diametrically opposed to the policies advocated by organised agriculture.'[79] The evidence suggests that elements of organised agriculture's leadership were prepared to support such recommendations but this probably came about because the SAAU adopted a 'better than nothing' attitude. Dissatisfaction with the scheme was never wholly absent. In December of 1945 the SAAU was already considering discontinuing the Committee because 'business was moving too slowly'.[80] In subsequent years, despite further meetings, no significant progress occurred, although an improved atmosphere of understanding between the NAD and prominent SAAU farmers was established.[81]

While some of the wealthy farmers in the SAAU could at least engage in dialogue with the 'liberals' in the NAD, the labour tenant farmers of Lydenburg had, in the past decade, moved further away from the ideas contained in the Fagan Report. Many farmers had joined fascist movements. One such movement, the *Suid Afrikaanse Nasionale Volksbeweging,* had a branch in the Ohrigstad area.[82] In 1938 the movement put forward its principles: they were violently opposed to

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76 CAD, NTS, No. 463/280, Vol. 2229, NAD Memo, c1947.

77 CAD, NTS, No. 463/280, Vol. 2229, Minister of Native Affairs to Prime Minister, 9 October 1945.

78 See, D. Hindson, *Pass Controls and the Urban African Proletariat,* p. 59. The recommendation 'argued that African urbanisation was inevitable and desirable and should be regulated but not inhibited'.

79 D. O'Meara, Volkskapitalisme: Class, capital and ideology in the development of Afrikaner nationalism, 1934-1948 (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1983), p. 236.

80 CAD, NTS, No. 463/280, Vol. 2229, Minister of Native Affairs to the Chairman SAAU, 3 December 1945.

81 CAD, NTS, No. 3/371, Vol. 9257, Secretary of Native Affairs to T. Wassenaar, 7 May 1947.

82 P.J. Furlong, *Between Crown and Swastika: The impact of the radical right on the Afrikaner nationalist movement in the fascist era* (Johannesburg, Wits. Univ. Press, 1991), p. 22: The *Volksbeweging* was a breakaway from the Blackshirts, under the leadership of Chris Haveman, and operated mainly in Johannesburg.

racial-mixing and in favour of forcing 'location' and 'reserve' Africans into farm labour.[83] It appears that the members of this movement were the poorer farmers in the Ohrigstad region, who were particularly willing to accept racist solutions that conferred automatic status on whites and justified coercive cheap labour practices.[84] But fascism also appealed to the richer farmers in Lydenburg. De Souza, Lydenburg's leading light, addressed the *Volksbeweging* in 1938 on the need to solve the 'Indian question'.[85] He launched a racist attack on the traders, objecting to Indians benefitting from the fruits of Afrikaners' labour, and called for a white boycott of the traders.[86]

De Souza's fascist sympathies were revealed further when he joined the New Order of Oswald Pirow,[87] who visited Lydenburg in 1940 and held a meeting with a 'very large attendance'.[88] The Member of Parliament for Lydenburg, Nic Schoeman, was also a member of the New Order. His speeches offer an important insight into what attracted wealthier farmers like Schoeman and De Souza to fascism. Schoeman was a classic example of the kind of progressive farmer described in Chapter Two. He came from a Lydenburg farming family, qualified as a lawyer, set up practice in Lydenburg and owned one of the largest, best situated farms in the district.[89] Schoeman was strongly in favour of the development of rural industries, especially in Lydenburg. In order to bring this

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83 *Lydenburg News*, 11 March 1938.

84 They operated in an area where poor white settlers were abundant, no one on the executive was a leader of any other Farming Union, and they were particularly opposed to wages; See CAD, NTS, No. 97/362, Vol. 8838, Native Commissioner Lydenburg, Report, c1938: 'The small landowner can definitely not afford to pay a wage.' For the status appeal of racism see G. M. Fredrickson, *The Arrogance of Race* (Middletown, Wesleyan University Press, 1988), p. 201: 'From the vantage point of non-slaveholders there was a ... tendency to project upon the blacks their own suppressed sense of inferiority as a way of gaining or retaining a sense of status'.

85 His opposition to Indian traders can be linked to his position as chairman of the local cooperative. Indian traders monopolised the business of certain farmers by keeping them in debt, and selling their crops in return for consumer goods. This practice undermined the Cooperative's constant efforts to achieve a marketing monopoly in Lydenburg.

86 *Lydenburg News*, 14 April 1938.

87 N.M. Stultz, *Afrikaner Politics in South Africa, 1934-1948* (Berkeley, Univ. of California Press, 1974), p. 77: The New Order proposed that, 'under God's guidance, [they] would sweep away democracy and substitute a Christian, white, National-Socialist republic, separated from the British crown and founded on the principles of state authority (*Staatsgesag*) and national discipline'.

88 *Lydenburg News*, 20 December 1940.

89 For the history of the Schoeman family see *Assembly Debates*, 4 March 1942; for details on the farm see, Interview with Mr & Mrs Ngomane, Praktiseer, 13 June 1993.

about he demanded that rural industries should get 'their share of public money', and that Government spending should be re-directed for the purpose of 'rehabilitating the farming community'.[90] This state intervention, Schoeman argued, was crucial for racial hegemony in South Africa: 'Farming was the foundation of the European settlement of the Union and is indispensable to its survival.'[91] He was also opposed to the 'inroads of Asiatics into the countryside'.[92]

Even the wealthier farmers in Lydenburg were at a comparative disadvantage to capitalised farmers in the more prosperous districts of the country.[93] The former were thus unlikely to favour a move towards 'economic' or free market principles.[94] The fascism of the New Order provided them with an ideological framework in which their racially defined interests would be promoted by massive state intervention. They therefore rejected the liberal doctrine of individualistic competition and instead emphasised the obligations of the state towards the community it represented.[95] These ideas appealed to white farmers in general, but the wealthier farmers in districts like Bethal were more open to alternative discourses. This was so because the latter had a better chance of competing on the labour market and their economic importance as large scale producers of food gave them an additional leverage on the state.[96]

In Lydenburg the shift towards fascist and overtly racist solutions continued with massive support for the Ossewa Brandwag and the growing political popularity of the National Party.[97] The Brandwag, formed in order to preserve the 'spirit' unleashed by the centenary trek, argued that 'the need to protect racial purity [is]

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90 *House of Assembly Debates*, 1 May 1940; 6 February 1941.
91 *House of Assembly Debates*, 1 May 1940; 6 February 1941.
92 *House of Assembly Debates*, 15 April 1941.
93 See Chapter Two. p. 64.
94 *House of Assembly Debates*, 1 May 1940.
95 See, S. Dubow, 'Afrikaner Nationalism, Apartheid and the Conceptualisation of "Race"', in *Journal of African History*, 33 (1992), for details on the 'volk' elements of Afrikaner nationalism and fascism, in which the cultural community was regarded as more important than the individuals who made up the group.
96 Bradford, 'Getting Away with Murder', p. 110.
97 *Lydenburg News*, 28 November 1945; 5 May 1944; 6 August 1943; 21 March 1941.

a sacred duty of Afrikanerdom, as well as a matter of physical survival'. National Party ideologues were often 'obsessed with racial separation'.[98] One of the causes of this shift to the right could have been, Giliomee argues, the political destruction of Hertzog's more moderate version of Segregation, which polarised political choices.[99] In Lydenburg an additional factor must surely have been the growing dissatisfaction with the state over the its failure to help farmers meet their cheap labour requirements.[100]

Throughout the 1940s Lydenburg farmers were concerned about the labour shortage and unhappy with the state's efforts to solve the problem. In 1942 the *Lydenburg News* carried an editorial urging the Government to solve the labour shortage problem in the district:

> 'The [shortage of] necessary labour is a problem which will need primary attention. The majority of our native population, and we do not exclude our district, have become so independent in latter years that they have disdained becoming farm labourers, and prefer to squat on Crown Lands, leading an independent life rather than do farm work. The lack of native labour has long since been a general complaint.'[101]

In the following year a large meeting was held in which the NAD's farm labour policies were condemned and a new solution was demanded.[102]

This opposition to the NAD's policies persisted after the War, both in Lydenburg and in other mid-eastern Transvaal districts where farmers continued to rely on labour tenancy.[103] In 1947 Belfast farmers complained to the NAD about 'communist propaganda', which was 'destroying our native labour'. The NAD's response produced 'strong resentment and unpleasant discussions' amongst TAU

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98 See S.J. Louw, 'Discourse Theory and Afrikaner Nationalism: The Case of the Ossewa Brandwag', Honours Dissertation, University of Witwatersrand, 1990, p. 89; J.M. Coetzee, 'The Mind of Apartheid: Geoff Cronjè 1907', in *Social Dynamics*, 17(1), 1991; T.D. Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom* (Berkeley, Univ. of California Press, 1975), p. 200; S. Dubow, 'Afrikaner Nationalism', p. 229.

99 H. Giliomee, 'The Growth of Afrikaner Identity', in H. Adam, *The Rise and Crisis of Afrikaner Power* (Cape Town, David Philip, 1979), p. 114.

100 See below, p. 159. See also D. Posel, 'The Meaning of Apartheid before 1948: Conflicting Interests and Forces Within the Afrikaner Nationalist Alliance', in *JSAS*, Vol. 14, No. 1, p. 131.

101 *Lydenburg News*, 10 April 1942.

102 See *House of Assembly Debates*, 10 March 1943; *Lydenburg News*, 21 January 1944: 'Meeting of Mr. F. Mare M.P. re Farm Labour'.

103 *Lydenburg News*, 26 March 1948.

members. The NAD had claimed that the propaganda originated amongst labourers who had bad experiences on the farms. Farmers rejected this compassionate response, and felt that the NAD was blaming the farmers for the propaganda. This incident, the Liaison Committee's Theo Wassenaar claimed, 'may result in the reactivation of the deplorable state of friction and bad feeling between farmers and [the NAD]'.[104]

In 1943, in the middle of this period of farmer dissatisfaction with United Party labour policies, the United Party delegate was nevertheless elected in Lydenburg. This can only be attributed to the divisions in the Afrikaans right and to the particular conditions produced by the War. The National Party continued to oppose the War at a time when the allies were clearly winning. Perhaps more importantly, farmers were reaping huge benefits from the market conditions produced by the conflict.[105] These conditions ceased to exist after the War and the shift to the right then manifested itself at the polls.[106] The National Party won the Lydenburg seat in 1948.

STATE POLICIES AND FARMERS AFTER 1948

The state, it has been argued, failed to establish friendly relations with poorer farmers who depended on labour tenancy. It was precisely in poorer districts such as Lydenburg where the most significant post-war political shifts occurred, giving the National Party its narrow majority in 1948.[107] One would therefore expect the new Government to be especially sensitive to the labour needs of poorer farmers.

O'Meara demonstrates that this was indeed the case. He argues that, 'Afrikaner

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104 CAD, NTS, No. 3/371, Vol. 9257, Theo Wassenaar to the Secretary of Native Affairs, 7 May 1947.

105 Interview with Johan Steyn, Lydenburg, 1990: 'People voted for the U.P. in 1943 because it was a war election, they did well, they got money out of it'. See also *The Star*, 10 February 1943; 15 January 1943; 9 January 1943; 8 February 1943; 6 February 1943.

106 See Chapter Two, p. 96, for the negative impact that the state's marketing policies began to have after the War.

107 O'Meara, *Volkskapitalisme*, p. 237: 'With the *broedertwis* firmly behind it, the [National Party] not surprisingly won a secure base among the farmers of the Transvaal whom it had wooed for so long. It now controlled 56 of the 66 rural constituencies outside Natal, and its AP partner won a further 5.'

farmers had been a vital component of the victorious 1948 nationalist alliance, and continued to occupy a special place in the affections and attentions of the National Party Government.'[108] Bradford also shows that the fundamental shift ushered in by the National Party *vis a vis* farm labour policies was the new Government's sensitivity to the needs of 'small farmers'.[109] Bradford goes on to argue that small farmers were quickly disregarded when the National Party confronted the realities of rural capital accumulation. However, she seriously underestimates the importance of the ideological changes introduced into the bureaucracy by the new Government. After 1948 a new understanding between the state and labour tenant farmers in the mid-eastern Transvaal was established; the ideology of the National Party was compatible with the way these farmers perceived their world.

Posel claims that the National Party stood for an unambiguous commitment to 'white economic and political supremacy, and the complete eradication of any racial mixing'.[110] For a number of reasons the Party believed that the state was the instrument that could readily turn this doctrine into reality. One reason was contained in a speech by D.F. Malan. The new Prime Minister intimated that he was not prepared to consider African equality at *any* stage in the future. Nor was he in any way concerned to encourage the upliftment of Africans.[111] Thus, during this period of '*baaskap* Apartheid', the emphasis on accommodating Africans became less pronounced. Supporters of Apartheid could declare that the broad answer to the 'Native problem' was 'to assert control over the African and other Non-white people by *whatever means were necessary.*'[112]

National Party supporters often struggled, when challenged by the opposition, to define what exactly Apartheid stood for. However, one principle that did emerge clearly from these debates was that the National Party 'proposed state

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108 J. Lazar, 'Conformity and Conflict: Afrikaner politics 1948-1961', Unpublished PhD Thesis, Oxford, 1987, p. 97.

109 Bradford, 'Getting Away with Murder', p. 115.

110 D. Posel, 'Influx Control and the Construction of Apartheid, 1948 - 1961'; Unpublished PhD Thesis, Oxford, 1987, p. 5.

111 Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom*, p. 247.

112 H. Wolpe, 'Capitalism and Cheap Labour Power in South Africa: From Segregation to Apartheid', in *Economy and Society*, Vol. 4, 1972, p. 13, [my emphasis].

interference and state control on a large scale'.[113] Another factor that facilitated this unambiguous commitment to state control was the Party's rejection of 'so called laissez faire'.[114] National Party ideologues felt that only by united action as a 'volk', and through state intervention in the economy, could Afrikaners 'take control of their legitimate place in the economy'.[115] Furlong points to the importance of fascism as an influence. He argues that, despite serious reservations about many of the implications of fascism amongst the National Party leadership, the fascist ideal of a state controlled society began to influence members of the Party at a number of levels. This process occurred because fascism was disseminated in Afrikaner schools and universities, because many 'radical right' Afrikaners took up important positions in the increasingly influential Broederbond, and because the members of neo-fascist groups like the Ossewa Brandwag and Grey-Shirts were accommodated in the party before the 1948 election.[116]

The influence of this ideology, especially in declaring a new dispensation or order that rejected the 'liberal principles' of the 'British', produced ideas about state intervention that were far less cautious than earlier state ideologies. In contrast to the top officials of the pre-1948 NAD, members of the Afrikaner nationalist movement had few qualms about using the state to regulate economic relationships. Thus, Furlong argues, 'Apartheid meant government by blueprint, in which state planning would ensure that measures regulating economic development, interracial contact, and Afrikaner political control would be mutually complementary, part of a single vision, rather than the intermittent *ad hoc* measures of the past.'[117] The precise form that the blueprint would take was an area of conflict between different factions within the Party. The emphasis on state planning, however, was generally accepted.[118]

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113 S. Greenberg, *Race and State in Capitalist Development* (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1980), p. 385: Statement made by 'National Party M.P. South Africa, 1943'.
114 O'Meara, *Volkskapitalisme*, p. 152.
115 *Ibid.*
116 Furlong, *Between Crown and Swastika*, pp. 88-89; 243-244; 237.
117 Furlong, *Between Crown and Swastika*, p. 227.
118 Posel, 'Influx Control and the Construction of Apartheid', p. 8.

In this arena, where some consensus existed but the basic objectives of Apartheid had not yet been settled, the NAD set about applying an Apartheid policy to the 'native question'. The Department's most immediate and pressing concern was the construction of 'better control'.[119] According to Posel, the NAD decided to build state machinery that could control African labour without threatening the labour supply of white employers. The NAD intensified its control over African political organisations and trade unions, and brought a 'more rigorous and aggressive influx control policy' into effect.[120] The regulation of labour became the foundation stone of NAD policy.

The NAD's new ideological orientation was reinforced with the appointment of W.W.M. Eiselen as Secretary of Native Affairs in 1949. Eiselen, a strong supporter of the 'Afrikaner nationalist movement', had joined the New Order and was a leading member of SABRA, which included some of the most important Afrikaner nationalist intellectuals of the 1940s. SABRA's purpose was 'the scientific study of the country's racial problem [and] the promotion of sound racial policy'.[121] A number of other SABRA members also took up positions in the NAD, especially in the Native Affairs Commission, from which 'liberal elements' like D.L. Smit were expelled.[122]

According to Moodie, Eiselen was a crucial figure in the construction of Apartheid policy and a confidant of the new Minister of Native Affairs, Verwoerd.[123] He believed strongly in the importance of culture and community and regarded the members of the African intelligentsia with disdain because they had assimilated the ideas of European philosophy rather than develop within their own culture.[124] As an intellectual he had a well developed vision of an ideal, segregated future, and, probably influenced by his interactions with fascism,

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119 Posel, 'Influx Control and the Construction of Apartheid', p. 11.
120 Posel, 'Influx Control and the Construction of Apartheid', p. 13.
121 Posel, 'Influx Control and the Construction of Apartheid', p. 53.
122 J. Lazar, 'The Role of the South African Bureau of Racial Affairs (SABRA) in the Formulation of Apartheid Ideology, 1948-1961', in Bonner *et al, Apartheid's Genesis*.
123 Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom*, p. 272.
124 C. Kros, 'Eiselen: Idealist and Idealism Revisited', Unpublished Seminar Paper, 1993, p. 6; 12.

believed that the state could make this future a reality.[125] As an administrator he was prepared to regard absolute segregation as a long-term goal and make short term compromises in the name of economic growth.[126] He did, however, become disillusioned with the state's inability to make significant headway against competing concerns pulling it in various directions.[127] In many ways Eiselen believed that Apartheid was a blue-print, which could be imposed from above on a receptive society. He described the problems faced by the NAD in the 1950s in the following terms: '[There is] an unbalanced development in all spheres which is attended with the disorganisation of the old order without a sound foundation for a *new established order* having been created.'[128] When, after a number of years of trying, the state had not succeeded in establishing the new order of Eiselen's dreams, he resigned from the NAD in bitter disillusionment.[129]

Eiselen was the son of a Berlin missionary, and the ideas of the Berlin Mission Society had an important influence on his thinking. The leading missionaries, including Eiselen's father, had for a long time been in favour of a strict form of separate development. They were concerned to help Africans develop within their own cultures, strongly disapproving of any process that drew Africans into the 'European world'.[130] The Missionaries regarded themselves as part of the Afrikaner community; they endeavoured to send their sons into the state, where they could work for the cause of Afrikaner Nationalism.[131] In 1949 they explicitly supported Apartheid, and praised Eiselen for his role in shaping Apartheid policies.[132] The Berlin Mission Society, the evidence suggests, helped to provide

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125 C. Kros, 'Eiselen', p. 6.
126 C. Kros, 'Eiselen', p. 15.
127 Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom*, p. 274; CAD, Bantu Affairs (BAO), No. B23/2, Vol. 2086, Eiselen to the Minister of Bantu Affairs, 15 February 1964.
128 *NAD Blue Book*, Report of the Secretary of Native Affairs, 22 June 1951, [My emphasis].
129 Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom*, p. 274: Eiselen became particularly exasperated about the selfish demands of farmers: 'They accept the theory. But at the same time they want comfort. Obviously a generous theory and unchallenged comfort are incompatible.'
130 CAD, NTS, No. 841/323, Vol. 7143, Berlynse Sendingsgenootskap to Minister of Native Affairs, 25 November 1937: 'Kristelike-nasionaal onderwys en naturelle ontwikkeling volgens eie verlede en ras.' See also *Berliner Missions Berichte*, Heft 2/4, 1949.
131 CAD, NTS, No. 841/323, Vol. 7143, Berlynse Sendingsgenootskap to Minister of Native Affairs, 25 November 1937.
132 *Berliner Missions Berichte*, Heft 2/4, 1949.

a new breed of state official, whose hard-core cultural determinism and disinterest in the rights of the individual can be contrasted with the more liberal tradition of the English missionaries, who, Dubow claims, were important in the pre-1948 NAD.

The new NAD also introduced important changes at the level of the Native Commissioner. The notion of the Commissioner as 'trustee of the native' was replaced by the view that the Commissioner was simultaneously the 'government' and the 'father of the Bantu'. The kind of father the NAD had in mind was ominously illustrated when they held up Abel Erasmus as the archetypal Native Commissioner. As I demonstrated earlier, Erasmus' paternalism was very different from the 'trusteeship' practised by Major Hunt. Erasmus was more overtly racist; he believed that it was natural for Africans to be permanently subservient to, and the workers of, whites.[133]

In terms of this new vision the Native Commissioner's autonomy was also severely limited. All the Commissioner's duties were now to be carried out within the framework provided by the NAD's 'consolidated circulars'. The Commissioner was expected to carry out the broad policies dictated by these letters in a way that was 'precise, tactful and worthy'.[134] Thus Native Commissioners now had to follow a more assertive, prescribed policy, further curtailing the powers of the man on the spot.

The National Party used force to disseminate its ideas throughout the various organs of the state by purging 'many English speakers from senior positions in the civil service' and replacing them with more suitable candidates.[135] In practice this caused a massive increase in the number of Afrikaans speaking officials. For example, in April 1954, of the six people receiving promotions, five had Afrikaans

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133 *Bantu*, August 1954: 'Die Taak en Probleme van die Naturellekommissaris, Deel 1'; *Bantu*, September 1954, 'Deel 2'; For Erasmus see Chapter One, p. 53.

134 *Bantu*, August 1954.

135 Furlong, *Between Crown and Swastika*, p. 236; M. Lipton, *Capitalism and Apartheid* (London, Aldershot, 1985), pp. 384 - 385; *House of Assembly Debates*, 14 September 1953, p. 3409.

surnames, and ten out of the twelve new appointees were Afrikaans.[136] Some English speaking officials remained in prominent positions, but they were expected to fill the role of 'experts' rather than have a real say in policy formation. For example, in the early 1950's, H.J.J. Van Wyk was appointed as Under Secretary (Staff and Administration) over C.A. Heald and C.B. Young, who continued as Under Secretary (European Areas) and Under Secretary (Native Areas) respectively. C.A. Heald was considered an expert in urban African housing after 'his fourteen years experience in urban administration'.[137]

The Lydenburg Magistrate in 1950 was F.H. Mundell, an official with an English surname. However, all the other officials, including the one in the newly created post of Assistant Magistrate, were Afrikaans. Their names were H. van Rooyen, D. Loubscher, C.J. Britz, L. Coetzee, J. Grobler, L. Schoeman and J.A.H. Botes.[138] A further development was the rapid rotation of these officials from one post to the next. They regarded their stay in a country office such as Lydenburg as a first step in a career within the Department of Justice or Native Affairs. Unlike the clerks Jeffries and Murray, who ran the Natives Affairs office in the 1920s and 1930s and resided permanently in Lydenburg, the new Natives Affairs clerks never lasted longer than three years.[139] An ex-labour tenant in Lydenburg remembers this change and the new administrative methods of the Apartheid era. Elise Mdluli, who was born in 1940 on a farm in the Waterval Valley, explains that

> 'this thing of changing commissioners only happened later when I was already grown up. The old commissioner was good because he listened to peoples problems and he was an old person. The new ones were just a bunch of youngsters [jongspan]. They would say "No! Get Away! You are bothering us, you are always coming here complaining, no go, go!" They were all Afrikaans.'[140]

The coming to power of the National Party produced a new kind of emphasis on control within all the structures of the NAD. This emphasis had important

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136 *Bantu*, May 1954.
137 *Bantu*, February 1955.
138 CAD, JUS, No. 21/167, Vol. 921, Inspection Report: Magistrate's Office Lydenburg, 1 November 1950.
139 See CAD, JUS, No. 21/167, Vol. 921, Inspection Report on Magistrates Office Lydenburg, 2 November 1945; November 1948; Vol. 922, 1950 above; 25 September 1953.
140 Interview with Elise Mdluli, Marulaneng, 6 June 1992.

precursors in earlier NAD policies The previous drives towards control, however, were mitigated by ideas that caused officials to be uneasy about state regulation, and to be more concerned with NAD legitimacy. The Apartheid framework produced policies that emphasised control first and legitimacy second. It is true that the NAD under the United Party had restricted the movement of Africans as part of the domination practised in a racist society, but they had always shied away from extending this control to its logical conclusion. The National Party controlled state, in contrast, moved firmly in this direction. For example, on the 16 September 1948, the Secretary of Native Affairs claimed that the existing legislation was not sufficiently efficient. Therefore, he argued, it was necessary to create new machinery that would ensure an appropriate division of labour between town and countryside; the government would bring to a halt the 'flood of natives into the city'.[141] The logic of this, and other similar statements, proves that the new NAD operated within a vision of an ordered society, where white capitalism would be able to thrive with an adequate and efficient labour force supplied by the guiding hand of the state.[142]

The effects that these changes had on the relationship between the NAD and farmers can be gauged clearly from the records of the Liaison Committee's meeting held immediately after the National Party's election victory. A different level of co-operation and understanding could be detected at the meeting that took place on the 1 November 1948. The new Minister of Native Affairs, Jansen, outlined the government's plan to register all farm workers and, in conjunction with a labour bureaux system, bring about 'better control' over rural Africans. The Chairman of the SAAU, Rossouw, explained to the Minister that they had backed the idea of a permanent urban African population because farmers did not want to support African families that remained on the farm while the African husband went to work in the urban areas. The Minister answered, 'would it not be better to send

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141 CAD, NTS, No. 222/280, Vol. 2096, Secretary of Native Affairs to Koos Jonker, 16 September 1948: 'Met die doel voor oe oorweeg die regering al 'n breedvoerige plan vir die beperking van oormatige toevloed van naturelle na sekere gebiede en vir die inwerking - stelling van 'n stelselmatige reeling van Naturelle - arbeid.'

142 CAD, NTS, No. 289/280, Vol. 2144, NAD Algemene Omsendbrief No.1 van 1952, 28 January 1952.

the Native back to the farm?' Mr Rossouw responded jubilantly, 'we would welcome that'.[143] The parameters of what could be expected from state coercion had visibly shifted.

Outside of the Liaison Committee the majority of farmers in the Transvaal also exhibited a new attitude towards the state. At a TAU meeting held in 1949, loud applause greeted a speaker who suggested that, 'our government is now busy doing what we propose. We should support them, not ask them to do what they are already doing.'[144] Subsequent TAU resolutions reveal a marked drop in complaints about the government's control of Africans.[145]

This change in attitude came about because the NAD now promised to deliver the labour bureaux and tighter pass laws that farmers had called for throughout the 1940s. At the 1949 Liaison Committee meeting the Minister of Native Affairs informed the delegates that: 'I can tell you that we have decided to establish labour bureaux in all centres, with a central bureau in Pretoria.' The Chairman of the SAAU replied: 'I must congratulate you. That is what we want to have.'[146]

The effects of the new state policies were considerably more uneven than the sweeping pronouncements of the Minister and his secretary would suggest.[147] Nevertheless, the vision of what the state could and should achieve had shifted significantly. For example, the labour bureaux set up by the Native Laws Amendment Act (1952) intended to control the ability of all Africans to choose their employment. Africans were permanently prohibited from moving between rural and urban areas. 'The distinctions between urban (prescribed) and rural (non-prescribed) areas were made a political division on a national scale. The

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143 CAD, NTS, No. 463/280, Vol. 2229, Minutes of a Meeting between the NAD and the Liaison Committee of the SAAU, 1 November 1948.

144 CAD, NTS, No. 3/371, Vol. 9257, *Pretoria News*, 1 September 1949: 'Influence of Communism on Natives'.

145 CAD, NTS, No. 3/371, Vol. 9257, Annual TAU Congress, 29-30 August 1950; Annual TAU Congress, 31 August 1951.

146 CAD, NTS, No. 463/280, Vol. 2229, NAD and Liaison Committee, 6 December 1948: [Trans. in Text] 'Ek mag u meedeel dat daar besluit is om op alle sentrums arbeids buros te stig, met 'n sentrale buro in Pretoria. Ek moet u gelukwens. Dit is wat ons wil hé.'

147 This is discussed in detail in Chapter Seven.

movement and employment of Africans in and between them would be controlled by a system of influx and efflux regulations operated through a network of labour bureaux'.[148] According to this system, an African could only look for a job in an urban area if his 'district' bureau granted him leave and he could obtain registration at the urban 'local' bureau. Africans could only get access to this process if they gained permission at the 'regional' bureaux which was set up at the office of every Chief Native Commissioner. Hence, the bureaucratic structures controlling the movement of African labour were to be immensely intensified.

The labour bureaux formed part of a wider system of control. The revision of the pass laws was another element of the system, designed to back up the effectiveness of the bureaux. The Secretary of Native Affairs explained this process in the following way: 'The Minister Of Native Affairs has laid down various measures in order to get better control over the natives, and to counteract uncontrolled movement. In this the pass-book and the Labour Bureaux will help.'[149] Thus the National Party set about strengthening the pass laws. In 1952 the Natives (Abolition and Coordination of Documents) Act 'consolidated existing pass laws and introduced a uniform pass book for Africans'.[150]

The NAD also expanded its regional offices, partly in an attempt to be more responsive to farmers' complaints. At the Chief Native Commissioner's office the post of Streeks-werksverskaffings-kommisaris (Regional Labour Supplier or SWVK) was created. Whenever a farmer complained to the Minister of Native Affairs about a labour shortage, this officer was sent out from Pietersburg to investigate the situation. Subsequently, he would attempt to solve such a farmer's problems by means of the district labour bureaux. He also made sure that these bureaux functioned effectively. Apart from reflecting the expansion of the bureaucracy, these processes also show the lengths to which the NAD was

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148 T. Marcus, *Modernising Super-Exploitation* (London, Zed Books, 1989), p. 64.

149 CAD, NTS, No. 436/280, Vol. 2223, Secretary of Native Affairs to Mr Brink, 11 April 1953: 'Die Minister van Naturellesake het verskillende matreels in wetgewing laat vasle om beter beheer te kry oor die naturelle en ook om onbeheerde rondtrekkery teen te gaan. So byvoorbeeld sal die Bewysboek-stelsel en die Arbeidsburos help...'

150 Hindson, *Pass Controls and the Urban African Proletariat*, p. 61.

prepared to go in order to give farmers the impression that the state was acting in their interest. In one instance the SWVK travelled the ± 370 kilometres from Pietersburg to Ermelo only to find out that the particular farmer's complaints were completely unfounded.[151]

The Minister of Native Affairs would always take care to respond in the form of a letter when farmers' complaints about labour shortages reached his office. One such response was written in 1957 by his private secretary to Mrs Meyer, a farmer's wife in Ermelo. The secretary was concerned to inform the Meyers that 'the Minister has been seriously dealing with the question of a farm labour shortage. ... He is sorry that there are still serious problems in your district.'[152] The secretary then listed the successes that the labour bureaux had achieved in providing farm labour: It was discovered that six hundred Africans working at the Kinross Gold Mine originated from the farms. They were all sent back to the farms. In a period of nine months the bureaux had sent 50000 'leeglopers' ('wont-works') out of the Witwatersrand to various districts. Furthermore, 'the Minister and the Department helped to recruit teams for harvesting - partly amongst the children at school and partly in the reserves'.[153]

It is therefore clear that the new intentions of the state led to the massive expansion of the actual bureaucratic control practised in the 1950s. This can be substantiated further with reference to an incident in 1953, when the labour bureaux had been criticised for failing to reduce the labour shortage experienced by maize farmers in the Transvaal. This criticism was largely unfounded. Although the bureaux were unable to solve the shortage completely, they did give farmers significant assistance. The heightened labour shortage in 1953 was caused largely by the good rains and bumper crops of that year. In anticipation of the

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151 CAD, NTS, No. 289/280, Vol. 2146, SWVK to Secretary of Native Affairs, 9 March 1957.

152 CAD, NTS, No. 289/280, Vol. 2146, Private Secretary of Verwoerd to Mrs Meyer, 14 February 1957: [Trans. in Text] 'dat die Minister die vragstuk van plassarbeidstekort reeds lank baie ernstig opneem .... Hy is jammer dat in u omgewing daar nog ernstige moelikhede voorkom.'

153 CAD, NTS, No. 289/280, Vol. 2146, Private Secretary of Verwoerd to Mrs Meyer, 14 February 1957: [Trans. in Text]: 'Die Minister en die Departement [het] meegehelp dat met oestye oespanne gewerf word - party onder die naturelle kinders op skool en party in reserves'.

problem, the Central Labour Bureaux set in motion every possible method at its disposal. For six months before the maize harvesting season, the bureaux, in collaboration with the South African police, systematically channelled 'surplus' urban Africans into agriculture. Illegal African immigrants in the Witwatersrand were likewise diverted to the farms. When a report of large numbers of foreign Africans entering the Cape through Mafeking reached the bureaux in March, plans were immediately laid to utilise this source as farm labour. Just before the maize farmers were ready to reap their crops, the head of the central bureaux went personally to the reserve areas to consult with the chiefs about surplus labour in their communities. In this way 16500 Africans were 'placed' in agriculture in the period from January to May 1953.[154]

The new bureaux and pass law policy significantly changed the level of control that the NAD exercised over Africans, and profoundly improved the relationship between the NAD and farmers. The relationship was strengthened even further by the NAD's new attitude towards Chapter Four. Whereas the pre-1948 NAD had consistently refused to apply the Chapter, because they did not have access to sufficient Trust land to accommodate displaced labour tenants and 'squatters', Eiselen's assessment of the barriers in the way of the Chapter was radically different. He explained the problem in the following terms:

> 'Chapter Four of the Native Trust and Land Act was framed to terminate the unequal distribution of farm natives and the large scale squatting on certain farms. The Agricultural Union now demands that it should be enforced, but this can only be done if certain intolerable obligations, concerning the provision of additional ground, which have been placed on the Department by the Act, have been removed. As soon as the above-mentioned steps have been taken, a more equal distribution of labour can be expected.'[155]

The 1948 elections reversed the order of the two strategies of control followed by the NAD in the 1930s. The pre-1948 NAD had been concerned about the effects

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154 Marcus, *Modernising Super Exploitation*: 'In 1952, when the labour bureaux were first established in most major urban centres, of the 28,545 African men 'placed' in Agriculture by them, 21,823 came directly from urban labour bureaux'; Lazar, 'Conformity and Conflict': '... by 1953, 21,823 African workers from urban areas had been placed by the labour bureaux in employment in agriculture; and between the middle of 1954 and the end of 1957 another 268,705 workers were directed back to white farms.'

155 *NAD Blue Book*, Report of the Secretary of Native Affairs, 22 June 1951.

that direct bureaucratic control would have on its image as the 'protector of the native'. The post-1948 NAD still presented itself as the 'father of the Bantu'. However, if the African children decided to oppose this particular father, they quickly acquired the status of deviants, and were severely punished.

This was a paternalism with which labour tenant farmers could readily identify. On their farms in Lydenburg whites practised a similar kind of paternalism, in which their claims to racial superiority and demands for obedience were backed up by extensive violence.[156] In addition, the state's emphasis on direct control was clearly much more in line with the kind of state action that most farmers had demanded throughout the 1930s and 1940s. Although these policies did not end 'the farm labour problem', they had the potential to provide poorer farmers with a larger and more controlled cheap labour supply. These poorer farmers had been crucial in the National Party's election, and the state, now much more sensitive to their needs and demands, always gave them a hearing.

The relationship between the state and poorer labour tenant farmers was not, however, completely harmonious. A negative feeling about labour tenancy continued in the bureaucracy. The state's opposition was particularly pronounced in those instances where tenancy included labour stints in the urban areas. To counteract this movement between town and countryside NAD officials advocated a move towards a more permanent labour system, in which workers would have to work for a wage on farms throughout the year.[157] The concern to bring about a uniformity of conditions on white farms also persisted in the post-1948 NAD. Eiselen was of the opinion that the labour bureaux experienced problems in meeting farmers' labour demands because some farmers paid wages that were too low. He also claimed that farmers still expected too much from the state. The state could only operate at maximum efficiency, he argued, if the farmers established

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156 See Chapter Five, pp. 198-199.

157 CAD, NTS, No. 334/280, Vol. 2204, Director of Native Labour to Mr Ryder, 13 April 1950: 'The truth nevertheless remains that the labour tenant system lies at the root of this desertion from country to town.'

a 'uniformity of wages'.[158]

Despite these continuities, and the persistence of sites of conflict between the NAD and labour tenant farmers, a new, more cooperative, relationship between the two groups came into existence in the 1950s. This was bad news for labour tenants. Their victory in 1938 was facilitated in part by the weak and ambivalent relationship between the state and farmers. The subsequent failure of other administrative measures in the 1940s had given Africans a certain degree of freedom of movement and the ability to negotiate their labour contracts with farmers. These elements were threatened by the laws promulgated by the National Party. Chapter Seven will examine the impact of the new labour regulations on the resistance of labour tenants. However, before turning to that issue, the focus of the next chapter shifts to the transformations in the labour tenant world ushered in by the economic changes of the 1940s and 1950s.

CAD, NTS, No. 463/280, Vol. 2229, Meeting of the Liaison Committee, 15 November 1952.

CHAPTER FIVE

LAND vs WAGES: THE FAMILY AND URBAN EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES, 1940-1954

Agriculture received a tremendous boost during World War Two. Represented on a graph, the value of agriculture's output moved onto a much steeper gradient during the war and stayed on that trajectory throughout the 1950s and 1960s.[1] Lydenburg also experienced these trends, which led to a labour shortage in the district. Although the shortage was at its worst during the war, it was still prevalent in 1948 when the National Party came into power.[2] In the 1950s the shortage became less acute, but it was only in 1955 that new labour policies began to shift the balance of power decisively in favour of white farmers.[3]

Labour scarcities gave African tenants something to bargain with. The unequal benefits that farmers derived from economic development allowed tenants to move to smaller struggling farmers in order to avoid the extended labour demands of larger farmers. However, only the larger farmers had enough agricultural land to enable tenants to sustain their way of life. African tenants were thus faced with a difficult choice. They could either stay on the large farms and endure heavier labour demands, or they could move to smaller farms, where land was scarce and farmers could not afford to offer much assistance with food, clothes and taxes. Both choices in effect led labour tenant family members to look for urban job-opportunities, either on a permanent or on a temporary basis. On the large farms heavier labour demands prompted youths, and to a lesser extent women, to take

1 D.H. Houghton, *The South African Economy* (Cape Town, Oxford Univ. Press, 1973), p. 55.
2 See Chapter Four, p. 159.
3 For the eventual effects of this legislation see Chapter Seven.

the initiative to look for alternatives in the urban areas, while on the smaller farms the pressing need for supplementary cash forced tenant families as a whole to send at least one member to an urban job. These 'push' factors were complemented by the pull of new job opportunities in urban secondary industries, at a time when pass laws were proving to be ineffective.[4]

The adoption of migrant labour must also be seen in conjunction with the dynamics within households, which are defined as 'task oriented residence units'.[5] The thesis has so far concentrated on tenant households operating as coherent units, struggling against the impositions of white farmers and the state. But, as Schmidt points out,

> 'The household is a terrain of struggle, manifest in disputes over the allocation of labour, control over female reproduction, the distribution of resources, etc., the outcome of which helps to shape the broader society, as the household in turn is shaped by those broader social forces.'[6]

The chapter deals extensively with the issues raised by Schmidt. It offers a detailed anatomy of African households in Lydenburg, and then examines the kind of labour tenant contracts that existed in the early 1940s, showing that these contracts continued to facilitate a strong allegiance to the rural areas amongst African tenants. This allegiance is assessed from the point of view of both men and women. Then it is shown how the spread of urban migrancy and emigration posed a number of threats to the rural way of life, and how rural families committed to this lifestyle dealt with these threats. The chapter therefore demonstrates that, during the period 1940-1954, the focus of resistance moved away from the defence of land towards establishing links with the urban money economy. At the end of this period there were African families who still fought for their land, but to a significant extent the struggle had been undermined by migrancy and emigration.

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4 See Chapter Four, p. 153.

5 R. M. Netting, *et al, Households: Comparative and Historical Studies of the Domestic Group* (Berkeley, Univ. of California Press, 1984), p. xx.

6 E. Schmidt, *Peasants, Traders, and Wives: Shona women in the history of Zimbabwe, 1870-1939* (Portsmouth, Heineman, 1992), p. 1.

LABOUR TENANT HOUSEHOLDS IN THE 1940s

The internal dynamics of labour tenant households are an important focus of this chapter. It is therefore essential to establish precisely what these households looked like. Were they extended, containing a number of generations (like the *kgoros* in Mönnig's study of the Pedi), or had conditions in Lydenburg caused these households to break down into smaller units?[7] It was shown above that tenants living on the farms of absentee landlords were able to guarantee the loyalty of their sons, and that the factors that ensured this loyalty included the availability of land and cattle which sons could expect to inherit.[8] But, as James has shown for areas in Lebowa, limitations on land and cattle often led to the adoption of a last-born inheritance practice. In these situations only the last born son inherited the property of his father. This son would also be obligated to look after his parents when they became too old to work. The older sons escaped these obligations, but they had to search for the resources necessary to sustain their own households.[9] The table below shows that, while extended households continued to exist in Lydenburg in the 1940s, there was also a widespread adoption of last-born inheritance and a subsequent proliferation of nuclear households. There is insufficient evidence to determine precisely when these family structures began to emerge on a large scale. Available statistics for the 1940s, however, suggest that declining *per capita* cattle numbers, combined with increases in the area utilised commercially by white farmers, made it increasingly impossible to obtain land and cattle herds large enough to divide between more than one son.[10]

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7 H.O. Mönnig, *The Pedi* (Pretoria, Von Schaik, 1967), pp. 219-226.

8 See Chapter Three, p. 114.

9 See D. James, 'Land Shortage and Inheritance in a Lebowa Village', in *Social Dynamics* 14(2) 1988; D. James, 'A Question of Ethnicity: Ndzundza Ndebele in a Lebowa village', in *JSAS*, Vol. 16, No. 1, March 1990, p. 37.

10 The number of cattle per capita declined from approximately 2.042 for the period 1937-39 to 1.371 for the period 1946-48. See *Agricultural Census*, 1946-1948. For the populations figures for 1937 see Chapter Three, p. 108, n15; for 1945 see Chapter Seven, p. 258. For the increases in commercial land use see Chapter Two. p. 102.

TABLE OF HOUSEHOLDS IN THE 1940s

EXTENDED HOUSEHOLDS	
William Sewela:	***Born:*** 1944. ***Household Size:*** Extended family. Grandfather's plot was subdivided into blocks. ***Second Household Size:*** When his grandfather died, his father moved from the farms and settled in Sekhukhuneland. One of his uncles inherited the cattle.
Mrs Paile:	***Born:*** c1935. ***Household Size:*** Lived with mother's parents, and mother's brothers, some of whom were married. Father lived with his first wife in Machadadorp.
LAST-BORN INHERITANCE HOUSEHOLDS	
K. Makola:	***Born:*** c1940s. ***Household Size:*** Lived with uncle. Uncle had one wife, and was the head of the household. Last-born inheritance. Other sons moved away when they got married.
M. Mashele:	***Born:*** 1928. ***Household Size:*** Lived with her father until late 1940s. Her father had three wives. Last-born inheritance. When the oldest brother got married he could stay with the family, but when the next oldest brother got married, the older one would look for his own place. ***Second Household Size:*** When she got married, she moved in with her parents in law.
J. Masenga:	***Born:*** 1958. ***Household Size:*** Lived with father and mother. Mother's parents stayed on the same farm, but they lived apart, and each household had their own field.
Henry Selahle:	***Born:*** 1934. ***Household Size:*** Married one wife. His father lived on a neighbouring farm. He had four sons. Last-born inheritance.
Nellie Ngwana:	***Born:*** Early 1940s. ***Household Size:*** Lived with mother, father, and father's mother. Father was the only living son of grandparents, but the grandfather had two wives, and lived with the second wife in another district. Her father looked after his mother, who lived in their homestead in a separate hut.
Trecky Mnisi:	***Born*** c1944. ***Household Size:*** Lived with her parents and her father's parents. Father was the last born.

The adoption of last-born inheritance was facilitated further by the growing demand for labour in Lydenburg, because the available jobs and land allowed the sons (and sometimes daughters) who did not expect to inherit anything from their parents to establish nuclear households on the farms. These men and women included people who, frustrated by either the lack of resources or the domination of their parents, left the 'reserves'. On the one hand, Elizabeth Morele, who was probably born in 1920, explains that, although there was no tension within her family, she left Bushbuckridge in the 1930s because, like a man who moves on when he sees that there are no available women for him to marry, she perceived a shortage of land in Bushbuckridge. She settled in Lydenburg because opportunities seemed greater there. In her own words:

> 'I left like a young man looking for a lover, he just to goes to any other place, and if he gets a girlfriend somewhere else maybe he will stay there. I realised people

> have got their own fields [in Lydenburg]. People are ploughing and that what attracted me to that place.'[11]

Piet Makola's mother and father, on the other hand, were born on the Sekhukhuneland side of the Steelpoort. They moved to the white farms on the other side because of tension within the family. Piet does not remember why his parents made this move, but he explained that he only visited his maternal grandparents and did not know his paternal grandparents, suggesting that some kind of falling out occurred between the latter and Piet's parents.[12]

But tension between the generations was not always the cause of moves to establish smaller households. As in the case of Elizabeth Morele, some people moved around within Lydenburg to establish their own households because the district presented them with opportunities to do so. Wilhelmina Mabilane's parents, for example, moved from the Ohrigstad Valley in the north to the Waterval Valley in the south. Wilhelmina remembered:

> '[I lived with] just my father and mother. My uncles and everybody were separated. My grandparents were at Ohrigstad. They stayed there on a farm. I do not know why my parents split from my grandparents. We used to visit my grandparents at Ohrigstad. There was no tension between my parents and my grandparents. We used to visit them for some days. The last born would look after the grandparents when they got too old.'[13]

In the Lebowa examples cited by James it was migrant labour that allowed older sons to establish their own households.[14] But the examples above indicate that in Lydenburg nuclear household formation was facilitated by the proliferation of fields where, in Elizabeth Morele's words, 'people' could 'plough for themselves'. Kunana Sehale, who lived on the farm of Piet Winterbach from 1918 until 1977, explains the general procedures that established nuclear and stem families on

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11 Interview with Elizabeth Morele, Marulaneng, 7 June 1992; For Bushbuckridge see Chief John Koza, 'our soil is not favourable for crops', quoted in E. Ritchken, 'Leadership and Conflict in Bushbuckridge', Unpublished Thesis, p. 98; See also interview with Johanna Malope, Jane Furse, 11 June 1993; Johanna Malope's parents also left Bushbuckridge in the 1930s. Her parents belonged to the Lutheran Church. They frequently clashed with the non-Christian residents of the 'reserve', and, in Johanna's words, 'churchgoers pulled one way, and non-churchgoers pulled the other way', causing the Malope family to move to Lydenburg. They left Johanna's grandparents in Bushbuckridge, and established a nuclear family on a farm in the Spekboom Valley.

12 Interview with Piet Makola, Praktiseer, 12 June 1993.

13 Interview with Wilhelmina Mabilane, Marulaneng, 11 June 1993.

14 See James, 'Land Shortage and Inheritance', p. 44.

many farms in Lydenburg:

> 'If someone gets married he leaves and finds a new place. He will get a field on the other side. If you are working for your father then you share the field. ... While [a man] is still living he will look after [keep possession of] his own cattle, but when he dies the one who looked after the father for his whole life until he was dead gets all the cattle.'[15]

Most sons, except the one designated to look after his parents, would therefore be prepared to look for their own field, rather than share their father's field. These fields were often available at the farm on which a son had grown up. For example, Wessel Davel, who owned the 10000 morgen farm Rooidraai, kept 21 labour tenant families on his farm. These Africans were mostly descendants of five families who had settled on Rooidraai about sixty years previously. Davel kept the generations on his farm by approaching young men with an offer of a labour tenant contract as soon as they got married. The newly-married men would then pay for their plot of land with six months labour per year.[16] This practice of offering every married male a plot of land shows that there were pressures on young married men to establish their own households, and that Davel gave them fields to keep their labour on his farm.[17]

However, not everyone moved to establish a nuclear household. Margaret Mabusa and her mother came from Bushbuckridge in order to integrate themselves into an extended family structure. After the death of her father, she and her mother went to live with her paternal uncle in Lydenburg. This uncle was the head of an extended household consisting of his unmarried sons and daughters and his married sons. They lived 'far away from the white farmer', and the extended household was expected to provide the labour of only one male member.[18] This example suggests that some large or absentee farmers still provided tenants with

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15 Interview with Kunana Sehale, Praktiseer, 13 June 1993.

16 Central Archives Depot (CAD), Native Affairs Department (NTS), No. 289/280, Vol. 2167, SWVK to Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas), 22 September 1955.

17 CAD, NTS, Vol. 2167, No. 289/280 (3) (7), SWVK to Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas), 22 September 1955; See also Interview with Johanna Malope, Jane Furse, 11 June 1993: Q: Since you were living with your grandparents and uncles in Mapulaneng, why was it the case that when a boy got married in Lydenburg, he had to leave and find a new home for himself?
A: That is because he did not agree with the rules of the white man. So he left and lived on another white man's land.

18 Interview with Margaret Mabusa, Jane Furse, 15 June 1993.

sufficient land to maintain extended households. It also proves that the trend towards nuclear households did not necessarily destroy the concept of the extended family or kinship-group, and that nuclear households, when the circumstances demanded it, could link up with relatives in an attempt to re-establish the security offered by the extended household.[19]

The households described above were pulled in two directions during the 1940s. On the one hand, conditions in Lydenburg continued to facilitate an identification with a rural lifestyle, while, on the other hand, changing conditions began to undermine the attractiveness of the rural areas for disadvantaged family members. Later in this chapter I examine in detail the motives that caused people to stay in, or to leave, the rural areas. But, before doing so, I discuss the context in which these decisions were made.

LABOUR TENANT CONTRACTS IN THE EARLY 1940s

Despite important economic changes and the emergence of new labour practices, labour tenancy remained firmly entrenched in Lydenburg during the 1940s. In 1943 it was reported from Nebo and Sekhukhuneland, the 'reserves' bordering on western Middelburg and Lydenburg respectively, that there were a total of 3200 labour tenant families in the area around the 'reserves'. These families received 'grazing within limits - about ten head of large stock - and four to five morgen dry-lands, plus, when available, about one-and-a-half morgen under irrigation'.[20] Although the Commissioner in Sekhukhuneland declared that some farmers hired seasonal wage labour, the Nebo Commissioner described conditions that undoubtedly applied to the majority of farmers in both Lydenburg and Middelburg when he explained that:

> 'The only enquiries for farm labour received at this office for some time are from

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19 Netting, *et al*, *Households*: They distinguish between the household and the family in the following terms: 'While both household and families are culturally defined, the former are task oriented residence units and the latter are conceived as kinship groupings that need not be localised.' See also, I. Niehaus, 'Disharmonious Spouses and Harmonious Siblings: Conceptualising Household Formation among Urban Residents in Qwaqwa, South Africa', Forthcoming.

20 CAD, NTS, No. 222/280, Vol. 2094, Additional Native Commissioner Sekhukhuneland to Secretary of Native Affairs, 2 June 1943.

> farmers in other districts, mainly the highveld's maize growers. As far as farm labour in this area is concerned, the labour tenant system is firmly entrenched, and farm labourers are required to work three to six months, and sometimes longer each year at various times.'[21]

In 1946 the Native Commissioner for Sekhukhuneland sent 79 juveniles to farms at 10/- to 18/- per month plus rations and quarters but nine applications for adult labour received no response. The farmers who made these applications were all hoping to acquire 'unpaid labour tenants' but the tendency in Sekhukhuneland, the Commissioner explained, was for Africans to avoid the farms and look for 'urban and mine work' instead.[22]

Research conducted by Edith Jones, Rheinallt's wife, also showed that labour tenancy continued to predominate in Lydenburg. In addition, her enquiries uncovered the gradual emergence of seasonal wage labour as a source that was used by some farmers. In 1941 Edith Jones found that some larger farmers, especially those adopting large scale tobacco farming, were beginning to employ women and children from the 'reserves' on a seasonal basis. One such farmer, Hendrik Neethling, explained that he had six tenant families on his farm Aapiesdoorndraai, in the Steelpoort Valley, where he grew maize, wheat and tobacco.[23] The men worked for him all year round; in return they could plough as much land and keep as much cattle as they wanted. The women and children, he claimed, did not work for him. Jones, however, doubted this claim because she saw 'a few oldish women about the house' and suspected that these were labour tenant wives.[24] Neethling supplemented the labour he got from the resident tenants by hiring women and children from Sekhukhuneland at about 5/- per month and by renting the neighbouring farm, Dresden. Most of the casual labourers from Sekhukhuneland were hired for the sorting and drying of the tobacco harvest, while the African residents of Dresden had to provide three

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21 CAD, NTS, No. 222/280, Vol. 2094, Assistant Native Commissioner Nebo to Secretary of Native Affairs, 7 June 1943. See also NTS, No. 222/280, Vol. 2094, Native Commissioner Lydenburg to Secretary of Native Affairs, 28 May 1943.

22 CAD, NTS, No. 222/280, Vol. 2096, NAD Memo, 31 January 1946.

23 Wits Historical Papers Library (WHPL), AD843.53.7, Edith Jones' interview with Hendrik Neethling, February 1941; See Chapter Two, p. 72 & Chapter Three, pp. 108 - 109, for evidence given by Neethling to the Native Economic Commission.

24 See also Chapter Three, p. ?

months labour, which involved ploughing, harvesting, and the maintenance of irrigation furrows.[25]

After the Dresden Africans had completed their three months they were free to return to their homes, or to find work in the towns. Neethling claimed that the older men preferred to stay on the farm and look after their cattle and lands, while the younger ones went away to work. The tenants who had to stay on Aapiesdoorndraai the whole year survived because Neethling provided them with at least two meals a day and paid most of their taxes. Tenants also made 'money from their mealies.'[26]

Mr. Luchtenburg, who farmed on a smaller scale than Neethling, owned the farm Doornhoek in the Spekboom Valley.[27] He grew fruit and wheat and kept some chickens. He employed the tenants on Doornhoek and the African residents of the farm Kliplaakdrift, which he hired for that purpose. He used women and girls from his farm 'on occasion', and paid them in kind. Tenants on his farm got two morgen of their own land as well as access to the crops of a further two morgen of Luchtenburg's land. Luchtenburg hired additional labour only occasionally, when he had 'no labour left'.[28] He also paid the taxes of his tenants; Jones argued that 'this was the rule' in Lydenburg.

Less market-oriented than Neethling and Luchtenburg, but perhaps more typical of other farmers in the district, was Chris Bauling, a descendent from an old Lydenburg missionary family. Bauling owned a portion of the farm Boerboomkraal in the Waterval Valley.[29] The farm consisted of 600 morgen, with plenty of irrigated land, on which Bauling grew 'wheat, some mealies, a little tobacco, fruit and vegetables for home use only, and kept some cattle'. He accommodated seven labour tenant families which, he said, were 'enough in general for the labour

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25 Wits Historical Papers Library (WHPL), AD843.53.7, Edith Jones' interview with Hendrik Neethling, February 1941; See also below pp. 186-187.
26 WHPL, AD843.53.7, Edith Jones' interview with Hendrik Neethling, February 1941.
27 CAD, NTS, No. 5/441, Vol. 10397, Minutes of Labour Tenant Control Board Lydenburg, 10 July 1957.
28 WHPL, AD843.53.7, Edith Jones' interview with Mr Luchtenburg, February 1941.
29 This was the farm that Johannes Dinkwanyane occupied in the nineteenth century.

required'. The tenants worked on a yearly contract, with no 'definite dates'; they stayed on the farm all year round, and worked whenever they were called. In return, they received 'dry land as much as they like, and a reasonable irrigation plot.' Bauling ploughed their lands; if they had oxen they were spanned in with the farmer's oxen. During bad years Bauling fed all the Africans on his farm, even if he had to buy the maize at 'exorbitant prices'. The wives of the labour tenants were expected to keep their own land hoed and they had to weed Bauling's land when he called them. They also had to take turns working in his kitchen. The tenants sold all the wheat that they produced on their irrigated plots, and if the grain year was 'a good one', Bauling suggested that 'they pay their own tax'. The African residents agreed that this was fair if Bauling paid the tax of the 'tenants who are worse off.' Bauling claimed that he 'liked the personal relations with the people on his farm, and he knew that he could get as many families more as he wanted, any day. He simply had no labour troubles or complaints.'[30]

The attractiveness of Bauling's January-to-January contract poses a challenge to the analysts who have assumed that longer tenant contracts were invariably less popular than shorter ones.[31] This view only works when it is used to examine the type of formal three-month or six-month contract reflected in the Land Acts. As we have seen, these kinds of contracts existed in Lydenburg, and they facilitated male migration to jobs on the mines or in the urban areas during the period of 'free time'. Furthermore, there was a growing tendency in the 1940s (despite the recent failure of Chapter Four of the 1936 Land Act) to demand six months' labour instead of three. When faced with a choice between a three or a six month contract, African tenants invariably chose the former.[32] In those cases where migrancy was part of an African family's survival strategy, they fought for the

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30 WHPL, AD843.53.7, Jones' interview with Chris Bauling, February 1941.

31 See especially J. Krikler, *Revolution from Above: The Agrarian Transvaal at the Turn of the Century* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1993). pp. 105-106.

32 Interview with Lucy Magagula, Jane Furse, 6 February 1991; Theresa Moretsele, Jane Furse, 6 February 1991; Kitty Sehlangu, Jane Furse, 22 December 1990; Bella Mapanga, Mashishing, 20 September 1992; Maria Chauke, Praktiseer, 13 June 1993; Moses Manana, Jane Furse, 17 April 1993.

maintenance of the three month period.[33] This, and the prevalence of the three month arrangement amongst poorer farmers who could not pay tenants' taxes, is reflected in Abraham Motau's assertion that

> 'the best farmer was the one who would allow the young people to work outside the farm. ... They would go to Pretoria and Johannesburg. They could go any time. The farmer used to encourage that because he was not rich so there was no money on that farm.'[34]

Motau, still young in the 1940s, was educated at the Catholic Mission. He was therefore likely to favour migrancy, both as a way of getting 'out of the house' and as a way of putting his education to use in better paid, semi-skilled, urban jobs.[35]

The popularity of the January-to-January contract, in a district that also contained the views described above, can be explained by the fact that it was a different kind of contract, which served interests different than those of young migrants like Motau. It centred around the sustenance of a rural life style and the *avoidance* of migrancy. In order to maintain themselves on the farms throughout the year, tenants cooperated with larger white farmers, who ranged from the 'progressive' Neethling to the more security conscious Bauling. Thus the January-to-January arrangement meant that tenants and farmers were, to some extent, involved in a joint agricultural venture, and consequently tenants did not perceive a clear division between work for the farmer and work for themselves. In the words of Elise Mduli, who was born in 1940:

> 'There was no specific time really to do work on our own fields. The farmer would give us his machine for weeding and it would be pulled by oxen and we would do [his field] at the same time that we were doing our fields as well. There was no specific time like: this time you do my fields and then you do this and then that. Because all this was done by the black workers we could just take that and use it on our own fields.'[36]

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33 Interview with Maria Sewele, Marulaneng, 11 April 1992: 'In the case of my parents my father would work for four months and then he was free to go and work in town or wherever. Next door the conditions were bad because people had to work six months, so we thought that it was better to work for four months.'

34 Interview with Abraham Motau, Jane Furse, 10 December 1990.

35 Interview with Abraham Motau, Jane Furse, 10 December 1990: Motau became a taxi driver.

36 Interview with Elise Mduli, Marulaneng, 6 June 1992; Letta Mabuza, Marulaneng, 7 June 1992: 'Ploughing was done at the same time as the farmers field; Mr Malapo, Marulaneng, 12 April 1992; Amie Sewele, Marulaneng, 12 April 1992; Mkenyi Mkhabela, Jane Furse, 20 December 1990; Anna Mapanga, Mashishing, 20 September 1992.

The cooperative character of the relationship between white farmers and their tenants was further reflected in the way that cattle were kept and used on the farm. The cattle of both groups were often kept together and herded by the sons of labour tenants:

> 'There were no individual kraals. It was just one big kraal next to the farmer's house and all the cattle for everyone were put in there, there were no problems, you knew which cows were yours. Each and every family would send a boy there to look after the cattle together with the farmers and each family knows how many they have and they also have names for their cows and oxen.'[37]

Poorer farmers often depended on the oxen, and sometimes the ploughing equipment, of their tenants. Tenants who had no equipment of their own would often depend in the same way on farmers.[38]

The January-to-January tenants made their living on the land without seeking outside employment. Amie Sewele, who was born in 1926, describes the way that people survived within this system:

> 'It was O.K. to live on the farms. ... There was enough food on the farm, but we didn't have sufficient clothes. ... My grandmother had a plot of land and we would plough that and get some mealies, and that would be ground and turned into mealie meal. That was our food. We were working from January to January, because the farmer would rotate maize and wheat, so that we were working throughout. We had to plough and take some of our crops to the nearest shop, and get money to buy clothes and coffee and such. There were no salaries on the farm. The farmer would not allow people to go and work in the cities.'[39]

To earn some cash for basic needs like clothes and 'luxuries' like sugar and coffee, most of the tenant families who worked from January to January sold their crops at Lydenburg markets.[40] They also relied on the farmer to provide them with food during droughts as well as with lunch when they worked in the fields. In addition, they expected farmers to supply milk, clothes if they could not afford

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37 Interview with Elise Mduli, Marulaneng, 6 June 1992; Mkenyi Mkhabela, Jane Furse, 20 December 1992; Mr Malapo, Marulaneng, 12 April 1992.

38 Interview with Elise Mduli, Marulaneng, 6 June 1992: 'The farmer would take their oxen to plough his fields and their own fields as well, use that jointly.' Rose Masilela, Jane Furse, 8 February 1991; Amie Sewele, Marulaneng, 12 April 1992.

39 Interview with Amie Sewele, Marulaneng, 12 April 1992; See also Elise Mdluli, Marulaneng, 6 June 1992; Mrs Makua, Mashishing, 25 January 1993.

40 Interview with Elise Mdluli, Marulaneng, 6 June 1992; Monica Letsoane, Mashishing, 11 April 1992; William Mgiba, Jane Furse, 6 February 1992; Mrs Mdaka, Jane Furse, 21 December 1990.

their own, and medical care during severe illnesses.[41]

FARM LABOUR ACCORDING TO AGE AND GENDER

The two different kinds of labour tenant contracts outlined above produced different divisions of labour. In the January-to-January contracts, where men were on the farm and in their homes throughout the year, they would do most of the heavy agricultural work.[42] The men ploughed their own and the farmer's field, repaired irrigation furrows and watered the fields. The latter task was particularly unpleasant. It involved opening up the furrows, wading in the water, which in winter was ice cold, and spending entire days spreading the water over the field with spades.[43] Women, by contrast, did a combination of domestic and agricultural labour. They divided their time between the farmer's household and their own by rotating the former obligation with the wives and/or daughters of other labour tenants. Women also usually hoed and weeded the fields, while everybody participated in harvesting.[44] Young boys, and sometimes young girls, primarily herded cattle, but teenage youths, often from the age of thirteen, did the same work as their parents.[45] Grandparents who were too old to work were usually fairly inactive, although the men sometimes looked after cattle.[46] Thus in the January-to-January contracts all members of an African family worked - for the farmer and for the family as a whole. This situation had existed for a long time. However, as agricultural production expanded on individual Lydenburg farms and workloads increased, women and youths - who often did most, if not the hardest, of the work - began to look for alternatives, away from the control

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41 Interview with William Sewele, Jane Furse, 16 June 1993; Martha Bhuda, Marulaneng, 2 June 1992; Letta Mabuza, Marulaneng, 7 June 1992; Mr Malatje, Marulaneng, 12 April 1992; Amie Sewele, Marulaneng, 12 April 1992; Emily Mkhonto, Jane Furse, 8 February 1991; Bella Mapanga, Mashishing, 20 September 1992; Johanna Malope, Jane Furse, 11 June 1993; Mr & Mrs Ngomane, Praktiseer, 13 June 1993; Piet Makola, Jane Furse, 12 June 1993.

42 Interview with Elizabeth Morele, Marulaneng, 7 June 1992; Mr Malatje, Marulaneng, 7 June 1992; Theresa Moretsele, Jane Furse, 6 February 1991.

43 Interview with Anna Mapanga, Mashishing, 20 September 1992.

44 Interview with Constance Sibulele, Marulaneng, 7 June 1991; Ella Shabangu, Jane Furse, 7 February 1991; Amie Sewele, Marulaneng, 12 April 1992; Anna Mapanga, Mashishing, 20 September 1992.

45 Interview with Mrs Makua, Mashishing, 25 January 1992; Emily Mkhonto, Jane Furse, 8 February 1991; Kitty Sehlangu, Jane Furse, 22 December 1990.

46 Interview with Moses Manana, Jane Furse, 17 April 1993; Mr Malapo, Marulaneng, 12 April 1992.

exercised by the head of the household.[47]

Labour was apportioned in a completely different way among those tenants who lived on the farms of absentee landlords, sheep farmers and poorer farmers. On all these farms, male tenants were expected to provide a certain number of labour months to the white owners. In their free time they worked on their own fields, or acquired migrant jobs in the urban areas. Women often fell outside these contracts, and, even when they were included in the contract, they would stay behind when their husbands sought outside employment.[48] Women therefore bore a heavy responsibility for the maintenance of their own houses and fields. Women would often do the ploughing on their own fields, either with the help of their husbands, or, if the latter was away, with the help of their children.[49] In these situations women became disillusioned, not because of the excessive control that their husbands exercised over them, but because of the growing length of their husband's absences, which left the women with all the work.[50]

SUSTAINING THE RURAL LINK

The inequalities within African families could, as we will see later, push individuals out of the rural areas. But there were numerous factors that continued to bind people to a rural way of life. One of these factors was the widespread belief that land and cattle were a necessary part of any meaningful existence. This is clearly reflected in the following story told by Bauling to Edith Jones:

> 'A few years ago my tenants came to me and said that they heard workers in

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47 The adoption of bean farming for example produced complaints about the long and back breaking work that harvesting of this crop required. See Interview with Letta Mabuza, Marulaneng, 7 June 1992; Amie Sewele, Marulaneng, 12 April 1992: 'I had to work very hard and I was not given any of the things that I was used to. I became tired of farm work because the farmers were giving us a lot of work and so we felt we wanted something different'; See also Elise Mdluli, Marulaneng, 6 June 1992; Emily Mkhonto, Jane Furse, 22 January 1992. See below p. ?

48 Interview with Maria Maphunga, Jane Furse, 24 January 1992; Effy Mapanga, Jane Furse, 19 September 1992; Margaret Mabusa, Jane Furse, 15 June 1993.

49 Interview with Ephraim Mosehla, Jane Furse, 22 January 1992; Kleinboy Makola, Glen Cowie, 15 June 1993; Wilhelmina Mabilane, Marulaneng, 11 June 1993; Moses Manana, Jane Furse, 17 April, 1993.

50 CAD, NTS, No. 367/313S, Vol. 6504, Magistrate Lydenburg to Chief Native Commissioner, 27 April 1953: Refers to 'destitute and deserted wives of natives who have obtained employment elsewhere ... This problem has only recently arisen.' The problem became more widespread in the 1960s, and is discussed in more detail in Chapter Eight, p. 308.

> Johannesburg got 2/6 a day. I said: "You can have two six a day if you work all the year round, 6 days a week, the full day. I will even give you your house plot, and I will feed you two meals on the working days, but you can not have any land to plough, or stock." The tenants laughed and said they would rather stay as they are. What would they be without their lands and cattle?"[51]

Further evidence of this emerges from the interviews conducted by Edith Jones with other white farmers, who argued, as they had done in 1930, that they could not abandon labour tenancy because Africans demanded these conditions.[52] In addition, the farmers also claimed that labour tenancy was the only system that provided them with a *stable*, cheap work force, and it is here that the interests of white farmers intersected with the interests of labour tenant household heads. The January-to-January contract provided both categories of people with an effective way of making sons dependent on their fathers.[53] Migrancy, which offered sons independent access to income, threatened the stability of the family. The simplest way for household heads to overcome these problems was to ensure that their sons avoided migrancy altogether.[54]

Idealisations of a rural lifestyle and self-sufficiency, typified by the following statement of Michael Monate, must therefore be placed within the context of family power relations:

> 'It was a good life on the farm ... We were ploughing for ourselves, and the farmer was just an absentee landlord. We could get enough food to eat. We could sell some of our surplus for money, and then we could get clothes.'[55]

By living on the land, men could rely on their women and children, instead of placing themselves, as individuals, completely at the mercy of a white employer. The preservation of independence and self-reliance was central to this strategy, and farm tenants therefore strove relentlessly to protect their families from the excessive intrusions of white farmers. For example, one of the recurring themes in the interviews I conducted was criticism of farmers who constantly supervised

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51 WHPL, AD843.B53.7., Interview by Edith Jones with Chris Bauling, February 1941.
52 WHPL, AD843.B53.7., Interview by Edith Jones with Hendrik Neethling; Mr. Luchtenburg; Albert Coetser, February 1941.
53 See Chapter Three, p. 115.
54 Interview with Mr Malapo, Marulaneng, 12 April 1992, See Chapter three p 114.
55 Interview with Michael Monate & Jeremia Moleke, Mashishing, 10 April 1992; Ephraim Mosehla, Jane Furse, 22 January 1992; Hosia Phala & Michael Mashupje, Mashishing, 2 February 1992.

their workers:

> 'Most of us suffered because a farmer would follow you on horseback to work. Other farmers were better because they did not follow you on horseback, they would just show you that this is your work, this is what you must do and they would leave it to you. But others they would supervise you every time and come to your home and follow you to work on horseback.'[56]

Household-heads therefore continued to defend their families' residual autonomy on the land. The support of their women, whether active or passive, was another crucial part of this strategy, and the evidence suggests that African women in Lydenburg usually stood by their men. Many women actively believed in a self-sufficient, agriculturally-based lifestyle. Betty Mnisi, who was born in Lydenburg in 1917, explains why women preferred rural over urban areas:

> 'We have land here. Land is better because if you are given that piece of land it remains yours; you can plough it all the time. But if you are employed somewhere you might get fired anytime and then it doesn't provide any security; land provides that security. But if you could get a job and not get fired, if you could work forever, then that would be better.'[57]

The association of land with security was, at the same time, linked to a conceptualisation of the family as an institution of mutual support. Mrs Moleke articulates this clearly:

> 'There was co-operation. The husband could go to town and work, the women should remain at home, look after children and do ploughing. And children would also help with ploughing. We were staying like in one big family. It was my husband's people. My husband's parents together with his brothers and sisters. And I was married into that family so I was staying with them. So even if he was staying in town there was no problem because the old man was there and the other children and his younger brothers were there and they could all plough the land.'[58]

Monica Letsoane, who was born in 1901 on the farm Rietfontein, also emphasises the importance of women's domestic obligations and the necessity of staying in the rural areas:

> 'Women would stay at home. As they were married they couldn't just go to town. They could go to visit their husbands, but mostly they should be at home, look

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56 Interview with Sekwatane Mosehla, Jane Furse, 22 February 1992; Rose Masilela, Jane Furse, 8 February 1991; Hezekiel Malope, Jane Furse, 19 October 1992; Anna Ndlovu, Jane Furse, 16 June 1993; Petrus Magolego, Jane Furse 8 December 1990.

57 Interview with Betty Mnisi, Marulaneng, 6 June 1992; Constance Sibulele, Marulaneng, 7 June 1992: 'I realised I could generate something if I could get a piece of land. I could get something to support myself.'

58 Interview with Mrs Moleke, Mashishing, 12 April 1992.

> after the home, do some work, look after the crops. [If women went to town] the problem would be: What about the children, who would look after them? If we all went to town, who would look after my home?'[59]

A complex combination of factors account for women's support for land, the family and their own domesticity. These include the cultural framework into which rural women were born, the structures that limited the power of women, and the limited alternatives that were available for African women in racist South Africa.

The commitment to land - as well as cattle - was part of a rural culture that was taught to rural men and women when they were still children. As Monica Letsoane explains:

> 'Our parents didn't allow us to sell everything, to sell all the cattle. You should always remain with something, that is how we were brought up. The decision [about selling] is taken by the husband, but usually you wouldn't sell all of it. Because maybe if something went wrong in town you could still come home because you've got cattle, you've got land, so you can live.'[60]

Ferguson shows that, in Lesotho, cattle were a cultural resource that defined rural relations and gave cattle owners social status.[61] In Lydenburg, as is indicated by Monica Letsoane's evidence, cattle played a similarly important social role. Henry Selahle, who took on his first migrant job in 1953 in order to earn money for bride-wealth, recollects that bride-wealth was often paid in cattle, but some fathers of the bride would demand money. This probably reflects the growing cash needs of Lydenburg tenants in the 1940s and 50s.[62] But Selahle emphasises that cattle nevertheless maintained their cultural value:'Cattle were much more valuable according to tradition. Without cows you would not be seen as a proper young man who was prepared to marry.'[63]

One way of counteracting the contradiction between social/cultural and cash needs

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59 Interview with Monica Letsoane, Mashishing, 11 April 1992.

60 Interview with Monica Letsoane, Mashishing, 11 April 1992.

61 J. Ferguson, *The Anti Politics Machine: Development, Depoliticisation and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho* (Cape Town, David Philip, 1990), p. 152.

62 See also Interview with Martha Mashele, Jane Furse, 16 June 1993.

63 Interview with Henry Selahle, Alverton, 4 July 1993; See also interview with Kleinboy Makola, Glen Cowie, 15 June 1993: 'In the olden days it meant you were rich. We did not think about cars or tractors, but we just liked having a lot of cows filling the yard'; For the significance of cattle in religious rituals see Interview with Maria Maphunga, Jane Furse, 24 February 1992; A. Kuper, *Wives for Cattle: Bridewealth and Marriage in Southern Africa* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982).

was the practice of paying bridewealth in both cattle and money.[64] Therefore, despite the partial integration of African labour tenants into a wider market economy, they maintained their links to cattle and a rural social order. This applied, as is shown below, even to men who emigrated to the urban areas. They would maintain access to cattle in the rural areas and could thus fall back on a rural social network if, in Monica Letsoane's words, 'something went wrong in town'.[65]

Women were affected by this culture because, as Kunana Sehale explains, 'women were married with cattle' and they could therefore not leave the rural areas.[66] As Kuper shows, the essence of the social systems built on cattle was the exchange of wives for cattle, which also accorded men rights to women's children.[67] These exchanges involved numerous reciprocal obligations that bestowed status and wealth on members of both the wife's and the husband's families. Wives who ran away from the rural areas would therefore destroy this process of exchange, undermining not only their husbands, but also their fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters. Therefore, one of the crucial social functions performed by cattle was to underline the dominance of men over women. Rural culture not only connected people to the rural areas by invoking an intricate matrix of values and convictions, but also by actively undermining women and by limiting the options open to them.

Women's support for a rural lifestyle that to a large extent was built on their subservience and exploitation can thus not be separated from the constraints placed on their freedom. Most of the women I interviewed felt resigned, to some extent, to the control that men exercised over them. Men made the decisions, they said, and women had to obey: 'We are controlled by men. ... If they say we have to do this we do it.'[68] Some women felt particularly dominated and saw even

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64 Interview with Evelina Mpanye, Bothashoek, 14 June 1993; Interview with Johanna Malope, Jane Furse, 11 June 1993.

65 Interview with Monica Letsoane, Mashishing, 11 April 1992; See also p. ? below.

66 Interview with Kunana Sehale, Praktiseer, 13 June 1993.

67 Kuper, *Wives for Cattle*, p. 3; M.D.W. Jeffreys, 'Lobolo is Child-Price', in *African Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 4, December 1951.

68 Interview with Constance Sibulele, Marulaneng, 7 June 1992; Maria Maphunga, Jane Furse, 24 January 1992.

divorce as an impossible option: 'women never divorced their husbands', Mrs Mashegoane remembers, because 'when you were married you were supposed to go and live with your husband wherever he came from.'[69] 'A man is the head of the family', says Mrs Dinkwanyane, 'he controls everything. ... With us women, there is nothing we can do.'[70]

It was, furthermore, very difficult for women to move about without their husbands because the whole pass system was geared towards men.[71] 'You couldn't just go there without a trekpass. It is only men who got passes', says Mrs Sibulele.[72] And Monica Letsoane concurs: 'Women didn't get passes on the farms, they worked forever on the farms.'[73]

Women were also dependent on men because of the difficulties involved in getting independent access to land. Mrs Mthembu, in keeping with the rural culture described above, was proud of the land that her parents occupied. But when they died she was not able to take over from them - as a last-born male would have done - because by then she 'belonged' to another family, the family of her husband:

> 'When [my parents] died the land was left and I couldn't go and plough it because I was now in the hands of other people. There was nothing I could do because the decision was taken by my husband that I must go and stay there in town. Though I didn't like it, there was nothing I could do. My parents had cattle. My brothers, after seeing my parents have died, they sold the cattle. They gave me a little money from the cattle but they took most of it because the cattle belonged to them, so what ever they gave me I was glad. Traditionally a woman does not inherit cattle, only boys [inherit cattle]'.[74]

However, despite the many disabilities they faced, women were not entirely powerless. In some relationships husbands would consult their wives about whether they should leave a farm or not. In some cases women initiated the

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69 Interview with Mrs Mashegoane, Praktiseer, 13 June 1993.
70 Interview with Mrs Dinkwanyane, Mashishing, 23 January 1992.
71 J. Sharp & M. Spiegel, 'Women & Wages: Gender and the control of income in farm and Bantustan households', in *JSAS*, Vol. 16, No. 3, September 1990, p. 534.
72 Interview with Constance Sibulele, Marulaneng, 7 June 1992.
73 Interview with Monica Letsoane, Mashishing 11 April 1992; Emily Mkhonto, Jane Furse, 22 January 1992; Amie Sewele, Marulaneng, 12 April 1992.
74 Interview with Mrs Mthembu, Jane Furse, 24 January 1992. It did, on rare occasions, happen that women inherited fields and cattle. See Interview with Mr & Mrs Ngomane, Praktiseer, 13 June 1993.

decision to leave.[75] Women also sometimes took the lead in directly criticising a farmer, since most farmers 'would not hit women.'[76] Further, women established some independence by transporting and selling their produce at the market. Husbands could not undertake this task as they were too busy working for the farmer, but they objected to the practice, probably because it gave women too much control over the cash generated by the crop sales.[77] In a similar fashion some women gained access to their own income by brewing spirits and selling them in the town. This practice was illegal and often dangerous. Anna Ndlovu remembers, as a young child in the 1950s, going to Lydenburg town with her mother at night to sell alcohol in the 'township':

> 'We distilled *spion* and then woke up at four o clock to go and sell it in town. ... If white people were fair they were supposed to give us licenses. We were supposed to get a licence for brewing, but my mother was arrested every year. ... She brewed it in the forest near the river. We woke up at two in the morning to go and sell it in town. We would climb up the mountain, [with me] being about five or six [years old], and my mother leading at the front. We had no shoes. Our dresses were made of meal bags. When we saw a car coming we hid ourselves. ... We made about R40 from the sale of *spion*. We used to collect the money at the end of the month and we would go to the shops to buy a big roll of cloth.'[78]

In those instances where women were abused by their husbands, they could go to the white farmer for help, although the effectiveness of this strategy seems to have been somewhat doubtful since the farmer usually merely scolded the offending male.[79] In some cases, where a husband was guilty of repeatedly beating his wife severely, the farmer would call the police.[80] With a little bit of creativity a woman could, furthermore, effectively manipulate the white farmer's sons or daughters against an abusive husband. That is precisely what Annetjie Sibande did. She was widowed and lived with a male farm labourer who intended to marry her, but who also beat her fairly regularly. The teenage son of the white farmer confronted this man and asked him: 'Why are you beating Annetjie?'. 'But', Annetjie explains,

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75 Interview with Kleinboy Makola, Glen Cowie, 15 June 1993; Mr & Mrs Ngomane, Praktiseer, 13 June 1993: Mrs Ngomane clashed with the farmer, and left the farm and her husband, Later Mr Ngomane followed her and they moved to Sabie together.

76 Interview with Trecky Mnisi, Okkernootboom, 14 November 1993.

77 WHPL, AD843.B53.7., Interview by Edith Jones with Chris Bauling, February 1941.

78 Interview with Anna Ndlovu, Jane Furse, 15 June 1993.

79 Interview with Johanna Malope, Jane Furse, 11 June 1993.

80 *Ibid.*

> 'this [African] man could not speak Afrikaans, so I interpreted for him. In the process I put him in trouble, because I did not interpret the same words that he said. I told them that he said that he did not want me to work, because the whites made me work until late at night. I wanted the whites to beat him the way he had beaten me. Then the white boy told him: "We have understood why you beat Annetjie. So go away." His mother asked him why he chased the man away ... [and the white boy replied:] "This lady cooks for us, and she raised us. I do not want to see her cry. [The African man] then left. As he left the white boy unlocked a [very vicious] dog, and told it to "vat hom". The dog bit the [African man] so much it nearly killed him. That white boy was very fond of me, and very protective towards me. So after that I remained alone with my children on the farm.'[81]

Not only were women able to manipulate a variety of devices in defence against abusive husbands, they could also, on occasion, resort to the dissolving of a marriage. Despite being 'married with cattle', not all women were irrevocably tied to their husbands because, without undermining the essence of the wives for cattle exchange, they could return to their parents if their husband behaved in an unacceptable fashion. Somewhat contradicting Mrs Mashegoane's evidence, cited earlier, was the case of Lucy Magagula. She was born on the African-owned farm Boomplaats in 1938. She married and went to live with a labour tenant from the farm Grysgewag during the 1950s. But, before 1961, she moved back to her parents on Boomplaats because her 'husband started drinking'.[82] Johanna Malope, who was born on a Spekboom Valley farm in 1929, recalls that: 'Cows were used to pay lobola for us, [but] if you get divorced and come back home [your father] must give the cows back.'[83]

Women could also turn to the church for support. Although, as shown earlier, the missions in Lydenburg did not play a major role in defending their African followers against white farmers, they did make some contribution towards protecting women against their husbands. Women were sometimes able to use the influence of the church against husbands who drank too much and/or beat their

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81 Interview with Annetjie Sibande, Marulaneng, 7 July 1993.

82 Interview with Lucy Magagula, Jane Furse, 6 February 1991; Johanna Malope, Jane Furse, 11 June 1993.

83 Interview with Johanna Malope, Jane Furse, 11 June 1993; See M.D.W. Jeffreys, 'Lobolo is Child-Price', p. 174; J. Stadler, 'Bridewealth and the Deferral of Marriage', in *Africa Perspective*, Vol. 2, No. 1, December 1993, on the drawn out nature of bridewealth payments, which strengthened the continuing ties that a wife had to her parents.

wives.[84] As Johanna Malope explains: [The Lutheran Church] gave advice. We told the ministers [about beatings and conflict]. We were, after all, married in the church.'[85] The church also provided women with moral support. Martha Mashele, for example, attended a women's prayer group every Thursday at the Lutheran Church. This group, she recalls, offered support to battered women: 'You know how the world is. Women would come to tell us to pray for them because they were fighting at home.'[86] Lastly, the Catholic church provided a few women with the option of completely abandoning the African family system by joining a convent. This was not an easy option; African women who decided to accept the 'calling of the Catholic church' usually had to face very stern opposition from their fathers, as Sister Masemola remembers:

> 'After I told my father I was joining the church he threatened to hit me. I cried the whole night. Then I was given work at the church, and my parents agreed to that. But it gave me the opportunity to avoid my parents and interact with the sisters. Then my father arrived one day, drunk, and asked me again if I intended to become a nun. I said yes, and he agreed.'[87]

But, despite the severe disadvantages that women faced on the land, many women perceived the rural lifestyle and land as safer than an existence based on urban wage labour. Land, as we saw above, was regarded as something that was reliable and could be controlled by African women, while in an urban area a person could get fired at any time.[88] Women were not completely powerless in the rural areas, and, it must be added, they could usually look forward to a time when they could obtain some power by exercising control over their daughters-in-law.[89] But in order to grasp fully the context in which these women's commitment to land was developed, it is necessary to look in more detail at the differences between urban and rural employment.

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84 For exceptions see, Interview with Kleinboy Makola, Glen Cowie, 15 June 1993; Mr & Mrs Ngomane, Praktiseer, 13 June 1993. Both interviews claimed that the church had no influence in these situations.

85 Interview with Johanna Malope, Jane Furse, 11 June 1993.

86 Interview with Martha Mashele, Jane Furse, 16 June 1993.

87 Interview with Sister Theresa and Sister Masemola, Glen Cowie, 15 April 1993.

88 Interview with Betty Mnisi, Marulaneng, 6 June 1992; Constance Sibulele, Marulaneng, 7 June 1992; Mrs Moleke, Mashishing, 12 April 1992; Monica Letsoane, Mashishing, 11 April 1992.

89 Interview with Kunana Sehale, Praktiseer, 13 June 1993; See also Schmidt, *Peasants Traders and Wives*, for the kinds of control Zimbabwean women exercised over other women within the family. Kuper, *Wives for Cattle*, p. 60.

On the Reef Africans faced insecurity and lack of control over their own lives. They could, as Betty Mnisi claims, be 'fired at any time', for no apparent reason and with no explanation. Bonner refers to the 'astonishingly high level of labour turnover that prevailed throughout the 1930s and 1940s.' One of the reasons for this turnover was an 'extraordinarily high rate of dismissals' perpetrated by white artisans who 'pursued their own racist agenda':

> 'As their craft privileges came under threat they allowed themselves to be transformed into a supervisorial class, in which capacity they often tyrannised black workers'.[90]

It is therefore not surprising that many Africans believed that they were powerless in Johannesburg, which they called *Makgoweng*: 'the place of the whites'.[91]

Relationships between whites and blacks on the farms were somewhat different. Despite the prevalence of racism, and the very different perspectives of white farmers and African tenants, the close working relations that emerged on many farms produced intimate interactions between whites and blacks. The story related by Annetjie Sibande above describes the personal relations between 'nannies' and the children they raised.[92] In addition, African and white children themselves were frequently close playmates who spent most of the pre-school days together.[93] These interactions often led the two groups to establish an implicit agreement based on a mutual understanding of each other's needs. These agreements can be described as a commonly accepted moral order in which both parties realised that they had antagonistic interests but nevertheless, in an attempt to avoid conflict, conformed to some of the expectations that one party had of the other.[94] Tenants would often remain for a long time on those farms where a moral order had been

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90 P. Bonner, 'The South African Black Working Class on the Rand, 1935-1955: Parameters, Patterns and Possibilities', Unpublished Paper, pp. 5; 11.

91 P. Delius, 'Sebatakgomo; Migrant Organisation, The ANC and the Sekhukhuneland Revolt', in *JSAS*, Vol. 15, No. 4, October 1989, p. 586.

92 See also, Interview with Annetjie Sibande, Marulaneng, 6 July 1993; She was deeply upset when one of the white farmer's sons committed suicide: 'I regarded him as one of my children.'

93 Interview with Trecky Mnisi, Okkernootboom, 14 November 1993; Nellie Ngwana, Cottondale, 14 November 1993; Philip Mbiba, Jane Furse, 9 February 1992; Samuel Sibande, Marulaneng, 6 July 1992; Steve Ngwenya, Glen Cowie, 17 June 1993.

94 I prefer the term 'moral order' to 'moral economy' because the former term seems adequate to capture the kind of implicit agreements described in this thesis, and the latter has been used in so many ways that its meaning has become somewhat confusing and obscure.

established by a process of give and take, which indicates the extent to which these implicit agreements allowed farmers and tenants to sort out their differences without resorting to drastic measures. This inference is supported by numerous stories of conflict breaking out, and tenants abandoning a farm, soon after an old farmer was replaced by a farmer with new ideas.[95] One such story, told by Elise Mdluli, concisely captures the kind of relationship that was built up with many white farmers over a period of time. Mdluli's family worked under a January-to-January contract and, apart from the hard work, they had few complaints. But then:

> 'We started suffering after the old man and woman passed away in 1949. Then we moved because we realised that we were not on good terms with the new farmer.'[96]

The new farmer imposed a range of new demands. In response, all the labour tenant families on the farm decided to leave: 'All men and women were called, and at the same spot they disagreed and asked for *trekpasses* now, and he gave them *trekpasses*'.[97] The tenants felt aggrieved because the farmer was new and had imposed his demands without consultation but they had few qualms about abandoning the farm - or the labourless farmer - because they felt no allegiance or loyalty towards him:

> 'If it was the former farmer, the old man, who refused to give us trekpasses it would have been something, because you had to work for three months notice and we would not have objected to work for three months notice. But now this one is a new person, he's just come in, so he didn't have the right to refuse us trek passes.'[98]

Moodie reveals similar implicit agreements at Johannesburg's gold mines in the 1940s, and their existence shows that Johannesburg was not completely the 'world of the whites'.[99] But these relationships were built up by migrants whose families had gone to the mines for many generations, and who had access to migrant

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95 Interview with Mrs Makua, Mashishing, 25 January 1991; Rose Masilela, Jane Furse, 8 February 1991; Effy Mapanga, Jane Furse, 19 September 1992; Kunana Sehale, Praktiseer, 13 June 1993; Abraham Motau, Jane Furse, 10 December 1990. As a result of these practices new farmers often found themselves without any labour, see African Studies Institute (ASI) Oral History Project (OHP), Interview with German Heyman Skhosana, Lydenburg, undated.

96 Interview with Elise Mduli, Marulaneng, 6 June 1992.

97 *Ibid.*

98 *Ibid.*

99 D. Moodie, 'The Moral Economy of the Black Miners' Strike of 1946', in *JSAS*, 1986, Vol. 13, No. 1.

networks that allowed them to band together against 'unacceptable' demands made by mine-managers. For rural inhabitants with insufficient experience of migrancy to establish such networks, Johannesburg remained an alien place that gave Africans less control over their lives than they had on the more familiar white farms. For this, and for other reasons discussed above, many tenants, both male and female, maintained their commitment to the rural areas in the 1940s and 1950s.

THE SEARCH FOR URBAN ALTERNATIVES

There were, however, other factors at work during the same period which conspired to push Africans out of white farming districts, in search of some form of wage employment. One cause of the growing rural exodus was the prevalence of conflict between white farmers and their tenants. Although labour tenant families had a degree of control over their lives in the more familiar rural areas, this is not to say that their relationships with white farmers were ones of harmonious cooperation. Relationships on farms were strongly influenced by the racism of white farmers, as well as by the control they claimed over their tenants on the basis of their land ownership. As Van Onselen observes in his study of race and class in the western Transvaal, relationships between whites and blacks, although sometimes quite intimate, were always informed by an unwritten 'racial code'.[100] This meant that, despite inter-personal relationships between white farmers and African tenant families, racial conflict was never far from the surface. One consequence of the racist paternalism in which the relations between whites and blacks were formulated, was widespread violence perpetrated by white farmers. Sometimes this violence would be administered by individual farmers, while at other times it was meted out in an organised fashion by means of the 'letter in the stick method' described by the labour tenant Mkenyi Mkhabela:

> 'At times the farmer would send you with a letter put in a stick to another farm. On arrival you get held up and beaten. After this you will be given another letter

100 C. Van Onselen, 'Race and Class in the South African Countryside: Cultural Osmosis and Social Relations in the Sharecropping Economy of the South-Western Transvaal, 1900-1950', in *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 95, No. 1, February 1990, p. 17.

[confirming that you have been beaten].'[101]

The violence perpetrated by farmers was often brutal, and occasionally fatal.[102]

In addition, many labour tenants were never able to establish a stable relationship with a white farmer. Instead, they moved constantly from farm to farm in a bid to avoid what they deemed unfair white demands.[103] Anna Mapanga, who stayed on several Lydenburg farms between 1909 and the mid-1950s, offers some insights into the consequences of always being ready to move. She recalls:

> 'There were some hardships, so we just moved. ... Our houses were made of thatch. They were like bird's houses; they were not permanent, they were temporary so you could move at any time.'[104]

Even on those farms where long-standing cooperative relationships had been established, relationships were still, in a somewhat contradictory fashion, informed by feelings of antagonism. Many Africans did not, for example, gladly allow their cattle to be used on the farm as a whole, and frequently equated the use of their cattle with the equally unpopular demands made on their women and children.[105] The farmer's control over herds that included tenants' cattle was, furthermore, resented by some tenants, who claimed that: 'The white farmer robbed us because we could not get milk from our individual cows. He was the one in charge and he would milk the cows and distribute all the milk.'[106]

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101 Interview with Mkenyi Mkhabela, Jane Furse, 20 December 1990.

102 For Lydenburg see, Interview with Anna Ndlovu, Jane Furse, 15 June 1993; David Sibande, Marulaneng, 6 July 1993; Maria Chauke, Praktiseer, 13 June 1993; Piet Jonas Makola, 12 June 1993; Hezekiel Malope, Jane Furse, 19 October 1992; Kate Ndlozi, Jane Furse, 1990; Maria Maphunga, Jane Furse, 24 January 1992; Constance Sibulele, Marulaneng, 7 June 1992. For outside Lydenburg see T. Keegan, Rural Transformations in Industrialising South Africa (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1986), p. 156; ASI, OHP, Interview with Mr S. Masangu, Middelburg, 19 October 1979; Resishe Jack Mapaila, Green Valley, 16 March 1983; Solomon Mhlongo, Barberton, April, 1981: When asked if he was ever beaten by the white farmer he replied, 'Too much, ... for sweet nothing, when he felt like. Sometimes he felt offended if one gave his dogs food later than on the scheduled time; you were then beaten up so that you shouldn't next time.'

103 Interview with Maria Malebe, Jane Furse, 5 July 1993: 'You would work at a certain place for about two years, and then you would complain when the white man, for instance, woke you up in the middle of the night to go and water the fields. As such he would chase you away, and you would go and work on the farm next door.' See also interview with Martha Mashele, Jane Furse, 16 June 1993; Sekwati Hlatswayo, Jane Furse, 8 February 1991; Theresa Moretsele, Jane Furse, 6 February 1991.

104 Interview with Anna Mapanga, Mashishing, 20 September, 1992; An almost identical story was told by Mrs Khoza, Jane Furse, 5 July 1993.

105 Interview with Sekwatane Mosehla, Jane Furse, 22 January 1992.

106 Interview with Elise Mduli, Marulaneng, 6 June 1992.

Personal interactions between the racial groups on farms produced both cooperation and conflict. Barriers were, for example, set up against interactions between erstwhile playmates. When white children reached a certain age they would be told that they could no longer play with their black friends. Blacks would then be told the same and that they now had to address their ex-friends as either 'klein-baas' or 'klein miessies'. These measures did not necessarily prevent intimate relations between the races, but they were resented by tenants.[107]

Further, while the moral order established on farms sometimes facilitated cooperation, it was also inevitable that numerous farmers would fail to meet the requirements of what African tenants regarded as a 'good farmer'. Consequently tenants repeatedly condemned farmers for not giving them enough milk, giving them low-quality milk, not providing them with enough food during times of shortage, and not helping when they were sick.[108]

Overt clashes and covert tension were thus an integral part of the relationships between white farmers and African labour tenants, and much of this conflict was informed by white racism. Africans were acutely aware of this racism. They believed that conflict often emerged as a result of white jealousies and farmers' efforts to keep Africans dependent on whites. As Theresa Moretsele, who was born in 1933 on a farm in the Waterfall Valley, explains:

> 'A lot of white farmers, if they see you are prospering then they would move you from that place and say that this place must now be used for business. We were used to it. If we went to the next farm we would experience the same problem. If you build a new house which is modern then the farmers would not like that and they would move you. They wanted us to be dependent; we shouldn't do things on our own. If we did things on our own then there would be conflict.'[109]

Conflict was commonplace on the farms of Lydenburg, but it is difficult to judge

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107 Interview with Philip Mnisi, Jane Furse, 10 April 1992; Trecky Mnisi, Okkernootboom, 14 November 1993; Steve Ngwenya, Glen Cowie, 17 June 1993; Piet Jonas Makola, Jane Furse, 12 June 1993.

108 Interview with Lucy Magagula, Jane Furse, 6 February 1991; E. Mkhonto & Makgetwa Madigage, Jane Furse, 22 January 1992; Martha Buhda, Marulaneng, 2 June 1992; Mr Malatje, Marulaneng, 12 April 1992; Steve Ngwenya, Glen Cowie, 17 June 1993.

109 Interview with Theresa Moretsele, Jane Furse, 6 February 1991; See also William Mgiba, Jane Furse, 6 February 1991; Mahlako Mashego, Jane Furse, 7 February 1991; Anna Ndlovu, Jane Furse, 15 June 1993; Samuel Sibande, Marulaneng, 6 July 1993; Brother Brandt, Glen Cowie, 15 April 1993.

whether this conflict became more prevalent in the 1940s. It is clear, however, that conflict around two specific issues - education and migrancy - did become much more intense at that time.

During the 1940s, African education on Lydenburg farms was provided by missions and a few farmers. The Lutheran, Catholic, and Dutch Reformed Mission Societies all had schools at their Mission stations, as well as on a few other farms throughout Lydenburg.[110] In addition, the Norwegian mission ran a school, which in 1947 accommodated 250 pupils, on the African owned farm, Boomplaats.[111] The farmers who provided schools on their farms often did so as a result of requests from their African labourers.[112] Many of the schools were bursting at the seams and had to turn pupils away.[113] The African demand for education was intense during the 1940s, and interviews I conducted point to a dramatic increase in conflict around the issue of education, with many labour tenant families leaving farms because the farmer refused to provide adequate education.[114]

The stimulus for the intense conflict over education came both from farmers and from labour tenants. Farmers were opposed to African education because they wanted to keep the sons and daughters of labour tenants on their farms, and because they did not want schooling to interfere with the duties that they expected

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110 CAD, NTS, No. 429/110, Vol. 711, Secretary of TED to Native Commissioner Lydenburg, 15 June 1951. See Chapter Three, p. 134.

111 CAD, NTS, No. 343/302, Vol. 2840, P.H. Sorum to Native Commissioner Lydenburg, 14 October 1947: The increasing demand for education is reflected in the growth of the Boomplaats school from 101 pupils in 1940 to 250 in 1947.

112 CAD, NTS, 647/302, Vol. 2855, W. Schurink to Secretary of Native Affairs, 1 February 1945; NTS, No. 334/302, Vol. 2840, Lugtenburg to Secretary of Native Affairs, 8 August 1940; NTS, No. 429/110, Vol. 711, Native Commissioner Sekhukhuneland to Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas), 28 November 1951.

113 CAD, NTS, No. 628/302, Vol. 2855, J.P. van der Wal to NAD, 13 August 1944; No. 429/110, Vol. 711, Inspector of Native Education to Secretary of Transvaal Education Department, 12 August 1941; No. 568/302, Vol. 2852, Prinsloo to Secretary of Native Affairs, 6 October 1943.

114 The following people remembered that they clashed with farmers over African education, and their memories can all be placed in the 1940s or 1950s: Elise Mdluli, Marulaneng, 6 June 1992; Amie Sewele, Marulaneng, 12 April 1992; Lucy Magagula, Jane Furse, 6 February 1991; Ella Shabangu, Jane Furse, 7 February 1991; Kate Ndlozi, Jane Furse, 20 December 1990; Effy Mapanga, Jane Furse, 19 September 1992; Maria Malebe, Jane Furse, 5 July 1993; Betty Mnisi, Marulaneng, 6 June 1992.

these sons and daughters to perform.[115] The latter concern was heightened during the 1940s as the combination of economic progress and labour shortage led numerous farmers to increase the work loads of labour tenant children. Mr Malatje and Emily Mkhonto remembers this process:

> 'We realised we wanted actually to have more schooling and most of our children ... the boys were looking after cattle, the girls were working in the kitchen, and they didn't have enough time to go to school. So that's why we left that place because we wanted to have schooling for our children. Over time we realised that children were doing more and more work and they didn't have enough time to go to school.'[116]

> 'The children were old enough but they were not actually working, they were at school, but sometimes they would do some work after school. So the farmer decided that they should no longer go to school and they should work for him. When the children went to school the farmer would wait on the way to beat them and he would chase them. So we realised we could not cope with the situation and we decided to leave.'[117]

The concern to keep tenants on the land was linked to a connection between education and urbanisation. Education increased the likelihood that labourers would abandon the rural areas, because it gave young Africans access to the semi-skilled jobs that were becoming available in the urban areas, which, as shown below, was precisely the reason why members within labour tenant families demanded education. The dramatic increase, during the 1940s, in the conflict around education can therefore be explained by the fact that labour tenants demanded education in growing numbers at the same time that farmers became more opposed to African education.

The demand for education in the 1940s in fact represented a significant shift in the world-view of Africans in the white rural areas, and in effect undermined the position of those who still clung to the rural way of life. The virtues of education had not always been apparent to labour tenants; in the 1930s, indeed, schooling had been regarded as an alien concept imposed by missionaries, and was adopted

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115 *Lydenburg News*, 26 September 1947; CAD, NTS, No. 289/280, Vol. 2167, Mrs Hanna Hengherr to Minister of Native Affairs, 27 March 1955.

116 Interview with Mr Malatje, Marulaneng, 12 April 1992.

117 Interview with Emily Mkhonto, Jane Furse, 22 January 1992.

only by convinced Christians.[118] In 1930 Bernard Serote, a Lutheran Minister stationed in Lydenburg, explained that:

> 'A portion of our people have an appreciation for learning, for education; they want to be taught, but not everybody. The majority of our people are still backward and they don't want to hear anything about education. ... In many places our missionaries are trying very hard to bring learning to them, but they don't want to accept it.'[119]

Conflict broke out in the 1930s between 'traditionalists' and Christians over the issue of schooling. Tension between the two groups on various farms in the Waterfall Valley caused the Christians to band together, and to move to the Steelpoort area, where access to a mission and a school was guaranteed.[120]

Over time, Mrs Makua claims, Christianity and education became more acceptable, but it is difficult to date her memories. She was born in about 1902 and recalls that on the farm where she bore her first children,

> 'there were a lot of Swazis who were staying there and there was a school. The Swazi children were attending school, but our children, the Pedis, didn't like going to school. They did not favour school that much. They wanted their children to attend initiation, and then from there they should come and work and help their parents, and then start their own families. Schooling with their children started later, because some went to church and the church would also serve as a school house.'[121]

Martha Bhuda also emphasises the influence of the church. She claims that a Lutheran missionary in their area 'encouraged children to go to school'.[122]

Before education could become widely acceptable, a number of obstacles had to be overcome. Mrs Makua's evidence shows that education's threat to the rural way of life was due not only to its undermining of customary values, but also to the fact that it took young men and women out of the fields and kitchens as labourers, and put them into classrooms as scholars. African parents therefore shared an

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118 Interview with Monica Letsoane, Mashishing, 11 April 1992; Moses Manana, Jane Furse, 17 April 1993.

119 WHPL, AD1438, Evidence of the Native Economic Commission, Lydenburg, 18 August, 1930, Bernard Serote.

120 Interview with Mrs Mdaka, Jane Furse, 21 December 1990.

121 Interview with Mrs Makua, Mashishing, 25 January 1992.

122 Interview with Martha Buhda, Marulaneng, 2 June 1992; see also Constance Sibulele, Marulaneng, 7 June 1992.

interest with white farmers in keeping young Africans away from schools. However, as numerous interviews with people who remember the 1940s and 1950s confirm, African parents during that time frequently encouraged their children to go to school. Maria Maphunga claims that it was in fact parents who sometimes had to force their reluctant children to attend school. The reason for this, Maria explains, was that parents

> 'realised that in the near future no one will get any job if they did not have schooling. My husband had no problem, he wanted the children to attend school. Even if [our son] got educated and went to work in town we hoped that we were his parents and he won't forget us and that he would support us, and of course he did that.'[123]

Not all parents underwent this transformation. Some were concerned about the potentially damaging effects that education would have on the family. Elizabeth Morele, for example, recalls:

> 'We didn't know anything about schooling as it was a new thing, we didn't know it and we always suspected that something might be wrong with it. Like in the case of today if you take a child to school that child becomes your enemy. Later on he doesn't respect you and does all that is unwanted.'[124]

Letta Mabuza remembers that in the 1950s

> 'There were divisions on the farm. Some parents wanted their children to carry on working on the farms so that they should not get evicted from the farms and then others wanted their children to attend school, thinking that in the future they might get better jobs.'[125]

These divisions existed not only between families, but within families as well. Fathers were often a lot less enthusiastic about the benefits of education. Moses Manana, for example, admits that schooling had its benefits, but, he argued, 'no one *really* cared because we were concerned about the cattle. We did not know who was going to look after the cattle when the children went to school.'[126] It appears therefore that women were the least ambiguous supporters of their children's education. Women had less interest in the maintenance of agriculture and cattle and, if they could keep their children within the family, then the benefits of

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123 Interview with Maria Maphunga, Jane Furse, 24 January 1992; Constance Sibulele, Marulaneng, 7 June 1992; Martha Mashele, Jane Furse, 16 June 1993.

124 Interview with Elizabeth Morele, Marulaneng, 7 June 1992.

125 Interview with Letta Mabuza, Marulaneng, 7 June 1992.

126 Interview with Moses Manana, Jane Furse, 17 April 1993; see also Bella Mapanga, Mashishing 20 September 1992; Mr Malapo, Marulaneng, 12 April 1992.

education might be sons with steady wage employment, who would give mothers access to an income and an improved standard of living.

However, some fathers ceased to oppose education unambiguously. As the terms of labour tenancy became more arduous they too became prepared to sacrifice their short-term labour needs in order to allow their sons to obtain an education and a job. Mr Malapo, like Maria Maphunga's husband above, came to see the benefits of education and worked out a compromise on the issue of cattle. 'We wanted our children to get better jobs', he explains. 'They could get that if they went to school, so we would allow our children to go to school during the week, and during weekends they would look after livestock. During the week the old people would look after the cattle.'[127]

If this evidence is contrasted with that of the fathers mentioned above, who strove for self sufficiency within their January-to-January contracts, and were sometimes violently opposed to sons adopting any form of wage-employment,[128] then it becomes clear that a significant change of attitude to urban employment had occurred amongst some parents in the 1940s.

During this time, many families in fact closed ranks behind the issue of education, which they began to regard as a weapon that could empower all Africans in their fight against white farmers. The ability to communicate, for example, was seen as potentially beneficial to the families scattered over large distances on white farm land:

> 'What was most important [about education] at the time was that one should be able to write a letter to relatives on other farms to explain to them how they lived and the like. And also to know about those people there ... it was only for communication.'[129]

More importantly, African tenants realised that white farmers secured a lot of power from African illiteracy. Consequently, as the following extracts demonstrate,

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127 Interview with Mr Malapo, Marulaneng, 12 April 1992.
128 See above, p. 184; Chapter Three p. 114.
129 Interview with Elise Mduli, Marulaneng, 6 June 1992.

tenants sought to obtain literacy as a way of addressing this imbalance.[130]

> 'Some farmers were not speaking to us in Afrikaans, they would just speak to us in Sepedi because they were saying you should teach our children Sepedi so that we can just talk to you in Sepedi. It was like they didn't want us to learn Afrikaans so that we couldn't hear what they were saying.'[131]

> 'The problem was that people hadn't gone to school; like my father hadn't been to school so he hadn't learnt how to read and write, and if you want to leave the farm but the farmer wants you to stay, he might just write certain bad things on your trekpass, and then you go to this one he refuses you, and the other one refuses you, and it takes time to get a place to live. Then the trekpass is blocking you from finding a place.'[132]

The demand for education produced numerous racially-defined struggles, which sometimes caused African families to stand together against farmers, but the escalating conflict also contributed to the un-attractiveness of farm life. This further encouraged youths to look to the urban areas for alternatives. Thus the intensity of the conflicts over education and tenant families' labour periods caused those individuals within the family who benefitted least from the labour tenant arrangement to become disillusioned with the system as a whole. Consequently they began to search for new opportunities and a different way of life. It was mainly young men and women who took the initiative both in the growth of migrant labour from Lydenburg and in the abandonment of the rural lifestyle. Thus while parents collaborated and sometimes took the initiative in the demand for education, it must be remembered that this new attitude manifested itself at a time when migrancy was becoming widespread, and was therefore already a *fait accompli*.

During the 1940s the rate of migrancy from Lydenburg to towns like Johannesburg, Pretoria and Witbank increased dramatically.[133] The number of passes issued by the Native Commissioner in Lydenburg gives some indication of this movement. The data is quite sketchy because it sometimes includes the passes

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130 In contrast the tenants of the 1930s had asked for 'a white man who can explain the laws'. See Chapter Three, 131.

131 Interview with Constance Sibulele, Marulaneng, 7 June 1992.

132 Interview with Elise Mduli, Marulaneng, 6 June 1992.

133 CAD, NTS, No. 222/280; Vol. 2094, Native Commissioner Lydenburg to Secretary of Native Affairs, 28 May 1943: 'The urge towards urban life has been considerable accentuated since the war started and this is not surprising in view of the unattractive conditions prevailing on the farms.'

issued by the Sub-native Commissioner in Sekhukhuneland. Further, a few of the amounts are the Commissioner's rounded-off estimates. Nevertheless, using the figures that seem the most plausible, and only those that refer to the passes issued in Lydenburg, a clear trend is evident. In 1927 and 1928, 305 and 303 passes were issued respectively.[134] In 1942, 1147; in 1943, 1380; and in 1944, 1000 passes were issued.[135] The number remained at an average of about 1200 throughout the 1940s, and then in 1951 and 1952 the numbers began to decline, to 900 and 720 respectively.[136] Unfortunately the figures for the 1930s are not available - except the high figures for 1938, the year of the Chapter Four exodus.

Interviews I conducted also point to the 1940s as the time when migrancy became a more general practice amongst labour tenants, spreading from tenants under the three and six month contracts to include January-to-January tenants. Obed Gwebu, a Lydenburg labour tenant, remembers that TEBA first recruited him in 1941. He claims that this was the first time that TEBA was active in Lydenburg.[137] Although prior to this there had been recruiting offices in Lydenburg town and in Ohrigstad, these offices had mainly processed recruits from Sekhukhuneland. As Crush *et al* argue, in the 1940s the gold mines started expanding their local recruiting net because 'foreign' recruits were initially not available in sufficient numbers to replace those South Africans who were increasingly finding employment in the booming manufacturing sector.[138] The evidence reveals that in both 1938 and 1958 recruiters were prohibited from recruiting Africans resident on white farms.[139] This prohibition was, however, never completely effective and it seems probable that, as part of the initiative identified by Crush *et al*, local recruiters became more willing to attest Africans

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134 CAD, Department of Justice (JUS), 552/29, Vol. 462, Public Service Inspector's Report: Lydenburg, 17 April 1929.

135 CAD, JUS, No. 552/29, Vol. 462, Annual Report of Magistrates Office: Lydenburg, 1949.

136 CAD, JUS, No. 552/29, Vol. 462, Report of Department Inspector: Lydenburg, 18-23 September 1953.

137 Interview with Obed Gwebu, Jane Furse, 19 September 1992; see also Henry Sehlale, Alverton, 4 July 1993, on the role played by TEBA.

138 J. Crush, *et al*, *South Africa's Labour Empire: A history of Black migrancy to the gold mines* (Cape Town, David Philip, 1991), p. 57.

139 CAD, NTS, 32/280, Vol. 2214, Native Commissioner Lydenburg to Director of Native Labour, 19 November 1938; CAD, NTS, 897/280A, Vol. 2316, Director of Native Labour to The General Manager NRC, 10 January 1958.

from the farms in the 1940s. Even if this did not last long, it probably heightened awareness amongst labour tenants about the potential of migrancy, and would have encouraged a growing number of young men to seek employment in the cities.[140]

It was not only recruiters who contributed to the growth of migrancy in the 1940s. African youths themselves looked for ways to leave the farm. Many were no longer satisfied with the standard of living that could be attained on the farms, as Johanna Malope and Letta Mabuza recalls:

> '[Those who left for Johannesburg were still young and unmarried. They were attracted by money, because in the farms they did not get enough. They used the money that they earned to marry and to buy some of their personal stuff.'[141]

> 'Children usually would complain that they don't have clothes and they want to work, get money and buy some clothes, and then they would just run away, and that would result in their parents being evicted from the farms.'[142]

Further, as Rose Masilela observes, returning migrants established new standards of living on the farms of Lydenburg:

> 'Some banked their money. It also depended on where they worked, sometimes their boss would give them advice to bank the money. But others spent their money on clothes, so they can dress smartly so that when they come back home the people will know they are migrants, they are young men who liked to dress in a new style.'[143]

Youths who had not migrated felt the urge to imitate this style, and returning migrants therefore fanned the aspiration towards wages and material goods.[144]

A further, very important cause of the expansion of migrancy during the 1940s was the increasing availability of urban jobs outside the mining sector.[145] As Obed Gwebu explains, mine labour was difficult, dangerous and not very popular,

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140 See William Sewele, Jane Furse, 16 June 1993, for the ways of avoiding the restriction on recruiting in Lydenburg.

141 Interview with Johanna Malope, Jane Furse, 11 June 1993; Moses Manana, Jane Furse, 17 April 1993.

142 Interview with Letta Mabuza, Marulaneng, 7 June 1992; Mr Malapo, Marulaneng, 12 April 1992.

143 Interview with Rose Masilela, Jane Furse, 8 February 1991.

144 Interview with Obed Gwebu, Jane Furse, 19 September 1992; the Masha Council, Strydkraal, 15 April 1993.

145 Delius, 'Sebatakgomo', p. 593.

although he and others in the early 1940s did take jobs on the mines.[146] But, as migrancy became more entrenched in Lydenburg, so information about jobs outside the mines began to reach the youths on the farms:

> 'A group of young men would go first. They would find the best jobs and then call the others. ... The first group went to the mines. But some could not work on the mines because they did not have good enough lungs. Also there were whites who came to recruit workers away from the mines. The people who then got jobs outside the mines were the ones who called the others on the farms, and told them about the other jobs. There were plenty of other jobs outside the mines.'[147]

Some farmers adjusted to the new demands for migrancy. On many farms the January-to-January contract was transformed to accommodate migrants. Farmers began to give labour tenant family members 'free months' within their contracts, during which time Africans were allowed to seek wage employment in the towns.[148] But other farmers refused to compromise and, consequently, clashed with those who sought urban jobs. As Johanna Malope notes, 'some of the older boys would go and seek work in cities like Johannesburg' but they had to do this by leaving the farm without the farmer's permission. If they came back to the farm, the farmer 'chased them away as he did not like that. He just wanted us to work for him'.[149] Other farmers were even more extreme in their reactions to migrants. They would chase the entire family off their farm if one son or daughter of that family left for town.[150]

Parents were once again placed in a difficult position within these conflicts between youths and white farmers. On the whole, however, they took the side of their children, hoping that they would maintain their links with the rural areas and their parents. Moses Manana provides one reason for the support that parents offered their migrating children. Parents, he explains, supported their children's

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146 Interview with Obed Gwebu, Jane Furse, 19 September 1992

147 Interview with Henry Selahle, Alverton, 4 July 1993. Although these interviews suggest that it was mainly young men who made the move to migrancy in the 1940s, other evidence shows that some unmarried women also began to participate in this trend. See Interview with Henry Selahle, Alverton, 4 July 1993; Monica Letsoane, Mashishing 11 April 1992.

148 Interview with Sekwati Hlatswayo, Jane Furse, 8 February 1991; See also Petrus Magolego, Jane Furse, 8 December 1990; Mrs Makua, Mashishing, 25 January 1992; Constance Sibulele, Marulaneng, 7 June 1992.

149 Interview with Johanna Malope, Jane Furse, 11 June 1993.

150 Interview with Daniel Mnisi, Jane Furse, 13 April 1991; Moses Manana, Jane Furse, 17 April 1993; Bella Mapanga, Mashishing, 20 September 1992.

movement off the farms because they knew that 'the white man beat their children'.[151] Letta Mabuza and Rose Masilela offer more details on why and how parents supported their migrating children:

> 'The parents also did not really want to stop children from running away because they thought that the children would help them with some money. The farmer, before he evicted the parents, would ask them, "where are the children, haven't they come back?", and then the parents, even though they knew where the children were and that they were coming back next week, they would just say, "no they just left and we are also looking for them, we don't know where they are".'[152]

> 'Boys would go far away so the [farmers] couldn't trace them. They would go away for a long time, but when they wanted to come home they would come home at night so the farmer would not know, because if he knew he would send the police. Those who got married would return to find wives there on the farms. After a son married the farmer would expect to get someone to do washing. So a problem used to come when he needed a place to farm. There was some cases when the people did not return from Johannesburg because they thought about the life on the farms and they were discouraged and they stayed in Johannesburg forever. It used to happen that parents refused to pay bridewealth when there was a conflict of interests, when the parents wanted the son to marry someone from around their home.[153]

This evidence from Rose Masilela suggests that there *were* conflicts between parents and those youths who completely cut their ties with the rural areas, and, furthermore, that parents were active protagonists in these conflicts rather than passive victims of their children's actions.[154]

Certain marriage practices were enforced by parents to ensure that migrant sons, instead of becoming permanently urbanised, would continue to supplement the rural standard of living on white farms. Unlike the urbanised Basotho studied by Bonner, who linked up with large numbers of 'unattached' Basotho women in the towns, migrants from Lydenburg were strongly encouraged to stick to rural marriage partners.[155] William Sewela, who was a migrant in the late 1950s, describes how this worked:

> 'My parents wished that I would marry a woman who was a hard worker. They

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151 Interview with Moses Manana, Jane Furse, 17 April 1993.
152 Interview with Letta Mabuza, Marulaneng, 7 June 1992.
153 Interview with Rose Masilela, Jane Furse, 8 February 1991.
154 See also Interview with Kunana Sehale, Praktiseer, 13 June 1993, for the procedures enforced by mothers in order to ensure that they received a fair share of their migrant son's wages.
155 P. Bonner, 'The Russians on the Reef, 1947-1957: Urbanisation, gang warfare and ethnic mobilisation', in P. Bonner, *et al*, *Apartheid's Genesis* (Johannesburg, Ravan & WUP, 1993), p. 172

> liked a woman who would work for them. She also had to be respectful. When I was growing up [the men] married on the farms. Your parents would choose a girl they liked.'[156]

Kunana Sehale makes the connection between acceptable women and the rural areas even clearer:

> 'The men had to marry a wife from here [Lydenburg], because what are you [as a parent] going to do with a wife from the urban areas? They are unable to draw water, or fetch wood from the mountains.'[157]

Parental control over marriage therefore benefitted parents in two ways. Firstly, it enabled parents to make sure that, especially in the case of last-born sons, they acquired a daughter-in-law who would carry out her assigned duties. Secondly, it facilitated their creation of a strong bond to the rural areas for their sons. Not all parents played as direct a role in the choice of their son's marriage partner. The 'tradition' of cousin marriage, though, worked as an additional constraint on who migrants could marry.[158] This practice meant that, unless members of the rural lineage had become urbanised, a migrant's choice of marriage partners would be limited to the rural areas.

In numerous instances these practices ensured that migrant sons, in the words of Michael Monate, 'would always come home.'[159] But these cultural and familial constraints did not necessarily have the desired effect and, as conditions on farms became less attractive, numerous sons and daughters migrated, on a more permanent basis, to the urban areas. Simkins shows that African emigration from white farming districts increased dramatically during the period 1937 to 1951 and oral evidence confirms that numerous residents of Lydenburg participated, to some extent, in this rural exodus.[160]

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156 Interview with William Sewela, Jane Furse, 16 June 1993.

157 Interview with Kunana Sehale, Praktiseer, 13 June 1993; See also Elise Mdluli, Marulaneng, 6 June 1992, for the importance of controlling the sexuality of youths.

158 Kuper, *Wives for Cattle*, p. 30; Interview with Henry Sehlale, Alverton, 4 July 1993. He explained the reasoning behind this practice: 'It was a way of enriching one another. [i.e. keeping cattle in the family]. If you take someone who was alien they would not be able to talk to the ancestors. A cousin would understand your traditions and culture.' See also Moses Manana, Jane Furse, 17 April 1993; Martha Mashele, Jane Furse, 16 June 1993; Johanna Malope, Jane Furse, 11 June 1993.

159 Interview with Michael Monate and Jeremia Moleke, Mashishing, 10 April 1992.

160 C. Simkins, 'African Population, Employment and Incomes on Farms Outside the Reserves, 1923 - 1969', Carnegie Conference Paper No. 25, 13-19 April 1984.

Ironically, farmers who stubbornly opposed their tenants' involvement in migrancy often encouraged emigration. By making it difficult for migrants to return to the farms where those migrants' parents lived, farmers frequently contributed to the decision of African sons to become permanently urbanised.[161] Mrs Khoza's life story provides a dramatic example, in which a white farmer's actions against migrants led to the urbanisation of both men and women. Mrs Khoza's brother was a migrant in Johannesburg who was arrested for breaking his contract with the owner of the farm Grootboom. The brother was beaten by the police and then thrown in jail when he fought with the farmer's son. When he returned from jail the farmer chased him off his farm, prompting Mrs Khoza's widowed mother to take her family to another farm and Mrs Khoza's brother to settle in Johannesburg's Sophiatown. The first farmer then had Mrs Khoza arrested for breach of contract and, after spending time in jail and being forced to work for the farmer, she got married and moved with her husband to Sophiatown. Further, when her husband returned to Lydenburg she remained in Sophiatown with her brother, moving back with her husband only once her brother left. Soon after her return she and her husband moved to the 'power station under the Lydenburg municipality' because 'we no longer wanted to stay on the farms'.[162]

Mrs Khoza's story shows that, despite the constraints and difficulties described above, women were able to move out of the rural areas. But, unless women had close relatives or husbands in town, the ties of the rural areas remained strong.[163] Schmidt, in her study of Shona women, argues that, apart from the adoption of beer brewing or prostitution, a woman could also escape the rural areas and an undesirable marriage by running 'away with a lover who would become her new husband.'[164] This practice also occurred in Lydenburg during the 1940s. In the early 1940s there were reportedly thousands of Malawian migrants in Lydenburg, who refused to do farm work and were passing through on their

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161 Interview with Maria Chauke, Praktiseer, 13 June 1993; Emily Mkhonto, Jane Furse, 8 February 1991; Ephraim Mosehla, Jane Furse, 22 January 1992; Henry Sehlale, Praktiseer, 4 July 1993; Moses Manana, Jane Furse, 17 April 1993.

162 Interview with Mrs Khoza, Jane Furse, 5 July 1993.

163 See also interview with Ella Shabangu, Jane Furse, 7 February 1992.

164 Schmidt, *Peasants Traders and Wives*, p.93

way to the mines. These Malawians

> 'take local girls and marry them. There is no ceremony and no *lobola*, but the fathers can't prevent it because the girls ... like the life. The Blantyre boys are very good to them. Evidently the money they earn is wealth and they are very generous with it. They want a woman to live with and to cook for them. There are some mine rations, and the man is willing to buy more. The women have no mealies to stamp or grind. They have meat every day, and tinned goods and sugar instead of having to go and gather *morogo*. There is no field work, very little house work, and water and wood supplied or bought.'[165]

Migrating Malawians therefore provided some women with the opportunity to escape the domestic grind of the rural areas.[166] But the easiest option for women in the 1940s was to find employment in Lydenburg township. Bella Mapanga, for example, explains that she got a job in Lydenburg town 'to work to get clothes, because on the farm you could not get clothes.' The move to town did not involve any major transitions. She stayed close to her father, worked in the kitchens (a job she had been forced to do on the farms anyway) and was accommodated and fed by her employers. Bella was glad to get away from the farms and to earn her own wage, which she did from 1948 until 1955 when she married a 'township' resident and 'stopped working in the kitchens'.[167] A number of other young women followed this route to urbanisation and some independence. The option was partly facilitated by the particular conditions in the town during the 1940s and 1950s.[168] The Lydenburg 'township', Marambane, did not expand in accordance with the growing job opportunities in Lydenburg town. By 1955 it provided only twenty per cent of the labour needs of the town.[169] Consequently labour tenants found it fairly easy to obtain domestic and municipal employment in the town.[170]

Young men also got jobs in Lydenburg town, and they sometimes used these as a

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165 WHPL, AD843.53.7, Edith Jones' Interview with Hendrik Neethling, Lydenburg, February 1941.

166 This practice continued into the 1950s. See, CAD, Bantu Affairs (BAO), No. c43/1396, Vol. 3322, Bantu Commissioner Sekhukhuneland to Secretary of Bantu Affairs, undated.

167 Interview with Bella Mapanga, Mashishing, 20 September 1992.

168 Interview with Effy Mapanga, Jane Furse, 19 September 1992; Mrs Mashegoane, Praktiseer, 13 June 1993; Martha Bhuda, Marulaneng, 2 July 1992; Maria Maphunga, Jane Furse, 21 January 1992.

169 CAD, NTS, No. 289/280, Vol. 2167, Lydenburg Town Clerk to Director of Native Labour, 16 September 1955.

170 CAD, NTS, No. 222/280, Vol. 2094, Native Commissioner Lydenburg to Secretary of Native Affairs, 23 August 1943: 'In the urban areas of this district the majority are employed as domestic servants. The Municipality employs ± 120 natives. A small number of native are employed by business firms as delivery boys. Average wage = £1.10 - £3 per month.'

springboard to permanent urbanisation in Johannesburg. Rufus Mapanga provided a coherent account of the circumstances and the motivations behind this process. Mapanga lived with his mother and father on the farm Nooitgedacht. His father, who had worked in Benoni as a migrant, came back permanently to the farm when the family moved to Nooitgedacht. Rufus tried to go to school but he found it difficult to juggle his school attendance with the demands made on him by his mother and the white farmer. He was frustrated by this experience and became determined to get away from the 'oppressive Boers'. In 1947 he took the first step when he got a part-time job as a gardener in Lydenburg town. At the town he was presented with an opportunity to put an even greater distance between himself, 'the Boers' and his parents:

> 'Then the fun-fair came to town and I left with them. I ran away from home. It went to Nelspruit, Carolina, Middelburg, Bronkhorstspruit and Fordsburg. So I stayed in Fordsburg, fitting tires at the garage at Main Reef Road. Then I went to Martins Transport as a driver, and I work there still. Life was bad on the farms.'[171]

Rufus Mapanga was apparently wholly opposed to the rural way of life and happy to remain in the urban areas. But a number of other male immigrants, while being just as keen to get off the farms in their youth, maintained links with the rural areas and returned there to retire. Petrus Magolego, for example, left the farm when, as a young man in the early 1950s, he was expected to take over the labour that had been performed by his uncle. Magolego did not feel bound by his uncle's contract, and he asked the farmer for permission to seek a migrant job in Johannesburg. The farmer refused to grant this, so Magolego left for Johannesburg without the farmer's permission. He settled in the urban areas but when, through a windfall, he acquired some extra money, he invested this money in cattle which he kept with a relative on a farm in Lydenburg. Thus Petrus Magolego remained connected to Lydenburg. He returned to the rural areas when he was in his 50s; he firmly believed that 'it is preferable to have land and cattle'.[172] David Sibande, on the other hand, maintained his links with the rural way of life by working in nearby Witbank. He went to work on the coal mines in

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171 Interview with Rufus Mapanga, Jane Furse, 19 September 1992

172 Interview with Petrus Magolego, Jane Furse, 8 December 1990.

Witbank in 1945 and returned home regularly until 1949, when he married and settled in Witbank. As a result of his selection of a wife from the Bethal district, Sibande was forced to pay the bridewealth out of his own pocket. His parents refused to help him marry a stranger. Sibande paid four cattle and 30 pounds for his wife and together they settled on the 'compound'. However, this 'compound' was not like the 'compounds' in Johannesburg. The compound in Witbank was situated on the farm of an absentee landlord and Sibande had access to a small field on which he could put his wife to work and keep a few cattle. Sibande was therefore able to maintain the best of both worlds. On the one hand, he had a job where 'you knew that at the end of the month you will be having some money even if it is only £3.10' and, on the other, he had access to land and cattle and control over his wife's labour, which he could use to supplement his wage.[173]

Witbank in the 1940s and 1950s was often a half-way station between the agricultural existence of Lydenburg's January-to-January contracts and the wage labour existence of Johannesburg's townships. Within Lydenburg there was another option that was similarly in-between the two worlds. The African-owned farm, Boomplaats, was situated next to the town of Lydenburg and its expanding job opportunities. In the 1950s a growing number of labour tenant families settled on the farm, gaining access to small, fairly unproductive fields and migrating on a daily basis to jobs in town. These moves were clearly an effort by labour tenant families to sustain a quasi-rural way of life, away from farmers' labour demands, which were beginning to undermine the coherence of numerous Lydenburg families. As Betty Mnisi explains:

> 'Most of the people who came [to Boomplaats] later were from farms. They were tired of working on the farms. Those people from the farms were complaining that it involved working all the time. To be on a farm you had to work every time. They were tired, they wanted a place where you could have a choice whether to go and work or stay at home. ... The main complaint that people from the farms had was that all of them had to go and work; children and parents, but then they would get very little pay. On Boomplaats the women would stay at home and look after the fields while the men worked in town. In most cases it would be women who were married with children who would stay behind, but daughters who were not yet married would go and work in town for money. Children would bring their money

173 Interview with Samuel Sibande, Marulaneng, 6 July 1993.

home ... there was no problem with children.'[174]

As discussed further below, the Boomplaats option ceased to exist in 1961 when the state forcibly removed the Boomplaats community.

THE IMPACT OF MECHANISATION

Another factor contributing to the subversion of the rural way of life was the growing use of tractors on Lydenburg's farms. This trend, although uneven and halting in its progress, was eventually to have profound effects. This began, according to many African tenants, in the late 1940s and early 1950s.[175] On other farms tractors arrived only in the late 1960s and they were thus hardly affected by the post-war mechanisation boom. In other cases, a number of people remember that farmers in the 1950s often used both a tractor and oxen to plough their lands, and in those instances mechanisation did not have the same effect as on the farms where machines totally replaced cattle.[176]

However, farmers who switched over completely to tractors changed the relationship with their tenants in a number of ways. For example, a farmer who used only tractors was less likely to be tolerant about labour tenant cattle. As Sekwatane Mosehla recalls, those farmers who allowed labour tenants to keep a lot of cattle, 'were the ones who needed those cattle to do some work'.[177] Emily Mkhonto, for example, moved in the 1950s from a farm where 'we used cattle to

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174 Interview with Betty Mnisi, Marulaneng, 6 June 1991; Numerous other interviews confirm this picture and place the movement to Boomplaats in the 1950s; See Interview with Elise Mdluli, Marulaneng, 6 July 1992; Mrs Moleke, Mashishing, 12 April 1992; Letta Sekhukhune, Jane Furse, 23 January 1992; Magdalena Moleke, Mashishing, 23 January 1992; Theresa Moretsele, Jane Furse, 6 February 1991; Kate Ndlozi, Jane Furse, 20 December 1990; Bella Mapanga, Mashishing, 20 September 1992; Anna Mapanga, Mashishing, 20 September 1992; Mr Mashupje, Mashishing, 10 April 1992.

175 Letta Mabuza, Marulaneng, 7 June 1992, was born in 1936 and only remembered ploughing with tractors; Maria Maphunga, Jane Furse, 24 January 1992, first saw tractors in the 1950s. As did Emily Mkhonto, Jane Furse, 22 January 1992; Mkenyi Mkhabela, Jane Furse, 20 December 1990, was vague. It could have been in 1937. Effy Mapanga, Jane Furse, 19 September 1992, remembered tractors in 1948; Daniel Mnisi, Jane Furse, 13 April 1991, saw tractors in the 40s or 50s.

176 Interview with William Sewele, Jane Furse, 16 June 1993; Mr Malatje, Marulaneng, 12 April 1992, born in 1924: The tractors came later, and even when they came there was not that much change because there was only one tractor. Ephraim Mosehla, Jane Furse, 22 January 1992: The farmer only used his tractor on his other farm. Sekwatane Mosehla, Jane Furse, 22 January 1992: We did not have problems with cattle, even when the farmer got a tractor, he used to plough his field and we used cattle to plough ours.

177 Interview with Sekwatane Mosehla, Jane Furse, 22 January 1992.

plough', to another farm where 'we found tractors there and we no longer used cattle'. Subsequently the Mkhontos had to sell their cattle because the farmer did not 'like cattle on his farm'.[178] Thus tractors had the effect of separating many tenants from their cattle. Cattle, as I have argued above, was one of the factors that held the social and gender relations of the rural way of life together.

Tractors ended white farmer's dependence on African cattle and in, a number of instances, made them less dependent on African labour. Many women actually remember tractors in a positive light because, they said, tractors reduced the work on farms.[179] This meant that, on many farms in Lydenburg, tractors were used to replace labour rather than to extend production. In addition, many farmers would drive their own tractors, thus making themselves a more active part of the work-force, and less dependent on African labour.[180] There was not yet a surplus of farm labour in the early 1950s. Nevertheless, the growing use of tractors helped to shift the balance that had, due to the labour shortage of the 1940s, favoured African tenants.

CONCLUSION

The January-to-January contract was undermined during the 1940s and, on those farms where white farmers continued to demand it, it became increasingly difficult to keep members of African families on the farms. Further, many labour tenants became more ambivalent about the rural way of life, while others abandoned it completely. However, the labour practices and the processes of conflict and compromise that had been so important before World War Two were not completely replaced during the period 1940-1954. By 1955 labour tenancy was still the dominant form of labour in the Lydenburg district, and most of the Africans who sought work continued to demand land and cattle as part of their

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178 Interview with Emily Mkhonto, Jane Furse, 8 February 1991.

179 Interview with Elizabeth Morele, Marulaneng, 7 June 1992; Emily Mkhonto, Jane Furse, 8 February 1991; Effy Mapanga, Jane Furse, 19 September 1992.

180 Interview with Emily Mkhonto, Jane Furse, 8 February 1991; Effy Mapanga, Jane Furse, 19 September 1992; Daniel Mnisi, Jane Furse, 13 April 1991; Mkenyi Mkhabela, Jane Furse, 20 December 1990; Maria Maphunga, Jane Furse, 24 January 1992.

contract.[181] Those Africans who remained on the farms still followed strategies of resistance involving the labour tenant family as a whole. African families moved, or threatened to move, to other farms in instances where they felt farmers were not giving them enough land, were not leaving them enough free time, or were making too many demands on their children. A number of these families were able either to find farmers who offered better conditions, or to force farmers to back down in their land restrictions and their demands on children.[182]

The changes over the period 1940-1954 therefore did not herald a complete transformation but, rather, a shift in the focus of African resistance. Conflicts within households escalated and parents were pushed into numerous compromises. The trend in which individual Africans sought alternatives to a dependence on land became dominant. The actions of these individuals had the potential to undermine further the struggle for land and to integrate rural Africans into the industrial economy to an even greater extent. But the Apartheid state, whose rise to power was partly caused by the 'alarming' rate of African urbanisation, reacted by imposing influx controls that effectively slowed down urbanisation and, in Lydenburg, shifted the focus of resistance back to a fight for land and autonomy. These events are discussed in Chapter Seven.

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181 CAD, NTS, No. 289/280, Vol. 2167, SWVK to Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas), 22 September 1955.

182 Interview with Emily Mkhonto, Jane Furse, 22 January 1992; Letta Mabuza, Marulaneng, 7 June 1992; Maria Maphunga, Jane Furse, 24 January 1992; Maria Mkhonto, Jane Furse, 9 December 1990.

CHAPTER SIX

POLITICS, CULTURE AND REMOVALS, 1943-1961

Amongst labour tenants the movement into jobs in the expanding manufacturing sector shifted the focus of resistance away from the defence of land and autonomy. Despite taking advantage of these job opportunities, the so-called 'black spot' communities in Lydenburg - which consisted of African rent-tenants and land-owners - did not experience the same shift. They continued to strive for independent access to land in the 1940s and 1950s. Sometimes they were able to use urban links to *intensify* their struggle for land. But, in keeping with the experiences of labour tenants, urban links led African rent-tenants and land-owners to question the status of existing authority structures. This chapter analyses the subsequent debates over appropriate forms of power which occurred within the framework of local cultures and identities.

The chapter therefore concentrates on the struggles waged by 'black-spot' communities against removals promoted by the state and white farmers. However, the importance of urban-based political movements in some of these conflicts makes it necessary to view such political connections within the context of the thesis as a whole. At the outset I try to explain why labour tenants failed to establish these connections. In addition, the motivations and identities of people in Lydenburg's 'black spot communities' were also shaped by links to the 'reserve', Sekhukhuneland, and the chapter thus touches on crucial developments in that area. Lastly, focusing on the resistance practised by the community on the farm Aapiesdoorndraai, where no political connections at all were established, the chapter will assess the importance of political movements to rural resistance. The

chapter demonstrates that a cautious and isolated resistance strategy had little potential to bring about large-scale transformations, but nevertheless had a significant impact on local history.

POLITICS AND LABOUR TENANTS

The African National Congress (ANC) and the Communist Party did not link up to the widespread, determined opposition to Chapter Four in 1938, and there is no evidence to suggest that any connections between political movements and Lydenburg's labour tenants were subsequently established. The main reason for this was the failure of political movements to move into the countryside. Delius shows that, despite accommodating such large rural movements as A.M. Malivha's Zoutpansberg Balemi Association, during the early 1940s neither the Communist Party nor the African National Congress formulated a coherent plan to recruit, mobilise or educate members based in the rural areas.[1] The migrants who entered these organisations during the 1940s began to put rural issues on the agenda, but the involvement of farm workers in this process appears to have been minimal. In the Waterval Boven district the Reverend Elias Koza started one of the few ANC cells within a Transvaal farming district. However, the 20 members who made up this cell in 1948 were primarily railway workers.[2] A farm workers movement started by Gert Sibande in Bethal was probably the only attempt to organise Transvaal farm workers on a significant scale during the 1940s and 50s. Sibande's movement, which he brought into the ANC in 1939, attempted to take up the issues facing labour tenants but appears to have achieved only limited success in highlighting the desperate plight of Bethal's compound workers.[3] Furthermore, Gert Sibande had relatives in Lydenburg who remember that the Bethal movement started by their cousin had no impact in the rest of the eastern Transvaal:

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1 P. Delius, 'Migrant Organisation, the Communist Party, the ANC and the Sekhukhuneland Revolt, 1940-1958', in P. Bonner *et al*, *Apartheid's Genesis, 1935-1962* (Johannesburg, Ravan and WUP, 1993), pp. 140-145.

2 WHPL, ABX.480305b, Rev. Ezra Koza to Dr Xuma, 5 March 1948.

3 WHPL, ABX470819a, ANC Bethal Branch: Report on farm labour conditions in the Bethal District, 19 August 1947. See also 'The Lion of the East', in *Learn and Teach*, No. 2, 1987.

> 'My uncle never brought his children to Lydenburg, so [Gert Sibande] was born in Bethal and he did not know Lydenburg at all. This thing [of political movements] started only recently. Lydenburg did not have anything like the [ANC or ICU].'[4]

Labour tenants, the evidence suggests, were cut off from political movements, even after World War Two, when migrancy brought a great number of labour tenant family members into urban areas. But migrant rent-tenants and land-owners were able to bring political movements into the rural areas, and the most plausible explanation for their success lies in their easy access to the large numbers of people who occupied one particular farm, usually organised under one chief. This made the 'black-spot' communities attractive to political movements looking for members and subscriptions. The members of these communities who joined political movements in the urban areas could present their movement with the opportunity to recruit a large group of willing and accessible members. This was the procedure followed by two communities in Lydenburg. Before this procedure is examined, it is necessary to look at the issues that, prior to the involvement of political movements, motivated these communities to defend their land.

AFRICAN COMMUNITIES AND THE LAND IN LYDENBURG

All the communities discussed in this chapter regarded the land that they occupied in Lydenburg as something worth fighting for. Their determination to stay in the district contrasts with the feelings of the majority of Africans in Sekhukhuneland, who stayed away from Lydenburg and preferred 'urban and mine work'. But their motives were similar to those of the few 'reserve' families described earlier, who moved to Lydenburg in order to gain access to fertile fields.[5]

Lydenburg offered agricultural opportunities that were rapidly vanishing in the 'reserves'. As Isaac Twale told the Native Economic Commission in 1930: '[Lydenburg] natives [can't go to the locations of the chiefs] ... they are full, there is no space to get in.'[6] This perception was substantiated by the Sub-Native

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4 Interview with Samuel Sibande, Marulaneng, 6 July 1993.

5 Central Archives Depot (CAD), Native Affairs Department (NTS), No. 222/280, Vol. 2096, NAD Memo, 31 January 1946; Chapter Five, pp. 177-178.

6 Wits Historical Papers Library (WHPL), AD/438, Native Economic Commission (NEC), Lydenburg 18 August 1930, p. 625.

Commissioner of Sekhukhuneland, who described the conditions on the western side of the Steelpoort River as follows:

> '[Unused arable land] is getting less and less ... we have always got people coming into the locations ... and there are very few going out. ... Those people come in [and] demand new lands. Well, there is no new lands to give them ... so they simply have to use some of the lands that are [not used by absent owners].'[7]

The Commissioner stated that the 'reserve' was overstocked, eroded and not self-sufficient in food, due mainly to the climate and the soil types. Every seven out of eight years the district had to import maize. Climatically and physically the eastern side of the Steelpoort River, where the white farms were situated, was 'infinitely better'.[8]

In contrast to the conditions in Sekhukhuneland, the Lydenburg Africans who bought the farms Boomplaats and Aapiesdoorndraai in the early 1900s acquired land that was not being used and turned both farms into productive agricultural enterprises. The section of Boomplaats that the community under chief Dinkwanyane bought was situated a distance away from the Spekboom River. The community overcame this problem by building a canal that ran through their section and the section belonging to Ali Coetser, eventually reaching the river. This allowed some Boomplaats residents to irrigate their fields and plant wheat in winter.[9] The relatively small size of the fields and the abundance of cattle also allowed the residents to apply classic mixed farming principles by using cattle manure on their fields.[10] Within two generations the Boomplaats residents had turned the initially arid farm into productive, irrigated plots, the value of which the Native Affairs Department (NAD) Agricultural Officer estimated to be £6 to £7 per morgen. At that time, 1949, the price for a good farm in Lydenburg was approximately £6 per morgen.[11]

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7 WHPL, AD 1438, Box 2, NEC, Evidence from Lydenburg, Major D.R. Hunt.
8 *Ibid.*
9 African Studies Institute (ASI), Oral History Project (OHP), Tape No. 46 A/B, Interview with Kotana Stefaans Modipa, Jane Furse, 17 October 1979. See also, CAD, NTS, No. 2331/308, Vol. 3778, Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas) to Secretary of Native Affairs, 28 May 1956.
10 Interview with Mrs Moleke, Mashishing, 12 April 1992.
11 *Lydenburg News*, 14 January 1949; 20 January 1950.

Manok's farm, Aapiesdoorndraai, was riparian to both the Steelpoort and Spekboom Rivers. As a result Manok's family was able to irrigate their land extensively. The farm contained as much as 260 morgen under irrigation and 100 morgen of arable dry land. Both the irrigated and the dry fields had very good soils and, by the late 1950s, there was still no noticeable erosion on the whole farm.[12] The value of the farm was estimated at £44000.[13]

The company owned farms of Kalkfontein and Mosterthoek also produced good agricultural returns. People from Kalkfontein remember that the farm usually produced their food requirements plus a surplus which they used for bartering with people from surrounding farms.[14] In 1944 it was reported that Kalkfontein produced 3000 Bags of grain; in 1949, at the time of the Kalkfontein removal, the 'bumper crop' of the residents reportedly filled up 100 truck loads.[15] Mosterthoek, according to one resident, facilitated 'a good life' because it produced the food requirements of its inhabitants in most years, as well as a small surplus that could be sold in the nearby Lydenburg market.[16] Further, the rents on these farms were not too onerous. They usually amounted to about £2 per year plus 2/- per head of large stock.[17] Most of the residents of these farms, it will be shown below, paid this amount by engaging in migrant labour.

After 1940, when the Africans on the farm Steelpoortpark were moved from the east to west side of the Steelpoort River, the four farms described above were almost the only areas on the eastern side where Africans could settle without

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12 WHPL, AD843.53.7, Edith Jones' notes on a visit to Aapiesdoorndraai, February 1941.
13 CAD, NTS, No. 936/308, Vol. 3464, Native Commissioner Sekhukhuneland to Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas), 16 August 1956.
14 Interview with the Masha Council, Strydkraal, 15 April 1993.
15 CAD, NTS, No. 444/323, Vol. 7120, Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas) to Secretary of Native Affairs, c1949.
16 Interview with Michael Monate and Jeremia Moleke, Mashishing, 10 April 1992.
17 CAD, NTS, No. 238/323, Vol. 7107, J.H. Walker to Native Commissioner Lydenburg, 17 October 1921; NTS, No. 136/323, Vol. 7099, Native Commissioner Sekhukhuneland to Secretary of Native Affairs, 27 September 1922; NTS, No. 49/323, Vol. 7088, Native Commissioner Sekhukhuneland to Secretary of Native Affairs, 11 August 1932; NTS, No. 971/323/17, Vol. 7155, D.R. Scott to Native Commissioner Sekhukhuneland, 16 May 1955.

having to work for a white farmer.[18] Therefore, in a regional context where land for Africans was becoming increasingly scarce, these productive farms provided the communities with a good reason to resist white encroachments on their land. The attractiveness of this land was enhanced even further by the 'independence' provided by the settlements described above. Most Sekhukhuneland residents refused to move over to Lydenburg because they were concerned about their access to urban jobs,[19] which, they no doubt realised, could be jeopardised if they placed themselves under the control of a white farmer. But on the company and African owned farms this was not an issue; the residents of these farms were as free to engage in migrancy as any resident of Sekhukhuneland. Thus, for rent tenants and land owners, Lydenburg offered the best of both worlds: access to productive fields that provided some autonomy from the 'world of the whites' and access to urban jobs, which was exactly the kind of lifestyle most Sekhukhuneland residents coveted.[20]

There was one other reason to value the land in Lydenburg: the Pedi paramount's authority there was fluid and uncertain. In the case of Manok and Dinkwanyane this situation gave them the opportunity to establish themselves as chiefs and expand their followings.[21] In the case of the community that settled on the company owned farm Kalkfontein, the situation allowed them to establish a tenuous independence from Sekhukhune.[22] These issues, which had important effects on communal identities, are described more fully below.

Given these conditions, the willingness of these communities to oppose the state's removal plans is hardly surprising. But if all the communities had similar reasons to fight for their land, why then did they not offer the same kind of resistance?

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18 WHPL, AD843/RJ 2.2.6, List of African Occupied Farms in Lydenburg-Sekhukhuneland Region, 1938. For Steelpoortpark see Chapter One, p. 60.

19 CAD, NTS, No. 222/280, Vol. 2096, NAD Memo, 31 January 1946.

20 Delius, 'Migrant Organisation', p. 138: 'The residual resources of land and cattle provided important support for many rural households and allowed some men the possibility of early retirement from migrancy.'

21 See below, p. 226; Interview with L.S. Kgane & Chief Hendrik Manok, Aapiesdoorndraai, 15 April 1993.

22 Interview with Masha Chief's Council, Strydkraal, 15 April 1993.

The answer is located in the historically defined identities of the communities, and the links that they established, or failed to establish, to institutions outside of Lydenburg.

HISTORY AND IDENTITIES

Historical experiences were an important resource in identity construction. Most of the groups that developed a strong communal identity have based this identity on a common history, and, although these histories were interpreted and manufactured, they were nevertheless derived, to varying extents, from actual historical events.[23] At the same time, the creative reconstruction of historical events ensured that available theories and existing social conditions had a large influence on the way history was used. These constructed identities, furthermore, then had an influence on the way the next historical event was interpreted, and the interplay between history, identities and social conditions was therefore a continuous process.

The essential difference between the historical experiences of the community under Manok and the one under Dinkwanyane was that the former leader arrived in Lydenburg from present day Zimbabwe as a refugee with no historical links to the area, whereas the latter had settled in Lydenburg as part of a coordinated movement undertaken by a Christian community under the leadership of the Pedi paramount's half-brother.[24] The Pedi had a long history in the Lydenburg area and, because Micha Dinkwanyane regarded himself as a Pedi chief, he had a legitimate historical claim to the area in which he settled. Manok also established a claim to the area but, in the absence of a Pedi link, he was forced, in order to satisfy his ambitions, to enter into a number of alliances.

Establishing alliances, especially with white protectors, was a common strategy for rootless refugees. Manok had plenty experience of doing just that.[25] As a boy

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23 A. D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1988), p. 198.

24 For the details of these events see Chapter One, pp. 35; 43.

25 See E. Ritchken, 'Leadership and Conflict in Bushbuckridge', Unpublished Thesis, p. 189, for the alliances established by refugees in the lowveld.

Manok had learnt to speak Afrikaans, and had established friendly relations with white children, including the future vice-president of the Transvaal, Schalk Burger. After the war between white settlers and the Pedi in 1876, Manok helped the Lydenburg Native Commissioner to negotiate with Sekhukhune by acting as an interpreter.[26] In reward for his services he was appointed as a chief with jurisdiction in 'white Lydenburg'. His followers were mostly from the mission station and consisted mainly of Afrikaans speaking ex-*inboekselings* and 'Shangaan' refugees. Dinkwanyane, whose followers were mainly Pedi, also claimed jurisdiction over African farm residents in Lydenburg. In response, and in recognition of many of his followers' ethnicity, Manok styled himself as a 'Shangaan' chief with a refugee following.[27]

Manok's childhood experiences caused him to have a lot in common with both 'Shangaan' refugees and ex-*inboekselings*. Delius argues that 'the refugee inboekseling ... ran the risk that deserting a white master could mean that he found himself without a defender, or that a servile position within Boer society had been exchanged for close and exacting ties of dependence within African societies.'[28] Thus, ex-*inboekselings*, like refugee 'Shangaans', were vulnerable and often dependant on white patrons, concerned to allay white fears, rather than challenge white claims.[29] Jacobus was equally vulnerable and eminently qualified to pursue a cooperative strategy. From an early age he had learnt the language and discourse of white Lydenburgers and, by winning their trust, he had acquired power. As I showed earlier, white assistance also helped him acquire land in 1902.

In 1913 Manok tried to fight against the Land Act by travelling to England and appealing to the most important of all white patrons: King George V. The trip was, however, called off because Jacobus became ill. When the Stubbs commission came to Lydenburg to review the Land Act, Manok refused to express any strong

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26 Interview with L.S. Kgane & Chief Hendrik Manok, Aapiesdoorndraai, 15 April 1993; Interview with Chief Christian Manok by Edith Jones, Aapiesdoorndraai, February 1941.
27 Beaumont Commission, Lydenburg, 30 May 1914: Evidence of Chief Manok.
28 Delius, *The Land Belongs to Us* (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1983), p. 144.
29 See Ritchken, 'Leadership and Conflict', p. 178, for the vulnerability of Shangaans in the lowveld.

opposition to the Act.

As a result of their different identities, Manok and Dinkwanyane expressed their claim to land in very different ways. Dinkwanyane drew on Pedi claims to the whole of the eastern Transvaal, as well as his father's occupation of land in Lydenburg before white control had been formalised.[30] He thus confidently told the Stubbs commission in 1918:

> 'We have lived here in this country for many years. We took it for our home. Our fathers lived and died here. Then there came a time when the white man appeared, and said 'We have bought these farms. You must leave.' After we had cultivated our lands we were compelled to leave because the white people came and took them away. We natives are many in this country, and we have a lot of stock, and we are starving with our stock.'[31]

He then went on to demand the whole of Sekhukhuneland and most of Lydenburg as the area that should be set aside for Africans in the eastern Transvaal. He further backed up his demands with arguments that clearly situated the issues facing Africans in Lydenburg within a regional, essentially Pedi, struggle for land. He said:

> 'That country is the only area I can recommend that would satisfy our natives. We include the village of Lydenburg. We want that to be our administrative centre and headquarters of our area. ... Colonel Damant has explained to us what the [Sekhukhune] natives have recommended. We do not agree with these recommendations. We want our area added to theirs. The natives here are spread chiefly over farms belonging to white people. They have a large quantity of great and small stock. Some of them are rent payers, and others are labour tenants.[32]

Another Boomplaats resident stated the case even more clearly. He explained to the commission:

> 'I am Mopedi. My chief is Micha. ... I agree with what the chief has said about the area. It is too small. I belong to Secocoeni's (sic) tribe. I should not like to go and live in Sekukuniland (sic). There is no more room for the natives in Sekukuniland. It is overcrowded there.'[33]

Jacobus Manok, whose approach was in stark contrast to the bold position taken by the Boomplaats residents, sent a spokesperson, Dirk Kana, to the meeting.

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30 Delius, *The Land Belongs to Us*, p. 177.
31 Stubbs Commission, Lydenburg, 15 October 1917, Evidence of Micha Dinkwanyane.
32 *Ibid.*
33 Stubbs Commission, Lydenburg, 15 October 1917, Evidence of Abel Dimpejane.

Kana refused to make any real demands, despite expressing concern about the situation that had arisen from the 1913 Land Act. He said:

> 'This [land] question is a great trouble to us. We can not prevent our father from doing what he wants, so we leave it to him to do what is right for us but not to chase us about from place to place. I obey the King. What he tells me to do I must do. ... I spoke with one of the native delegates sent to England to protest against the [1913 Land Act]. ... I had rather not say whether I think what he says against the Bill is right and proper.'[34]

At the end of the meeting those present were asked to stand up if they supported Dinkwanyane's proposal. The only people who remained sitting were Manok's ten followers at the meeting.

Different identities therefore divided the two land-owning communities from one another. The same was true of Lydenburg's two rent-paying communities. The history and identity of the Mosterthoek community was closely linked to Boomplaats. Micha Dinkwanyane, who had lived on the farm before the Boer War, had left some followers behind when he moved away during the war. With the purchase of Boomplaats in 1906 Dinkwanyane once again put himself into contact with these followers, as Mosterthoek, which was now owned by a land company, shared a border with Boomplaats. The residents of Mosterthoek subsequently regarded Dinkwanyane as their chief. This allegiance undermined to some extent the community's resolve to oppose removals since Dinkwanyane was unaffected by the Mosterthoek removal and Boomplaats offered a nearby, alternative area of settlement.[35]

By contrast, the Kalkfontein community did have a resident chief on the farm, and the community was therefore reluctant to submit to the authority of the neighbouring paramount chief in Sekhukhuneland. The people of Kalkfontein, who called themselves the Mashas, traced their origins back to present day Malawi. Their 'official history' - as narrated by the present chief - consists of numerous

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34 Stubbs Commission, Lydenburg, 15 October 1917, Evidence of Dirk Kana.

35 CAD, NTS, No. 238/323, Vol. 7107, Sub-Native Commissioner Johannesburg to NAD, 1 August 1923; Stubbs Commission, Lydenburg, 15 October 1917: Evidence of Salomon Sipube.

migrations in search of land and independence.[36] They settled on Kalkfontein in the 1860s. Here they found productive land that was situated on the outskirts of Sekhukhune's jurisdiction. Sekhukhune II attempted to extend his authority over the Mashas by arranging a marriage between his daughter and the Masha chief. The Mashas felt that this marriage strengthened *their* position, and exonerated them from having to pay annual tribute to Sekhukhune.[37]

Despite the tension between the Mashas and Sekhukhune the former nevertheless identified with Pedi land claims. They saw themselves as 'part of Sekhukhune's tribe' and spoke SePedi.[38] They shared a Pedi ethnicity even though their earlier history differentiated them from other Sekhukhuneland residents. Their identity is, however, perfectly compatible with the general character of Pedi ethnicity, which is essentially a supra-identity that transcends numerous local identities. These local identities emanated from the period before the Maroteng Paramountcy established its hegemony over *BoPedi*.[39]

Identification with Pedi land claims enabled the Mashas to claim ownership of Kalkfontein by virtue of the trials and tribulations that brought them there, and by their tenuous recognition of the Pedi Paramount's authority:

> 'We talked to the [white man who tried to take our farm] a lot of times, trying to explain that this land is ours; and even the mineowners [who charged us rent] do not have a right to be here. As such they were supposed to pay us and our chief because they have their mines on our land.'[40]

This ownership claim had an important influence on their response to the state's removal policy. How this occurred will become clear when the chapter examines the Masha removal in detail. It will also become clear that the Mashas' links to urban areas had an even greater impact on their resistance. Thus, before the chapter looks at the removals in detail, it first analyses the nature of migrant

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36 Interview with Chief Lengwai II Masha, Strydkraal, 15 April 1993.
37 Interview with Masha Chief's Council, Strydkraal, 15 April 1993.
38 CAD, NTS, No. 444/323, Vol. 7120, Native Commissioner Sekhukhuneland to Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas), 9 February 1948.
39 See Delius, *The Land Belongs to Us*, Preface; H.O. Mönnig, *The Pedi* (Pretoria, Van Schaik, 1967), p. 16.
40 Interview with Masha Council, Strydkraal, 15 April 1993.

labour amongst Lydenburg's four independent African communities.

MIGRANCY AND LINKS TO THE URBAN AREAS

On Aapiesdoorndraai the eight children of Jacobus were each given a plot of land. In terms of Manok's will they were not allowed to sub-divide or sell their plots.[41] Many did, however, rent out pieces of their land and accommodated labour tenants. But most were able to sustain themselves on the land without needing to resort to migrant labour. Those who moved to the city did so on a permanent basis.[42] As Manok's following grew, many of the people who settled on the unproductive dry-land sections of the farm had to find jobs elsewhere. But economic divisions, the exclusion of non-family members from ownership of the land, and the recentness of the chieftainship's establishment, undermined the sense of community on Aapiesdoorndraai. As a result, those who did migrate did not offer their links to the urban areas as a weapon against removal threats. It was the Manok family's responsibility to defend the land, and they had no links to the urban areas.

On Boomplaats the followers of Dinkwanyane had all contributed to the purchase of the farm. This helped to strengthen their communal identification with the land. The Boomplaats purchase also brought into being a well established tradition of migrancy because, in order to raise the money for the purchase, the male family heads had gone to work at Premier Mines, Sabie's gold mines and Johannesburg's mines. In later years male, and sometimes female, family members went to Johannesburg, Pretoria or Witbank.[43] There they worked in mines and as domestics in order to earn bride-wealth, and to supplement their families' income. Access to water from the Boomplaats canal was not equal; those families who could not irrigate their fields had to seek additional income in the towns. Further, as the size of the families on Boomplaats increased, migrancy

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41 CAD, NTS, No. 136/308, Vol. 3464, Secretary of Native Affairs to Native Commissioner Lydenburg, 21 March 1933; Interview with L.S. Kgane & Chief Hendrik Manok, Aapiesdoorndraai, 15 April 1993.

42 Interview with L.S. Kgane & Chief Hendrik Manok, Aapiesdoorndraai, 15 April 1993.

43 Interview with Stefaans Moela, Mashishing, 14 April 1993; Mrs Mthembu, Jane Furse, 24 January 1992; Monica Letsoane, Mashishing 11 April 1992; Samuel Modipa, Mashishing, 11 April 1992; Mrs Moleke, Mashishing 12 April 1992; Betty Mnisi, Marulaneng, 6 June 1992.

became more general.[44] The land on Boomplaats was often not sufficient to provide for larger families, thus increasing the need for wage earnings. In addition, there was no need for all the males to stay at home, so it made sense for the older sons to go to work in town.[45]

On Kalkfontein migrancy was also well established. After graduating from initiation school, age regiments went to the urban areas to acquire bridewealth. This was already the practice in the nineteenth century when young men went to Kimberly. Cash was hard to come by on Kalkfontein because there were no towns in the vicinity of the farm that could provide markets for the crops produced on Kalkfontein. Thus the crops were consumed and bartered, while cash supplements were earned by the men in Johannesburg and Pretoria.[46] The Mashas built their own school and church and were able to acquire some education. This helped them to get jobs outside the mines, on the railways and in secondary industry. This pattern became established amongst both the Mashas and Boomplaats residents in the late 1930s, when jobs in the manufacturing sector became available for migrants.[47]

By contrast, the community on Mosterthoek did not establish well developed links with urban areas like Pretoria and Johannesburg. This occurred because of the quality of the agricultural land on Mosterthoek and because of its proximity to Lydenburg. The farm's proximity to Lydenburg allowed Mosterthoek's residents, firstly, to seek short-term jobs there and, secondly, to sell their fairly abundant produce for cash.[48] Both these factors limited the need to seek jobs in Johannesburg and Pretoria.

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44 Interview with Samuel Modipa, Mashishing, 11 April 1992.

45 See D. James, 'Land Shortage and Inheritance in a Lebowa Village', in *Social Dynamics* 14(2) 1988; D. James, 'A Question of Ethnicity: Ndzundza Ndebele in a Lebowa village', in *JSAS*, Vol. 16, No. 1, March 1990, p. 37; Interview with Betty Mnisi, Marulaneng, 6 June 1992; Interview with Mrs Moleke, Mashishing, 12 April 1992; Interview with Stefaans Moela, Mashishing, 14 April 1993.

46 Interview with Masha Chief's Council, Strydkraal, 15 April 1993.

47 Interview with Masha Chief's Council, Strydkraal, 15 April 1993; See also P. Delius, 'Sebatakgomo; Migrant Organisation, The ANC and the Sekhukhuneland Revolt', in *JSAS*, Vol. 15, No. 4, October 1989, p. 593.

48 Interview with Abraham Motau, Jane Furse, December, 1990.

The different links to particular urban areas played a crucial role in determining the very different behaviour of the Kalkfontein and Mosterthoek communities. The chapter will demonstrate this by examining their reactions to the first removals, which, in the 1940s, were aimed at rent-tenants in white areas. But first, it is important to establish state policy towards removals at the time.

REMOVAL POLICIES

Chapter Four of the 1936 Land Act committed the state to the abolition of rent-tenancy in white areas. This aspect of the Chapter was not implemented because the NAD first wanted to acquire new land that would be added to 'black areas' and would then be able to accommodate rent-tenants expelled from 'white areas'. However, while the NAD continued with its land consolidations in the 1940s, most companies who owned land occupied by rent-tenants sold it to white farmers, thus avoiding the responsibility of removing long-standing clients.[49] This strategy was facilitated by the strong demand for land amongst white farmers, which was heightened by the expansion of the white rural population at a time when agriculture was increasingly becoming a profitable enterprise. These processes fed into a pre-existing racist antagonism against 'independent Africans' in 'white areas' and encouraged white farmers to become more vociferous in their demands for 'black spot' removals.[50]

RESISTANCE AND POLITICAL MOVEMENTS

Kalkfontein and Mosterthoek

The earlier experiences of the Kalkfontein community shows that their existence had been threatened for some time by white economic advance and demand for land. In 1925 Kalkfontein was bought by a platinum mining company which charged rent for residence and cattle.[51] Before the company's purchase the farm was owned by an individual named Van der Merwe. The arrangement with him

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49 CAD, NTS, No. 1209/308, Vol. 3636, NAD Memo, c1946.

50 See S. Schirmer, 'Racism and White Farmers: The Initiation of Racial Land Divisions at the Local Level', in *Africa Perspective*, Vol. 2, No. 1, December 1993, p. 40.

51 CAD, NTS, No. 444/323, Vol. 7120, Lydenburg Platinum Areas Ltd. to Sub-Native Commissioner Sekhukhuneland, 24 November 1926: '£1.10.0 per person per anum including wife or wives, and a grazing fee of £3 per anum for large stock and six pence for small stock.'

was also rent-tenancy but in 1920, at the end of an agricultural boom in Lydenburg, he decided that the residents would have to become labour tenants. The community on Kalkfontein, led by their chieftainess Magosebo, the daughter of chief Sekhukhune II, resisted this change. Van der Merwe responded by evicting many of the residents, including the chieftainess and her son, Petrus Makopole Masha. After the company purchase and the reversion to rent-tenancy the two were allowed to return to Kalkfontein.

Despite these early difficulties, the Mashas kept their land longer than the other remaining rent-tenants in Lydenburg, the community on Mosterthoek. Mosterthoek was sold in 1944 by the Central South African Lands and Mines Company to a white farmer called Steenkamp.[52] The residents of the farm tried to counter this impending process by offering to buy the farm themselves. In this quest they were assisted by the recently elected Native Representative, Hyman Basner. The state, however, rejected the African purchase offer because the farm was not situated in a 'released area'.[53] There was no further overt resistance to the new farmer once Basner's pleas had fallen on deaf ears. Michael Monate remembers that Mosterthoek residents felt that the white farmer took away their lands because he was jealous of their productivity, but they accepted this fatalistically and moved away to Boomplaats, where they settled on smaller, rocky fields.[54] In this way they mitigated the harshness of the removal by retaining access to some land within the same vicinity, as well as links to the community under chief Micha Dinkwanyane.

Although the Mosterthoek community brought in Basner in 1944, they were unable to link up to urban political movements because they rarely went further afield than Lydenburg town in search of wages. By contrast, the community of Kalkfontein, which had been sold to a white farmer in the previous year, refused to accept the resulting situation, primarily because the Mashas established links

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52 Interview with Maria Mkhonto, Jane Furse, 9 December 1990; Interview with Emily Mkhonto, Jane Furse, 8 February 1991.
53 CAD, NTS, No. 282/323, Vol. 7107, Senator Basner to Secretary of Native Affairs, 2 September 1944.
54 Interview with Michael Monate and Jeremia Moleke, Mashishing, 10 April 1992.

to both the ICU and the ANC. The importance of these links will become apparent in the following examination of the Masha's resistance to removal.

At the end of 1943 the Lydenburg Platinum Areas Company sold Kalkfontein to a farmer called Martin Nieuwenhuize. Most of the African residents refused to accept the conditions imposed by the new owner. Their resistance was, however, beginning to crumble until the 'United ICU', a very small ICU offshoot situated in Pretoria's Marabastad, under the leadership of Robert Malatji, became involved and encouraged the Masha's to resist.[55] Gawie Masha, who worked in Pretoria and had been in contact with the ICU prior to the sale, led the resistance. He had been given his *trekpass* by Nieuwenhuize because he refused to agree to the new labour tenant contracts imposed by Nieuwenhuize. Masha then went to Pretoria to ask the ICU for advice and returned to Kalkfontein with the message: 'Mr Nieuwenhuize can do nothing. You go on ploughing'.[56] He collected ICU membership fees and told people at a meeting: 'This money I am collecting is to protect you'.[57] The involvement of the ICU gave the Mashas renewed hope. Some people had already accepted labour tenant contracts while others had left the farm, but when Gawie Masha returned from Pretoria with the assurance of ICU support most of the people on Kalkfontein rallied behind him.

One of the most important aspects of the ICU's involvement was that it acted as an alternative broker to the existing Chief. This was particularly important in a context where chiefs were increasingly becoming state officials and were no longer prepared to represent the interests of their followers if these interests clashed with the state. The first ICU members, including Gawie and his father, Piet Nyoko, established themselves as an alternative leadership. They held weekly meetings and formed a committee from which the Chief was completely excluded.[58] This did not mean that people rejected the institution of chieftainship.

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55 H. Bradford, *A Taste of Freedom* (New Haven, Yale Univ. Press, 1987), p. 254.

56 CAD, NTS, No. 444/323, Vol. 7120, Declaration by Petrus Masha, 12 January 1944.

57 *Ibid.*

58 CAD, NTS, No. 444/323 Vol. 7120, Nieuwenhuize to Frikkie Maré, 30 May 1944; CAD, NTS, No. 444/323, Vol. 7120, Native Commissioner Sekhukhuneland to Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas), 9 February 1948.

Rather, the new emerging concepts of leadership placed a greater emphasis on accountability and less on the genealogical basis of chieftainship.[59]

Chief Petrus Masha, who, with his mother, had opposed the previous abolition of rent-tenancy, was opposed to the ICU and the decision to resist. He gave the Native Commissioner details about the meetings and he asked the state to remove Gawie Masha in January of 1944. He actually accompanied Martin Nieuwenhuize to the NAD offices to call for the expulsion of the Kalkfontein residents. At that meeting Nieuwenhuize claimed that he had 'lost control' of his property because the people there 'plough and sow as they please'.[60] He blamed this state of affairs on Gawie Masha and the ICU's promise that they would protect the people from Nieuwenhuize. In response to these complaints the NAD sent a constable, who encountered defiance and rejection of Nieuwenhuize's ownership. Most of the leaders at Kalkfontein failed to respond to the summons from the constable. The one person who did, refused to divulge any information and asked indignantly:

> 'What do you want me for? This is a secret affair and has nothing to do with Mr Nieuwenhuize. This farm belongs to the Company and Nieuwenhuize has nothing to do with it.'[61]

The state then took the initiative and prosecuted some of the residents for breach of contract. Hyman Basner again assisted the company farm residents of Lydenburg by hiring a Mr Boshoff to represent the accused. The prosecutions, however, were successful, especially after Basner's representative proved to be less than sympathetic and refused to defend people who had 'obviously been incited by some or other sinister movement'.[62] This outcome did not dampen the Masha's determination to resist. The convicted residents ignored the court and went back to Kalkfontein while Basner once again tried to negotiate with the NAD. This time Basner asked the NAD to buy another farm as compensation, a proposal which the

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59 P. Delius, 'The Tortoise and the Spear: Popular Political Culture and Violence in the Sekhukhuneland Revolt of 1958', Unpublished Paper, 1994: 'Both ANC members and commoners laid great stress on the ideal that *kgoshi ke kgoshi ka batho* [the chief is chief by the people] as a counterpoint to the increasingly authoritarian and co-opted realities of chiefly rule.'

60 CAD, NTS, No. 444/323 Vol. 7120, Declaration made by Martin Nieuwenhuize, 12 January 1944. See also J. Bekker, 'We Will Plough Where We Like: Resistance to the Application of Betterment Schemes in the Pietersburg Area, 1937-1946', Unpublished Honours Dissertation, Wits, 1989.

61 CAD, NTS, No. 444/323, Vol. 7120, Statement made by Geelbooi Matidi, 15 January 1944.

62 CAD, NTS, No. 444/323, Vol. 7120, Mr Nieuwenhuize to Frikkie Maré, 30 May 1944.

Native Commissioner of Sekhukhuneland supported. But the Department of Lands refused to sell the proposed farms because the local farmers association objected. As a result the proposal was shelved.

As a result of the determined resistance of the Mashas Nieuwenhuize was becoming less resolute by the end of 1944. He feared that if he tried to force the Africans off Kalkfontein with a court order 'they will retaliate by inflicting injury to his other properties and livestock'.[63] This trepidation gave the Kalkfontein residents a reprieve until February 1946, when a new contender appeared on the scene. Martin Nieuwenhuize had promised Kalkfontein to his son-in-law, L.J.L. Malan, who returned from active service in Syria determined to claim his inheritance. He backed up his calls for action with details of numerous 'disturbing' developments in the area since 1944. The first was an attack carried out by the Kalkfonteiners against two white *bywoner* families who farmed on a neighbouring segment of Kalkfontein. The *bywoner* families left the farm and the Africans took over the land. The other development was the movement of numerous labour tenant families to Kalkfontein, which infuriated farmers whose labour supply diminished as a result.

The arrival of Malan and the growing anger of the white farming community helped Nieuwenhuize to overcome his earlier fear. He obtained an ejectment order against the Kalkfontein residents. The Deputy Sheriff, however, ran into severe obstacles when he tried to issue the court order to the 87 families affected:

> 'When he arrived with the interpreter he found some fifty natives congregated. He tried to explain the writ and was shouted down. He called out the names of those on the list but, with the exception of one, they refused to respond. The one who did respond refused to accept the copy of the court order and adopted a very truculent attitude, as did all those present.'[64]

Nieuwenhuize's courage was exhausted. He refused to help the Sheriff because he heard that the 'Kalkfontein natives say that if the police come to take them off the

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[63] CAD, NTS, No. 444/323 Vol. 7120, NAD Memo: The Controller of Native Settlements, c1944.
[64] CAD, NTS, No. 444/323, Vol. 7120, Commissioner (SAP) Nelspruit to Secretary of Native Affairs, 24 August 1946.

farm their blood will be spilt, but Nieuwenhuize's body will also be found there'.[65]

After further delays lasting a full year the police and the NAD, backed by a substantial number of armed men, finally moved onto the farm. Starting on the 18 August 1947, and for the duration of three days, fifty four families were moved from Kalkfontein to the nearby trust farm Steelpoortdrift. The Africans offered no resistance to this substantial show of force, but Shulamoth Muller, S. Rappaport and Ruth First, all from the Communist Party, watched the proceedings to ensure that no irregularities took place.

By the 9th of February 1948 most of the people from Kalkfontein had left the smaller and very unproductive Steelpoortdrift and re-occupied 'their land'. A notable exception was Chief Petrus Masha, who decided to obey the NAD and remained on Steelpoortdrift. Labour tenants from white farms also continued to move to Kalkfontein, while members of the Kalkfontein 'committee' sought to expand the area of cultivation available to them by prohibiting neighbouring Indian tenants from ploughing. White farmers were becoming increasingly dissatisfied with this situation and they threatened to form a 'commando' to attack the farm. The Pedi paramount Morwamotse Sekhukhune tried to intervene by offering the Kalkfonteiners land in the Nebo area. On the 19th October Morwamotse, accompanied by the Native Commissioner, Frank Maserumule, Chief Kgolokoe and James Mabowe Sekhukhune, addressed the people on Kalkfontein. All the speakers advised the people to leave Kalkfontein peacefully. These exhortations had no effect.[66]

The ANC then intervened in an attempt to 'obtain a peaceful settlement'. Representing the ANC in this matter was Ismael Moroe, who had been a member of the ICU in 1937. The ANC's solution was to look, with the assistance of the NAD, 'for a suitable property in the released area' as an alternative for

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[65] CAD, NTS, No. 444/323, Vol. 7120, Deputy Commissioner (SAP) Transvaal Division to Commissioner (SAP) Nelspruit, 5 September 1946.

[66] CAD, NTS, No. 444/323, Vol. 7120, Native Commissioner Sekhukhuneland to Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas), 19 October 1948.

Kalkfontein. The representatives of the Kalkfontein community agreed to this compromise and they eventually decided on the farm De Hoop. But farmers, some of whom were still considering a raid on Kalkfontein, refused to permit the purchase of this farm because it fell outside the 'released area'. The NAD then offered two other impoverished farms, which were later also rejected by other 'black spot' communities, and thus the compromise solution broke down.[67]

After this solution failed the NAD labelled the Kalkfontein community as 'unreasonable'. The Kalkfonteiners, it was decided, had therefore forfeited their rights to compensatory land, and they could now be placed on any available 'trust land'. On the 27th of June 1949 the second removal was undertaken with the assistance of sixty armed policemen. This time the removal lasted four days and 150 families were settled in tents on the farm Geen Einde. Although the residents had held a meeting and decided to resist, they were overwhelmed by the size of the police force. They did not offer any opposition. People were given the opportunity to return and gather their crops and cattle, but most cattle and many bags of grain were lost. The Mashas, with the assistance of the ICU, tried to find ways to return to Kalkfontein, but the police patrolled the area on a daily basis. Those who returned were arrested and charged with trespassing. Even a Supreme Court decision stating that the removal was illegal failed to reverse the process. The NAD refused to yield. They claimed that when they were made aware of the court's decision, the removal was already a *fait accompli.*

In 1943, one year after the first residents had joined the ICU, many of the Mashas working in Pretoria and Johannesburg had joined the ANC while still retaining ICU membership.[68] The reasons for this dual membership are described by members of the present Chief's Council:

> 'What we wanted was to build a concrete defence which would protect us from both

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[67] CAD, NTS, No. 444/323, Vol. 7120, ANC Transvaal Branch to Secretary of Native Affairs, 11 November 1948; Secretary of Native Affairs Memo, 4 February 1949; Deputy Commissioner to Commissioner, South African Police, 14 March 1949; Native Commissioner Sekhukhuneland to Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas), 6 April 1949.

[68] Interview with Masha Chief's Council, Strydkraal, 15 April 1993.

> sides. When one was weakened the ANC would come on strong. [They agreed enthusiastically that] by having both cards it helped us to be stronger because the ANC would be negotiating and ICU using lawyers. When you have problems you do whatever you think will help.'[69]

Clearly, they regarded membership of these political movements as a resource to be used in their local struggle for land. There is no indication that the Masha ANC/ICU members absorbed the ideology of these movements in the way that some migrants from Sekhukhuneland were conscientised by the Communist Party in the 1940s and early 1950s.[70] The Masha's membership had more in common with other Sekhukhuneland residents who joined ANC linked organisations in the late 1950s. Most of these rural residents 'remained doubtful about the ANC' and concentrated on dealing with local problems.[71]

The ANC and ICU were very different from one another in the 1940s. During that decade Israel Moroe, the chair of many ICU meetings in Marabastad during the 1930s, first left politics and then joined the ANC. Consequently the already declining support for the ICU in Pretoria vanished altogether.[72] But a small group of people, under the leadership of Robert Malatji, maintained the ICU in Marabastad, inspired by the tradition of anti-communism that had been a prominent part of many ICU platforms since 1927.[73] Linked to this was an attempt to represent the ICU to the state as a 'reasonable' organisation that should be encouraged as a way to divert Africans from radicalism.[74] The ANC, on the other hand, was gradually becoming the representative of 'radical' Africans. The extent and nature of their radicalism was constantly debated, but their growing commitment to mass action, demands for the franchise, desire to represent all African grievances, and their alliance with the Communist Party,

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69 Interview with Masha Council, Strydkraal, 15 April 1993; The intervention was made by Philip Mbiba.

70 P. Delius, 'Sebatakgomo and the Zoutpansberg Balemi Organisation', p. 15-16.

71 P. Delius, 'Sebatakgomo', p. 613.

72 N. Mokgatle, *The Autobiography of an Unknown South African* (Berkeley, Univ. of California Press, 1971), p. 222.

73 See Bradford, *A Taste of Freedom*, pp. 128, 254-255; E. Roux, *Time Longer than Rope: A History of the Black Man's Struggle for Freedom in South Africa* (London, Victor Gollancz, 1948), pp. 167-168.

74 CAD, NTS, No. 444/323, Vol. 7120, Stephen Mabula to Secretary of Native Affairs, 26 July 1949.

made their political position incompatible with the tactics favoured by the ICU.[75] Both organisations did, however, stress the importance of allowing Africans to have a say in their own affairs, and it is likely that this message resonated with, and was adopted by, people who were dissatisfied with chiefs who ignored their followers' concerns. This explains why the ICU members at Kalkfontein circumvented their chief so readily, and connects the Masha's ideas to those expressed at Boomplaats, by ANC members who also opposed their chief.

Boomplaats

Links to Sekhukhuneland, in terms of a Pedi identity, enabled the Mashas to claim Kalkfontein as 'their land', but links to the paramountcy proved to be a hindrance rather than a help. Kalkfontein residents claimed that Morwamotse supported the removal because the Mashas were able to avoid his control while they stayed at Kalkfontein. The Dinkwanyane community, whose fight against removal began in 1949, was, on the other hand, able to draw strength from links to the paramountcy, because massive transformations occurred in Sekhukhuneland during the 1950s.

The shortage of land in Sekhukhuneland had become more acute in the 1950s. In 1952 the Native Commissioner estimated that about 10,000 families could make a 'reasonable' (although not secure) living in the area. This was based on the estimation that each family would require five morgen of land. The problem was that the implementation of such a scenario would require the displacement of 5000 families, or 25,000 people. Whereas hardly any extra land had been available in 1930, in 1952 people exceeded, by one-third of their number, the amount of land that should have been used per family.[76]

The concern over land within this regional situation was eloquently expressed by

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[75] Delius, 'Migrants Organisation', p. 148; showed that the Communist Party played an important role in radicalizing the ANC. Within the Lydenburg-Sekhukhuneland region specifically, the communist party migrants from Sekhukhuneland began to shift the ANC away from a rural policy based on consultation with chiefs, to a more popularly based policy.

[76] CAD, NK, No. 2, Vol. 65, Native Commissioner's Evidence on Sekhukhuneland submitted to Tomlinson Commission, c1952.

Chief Frank Maserumule, who was the only African from Sekhukhuneland consulted by the Tomlinson commission of 1952. Chief Maserumule told the commission:

> 'It would have been better if from the start we would have been given more land. Now things are wrong. You gave one tribe which is a thousand people a small place to live on, and how would a thousand people live in that small place? ... The Trust has taken the farms [outside our location]. If our people were given those farms which are now occupied by the Trust, it would be much better because they are next door to us. Now those farms are occupied by people who come from far.'[77]

Chief Maserumule also explained that Africans needed land to survive *in the present situation*. If blacks started getting jobs like those held by whites, he explained, then they would no longer need land to supplement their incomes. Thus the residents of Sekhukhuneland could identify with the kind of lifestyle, based on a migrant labour income supplemented by 'independent' access to agricultural crops, that many of the Lydenburg communities tried to defend. Due to the establishment of betterment policies, the state interfered with a new intensity in the lives of 'reserve' residents, many of whom began, as a matter of principle, to oppose state encroachments in any rural area. These Sekhukhuneland residents expressed support for the struggle against removals in Lydenburg. In the early 1950s, Delius argues, they regarded the removal of 'black spots' as an attack against the 'remaining economic props of their rural world'.[78]

A growing militancy emerged in Sekhukhuneland at this time, with the 1951 Bantu Authorities Act as its focus. When the state asked Morwamotse to agree to this Act in 1953 many people in Sekhukhuneland saw this as an attempt to undermine their independence and the dignity of the chief.[79] Their opposition was led by migrants who had become ANC and Communist Party members in the towns. These migrants returned to Sekhukhuneland and forced Morwamotse to accept a new Chief's Council dominated by ANC members. The migrants, who were part of a political movement known as Sebatakgomo, promoted the idea that

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77 CAD, K, No. 20, Vol. 54, Evidence given to the Tomlinson Commission by Chief Maserumule, c1952, p. 840.

78 Delius, 'Sebatakgomo', p. 22.

79 Delius, 'The Tortoise and the Spear', p. 10.

chiefs should represent the wishes of their followers and should not collaborate with outside authorities such as the South African state. Morwamotse changed after the new Sebatakgomo dominated Chief's Council came to power. He rejected Bantu Authorities and refused to help the state with their removal of Boomplaats.[80] Thus, when the time came for the Boomplaats community to resist removal, their struggle was already part of a wider conflict in which defining the role of chiefs was crucial.

The perception that the conflict on Boomplaats was linked to Sekhukhuneland was enhanced by close ties between the chiefly families. This perception was reinforced when Thorometsane, a sister of Morwamotse, married Micha Dinkwanyane's son.[81] When Thorometsane became chieftainess and decided to go along with the removal in 1955 it was deemed by many members of the community as unacceptable behaviour and tantamount to accepting Bantu Authorities.[82] In retrospect, her behaviour is contrasted with Micha and Morwamotse, who were regarded as good chiefs. Michael Mashupje recalls:

> '[Boomplaats] was a peaceful place, there was no conflict. But because of marriage this woman [Thorometsane] destroyed all of that. Her brother is Sekhukhune. He disagreed with all this thing. He was taken away, banished to some area and when he came back he could not even talk.'[83]

Dinkwanyane (like Morwamotse who later rejected Bantu Authorities because of the pressure exerted by Sebatakgomo) was not unambiguously opposed to co-operation with the state. He co-operated with the Native Commissioner in drawing up cards that registered new settlers on Boomplaats and he fought for recognition as a chief under the 1927 Native Administration Act. Non-recognition would have undermined his authority in the Lydenburg area.[84] It is thus not entirely clear where Micha would have placed his loyalties if he had been faced with the choices later faced by his daughter-in-law. When the NAD started its campaign to remove

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80 See Delius, 'Sebatakgomo' for details on these events; CAD, NTS, No. 2331/308, Vol. 3778, NAD to Native Commissioner Lydenburg, 13 March 1958.

81 See H.O. Mönnig, *The Pedi*, p. 38.

82 For similar developments in the lowveld, see Ritchken, 'Leadership and Conflict', p. 297.

83 Interview with Michael Mashupje, Mashishing, 2 February 1992.

84 CAD, NTS, No. 274/323, Vol. 7109, Secretary of Native Affairs to Native Commissioner Lydenburg, 9 December 1933.

Boomplaats they were told that Micha was too old to represent the interests of the residents adequately. They had to negotiate instead with the Chief's Council. Micha's absence from these meetings might indicate that he was not strongly in favour of opposing the removal. However, this impression is contradicted by a letter he wrote in 1951 in which he spoke about the NAD's plan to clear Lydenburg of African farmers and urged his followers to fight against this process.[85]

Two years earlier, on the 15th of February 1949, the Native Commissioner of Lydenburg, perhaps acting in terms of a more determined Apartheid initiative against 'black spots', had informed the people of Boomplaats that they had to leave their farm and should choose an alternative farm in the 'released area'.[86] Thomas Dinkwanyane, acting as spokesperson for the Chief's Council, explained that 'we [intend to] remain on the above-mentioned farm due to climatical [sic] and the heavy expenses entered into in improving the farm, i.e. making of the dams, planting trees etc.'[87] Thomas presented this resolution after the matter had been discussed with 'the people of Boomplaats'.[88] Subsequent meetings between NAD officials and the Council usually involved a large number of men and women spectators who participated by loudly voicing their collective approval or disapproval. During that time there was no indication that anyone on the farm supported the proposed removal.

The situation changed after Micha Dinkwanyane's death in 1952, which was followed by the deaths, in quick succession, of his son and grandson and the accession of Thorometsane Victoria Dinkwanyane. She worked closely with her brother James Mabowe Sekhukhune, who strongly favoured cooperation and was a key figure in the NAD's attempt to incorporate the Pedi Paramount into Bantu

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85 Letter handed to Author by Samuel Modipa, Micha Dinkwanyane to *Go* Bapedi Tribe, 14 December 1951.

86 L. Platzky & C. Walker, *The Surplus People: Forced Removals in South Africa* (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1985), p. 115.

87 CAD, NTS, Vol. 3778, No. 2331/308, Meeting Between Native Commissioner Lydenburg and Dinkwanyane Tribe, 15 February 1949.

88 *Ibid.*

Authority structures.[89] James' importance to the state allowed him to intervene on behalf of his sister. He obtained the state's permission to find an appropriate farm for the Boomplaats community, and in October 1955 he examined the available farms along with Thorometsane's committee of Boomplaats residents who supported the decision to cooperate.[90] They chose the farm Sterkspruit, a choice that was at first opposed by the NAD's Chief Native Commissioner on the grounds that 'Sterkspruit [is] too valuable to offer to Natives who don't care about farming'.[91] But the need to placate cooperative people like Thorometsane and James Mabowe led the NAD eventually to approve Sterkspruit as compensation for Boomplaats.[92]

The supporters of Thorometsane on Boomplaats were mostly wealthy land-owners who were probably persuaded by the fertility of Sterkspruit and the compensation that the NAD promised to pay for any 'improvements' that would be left behind on Boomplaats.[93] The rest of her supporters were established Boomplaats residents who were 'close to the chieftainess'.[94] But a large group of people remained strongly opposed to the removal. The earlier consensus broke down, which gave the chieftainess an additional reason to support the removal. The split in the community undermined the chieftainess' authority, making her more dependent on the NAD. Initially she probably decided to go along with the removal because the danger of resistance seemed too great and because the NAD offered her a car, residence in the new farm's abandoned house and, eventually, a salary in terms of the Tribal Authorities Act. But once she made this decision she gradually lost control of most of her followers. She realised that on the new farm,

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89 CAD, NTS, No. 2331/308, Vol. 3778, Victoria Dinkwanyane to Nkwale Skosana, May 1956; Interview with Samuel Modipa, Mashishing, 11 April 1992.

90 Interview by P. Delius with James Mabowe Sekhukhune, 12 October 1987; My thanks to Peter Delius for giving me access to this interview.

91 CAD, NTS, No. 2331/308, Vol. 3778, Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas) to Secretary of Native Affairs, 6 November 1954.

92 CAD, NTS, No. 2331/308, Vol. 3778, Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas) to Secretary of Native Affairs, 15 October 1955: 'Ons moet haar tegemoet kom want die uitwerking van haar handeling op die res van die Boomplaats bewoners kan niks anders as heilsaam wees.'

93 See below, p. 249; Interview with Michael Monate and Jeremia Moleke, Mashishing, 10 April 1992; Letta Sekhukhune, Jane Furse, 23 January 1992.

94 Interview with Letta Sekhukhune, Jane Furse, 23 January 1992.

with the NAD's help, her control over those who decided to move with her was assured.[95]

The ANC first became involved in the Boomplaats conflict in 1955 through a migrant by the name of Hezekiel Mpjane. He worked in Johannesburg, where he contacted Nelson Mandela and Oliver Tambo, who, in their capacity as lawyers, drew up a petition that Mpjane brought back to Boomplaats were it was signed by 137 protesting residents.[96] The petition was powerfully and eloquently phrased, and suggests that, despite the lack of a comprehensive ANC rural programme, Mandela and Tambo, at least, understood some of the issues that inspired rural people. The petition claimed that the removal was unacceptable, despite the offer of compensation, because 'Boomplaats is our social, economic and religious home and no substitute and/or compensation can ever suffice'.[97]

In the 1950s a greater number of rural migrants joined the ANC in towns like Johannesburg.[98] Young migrants from Boomplaats participated in this trend, and they joined an ANC that had extended its radicalism since the 1940s.[99] With the growing dominance of communists and Youth League members within, and the newly elected National Party threatening to wipe out even moderate political opposition, the ANC became wholly committed to extensive mass action. This context, it can be argued, gave ANC members hope of an approaching political victory and thus boosted the confidence of all those who believed in such a possibility.[100] In addition, Youth League members' faith in 'the will of the majority' and the communists' regard for 'grass roots issues' produced greater and clearer support for democratic forms of government that should represent, rather than rule, the majority. In Lydenburg these ideas bolstered the opposition of

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95 Interview with Samuel Modipa, Mashishing, 11 April 1992; Mrs Moleke, Mashishing, 12 April 1992.

96 Interview with Mrs Mnisi, Acornhoek, 18 November 1993; Mandela remembered his involvement with the Boomplaats petition during a discussion with K. Schirmer, c1993.

97 CAD, NTS, No. 2331/308, Vol. 3778, Petition of Dinkwanyane-Bapedi Tribe, c1955.

98 Delius, 'Migrant Organisation', p. 150; This happened especially after the Communist Party was banned in 1951 and its members accepted 'the necessity of a close alliance with the ANC and the centrality of the national democratic struggle.' See 'Migrant Organisation', p. 149.

99 Interview with Michael Mashupje, Mashishing, 14 April 1993; Stefaans Moela, Mashishing, 14 April 1993. Interviews.

100 See L. Kuper, *Passive Resistance in South Africa* (London, Jonathan Cape, 1956), pp. 120-121.

communities against chiefs who ignored the 'majority'.[101]

The two most prominent leaders of the Boomplaats resistance were migrants and ANC members called Petrus Magabe and Ananias Leshaba. They used the language of democracy that they had acquired from the ANC, declaring that Thorometsane's position was illegitimate because she and her secretary, Sesthanius Phala, 'were not elected, but assumed the duties of administering the tribe without consultation with the tribe.'[102] It was Joseph Mashele who came up with the idea that there should be 'a regularly elected leader' on Boomplaats. Accordingly a general meeting was called on 15 June 1956 by Hesekiel Mpanya, a grandson of Micha Dinkwanyane who lived in Johannesburg.[103] At the meeting Petrus Magabe was elected by 'majority vote' to take over the position of chief. Ananias Leshaba became the chief's secretary. Thorometsane and Phala were 'asked to relinquish their position as office bearers of the tribe'.[104] Thus the chieftainess could now be condemned not only because she was involved in an unacceptable relationship with 'outsiders' but also because she did not represent the wishes of the majority. This language clearly helped people to articulate their opposition to Thorometsane and is still evident among those who condemn her today. Samuel Modipa, for example, recalls:

> 'Those people who were pro-Thorometsane held their meetings in secret at night. The other people would call meetings during the day so that there would be no splits. ... the chieftainess was aware that she could not exercise her power in the presence of the majority, its like they were obstructing her.'[105]

Michael Mashupje, an ANC member who later went into exile, also condemned Thorometsane's insensitivity to the views and demands of 'the people'. He explains:

> 'She was rude, she never understood the views of other people. She is just married to Boomplaats, the farm was bought by the people, but she would not listen to

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101 For the 'mystic communion' between youth leaguers and 'the popular classes', see Lodge, *Black Politics*, p. 22. For the contribution of communists to mass-based politics see, Delius, 'Migrant Organisation', p. 148.

102 CAD, NTS, No. 2331/308, Vol. 3778, Affidavit made by Petrus Magabe, Undated.

103 CAD, NTS, No. 2331/308, Vol. 3778, Native Commissioner Lydenburg to Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas), 18 July 1956.

104 CAD, NTS, No. 2331/308, Vol. 3778, Affidavit made by Petrus Magabe, Undated.

105 Interview with Samuel Modipa, Mashishing, 11 April 1992.

anyone. She sided with the Apartheid system.'[106]

Before those who were against the removal formally elected Magabe they became involved in a number of violent conflicts with those who refused to fight. On the 28 April 1956, at one-o-clock in the morning, a group of unknown people attacked Sesthanius Phala's house and burnt it to the ground. Phala's dogs woke him up as the house began to catch ablaze and he was able to save himself and his family. There were rumours that this attack was part of a well-laid plan to kill both Phala and Thorometsane.[107] The violence did not escalate, however, because Thorometsane and her followers (consisting of 45 families) left Boomplaats and settled on the trust farm Sterkspruit in December 1956. After that they only returned to Boomplaats under police escort.

But even after Thorometsane and her followers left, the threat of violence against any co-operation with the state remained. When Agricultural Officers tried to get Boomplaats residents to sign validations of their properties a number of women screamed at them to go away. They claimed that people would be killed if the officials' vehicles were seen in front of their houses. The officials themselves *were* attacked:

> 'A number of Africans ran at them with stones and metal weapons so they got in their cars and drove back. The Africans chased their car. On route out of Boomplaats they were intercepted by a hostile mob. They turned around and took a different route out of Boomplaats. This exit was barricaded with stones and logs. The officials had to remove these obstacles in a hurry as a number of Africans were still chasing them. They managed to escape.'[108]

These attacks against officials and 'collaborators' parallel the attacks on 'rangers' in Sekhukhuneland. The 'rangers', named after the Africans who policed the 'trust farms', were residents of Sekhukhuneland who supported Bantu Authorities. In 1958 nine were killed and many more injured. In Kenya during the Mau Mau conflict most Kikuyu attacks were also against collaborators. Lonsdale's recent assessment of Mau Mau examines the shared cultural values of the Kikuyu, which became increasingly relevant and the subject of hot debate as more and more

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[106] Interview with Hosia Phala & Michael Mashupje, Mashishing, 2 February 1992.
[107] CAD, NTS, No. 2331/308, Vol. 3778, Victoria Dinkwanyane to Nkwale Skosana, May 1956.
[108] CAD, NTS, No. 2331/308, Vol. 3778, NAD Memo, Undated c1958.

Kikuyu faced landlessness and marginalisation.[109] Knott argues, in the context of Irish agrarian resistance, that tenants would often attack and kill other tenants who accepted 'unacceptable terms' because they most clearly violated the moral order; they shared these values and should have known better.[110] These examples shed light on the politics and violence on Boomplaats. There the threat of being torn from the land, coupled with Thorometsane's behaviour, made the moral order of the chieftainship a burning issue. Links to Sekhukhuneland and the ANC were then introduced into the debate on acceptable behaviour. In this instance, the outside influences reinforced and re-shaped the tendency to reject a 'rude chief'.[111]

After Thorometsane left, Petrus Magabe initiated two strategies of resistance. First he tried to boost the number of his supporters and his revenue by encouraging people who lived as labour tenants on surrounding farms to come and settle on Boomplaats. Those that arrived immediately after the departure of Thorometsane's group were allowed to occupy the dwellings and fields left unoccupied by the exodus. Once these spaces had been filled people were encouraged to move onto the less arable, rocky parts of Boomplaats. Here they were given small fields that provided a bare supplement to incomes that, as I showed earlier, were mainly earned in Lydenburg town. People who decided to move on to Boomplaats had to pay an entrance fee and an annual rent.[112] Magabe explained that the money collected in this way would be used to defend the people on Boomplaats against the removal. He also tried to get control of the Dinkwanyane Tribal Fund, which was kept in an account at the Barclays Bank in Lydenburg. Due to the NAD's support for Thorometsane, however, he never had a chance and his claim was rejected by the court on the 23 March 1959.[113]

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109 B. Berman & J. Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya & Africa, Book Two: Violence & Ethnicity* (London, James Currey, 1992).

110 J.W. Knott, 'Land, Kinship and Identity: The cultural roots of agrarian agitation in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Ireland', in *Journal of Peasant Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 1, October 1984.

111 For the reasons why violent solutions were adopted in Sekhukhuneland, see Delius, 'The Tortoise and the Spear', pp. 20-22.

112 CAD, NTS, No. 2331/308, Vol. 3778, Affidavit signed by Jacobus Segoane, 15 August 1957.

113 CAD, NTS, No. 2331/308, Vol. 3778, Native Commissioner Lydenburg to Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas), 3 April 1959.

The support for Magabe, despite the fact that he had been elected unanimously, was not overwhelming. Those who were unambiguously opposed to the removal were the new leaders, for whom the resistance had brought political and financial power, and the younger migrants who saw their conflict as part of a wider conflict led by the ANC. Hosia Phala, one of the ANC members on the new chiefs council, remembers: 'Mr Unterhalter, Mandela, Slovo and J.B. Marks tried their last sorts to allow us to stay [on Boomplaats].'[114] The more recent settlers on Boomplaats who had no possibility of receiving compensation from the NAD, also wholeheartedly supported the resistance. Older property owners, like Nathan Modipa's brother Stefaans, were not as committed and seemed to have been largely uninterested in the ANC and its objectives; Stefaans Modipa later remembered Mandela as 'some Xhosa who went to jail'.[115] In many ways landowners like Stefaans Modipa resembled Sesthanius Phala and Godfrey Modipa, who supported Thorometsane and owned large, well irrigated plots. Phala explained that the main reason he agreed to go along with the removal was because: 'It was tough. I could see that things were getting tough'.[116] Thus these property owners were not prepared to risk access to land on Sterkspruit and NAD compensation payments by engaging in dangerous resistance, which one NAD official, at a meeting on Boomplaats, compared to a fly challenging an elephant.[117]

When things got really tough many of the remaining property owners also sought to compromise. This happened when the NAD announced its decision to disown the residents who continued to defy the state, and to prohibit ploughing on Boomplaats.[118] Faced with this situation Stefaans Modipa became more flexible. He still refused to move to Sterkspruit and live under Thorometsane but he proposed that they would move to Rietfontein 'where one of their chiefs was

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114 Interview with Hosia Phala and Michael Mashupje, Mashishing, 2 February 1992.

115 ASI, OHP, No. 46 A/B, Interview with Stefaans Modipa by Moses Molepo, Jane Furse, 17 October 1979.

116 ASI, OHP 32 A/B & 33 A, Interview with Sesthanius Phala by Moses Molepo, Jane Furse, 6 September 1979.

117 CAD, NTS, No. 2331/308, Vol. 3778, Native Commissioner Lydenburg, Meeting on Boomplaats, 11 April 1949; Interview with Stefaans Moela, Mashishing, 14 April 1993.

118 Law 18 of 1954.

buried'.[119] In 1959 Stefaans and other older land owners like Paulus Mashupje, Johannes Sitladi, Amos Manangeni, Lukas Mashilo, Ephraim Mogato and Ben Likwadi decided to leave Boomplaats. But Petrus Magabe opposed them and would not allow them to hold meetings. He countered their initiatives with his own meeting, where he collected money so that lawyers could be hired to defend the community against the NAD. The vacillating land owners went along with this plan and, rather than leave Boomplaats, they decided in October 1959 to ignore the decrees of the state. Lukas Sapi told the NAD that, 'we bought the farm from Mr De Souza and it is our property. It is not something that we borrowed from the Government'.[120]

The land owners on Boomplaats were given one last chance in 1960 to claim their compensation money but Stefaans Modipa told the Native Commissioner that their lawyers would defend them. Samuel Modipa, Stefaans' son, describes what happened next:

> 'The Magistrate said, "if you say this is your area then you must bring those lawyers. Who are your lawyers"? My father told the Magistrate the names of the lawyers and the Magistrate then told him "those people are already dead, the one is buried in Bloemfontein and the other one in Pretoria. We give you only three days to wake those people from the graves and if you haven't done that then you must disappear in three days".'[121]

There is no evidence to suggest that the lawyers were able even to get the Boomplaats case to court. In 1961 the remaining residents were forced into trucks and their houses were bulldozed. The land-owners were taken to Rietfontein and the more recent arrivals were distributed amongst various trust farms in Sekhukhuneland. Most were taken to an area near the Jane Furse Missionary Hospital, where they were given the status of temporary residents. Many of them, including numerous land-owners who later left Rietfontein, still live there and have not yet obtained permanent residential rights.

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119 CAD, NTS, No. 2331/308, Vol. 3778, Meeting between Boomplaats Residents and Native Commissioner Lydenburg, 11 August 1959.

120 CAD, NTS, No. 2331/308, Vol. 3778, Meeting held at Boomplaats, 5 October 1959.

121 Interview with Samuel Modipa, Mashishing, 11 April 1992.

CAUTIOUS AND ISOLATED RESISTANCE

Aapiesdoorndraai

The Manok community on Aapiesdoorndraai was also threatened with removal in the 1950s. Their response displayed many continuities with their reaction to the 1913 Land Act. Despite facing removal threats throughout the 1950s, the Manok community established no links to the struggle against removal on Boomplaats. Jacobus Manok died in 1922, but his son Christian continued the tradition of cautious advancement established by his father. Like his father he was also in tune with the intentions and ideas of whites. He clearly understood the implications of the 1936 Land Act. Although the Native Commissioner assured him otherwise, he knew that the state would eventually use this legislation to remove Africans off Aapiesdoorndraai. But, rather than resist this possibility in a head-on confrontation, he tried in 1939 to move, on his own terms, to a farm that he considered suitable.[122] This request was ignored by the state, but it is clear that the Manok community's response was already very different from the Dinkwanyane community's reaction to removal. The latter community either resisted the state, or were offered incentives to co-operate. The Manok family always tried to stay on the right side of the state and, in doing so, minimise the negative implications of Segregation and racism. As Jacobus' grandson, Hendrik Manok, recalls: 'My grandfather was very tactful in his dealing with whites'.[123]

In the 1950s Hendrik succeeded to the chieftaincy. He too tried to be as 'tactful' as possible. When the Native Commissioner told Hendrik that there were illegal rent-tenants living on Aapiesdoorndraai in 1958, he responded as a meek and subservient black:

> 'I see that there are too many people but I am scared to push off the old people who came to live with our Grandfather. I am a child. If no one shows us the law we can not know it. I will try to get the people who should not be here away.'[124]

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122 CAD, NTS, No. 136/308, Vol. 3464, Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas) to Secretary of Native Affairs, 20 December 1939.

123 Interview with L.S. Kgane & Chief Hendrik Manok, Aapiesdoorndraai, 15 April 1993.

124 CAD, NTS, No. 936/308, Vol. 2464, Magistrate, Lydenburg to Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas), 15 August 1958: (Trans. in Text) "Ek sien die mense is te veel [maar] ek is bang om die ou mense wie by ons oupa kom bly het af te sit. Ek is kind. As geen mense vir ons wet wys kan ons dit nie weet nie. Ek sal probeer om die mense weg kry wie nie daar mag wees nie."

Hendrik Manok's use of the word tact, and his assertion that 'no white man would call my grandfather "kaffir" to his face', suggests that his dealings with whites were motivated by the same concerns as those expressed by American slaves:

> 'I endeavoured so to conduct myself as not to become obnoxious to the white inhabitants, knowing as I did their power, and their hostility to the coloured people ...'[125]

By behaving publicly as white people expected of Africans, Manok was in fact able to influence state policy. When Hendrik was offered the farms Onverwacht and Kromellenboog as compensation for Aapiesdoorndraai he told the Native Commissioner in Sekhukhuneland that he could not accept this deal because the two farms were mountainous and second-rate. But, as the Commissioner informed his superiors:

> 'The chief made it clear that he personally does not want to put himself up against the Government, but it will be very difficult to move. His people have, in all their years faithfully followed the dictates of the Government.'[126]

By framing his opposition in these terms Manok made it difficult for the NAD. The law required them to find land that was of equal value to Aapiesdoorndraai. Although this was an impossible task due to the inferior land that made up the Trust Area, the NAD at least had to abide by the spirit of the law and could not offer land that was blatantly inferior. In the cases of Kalkfontein and Boomplaats the NAD had declared that the resisting inhabitants were 'unreasonable' and thus undeserving of the provisions of the law. But on Aapiesdoorndraai the residents did not present the state with this excuse. These circumstances meant that the NAD was unable to find suitable compensatory land. Consequently, the removal of the Manok community was postponed and quietly shelved. They continue to live on Aapiesdoorndraai in the Lydenburg district today.

The Manok community consistently followed a policy of cooperation with white authority. Their strategies were never radically transformed because they did not establish links to alternative opposition movements. Consequently they remained

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[125] J.C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1990), p. 2.

[126] CAD, NTS, No. 936/308, Vol. 3464, Native Commissioner Sekhukhuneland to Chief Native Commissioner (Norther Areas), 24 September 1959.

isolated and, in some ways, were forced to confirm the power of whites. But, by working within the system, by establishing a successful black agricultural enterprise, and by keeping their land in a 'white area' during Apartheid, the Manok family did, in a small way, challenge racial prejudices in Lydenburg.[127] They also achieved their own short-term objectives more effectively than any other community in Lydenburg.

CONCLUSION

The resistance of Lydenburg's 'black-spot' communities differed in many ways from the labour tenant resistance discussed in previous chapters. The communal struggle for land posed a greater immediate threat to the state, brought in political movements, and shifted local concepts of authority and African rights in new directions. However, for the short-term goal of retaining land in Lydenburg, the larger, more radical character of the communal struggle proved detrimental to the interests of residents. By posing a direct, discernable threat to state policy, the communities in Lydenburg provoked the state to respond with force, which, especially after the more determined National Party came to power, crushed the struggle against removals in Lydenburg.

These struggles nevertheless had important historical consequences. Because they fought hard for their land, members of the Masha and Dinkwanyane communities remember their struggle with passion. Many strengthened their ties to the ANC, and both communities are in the process of demanding their land back as restitution for the injustices committed by the Apartheid state. The opposition offered by these communities was central to bringing the coercive state out into the open. Armed police invading farms in the early hours, pulling people out of

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127 Not a lot of evidence exists for this, but the leading farmer, Hendrik Neethling, appears to have been involved in a very ambivalent relationship with Jacobus Manok and his sons; See Schirmer, 'Racism and White Farmers', p. 40. Some of this ambivalence can be discerned from notes by Edith Jones, which were almost certainly based on conversations with Neethling: 'The old man Manok was evidently an exceptional character, not of a high chief status, but every bit a chief and made his power felt. He had a wife Sara who was renowned for her housekeeping throughout the low country and she evidently fed and mothered many of the bachelor settlers of the District in the old inaccessible fever days.' See, WHPL, AD843.53.7, Edith Jones' notes on a visit to Aapiesdoorndraai, February 1941.

their houses, clearing the way for bulldozers that turned houses to rubble while residents watched; these were violent responses provoked by African resistance. Such responses fuelled a quest for justice amongst both the communities who suffered directly and amongst those who saw coercive removals as a symbol of Apartheid's wickedness. The resistance of communities in Lydenburg and elsewhere therefore contributed, albeit indirectly, to the eventual destruction of Apartheid.

The Aapiesdoorndraai resistance failed to contribute to these processes. But, by following a small-scale, isolated strategy, they were able to retain their land, and they therefore also modified the policy of the state. During the period 1955-60 labour tenants once again used this kind of resistance strategy against Apartheid's farm labour policies, and they too succeeded in modifying these policies. These processes are discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER SEVEN

LABOUR TENANTS AND APARTHEID, 1955-1960

> 'Countless individual, or small-scale acts of non-compliance proved more pervasive, elusive, persistent and difficult to suppress or control, than more formal or organised political struggle. It was these myriad public and private struggle which we contend both shaped the terrain traversed by political movements and played a decisive role in the rise and fall of apartheid.'[1]

A recent collection of papers argues that Apartheid was shaped from below, by the kind of small-scale resistance at the core of this thesis. However, the collection does not examine extensively the Apartheid policies applied to white farming districts. Morris and Greenberg, who analyze these policies from a different perspective, have therefore not been comprehensively challenged.[2] Both authors fail to perceive that the state's intentions were substantially modified in white farming districts by the reactions of Africans and white farmers.[3] This chapter examines the extent to which such reactions influenced Apartheid policies in Lydenburg and surrounding districts, and also demonstrates that the interactive process between the state and local residents helped to produce the context out of which the next phase of state legislation arose.

The geographical focus of this chapter takes in the whole of the mid-eastern Transvaal. The advantages of this are twofold. Firstly, the broader focus allows the chapter to incorporate archival evidence about the experiences of farmers and

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1 P. Bonner, *et al*, *Apartheid's Genesis, 1935-1962*, (Johannesburg, Ravan & WUP, 1993), p. 2.

2 These are the authors on whom T. Marcus, *Modernising Super-Exploitation* (London, Zed Books, 1989), draws in her fairly recent study of the subject; see, p. 48.

3 M. Morris, 'State Intervention and the Agricultural Labour Supply post-1948', in F. Wilson, A. Kooy, D. Hendrie, eds., *Farm Labour in South Africa* (Cape Town, David Philip, 1977); S. Greenberg, *Race and State in Capitalist Development: South Africa in comparative perspective* (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1980), pp. 97-99.

tenants in the districts of Lydenburg, Carolina, Middelburg, Belfast *and* Ermelo. Secondly, the similarity of those experiences points to a particular kind of interaction between the state and labour tenant farmers. These poorer farmers must therefore be distinguished from the more capitalised farmers in districts such as Bethal and Standerton, whose concern with unpaid labour and influx control was of a different order.[4]

Labour tenant families in the late 1950s used similar tactics (protesting with their feet) and had similar aims (to maintain some autonomy and a say in tenant contracts) as the families who had opposed the Land Act in 1938. But their resistance was less effective. They only succeeded in deflecting state policy away from the control of labour tenancy towards the destruction of the entire system. This happened because the Apartheid state was more determined than the previous United Party state to intervene decisively in the countryside. In addition, it can be argued that, although individual families offered some resolute resistance, the same kind of unanimous outrage that emerged in 1938 did not manifest itself this time because the conditions for labour tenants had deteriorated significantly. As I showed earlier individuals within tenant families had become much more ambivalent about the virtues of the lifestyle in white rural areas.

THE CONTEXT

But, despite the existence of this ambivalence, labour tenant families stuck together in defence of particular conditions. The decision of women and youths once again to participate actively in a struggle that effectively reinforced patriarchal control, at a time when the material benefits of rural life were steadily shrinking, can only be understood within the broad context of Apartheid. Within this context the alternatives for Africans had diminished drastically. The first reason for this was influx control. These controls effectively slowed down the rate of urbanisation, and they created a situation which made the city much less attractive to rural Africans, who already regarded this area with suspicion:

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[4] See Chapter Four, p. 148.

> 'the practice of influx control during the 1950s, which intensified as the decade wore on, incurred heavy economic, social, and psychological costs for the victims of the influx control laws. Compounding the existing burdens of poverty, the influx control system also broke up families, and reinforced racist practices which cast Africans in socially servile roles. Even legal city-dwellers were treated as offenders until they could prove themselves innocent.'[5]

Thus urban areas became, to an even greater extent, the 'place of the whites'. At the same time, the 'reserves' were becoming increasingly densely populated and access to the remaining, newly acquired land was strictly monitored by the Native Affairs Department (NAD).[6] The reserves no longer provided an attractive alternative for those labour tenants looking for a way out.

This situation not only tied Africans to white rural areas, it made conditions worse by causing an increase in the population density.[7] In 1945 the number of Africans who lived under rent or labour tenant conditions in Lydenburg was reportedly 17060.[8] In 1955 an official from the Pietersburg NAD office claimed that a dramatic increase had occurred in the number of Africans. He reported that there were 40000 Africans in Lydenburg, most of whom were members of labour tenant families. This figure is clearly a rough estimate, and could have included the seasonal women and children who were migrating from the 'reserves' in growing numbers,[9] but it nevertheless points to momentous population increases caused by the slowing rate of urbanisation, 'betterment' policies pushing people out of 'reserves', and farmers demanding more labour.[10] Thus the rural population began to catch up with labour demand, bringing to an end the labour shortages of the 1940s. The bargaining power of white farmers improved as they became less

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5 D. Posel, *The Making of Apartheid: Conflict and Compromise* (Oxford, Clarendon, 1991), pp. 147-148.

6 See Chapter Six, p. 241.

7 See C. Simkins, *Four Essays on the Past, Present and Possible Future Distribution of the Black Population of South Africa* (Cape Town, SALDRU, 1983), p. 8.

8 Central Archives Depot (CAD), Native Affairs Department (NTS), No. 97/362, Vol. 8834, Native Commissioner Lydenburg to Secretary of Native Affairs, 23 April 1945. The total African population in the district was 19600.

9 CAD, NTS, No. 3/280, Vol. 1994, Chief Native Commissioner to Secretary of Native Affairs, January 1953; Union of South Africa (UG 61) "Agricultural Census No. 34" (Pretoria, 1960).

10 CAD, NTS, No. 289/280, Vol. 2167, SWVK to Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas), 26 September 1955; E. Ritchken, 'Leadership and Conflict in Bushbuckridge', Unpublished Thesis, p. 121; *Summary of the Report of the Commission for Socio-economic Development of the Bantu Areas within the Union of South Africa* (Tomlinson Commission) (Pretoria, Government Printer, 1955): 'Because of overpopulation of reserves and barriers into cities many natives are left with no alternative but to live on farms.'

desperate for labour.

The expanding population was being squeezed onto smaller plots of land and given access to fewer cattle, which plainly diminished the material benefits of farm life. The production of maize by Africans on farms in Lydenburg rose slightly from an annual average of 24341 bags for the period 1946-1949 to an average of 24814 bags for the period 1954-1957, which, in the context of the population trends outlined above, definitely reflects a drop in output per head. In addition, the average number of African owned cattle fell dramatically, from 1503 to 929, over the same periods.[11]

These conditions, the chapter shows, were made worse by the application of Apartheid farm-labour policies, which sometimes destroyed individual African lives. Nevertheless, local reactions ensured that policies were diluted, reshaped, and, in the case of Labour Tenant Control Boards, abandoned. A lot of this opposition emanated from white farmers, but their objections can not be separated from their relationships with African tenants. Africans resisted and were able to avoid being completely regulated, which caused farmers to worry about the stability of their labour supply, and therefore to demand that the state proceed cautiously. As a result, African tenants were able to maintain some of the freedom of movement that, until 1970, made labour tenancy a continual site of struggle rather than a cheap labour system laid on purely for the benefit of white farmers.

THE LABOUR BUREAUX

As I showed earlier, the Native Laws Amendment Act of 1952 was supposed to transform farm labour practices by means of 'local' and 'district' labour bureaux. 'Local bureaux' were designed to regulate labour in the 'prescribed' or urban areas and the NAD was determined to establish one of these bureaux in every town where Africans lived in so called 'locations'. In this way they hoped to prevent any African town dweller from living beyond the control of the state, and to prevent

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11 *Agricultural Census No. 20, 1946* (U.G. 77-48) to *No. 29, 1955* (U.G. 49-58).

labour tenants from using residence and employment in the 'locations' as an alternative to farm labour.

The district bureaux, on the other hand, aimed to supply farmers with labour and to prevent the uncontrolled movement of Africans. If farmers filled in the appropriate form (N.A.84) then it was up to the bureaux to find enough labourers to meet this demand. No African could leave a district without the permission of the bureaux. Any African intending to do so had to present a pass book signed by his previous employer. The district and local bureaux also worked together to ensure that no 'unnecessary' movement between town and countryside took place. On paper this looked ominous for Africans living on the farms but on the ground it took on a different appearance as bureaucrats had to deal with white and black resistance.

LABOUR BUREAUX IN RURAL TOWNS

Officials encountered their first problems in the mid-eastern Transvaal when they attempted to establish local bureaux in rural towns. The move was opposed by both municipalities and Africans. Ironically, this actually proved to be a fortuitous combination for the NAD. The creation of the first labour bureaux demonstrated that Africans were willing and able to resist controls if alternatives continued to exist. Districts where new labour bureaux were set up often complained of an escalating labour shortage. Africans would leave and go to areas 'where labour bureaux do not exist yet and they are not hassled'.[12] This opposition convinced the NAD of the urgent need for uniform labour regulations. It was also effectively used as a threat against municipalities reluctant to co-operate. In the eastern Transvaal town of Belfast the town council did not want to form a local labour bureau. They felt that they did not have the personnel or the finance to manage such an undertaking. In response the Chief Native Commissioner warned the town to expect a major influx of Africans escaping from other areas where the bureaux were being established. This prospect was clearly unattractive to the councillors

[12] CAD, NTS, No. 3/280, Vol. 1994, Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas), Memo, 9 November 1953.

of Belfast. They reversed their earlier decision and a local labour bureau was established on the 11th of June, 1954. Similar processes, with the same result, occurred in the mid-eastern Transvaal towns of Machadadorp and Waterval Boven.

THE EARLY PHASE OF LABOUR CONTROL

Despite the population increases outlined above, labour shortages had not disappeared entirely in the Lydenburg district by 1953, and the labour bureaux did little to alleviate the problem.[13] In 1955, two years after the establishment of the local and district labour bureaux in Lydenburg, Mrs Nic Fourie complained that she and her husband were unable to farm effectively because they could not get any labour. She also claimed that in the Oshoek area, in the southern part of the Lydenburg district, there were seven other farmers that were almost on the verge of leaving their farms. Most of them had no labour while others had one or two labour tenant families. There was one farmer in the area, however, who had so much labour that he had lost track of their number. The labour conditions on his farm closely approximated the original labour tenant conditions that had been laid down in the 1913 Land Act. Each labour tenant family was expected to supply one member who had to work three months for the farmer. According to Mrs Fourie, there were no other obligations and the tenants were largely free to do as they pleased. She also claimed that there were numerous examples of this kind of unequal distribution of labour amongst farmers within a single farming area. Farmers who were prepared to offer certain conditions had plenty of labour while others struggled to find someone that would work for them.[14]

This situation reflects the uneven development of commercial farming described in Chapter Two. Struggling farmers with very little land were unable to offer

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[13] CAD, Chief Native Commissioner, Northern (HKN), 30/36/16, Native Commissioner Lydenburg to Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas), 30 October 1953; CAD, NTS, No. 3/280, Vol. 1994, Native Commissioner Lydenburg to Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas), 31 March 1952; Notes by Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas), 20 January 1953.

[14] CAD, NTS, No. 289/280, Vol. 2167, Mrs Fourie to Minister of Native Affairs, 30 May 1955; This situation was prevalent throughout the Transvaal. See, Union of South Africa, *Inter-departmental Commission of Enquiry into the Labour Tenant System* (Nel Commission) (Mimeograph, 1960).

enough to attract Africans in significant numbers. They therefore had a choice between attracting Africans by making very few demands, or they could try to get as much labour as possible out of the few Africans they were able to hire.[15] The Fouries saw themselves as representatives of the small farmers that chose the latter option. They refused to offer permissive labour tenant conditions, asserting that 'other farmers [like us] simply do not see the possibility of keeping the kaffers on our farms under such a [three month] contract and that is why we can not get folk'.[16] But by adopting this attitude the Fouries found it difficult to attract any labour at all and, as a result, their farming enterprise threatened to collapse. It became increasingly difficult for Mrs Fourie and her neighbours to keep their sons interested in farming. She reported that a number of their children found farming unattractive and were leaving the rural areas. Still, the Fouries refused to compromise. While not abandoning the labour tenant system entirely, they were adamant that tenants should work six months for their land. For the rest of the year tenants had to continue in employment on the farm for about £3 a month. Shepherds got £3.10 and tractor drivers £5.

The 'hard line' attitude adopted by the Fouries was made possible by two factors. Firstly, they were able to obtain prison labourers, probably through the 'lease system, whereby prisoners not on parole are leased by employers from prisons on a daily basis'.[17] In this way they kept the farm going. They also used a tractor, which allowed Mr Fourie to do some of the ploughing himself, and to produce some crops with very little labour. Secondly, the Fouries believed that help in the form of further government intervention was imminent. They clung to this belief despite the labour bureaux's 'disappointing' impact and in the face of constant taunts from farmers opposed to the National Party. These opponents claimed that the relevant law would never be applied and that it had been passed only so that the National Party could win the following election.

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[15] For a description of the former see, Nel Commission; Mr Deacon, TAU Representative: Talks about weak farmers who keep large amounts of labour on which they make almost no demands.

[16] CAD, NTS, No. 289/280, Vol. 2167, Mrs Fourie to Minister of Native Affairs, 30 May 1955.

[17] Marcus, *Modernising Super-Exploitation*, p. 113; T.M. Corry, *Prison Labour in South Africa* (Johannesburg, Nicro, 1977), pp. 138-9. See also D. Posel, *The Making of Apartheid*, p. 139: 'By 1957/8 the number of prison labourers on farms shot up to 200,000.

The law that the Fouries, and many like them, pinned their hopes on was the 1954 amendment to Chapter Four of the 1936 Natives Trust and Land Act. In terms of this amendment, Chapter Four would be proclaimed for the whole of South Africa and Labour Tenant Control Boards would be set up in all the farming districts where there were labour tenants to control. Until then Lydenburg had not heard any news that such a board would be created in their district. Many farmers were unsure but hopeful about the precise provisions of the law. There was much speculation and the law was discussed eagerly by farmers like the Fouries.[18] It was hoped that Chapter Four would bring about an equal distribution of labour that would finally undermine the ability of Africans to bargain for permissive labour tenant conditions.[19]

The NAD gave Mrs Fourie the assurance that Chapter Four would be implemented. The difficulty lay in the department's lack of confidence that it could control the resistance that would emerge once the Chapter was enforced. The NAD would only engage in this exercise once they became convinced that the 'machinery' they were setting up was strong enough to prevent Africans from deserting rural areas in large numbers.[20] The NAD also explained that the boards would determine how many labourers a farmer could keep according to an assessment of how many would be needed to engage effectively in productive farming. This clearly threatened the position of labour tenants who congregated on certain farms, but it is equally clear that the application and interpretation of this ruling would be subject to struggles at various levels.

In the meantime the NAD was determined to solve the Fouries' problems by using the district labour bureau. After looking in to the matter it became evident that about one sixth of the people looking for employment in Lydenburg passed through the bureau. The rest managed to evade the system because they could find

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18 CAD, NTS, No. 289/280, Vol. 2167, Mrs. Nic Fourie to Minister of Native Affairs, 30 May 1955: 'I wish you could here how it (Chapter Four) is discussed daily amongst ... the farmers who long for such a law.'

19 CAD, NTS, No. 289/280, Vol. 2167, Private Secretary of Verwoerd to Mrs Fourie, 13 June 1955.

20 *Ibid.*

employers who did not register their labourers. Without this registration, the hiring and firing of labour occurred largely outside the sphere of the labour bureau. The bureau officer claimed that Africans avoided the bureau because they would not willingly sign themselves over to an employer whom they had never met. Even those who were channelled by the bureau would find a way to avoid employers who had a bad reputation. For this very reason, all attempts to supply the Fouries with labour failed. The sergeant at the Dullstroom police station claimed 'that Mr Fourie is very intolerant and hard and cannot keep workers. Even prisoners that are sent to him, run away from him and return to jail'.[21]

It took the labour bureau only a few weeks to contact four labourers that were willing to work on the farms. However, when they arrived at the bureau and discovered who their employer was to be, they refused point blank to accept the employment. Mr Clark, the official in charge of the bureau, declined to force these Africans to take up employment with Fourie. He argued that this kind of coercion would put the labour bureaux system into disrepute with Africans. While the bureau struggled to succeed in its all encompassing function, local officials continued to be concerned about the NAD's image amongst Africans. This concern led them to make decisions that were sometimes directly opposed to the short term interests of some local farmers.

Over the following months the Fouries' position did not improve. The two prisoners who were in their employ decided to leave and go back to jail. Within a period of three weeks, the labour bureau sent 34 Africans, who were looking for work, to Mr Fourie. Not one of them arrived at Fourie's farm. On the way they must have become aware of his reputation and decided to find work elsewhere.

Thus the bureau in Lydenburg was clearly not very effective. The pervasiveness

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[21] CAD, NTS, No. 289/280, Vol. 2167, SWVK to Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas), 21 July 1955; See also NTS, No. 289/280, Vol. 2167, SWVK to Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas), 22 September 1955: Mr Fouries own father-in-law made the same claim; also Interview with Mahlako Mashego, Jane Furse, 7 February 1991: Talks about a harsh farmer's wife in Badfontein area, which could have been Mrs Fourie.

of evasions made farmers very reluctant to use the bureau. Word got around that it was a futile exercise to register a claim for labour. Those farmers who had done so said that absolutely no labour was forthcoming.[22] Even the Native Commissioner told farmers that 'the Natives are definitely refusing to got to the farmers where they are sent. They say they want to choose their own work and living place'.[23]

In other districts African tenants also refused to let bureaucratic machinery determine the terms of their employment. A German couple in Middelburg found 1955 as difficult as the Fouries of Lydenburg. The Hengherrs complained that: 'We farm since five years, and farming is not easy, believe me, and it becomes impossible and a killing profession if there is no labour available.'[24] In reply the NAD assured Mrs Hengherr of the positive impact that the labour bureau had made since its inception. However, subsequent investigations proved that the Hengherrs were unable to benefit from the bureau in Middelburg. The NAD official investigating their plight discovered that they were the victims of a boycott.[25] Because the Hengherrs interfered in, and attempted to control, all aspects of their labourers' lives, no one would work for them. Attempts by the bureau to send labour to their farms did not change this situation. Mr Hengherr had initially been filled with hope by assurances made by the NAD and he went to the bureau on the 3 May 1955. Subsequently, two Africans were sent to him but they never arrived at his farm. As in Lydenburg, the boycott proved more effective than the bureau.

The Hengherr's had been living in South Africa for 28 years but had only been farming for five. Their farm in Middelburg was 500 morgen in size. 100 to 120 morgen was ploughed in the summer and planted with maize and beans. They also

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22 CAD, NTS, No. 289/280, Vol. 2167, Mrs Fourie to Secretary of Native Affairs, 16 August 1955: 'The reason why my husband did not put in a written request for labour is because a few of our neighbours put in such a request and it was futile.'

23 CAD, NTS, No. 289/280, Vol. 2167, Mrs Fourie to Secretary of Native Affairs, 16 August 1955.

24 CAD, NTS, No. 289/280, Vol. 2167, Mrs Hanna Hengherr to Minister of Native Affairs, 27 March 1955.

25 CAD, NTS, No. 289/280, Vol. 2167, SWVK to Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas), 12 May 1955.

kept about 60 head of cattle and operated a small dairy which produced cream for the market. Despite realising that farmers who employed labour tenants experienced 'little or no trouble' with their labour, the Hengherrs were determined to rely on other labour methods. It was estimated that they needed three Africans in winter and five in summer. Instead they managed to employ one 'faithful Nyasaland native' and an African youth who herded the cattle.

Despite having almost no success in attracting labour, Mrs Hengherr was proud of the conditions they offered their employees. She proclaimed: 'We pay three to four pounds per month plus food which I prepare myself and which is very good. In addition a bed is provided for each labourer ... and also facilities for a daily bath.'[26] These conditions failed to impress the local African population. Freedom to maintain their own social practices, without interference from their employers, influenced their decisions about where to work. This was an impulse that Mrs Hengherr, who presumed the universal superiority of 'European culture', could not understand. Consequently, she continued to cook her 'very good' German meals for the solitary farm labourer. He, however, did not appreciate Mrs Hengherr's German cooking. He asked for the uncooked ingredients so that his wife could prepare them in the way that he preferred.

Because of their arrogance and inflexibility the Hengherrs were unable to acquire any voluntary labour, and they had to rely on convict labour which, according to Mr Hengherr, was also becoming scarce. Farmers were coming from twenty five miles to collect prisoners from Middelburg prison every morning. The prison could not spare guards to oversee these prisoners. Consequently Mr Hengherr had to stand guard with his gun from morning to night, a task about which he complained bitterly.[27]

Although other Middelburg farmers also had some shortages, the Hengherrs'

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[26] CAD, NTS, No. 289/280, Vol. 2167, Mrs Hanna Hengherr to Minister of Native Affairs, 27 March 1955.

[27] CAD, NTS, No. 289/280, Vol. 2167, Mr Hengherr to Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas), 31 May 1955.

labour problems seem to have been worse than most. The Chairman of the Middelburg Farmers Union, Mr J.L. Brits, stated that Middelburg continued to suffer from a labour shortage, although seventy five per cent of this shortage was seasonal. Farmers in Middelburg often tried to meet their seasonal demands by going to the nearby reserve area of Nebo to recruit. Very few made use of the bureau. Even when they did, they often frustrated officials by not following the correct procedure. Failure to sign the passbook or return the bottom of the N.A.85 form meant that even those Africans who had moved into the sphere of the bureau's control often slipped out again. Thus most farmers operated outside the domain of the bureaux and managed to maintain an adequate, permanent labour force by offering labour tenant conditions that facilitated a degree of African independence. Mr Hengherr, by contrast, stubbornly attempted to persuade a labour tenant, who had previously worked a six month contract, that his offer of three pounds a month plus food for continuous work throughout the year was much better. He was astounded when 'the Native refused'.[28]

It was also reported from Lydenburg that most farmers in 1955 continued to work with the labour tenant system, and those who 'treated their labour well' were able to attract an adequate labour supply.[29] It can be deduced that farmers with a lot of land still had the least problems in attracting labour, as large landowners like Wessel Davel and Louis de Souza had the most tenants within their respective regions. These two farmers offered contracts of six months labour, for no pay, and six months free time, during which tenants could work for anyone they chose. For their labour tenants received land, which the farmer often helped them plough, and the right to graze a limited number of cattle.[30] These contracts, offered by farmers who previously demanded January to January labour, also point to important changes within the labour tenant system. The spread of migrancy in the 1940s had transformed the January to January contract into one that allowed

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[28] CAD, NTS, No. 289/280, Vol. 2167, Mr Hengherr to Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas), 31 May 1955.

[29] CAD, NTS, No. 289/280, Vol. 2167, SWVK to Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas), 22 September 1955.

[30] CAD, NTS, No. 289/280, Vol. 2167, SWVK to Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas), 22 Sept. 1955; Nel Commission, Evidence of J.P. Joubert.

tenants to take 'months' off the farm. These months were usually spent in urban employment until influx control in the 1950s made this a difficult option. From then on most tenants sought wage employment on other Lydenburg farms, or even on the farm where they resided. This system enabled farmers to still get workers throughout the year but, increasingly, they now had to pay for a proportion of their labour force.[31] Thus the migrancy of the 1940s had tied a growing number of tenants into the money economy and, even though migrancy diminished subsequently, a greater dependence on wages continued to be a feature of labour tenancy in the late 1950s

INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CONFLICT AND ENDURING ADMINISTRATIVE PROBLEMS

The experiences of the Fouries and the Hengherrs prove that, by 1955, the labour bureaux system had made very little impact on the districts of Lydenburg and Middelburg. The majority of Africans avoided it. Those that were registered as 'work-seekers' were able to find ways of by-passing the controls that tried to limit their ability to find their own employment. Farmers who treated their labourers in an unacceptable fashion continued to face labour shortages as Africans refused to work for them.[32] Largely as a result of this successful African resistance, farmers were often wary of the new system and continued to deal with Africans outside the sphere of the bureaux.

In Belfast the establishment of a labour bureau was even more problematic. In 1954 two dairy farmers in the district complained that their production was threatened because their labour tenants had left the farms. According to one farmer, Kobie Viljoen, the local Native Commissioner knew nothing of the scheme 'through which labour can be recruited for the farmer'.[33] By 1958 the matter had not been cleared up and the Belfast Farmers Union launched a comprehensive

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31 See also, CAD, BAO, No. 24/1396, Vol. 2227, Secretary of Bantu Affairs to Du Plessis, 11 May 1970; which gives details on the system that continued to exist during the period 1955-1970.

32 CAD, NTS, No. 289/280, Vol. 2167, Native Commissioner Nebo to Secretary of Native Affairs, 22 February 1956.

33 CAD, NTS, No. 289/280, Vol. 2169, Kobie Viljoen to Secretary of Native Affairs, 24 June 1954.

attack against local state officials. The Union claimed that the local bureau was giving labour tenants permission to leave the district for cities without consulting the farmers. They also maintained that the bureau did not function properly because it lacked the trained personnel to handle 'native affairs'. When farmers made requests for labour they were simply told that no labour was available. Contrary to proper procedure their requests received no further attention. As a result, labour tenants could come and go as they pleased and labour was extremely difficult to obtain.

The reason for this unsatisfactory situation, according to the NAD, was that Belfast fell under the jurisdiction of the Department of Justice. The local Magistrate, accountable to the Department of Justice, also served as the Native Commissioner. The NAD claimed that local administration of 'native affairs' in such areas suffered because of the lack of personnel that was made available for this purpose. Justice was a smaller department than the NAD and was not allocated the same resources to employ people.[34] In Belfast the labour bureaux was run on a part time basis by a pensioner who was assisted by an African constable. It was also felt that Justice officials did not have the necessary training and did not display the proper amount of enthusiasm for their duties in the sphere of 'native affairs'.[35]

The NAD put pressure on the Department of Justice to fill the labour bureau post with a permanent official. Justice replied that this would only be possible once the broader personnel situation had improved. They did not seem overly concerned about the conditions in Belfast and claimed that running the bureau did not require any 'specialised skills'. The failure to appeal to Justice led the NAD to apply direct pressure on the Magistrate of Belfast through the 'Streeks-werk-verskafings-kommisaris' (regional-labour-supply-official or SWVK), the official in the Chief Native Commissioner's office responsible for the efficiency of labour bureaux in most of the Transvaal. This pressure initially led the Magistrate to

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[34] *South Africa Official Year Book 1956/57* (Pretoria, Government Printer, 1958).
[35] CAD, NTS, No. 289/280, Vol. 2167, NAD Memo, 17 March 1958.

expel all labour tenants from the town of Belfast. Although this action was favourably received by the local farmers, tension between farmers and the Magistrate continued. In July of 1959 a meeting was held between the two parties under the chairmanship of the SWVK. At this meeting the Magistrate claimed that he provided the services of the labour bureaux but farmers never made use of it. Farmers, on the other hand, claimed that they were unaware of any such facilities. It was agreed that the Magistrate would in future endeavour to inform farmers about the bureau. Thus, although some form of co-operation between the Magistrate and farmers was achieved in 1959, the bureau had not yet made an effective impact on the district of Belfast.

A problem that was faced by the bureaux in all the districts under discussion was the reluctance of farmers to register their tenants. Despite farmers' vociferous calls for the strengthening of state control over Africans, they were reluctant to take a direct part in this process. Farmers thus had an ambiguous attitude to bureaucratic control. On the one hand, involved in a daily struggle with Africans over the terms of employment, they saw the benefits of state intervention on their behalf. On the other, however, they were unwilling to allow the state to make crucial decisions about their employment practices. They preferred to be personally involved in this process. For example, a number of farmers believed that their ability to attract labour lay in their 'knowledge' on how to conduct relations with Africans. They were convinced that this gave them an advantage over other, less 'knowledgeable' farmers, an advantage that the bureaux threatened to undermine. Similarly, they believed that the bureaux could jeopardise the supply of farm labour because personal contact with Africans had always been one of the attractive features of the farms. Such farmers were aware that they could not compete with urban industries in terms of wages. They attracted labour by being sympathetic to other demands made by Africans. These demands included land, cattle and social activities like beer drinks. This does not mean that farmers were genuinely more sympathetic to Africans' demands; rather the labour bureaux

threatened to undermine the farmers' ability to negotiate on these issues.[36] It also happened that farmers did not necessarily regard Africans as being 'all alike'. Some were concerned to meet the people that were to live on their farms before they hired them. If they operated through the labour bureaux they would be forced to accept the labour of those particular Africans who were available as unemployed, registered 'work seekers'.[37]

Farmers were also reluctant to undertake registration because of the difficulties that were involved. A number of wool farmers protested against the time consuming need to travel all over the farm to collect and sign pass books and then commute all the way to town to get them stamped at the Native Commissioner's office. The farmers were especially upset because this process had to take place every year.[38]

The bureaux's relationship with farmers was also somewhat of a vicious circle. The bureaux's lack of success gave farmers no confidence in the ability of the bureaux to control labour. As a result they were unlikely to take the risk of alienating farm labourers by forcing the issue of registration.[39] It follows that farmers needed time to gain confidence in the system and that the bureaux had to prove itself before it could work in the hoped for close alliance with farmers. But it was precisely the farmers reluctance to register their labour that undermined the effectiveness of the labour bureaux.

SIGNS OF SUCCESS: LOCAL BUREAUX AND LABOUR TENANT MOBILITY

Over the next few years the labour bureaux of the mid-eastern Transvaal strove to win the confidence of farmers and prove that the bureaux could provide the

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36 Nel Commission, Transvaal Agricultural Union Evidence, 22 July 1960; C. van Onselen, 'The Social and Economic Underpinnings of Paternalism and Violence on the Maize Farms of the South-Western Transvaal, 1900-1950', *Journal of Historical Sociology* Vol. 5, No. 2, June 1992.

37 CAD, NTS, No. 222/280, Vol. 2097, Van Wyk to the Secretary of Native Affairs, c1956.

38 CAD, NTS, No. 97/362, Vol. 8835, SWVK to Secretary of Native Affairs, 6 Mar. 1959.

39 Lydenburg farmers, it must be assumed, were probably the most sensitive to this issue, as it was the opposition to registration that had sparked off the labour problems in the district during 1938; see Chapter Three, p. 125.

control that would undermine the ability of tenants to resist. The first area where labour bureaux began to have an effective impact was in the 'locations' of the rural towns. These areas where much easier to police because of their more concentrated and manageable character. The bureaux kept strict records, listing all the female and male Africans that were living in the 'location' and the 'white area' of the town. Regular raids were carried out against both illegal foreigners and 'leeglêers' (wont works).[40] The latter group were persecuted in terms of section 36 of the Native Laws Amendment Act, which gave 'any authorised officer' the right to evict a person he believed was habitually unemployed. Most local bureaux reported successes and effective monitoring in this regard. For example, in 1956 Middelburg reported that there were only four 'leeglêers' left and that these would be dealt with 'shortly'.

The local bureaux co-operated with the districts by not permitting the right of residence or employment in town to anyone unless it was approved by the district labour bureaux. This agreement eventually grew into a determination to prohibit anyone employed as a labour tenant, presently or previously, from entering town. The extent to which this policy was successful is difficult to assess. Despite bureaux claims to the contrary, the evidence suggests that tenants could still find people in town who were prepared to employ them, especially if they had worked for such people for a long period of time.[41] Regional conditions also had an effect on the success of this policy. The continuing inadequacy of the Lydenburg 'location', for example, made the effective implementation of this policy problematic. By 1955 most of the work in the town was carried out by migrant labour from the farms and Boomplaats. Further, as the proposed removal of Boomplaats threatened the labour supply of that source, the town clerk decided to ask for permission to suspend the law barring labour tenants from the town, and it was agreed that labour tenants could work in the towns in their free period as long as their urban employers made sure that they got back to the farms on

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40 CAD, NTS, No. 289/280 Vol. 2167, SWVK to Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas), 4 May 1956.

41 CAD, HKN, 1/9/3 (1), N.C. Anderson to Chief Bantu Commissioner, 24 November 1962.

time. In the mean-time the town would proceed with plans to build housing for an adequate labour force. The only way to populate the expanding 'location' was to allow labour tenants and people from Boomplaats to be considered for this housing.[42] Thus in Lydenburg, at the end of 1955, labour tenants were still given a local, urban alternative to the farms.

By 1958, many of the local bureaux claimed that all 'leeglêers' had been expelled and that no labour tenants were being permitted to work in town.[43] Regular raids were reportedly being carried out in the districts of Middelburg, Ermelo and Carolina. By 1959 Belfast also claimed to have cleared the town of labour tenants.[44] In Carolina it was discovered that absentee farmers living in town were employing Africans from their farms, in the town. It was emphasised that the bureaux would not tolerate such deviations. Any African who fell outside the control of the bureaux would not be allowed to live in an urban area.[45] From the bureaucratic point of view, the situation in Lydenburg also became 'more satisfactory' by 1958. The shortage of labour had been overcome and the 'location' had been expanded to accommodate three quarters of the town's labour requirements. A large proportion of the remaining demand was met by Africans from the reserves who had been registered with the district bureaux. The opportunities for labour tenants had diminished significantly.[46]

The attempt to halt the movement between town and countryside within the individual districts was quite successful by 1958. The effect that this had on the lives of Africans can be demonstrated by the problems faced by Abram Nkosi. He had been working, on and off, at an old age home in Middelburg. He now faced eviction because he did not qualify for residence in town. Nor had he been working for a continuous period of ten years for one employer, which would have qualified

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42 CAD, NTS, No. 289/280 Vol. 2167, Lydenburg Town Clerk to Director of Native Labour, 16 September 1955.
43 CAD, NTS, No. 289/280, Vol. 2167, SWVK to Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas), 28 May 1958; SWVK to Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas), 11 February 1958.
44 CAD, NTS, No. 289/280, Vol. 2169, SWVK to Chief Native Commissioner, 21 January 1959.
45 CAD, NTS, No. 289/280, Vol. 2169, SWVK to Chief Native Commissioner, 16 September 1958.
46 CAD, NTS, No. 289/280, Vol. 2167, SWVK to Chief Native Commissioner, 22 August 1958.

him for section 10 rights. Furthermore, he was born on a farm and had worked there for a period of time. He was consequently classified as a labour tenant and was advised to look for work on the farms. The alternatives to this option were rapidly vanishing. An area in Middelburg which had always offered a less controlled alternative to residence in the town and on the farms was the African settlement of Doornkop. This settlement, like the Lydenburg 'black spots' described earlier, faced a full scale removal. Furthermore, the implementation of Chapter Four in Middelburg had made 'squatting' on the farms more difficult. As a result of Nkosi's inability to find residence, his employment in town, which probably paid very well and at which he was extremely proficient, was threatened. His employer made a plea to the government on his behalf, but to no avail. Eventually Abram settled in Doornkop to await the removal and the destruction of his career as a respected attendant at the old age home.[47]

THE FAILURE OF THE LABOUR TENANT CONTROL BOARDS

In the case of Abram Nkosi the implementation of Chapter Four in Middelburg affected his ability to find an acceptable residence on the farms. The much awaited implementation of this Chapter did not, however, have the desired effect in the districts of the mid-eastern Transvaal. The Chapter was perceived as an extremely sensitive subject by the state because it allowed for direct intervention in the labour practices of certain farmers. Although this action was to be in the interest of other farmers, who were presumed to be the majority, the National Party government was wary of alienating any section of the farming community. In 1956 the Chapter was deemed ready for implementation but Verwoerd warned the officials of the NAD to be very cautious. Verwoerd was particularly worried that grievances against Chapter Four and the Labour Tenant Control Boards would become 'political issues' in the upcoming general election. As a result, he advised the boards to take action only if blatant transgressions of the Act occurred. He hoped that, for the time being, the boards would concentrate their efforts on gathering information concerning the labour situation in their districts.[48]

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47 CAD, NTS, No. 289/280, Vol. 2167, M. Schloemann to Dr. Eiselen, 25 February 1960.
48 CAD, NTS, No. 97/362, Vol. 8848, H.F. Verwoerd to Secretary of Native Affairs, 8 November 1956.

Labour Tenant Control Boards were tentatively set up in the districts of the mid-eastern Transvaal in 1957. These boards consisted of two appointed, *'bona fide'* farmers and the Native Commissioner who served as chairman. The basic task of the boards was to eradicate African 'squatting' on white land and to redistribute surplus labour tenants. A farmer found to have more labour tenants living on his land than he needed to run his farm effectively would be asked to evict the surplus tenants. These labourers would then be made available to other farmers by means of the labour bureaux. The provision of the 1936 version of Chapter Four which made it the responsibility of the state to find accommodation for evicted labour tenants, had been repealed. In the new version, section 38 (b) (ii) directed 'that every endeavour should be made to place ejected labour tenants in employment'.[49] Those tenants who refused this employment were expected to find another place of residence. The fact that residence rights could only be granted by the labour bureaux was expected to make such refusal extremely difficult. In particular, urban areas were to be barred to evicted labour tenants by such means. Farmers were also, once again, asked to register all their labour tenants.

In addition to the hesitant Government backing that they received, numerous other factors also contributed to the boards' problems. In the middle of 1957 the Native Commissioner of Middelburg outlined some of the difficulties experienced by his board. The Commissioner felt impelled to undertake some action because of the reports of large scale 'illegal squatting' that his board was receiving. It was alleged that Africans were living on farms in the vicinity of coal mines, where they worked. The squatter communities that facilitated this migrancy also brewed liquor and provided a place where mine workers could congregate without supervision. Some of these farms reportedly contained villages consisting of seventy five huts.

The Labour Tenant Board found it impossible to prosecute these cases because they were unable to distinguish labour tenants or squatters from full time

[49] CAD, NTS, No. 97/362, Vol. 4884, NAD General Circular, 24 August 1956.

servants. If a farmer claimed that the Africans on his farm were full time servants there was little the board could do.[50] There was no limit on the full time servants that a farmer could keep. The Native Commissioner also complained that his board was handicapped by the nature of its personnel: 'My committee members are farmers and find it difficult to spare the time to make thorough investigations.'[51]

In Lydenburg the board also became incapacitated when faced with farmers' refusal to co-operate. C.F. Ackermann owned six farms in the Lydenburg district but lived two hundred miles outside the district. When the board requested him to do so, Ackermann refused to appear before it. The farmers who sat on the board in turn refused to take action against a fellow farmer who had not had a chance to defend himself. The Native Commissioner declared himself helpless to undertake any further action. The state was unwilling to bring Ackermann before the board by force and the matter seems to have been dropped.[52] The attitude of the farmers on this board reflects a general tendency identified by Senator Le Roux of the SAAU Liaison Committee: 'In general a farmer is not inclined to hand in complaints against a neighbour.'[53] In the absence of effective farm inspections, the boards had to rely on such complaints, which, as a result of farmers' attitudes, were not as forthcoming as expected. The NAD did appoint inspectors in an attempt to overcome this problem but there were only two for the Northern Areas and, by 1960, they had only carried out inspections on some of the farms in the districts of Louis Trichardt, Pietersburg and Tzaneen.[54]

In Carolina the failure of the board to proceed according to NAD guidelines caused farmers to protest about over-zealous inspections. Whereas Justice Department jurisdiction had produced an inactive labour bureaux in Belfast, in Carolina it had

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50 CAD, NTS, No. 97/362, Vol. 8836, Minutes of the meeting of the Liaison Committee, 18 March 1959.
51 CAD, NTS, No. 97/362, Vol. 8833, Native Commissioner Middelburg to Secretary of Native Affairs, 26 June 1957.
52 CAD, NTS, No. 97/362, Vol. 8833, Native Commissioner Lydenburg to Secretary of Native Affairs 26 July 1957; Secretary of Native Affairs to Native Commissioner Lydenburg, 23 September 1957.
53 CAD, NTS, No. 97/362, Vol. 8836, Minutes of meeting of Liaison Committee, 18 March 1959.
54 CAD, NTS, No. 97/362G, Vol. 8837, Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas) to Secretary of Native Affairs, 29 August 1960.

the opposite effect on the Labour Tenant Board. Instead of proceeding at the cautious pace recommended, the Carolina board ascertained the labour supply on all the farms in the district. Following this survey the board proceeded to send instructions on how many labour tenants they were allowed to keep to all the farmers. More than seventy farmers were told to reduce their labour in this manner. Farmers voiced loud protests about this large-scale and arbitrary interference in their affairs. In the uproar the board defended itself by claiming that these were only recommendations that would probably not be carried out. Nevertheless, farmers complained to their member of parliament, Albert Hertzog.[55] The NAD emphatically pointed out to the Department of Justice that these procedures were contrary to Article 29 of the Chapter and contrary to NAD policy, and should cease before they caused more friction between farmers and the bureaucracy.

It is therefore not surprising that in 1958 the NAD felt that, 'perhaps the implementation of Chapter Four did not progress as quickly as could be expected but it is a new scheme that took time to become known amongst the farming community'.[56] Nevertheless, despite the problems, the NAD was hopeful about the future. In Middelburg this optimism seemed justified as the Labour Tenant Control Board reported a number of successes. The farmers Davel, Steenkamp, Weimer, Louw and De Villiers were held collectively to have 58 families in excess of their needs. Most of these families were subsequently removed by order of the board. Only five managed to stay on the farms.[57] Reports of forced removals were also starting to reach NAD head office. In cases where tenants refused to move it was decided to issue them with a 'heavy suspended fine'. If such tenants still did not move they would be served with an ejectment order in terms of section 3 of Act 52 of 1951.[58] These tenants would then be carted off the farms in NAD 'trust

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55 CAD, NTS, No. 97/362, Vol. 8849, Secretary of Justice to Secretary of Native Affairs, 5 March 1959.
56 CAD, NTS, No. 97/362, Vol. 8835, NAD Memo: 'Application of Chapter Four', c1958.
57 CAD, NTS, No. 97/362, Vol 8835, Chief Native Commissioner (Witwatersrand) to Secretary of Native Affairs, 4 September 1958.
58 C. O'Regan, 'The Prevention of the Illegal Squatting Act', in C. Murray and C. O'Regan, eds, *No Place to Rest: Forced Removals and the Law in South Africa* (Cape Town, Oxford University Press, 1990).

lorries' with the assistance of the police.[59]

Despite their patchy effectiveness, the Labour Tenant Boards interfered in the labour relationships on the farms to an extent that was unprecedented. When the NAD proposed farm inspections in the 1940s farmers raised a storm of protest. The new NAD measures were not met with organised opposition, probably because they were more directly in the interest of farmers as a whole. It is nevertheless evident that not all farmers were prepared to cooperate with the boards. This opposition or apathy was sometimes caused by the close relationships between farmers and resident tenants. Despite the overwhelming evidence that farmers strove on a daily basis to increase the oppression and exploitation of their labour, some farmers, in the isolation of their farms, developed a genuine allegiance to the Africans living and working with them, especially when labour tenant families had been resident on a particular farm for a number of generations.[60] In Badfontein, Lydenburg, a farmer refused to comply with the ruling of the board. He referred to the labour tenants as 'my folk' and pointed out that his father had grown up with the heads of the tenant families when they were children. Under pressure from the board he reluctantly called together all the Africans living on his farm and told them of the ruling. He told them it was up to them to decide who should leave and who could stay. He himself could not undertake the cruel act of evicting African families he had known all his life.[61]

Chapter Four seriously affected the freedom of some labour tenants, although by 1960 these effects were still only thinly spread over the districts of the mid-eastern Transvaal. In that year the Machadadorp Farmers Union in the district of Belfast claimed that the main objective of Chapter Four had not been reached: 'There is still no regulated distribution of farm labour.'[62] The union claimed that on a number of farms the increasing congregation of labour tenant families was

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59 CAD, NTS, No. 97/362, Vol. 8835, Secretary of Bantu Affairs to Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas), 16 December 1959.

60 See Chapter Five, p. 197; also Van Onselen, 'Paternalism and Violence', p. 9.

61 Interview with Bryna Davis, Lydenburg, 15 Sept. 1990.

62 CAD, NTS, No. 97/362, Vol. 8836, Machadadorp Boerevereniging to NAD, 25 July 1959.

taking place. Some of these families paid rent to the farmer and most of them were expected to work for a very short time.[63] Farmers that could or would not offer such conditions were often forced to rely on prison labour. The Belfast Labour Tenant Control Board was more specific about the conditions in that district. The distribution of labour ranged from no workers on a farm to seventy African families on one farm. It was estimated by the board that a particular farmer who kept seventy families needed only twenty of these people to run his farm. As a result of these practices, the board claimed, thirty percent of the farms housed Africans that were thirty percent in excess of their labour needs. The board also stated that in its three years of existence, not one of its many resolutions had been put into effect.

Chapter Four had no effect in Belfast. In Lydenburg and Middelburg the Labour Tenant Control Boards faced many difficulties and were only partially successful. In Ermelo protestations about absentee farmers that permitted Africans to 'squat' where still widespread in 1960.[64] Complaints from all over South Africa about the ineffectiveness of Chapter Four led, in the same year, to the calling up of an inter-departmental committee that, rather than persisting with attempts to redistribute labour tenants, decided to consider the total abolition of the system. This decision to abandon the policy proves that Chapter Four was, in the final analysis, unable to bring about an effective redistribution of labour.[65]

THE IMPROVEMENT OF LABOUR BUREAUX - FARMER CO-OPERATION

Labour bureaux were more successful than Labour Tenant Boards. At the end of 1956 the Lydenburg labour bureau reported that the situation was improving. A number of Africans were beginning to use the bureau. This allowed them to meet the demand for labour of those farmers that made use of the 'proper channels'. But they continued to represent a minority. Most farmers persisted with their own labour recruiting and were still not prepared to register their labourers. In 1958

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63 See also interview with Henry Sehlale, Alverton, 4 July 1993.
64 Nel Commission, evidence in Ermelo, 9 Aug. 1960.
65 Marcus, *Modernising Super-Exploitation*, p. 83.

a further change in attitudes was reported. In March of that year it was claimed that farmers were now arriving regularly to register their labourers. By 1959 some farmers were even handing in written requests for labour. In Middelburg things also improved slightly. Africans were using the bureau and were being sent out to the farms with the proper form in their possession. But farmers hardly ever returned the bottom of this form which made it impossible for the bureaux to maintain records on who was working for whom.[66] An appreciable increase in registrations occurred in Ermelo during 1958. Many farmers still preferred to recruit their own labour, but the first 20 days of the month of May saw the registration of three hundred farm labourers. According to the bureaux the 'big employers' in the district had registered practically all their labour. By 1959 nearly all the labour had been registered and registration was regularly being renewed.[67] In Belfast, during 1959, farmers were reportedly regarding the bureaux in a more favourable light. However, by 1960 very few registrations had actually materialised.[68]

On the whole, it would seem that the co-operation between the bureaux and the farmers had improved by 1960. The increase in registrations can be explained by a number of factors. The growing control over Africans, especially in the local urban areas, could have given farmers greater confidence in the ability of the bureaux. People eager for redistribution of labour in terms of Chapter Four, which also required registration, could have become more aware of the benefits of registration. Furthermore, the supply of labour in the farming districts grew at an even faster rate after 1955. In Lydenburg it was reported in 1956 that the number of Africans resident in the district increased by 7000 within one year.[69] In Carolina there were approximately 32000 Africans in 1957. By 1958 this figure had expanded to 36000.[70] This massive expansion can partly be explained by the

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66 CAD, NTS, No. 289/280, Vol. 2167, SWVK to Chief Native Commissioner, 11 February 1958.
67 CAD, NTS, No. 289/280, Vol. 2167, SWVK to Chief Native Commissioner, 16 March 1959.
68 CAD, NTS, No. 289/280, Vol. 2169, Native Commissioner Belfast to Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas), 15 January 1960.
69 CAD, NTS, No. 289/280, Vol. 2167, SWVK to Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas), 26 September 1955.
70 CAD, NTS, No. 21289/280, Vol. 2169, SWVK to Chief Native Commissioner, 23 January 1957.

effects that the bureaux in the large cities were beginning to have at this time.[71] Marcus claims that the bureaux were instrumental in channelling urban Africans back into the rural areas, thus reversing the ever increasing flow of rural Africans into the towns.[72] Lazar's figures support this contention: 'by 1953, 21,823 African workers from urban areas had been placed by the labour bureaux in employment in agriculture; and between the middle of 1954 and the end of 1957 another 268,705 workers were directed back to white farms'.[73] The increasing supply of labour naturally made farmers less nervous about Africans leaving their districts and thus gave them the confidence to register their labour.

CONTROLLING MOBILITY

But this change in attitude was not shared by all the farmers of the mid-eastern Transvaal. The relationship between many farmers and the bureaucracy remained uneasy. For example, a prominent member of the Transvaal Agricultural Union said in 1960 that farmers and Africans did not like using the bureaux system because of its impersonal nature. This farmer was of the opinion that the system needed to be revised. He believed that:

> 'if you could bring that farmer into personal contact with the native, then you will have a chance to successfully persuade him to come to agriculture. It is a question of man to man contact -personal relationships. He must build relationships with the native. Like I know the native he likes to find his own master. The bureaux handles him too much like a commodity'.[74]

Reservations about the value of bureaucratic control continued to be expressed, while other farmers, who struggled to obtain labour despite the regional population increases, were still worried about the patchy effectiveness of influx control. In 1957 one such farmer in Lydenburg reported that his farm workers were leaving the district to work at the dam construction on the Pienaars River. According to the farmer, the labour tenants 'simply leave without the permission

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71 CAD, NTS, No. 3/280, Vol. 1994, Chief Native Commissioner Pietersburg Memo for Period: 7 July - 30 Sept. 1953, 9 November 1953.

72 Marcus, *Modernising Super Exploitation*, p. 65.

73 J. Lazar, 'Conformity and Conflict: Afrikaner Politics 1948 - 1961', (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Oxford University, 1987), p. 98. A large percentage of these workers were prison labourers channelled under the 9*d*-a-day scheme; see Posel, *The Making of Apartheid*, p. 139.

74 Nel Commission, TAU Evidence, 22 July 1960.

of the Native Commissioner'.[75] The Native Commissioner assured him that these labour tenants would be brought back to Lydenburg, but no action was taken. The NAD found that the families of the labour tenants were still living on the farm, which, the officials argued, indicated that the tenants intended to come back when their 'free period' had elapsed. However, it is clear that what made the farmer nervous was the labour bureaux's inability to prevent Africans from moving beyond the borders of the district.

Farmers hoped that labour tenants would now use their free time to work only in their district, which would make control and the certainty of their return a much more manageable task. This is borne out by a farmer in Middelburg who was upset about the freedom of his labour tenants to go where they pleased in search of work. The farmer gave his labour tenant a 'work pass' for the specific purpose of finding temporary work in the town of Middelburg. Instead, the African went to Pretoria and found work at a building company.[76] The labour bureau had no knowledge of this move.

Labour bureaux in the districts were more successful in preventing labour tenants from taking up employment, without farmer's permission, at relatively well paid road works. This was partly because the farmer and the illegal employer both fell under the jurisdiction of the same bureau. In Ermelo this practice, which had been a source of farmer's complaints for decades, was effectively reversed. The bureau forced the road-works to register the workers in their employ. Subsequently, all the Africans who came from farms had to be sent back.[77]

The district bureaux could not be very effective in preventing Africans from leaving their jurisdictions. The real onus fell on the bureaux of the urban areas to which some labour tenants still migrated in their free period. It has been shown that the urban bureaux were successful in forcing large numbers into the rural

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75 CAD, NTS, No. 289/280, Vol. 2167, S.N. Du Toit to Minister of Native Affairs, 2 May 1957.
76 CAD, NTS, No. 289/280, Vol. 2167, C. Smit to Minister of Native Affairs, 29 April 1957.
77 CAD, NTS, No. 289/280, Vol. 2169, SWVK to Chief Native Commissioner, 11 March 1958.

areas, and that the large population increases of the 1950s must partly be ascribed to influx control preventing urbanisation. However, these controls were not able to close off the urban areas completely; a number of labour tenants from the mid-eastern Transvaal continued to find available jobs in the urban areas. Manufacturing 'expanded dramatically in the late 1950s' and there was thus a growing demand for labour in cities like Johannesburg.[78] Posel shows that despite the NAD's insistence that manufacturing firms use labour settled in the urban areas (the urban labour preference policy), many employers defied the bureaux and continued to hire migrants from the reserves and white farms. This meant that jobs in the manufacturing sector continued to be available to migrating labour tenants and that the urban labour bureaux could not be wholly effective. Urban employers, like white farmers, were not always willing to cooperate with the NAD and its bureaux.[79]

Ex-labour tenant informants remember that the new pass laws made it more difficult to leave the farms without the farmer's permission. As Letta Mabuza explains: 'The passes made it quite difficult for people to move, to get jobs somewhere else, because they needed to be signed. And if the farmer didn't sign it, it means you are unlawful.'[80] The residents of Boomplaats experienced similar difficulties. Samuel Modipa recalls:

> 'There were stricter controls. Before you could just go and find work somewhere else. You needed a letter from the chief, and then go to the commissioner. The pass books came in 1953. There were problems in the sense that people could no longer choose to work where they wanted. They were actually told to work within Lydenburg and if people went out they would just have to run away, as if they were visiting someone in Johannesburg. But there were still problems because they either had to work in the mines or the farms, they couldn't just work in town. People would try, but if they find you with your pass, and they see you are from Lydenburg, they would send you back to Lydenburg. They would say within twenty

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78 Interview with Maria Malebe, Jane Furse, 5 July 1993, shows that the Urban Labour Preference Policy did, however, affect Lydenburg tenants: 'Those who worked on the mines are the only ones who were allowed to work, but not in town. They reserved work in town for people who were staying there. Those who came from the farms were employed on the mines.'

79 D. Posel, '"Providing for the Legitimate Labour Requirements of Employers": Secondary Industry, Commerce and the State in South Africa during the 1950s and Early 1960s', in A. Mabin, ed, *Organisation and Economic Change* (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1989), pp. 209-210.

80 Interview with Letta Mabuza, Marulaneng, 7 June 1992; Amie Sewele, Marulaneng, 12 April 1992; William Mgiba, Jane Furse, 6 February 1991; Rose Masilela, Jane Furse, 8 February 1991; Hezekiel Malope, Jane Furse, 19 October 1992.

four hours you should have disappeared.'[81]

This evidence points to general difficulties faced by all potential migrants who managed to escape to the city; but it also proves that some Lydenburg tenants still fought to overcome the disadvantages of the NAD's Urban Labour Preference Policy. Ephraim Mosehla, for example, describes one way for sons of labour tenants to avoid the restrictions of the pass books:

> 'If your book is not signed at all then you could move wherever you wanted. If my father is on the farm then he will get his book signed, and I will just hide my book. The farmer will ask if I have got a book, and I will just say no, I haven't got one.'[82]

Another way of obtaining access to jobs in Johannesburg was through an administrative procedure that appears not to have been entirely above board. William Sewela remembers that he took his Lydenburg pass to Schoonoord (the administrative centre of Sekhukhuneland) where he was told to fill out some 'transfer' forms. Three weeks later, he explains, his 'pass number came back different' and he was able to proceed to Johannesburg.[83]

The evidence from Pretoria indicates that, by 1960, it was becoming even more difficult for labour tenants to find accommodation and work in the urban areas. However, some mid-eastern Transvaal Africans still managed to slip successfully through the influx control net. Transvaal labour tenants were given permission to work in Pretoria, but this only applied to the 2261 labour tenants that had been registered before 1960. No new registrations were permitted. If a labour tenant stayed away from Pretoria for a period of twelve months his registration would not be renewed. Most labour tenants, during their six to eight month sojourn in town, lived in the hostels and backyard shacks of Pretoria's 'locations'. These residencies came under serious attack in 1960. In that year the town council implemented a scheme to remove all farm labourers from the backyard shacks. They intended to

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81 Interview with Samuel Modipa, Mashishing, 11 April 1992.
82 Interview with Ephraim Mosehla, Jane Furse, 22 January 1992.
83 Interview with William Sewela, Jane Furse, 16 June 1993.

permit residence only in the hostels, where control was easier. Sixteen new inspectors had been appointed to make regular inspections of the backyard lodgings with the aim of arresting 'illegals'.

However, despite the tightening control, numerous Africans continued to enter Pretoria illegally. Many of them were discovered and expelled when they tried to find jobs. But some managed to stay on. One method of avoiding detection was very similar to the method described by Ephraim Mosehla above. Pretoria migrants, it was reported, often acquired two pass books by claiming to have lost their book. Once issued with a duplicate, migrants who originated from farms would then only use this duplicate in town and keep the other pass for the farms. There would thus be no evidence of their origins from the farms when they looked for a job in town. In 1960 there were 112 labour tenants from Belfast and 358 from Middelburg working in Pretoria with the knowledge of the town council. An unspecified number were there without official knowledge.[84] But tighter controls and the expansion of bureaucratic personnel did make the movement between town and countryside increasingly difficult.

Lettow Vorbeck Mnisi was one of the victims of this tightened influx control. Mnisi was a BA student who worked to pay his tuition fees. The available work in Lydenburg did not pay a wage that would enable him to meet these obligations. He found work in Johannesburg which sustained him for five months but, once the 'job came to an end', the bureau expelled him from Johannesburg and sent him back to Lydenburg.[85] Subsequently Mnisi looked for work in Pretoria and Nelspruit but was sent back both times by the bureau.[86] He was unable to pay his university fees and his chances of acquiring a university education were effectively destroyed.

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84 Nel Commission, Evidence of G.M. Retief - Assistant Director of Non-White Department of Pretoria Town Council, 5 Aug. 1960.

85 CAD, HKN, 30/36/16, Lettow Vorbeck Mnisi to Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas), 4 July 1953.

86 CAD, HKN, 30/36/16, Lettow Vorbeck Mnisi to Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas), 19 January 1954.

CONCLUSION

Labour bureaux, labour boards and pass-laws made it increasingly difficult for labour tenants to move between farms, and to seek alternative forms of employment in the urban areas. Consequently, the balance of power shifted in favour of white farmers during the 1950s. Other factors, including the end of a general farm labour shortage, contributed to this process. Even the spread of a seemingly innocuous technology like the telephone undermined the bargaining power of labour tenants.[88] The telephone, as it turned out, gave farmers the ability to confer with each other before hiring anyone. When an African came to look for work, the farmer would first phone his previous employer, and if the African had left the farm because of a dispute with the owner, then the farmers would often decide to deny this person a job because he was marked as a 'trouble maker'.[89]

These power shifts in the relationship between white farmers and labour tenants provided the base from which farmers and the state launched their final attack against Africans in white farming districts. The character and outcome of this attack is discussed in the next chapter. In this chapter it has been shown that the Apartheid state made a very real impact on the districts of the mid-eastern Transvaal, but this impact was modified by a number of conflicts and compromises. The state's intentions were firstly influenced by internal conflicts and were then repeatedly shaped by the ongoing resistance of labour tenant families determined to maintain some autonomy and some control in white farming districts. All of the important state policies were affected by this resistance. Labour Tenant Control Boards were designed to bring about an equal distribution of labour tenants. Due to opposition they failed to achieve this and the policy was abandoned. Labour bureaux and pass-laws were designed to prevent the unregulated mobility of African labour and to deny Africans a say in where and with whom they would be employed. Although the new laws diminished the

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[88] See, *Assembly Debates*, 11 May 1954: Mr Liebenberg (Lydenburg); for the progress made with the expansion of telephone services.

[89] Interview with Petrus Magolego, Jane Furse, 9 Dec. 1990. See also, CAD, NTS, No. 289/280, Vol. 2167, Secretary of Native Affairs to Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas), 17 October 1955.

bargaining power of rural Africans, they were never able to establish a bureaucratically regulated labour market in which individual preferences played no role. These processes highlight the importance of African resistance within the historical processes that shaped South Africa. If Apartheid had operated in the uncomplicated, all-embracing way intended by the law-makers, we would be living in a very different country today.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE TRANSFORMATION OF LABOUR RELATIONS, 1961-1970

During the 1960s the state moved away from its previous attempts to redistribute labour tenants and worked instead to undermine the hold that Africans still had on 'white land'. This chapter shows that the state's new objective was initially achieved by taking a much harder line on the issue of 'surplus tenants', many of whom were expelled from white farming districts during the 1960s. The piecemeal approach was then replaced by the district by district banning of the entire system, and the removal of all remaining labour tenants from white farming districts to 'reserves'.

The state and the leadership of the South African Agricultural Union (SAAU) had been opposed to the labour tenant system since the 1930s[1], but the system was kept alive by poorer farmers who feared that wage costs would threaten their survival on the land and by Africans, whose resistance ensured that farmers had to offer land, cattle, and an element of 'free time' in order to attract cheap labour. However, by 1960 it became clear that many of the farmers who had clung to labour tenancy in the past, were prepared to abandon it. J.P. Joubert told the Nel Commission of 1960 that, out of a total of 922 farmers, the Lydenburg district had 200 farmers who worked with full-time labourers. This trend had begun to emerge in 1958 when 50 farmers abandoned the labour tenant system.[2] These farmers

1 See Chapter Four, p. 148.

2 *Inter-departmental Commission of Enquiry into the Labour Tenant System* (Nel Commission), (Mimeograph, 1960), Evidence of J.P. Joubert; Central Archives Depot (CAD), Native Affairs Department (NTS), No. 971/323/17, Vol. 7155, Native Commissioner Lydenburg to Secretary of Native Affairs, 3 February 1959.

now favoured the combination of a small permanent wage labour contingent with a large seasonal labour force consisting of women and children recruited from nearby 'reserves'.

The trend away from labour tenancy was facilitated by the state policies and economic growth patterns of the 1950s. As I will show below, it was then strengthened by the faster economic growth and even more determined state intervention of the 1960s. But farmer and state initiatives do not in themselves provide an adequate explanation for labour tenancy's demise in Lydenburg. As this thesis has demonstrated, African resistance regularly undermined or modified initiatives imposed from above. This time state policy proceeded largely according to plan, mainly because no substantial African opposition emerged. In fact, most labour tenant families moved to the 'reserves' on their own accord and, in order to understand this response, it is necessary to examine the difficult conditions that Africans faced throughout South Africa during the 1960s. The economic conditions that Africans confronted are analyzed first.

ECONOMIC GROWTH IN A RACIST SOCIETY

The 1960s was an era of 'unparalleled growth and diversification in the South African economy'.[3] Although manufacturing made the biggest contribution towards this growth, agricultural production continued to increase within a controlled and lucrative market. Increases were generated by the more efficient use of existing land, through the more intensive use of tractors and fertilisers, on farms whose average size increased steadily.[4] In Lydenburg the number of farms continued to decline, from 702 in 1962 to 550 in 1969. During this period the average farm size grew from 539 to 785 morgen, while the expenditure on new tractors increased by R176488.[5] Capital was available in abundance from the

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3 T.C. Moll, '"Probably the Best Laager in the World": the Record and Prospects of the South African Economy', in J.B. Brewer, *Can South Africa Survive? Five Minutes to Midnight* (London, Macmillan Press, 1989).

4 S. Jones & A. Müller, *The South African Economy, 1910-1990* (London, Macmillan, 1992), pp. 238-246.

5 *Agricultural Census No. 36*, 1962 (R.P. 65/1965); *Agricultural Census No. 39*, 1965 (Gov. Printer, undated).

Land Bank and the co-operative. By 1969 Lydenburg farmers were in debt to the tune of R3,43 million.[6] At the same time the number of poor farmers, although they continued to exist, diminished drastically during the 1960s. In 1961 there were still 252 farmers in Lydenburg whose annual gross value of livestock and farm produce sold was less than R500. By 1965 this number had declined to 126.[7] The majority of Lydenburg farmers during that year earned more than R1000 for the produce that they sold.[8]

Labour tenants were unable to participate in this white prosperity. They found themselves restricted to less land, with access to fewer resources. Statistics confirm that the material base underpinning labour tenancy gradually vanished during the 1960s.[9] Tenants found it difficult to combat this trend, because the well established tactic of moving between richer and poorer farmers became increasingly less viable once farmers became more homogenous and generally had sufficient labour.[10] This labour was provided by a growing number of resident tenants. There was also a greater reliance on women labourers from the 'reserve', Sekhukhuneland, during harvesting and ploughing seasons.[11] Farmers now regularly drove to the Trust farms in Sekhukhuneland during the ploughing and harvesting seasons, collected as many women (and sometimes youths) as they needed, and then registered these seasonal workers at the district labour bureau.[12] This practice was facilitated by the population density on the Trust farms, which released large numbers of women who did not have their own fields

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6 *Agricultural Census No. 43*, 1969 (Gov. Printer, undated).

7 *Agricultural Census No. 35*, 1961 (R.P. 40/1964).

8 *Agricultural Census No. 39*.

9 *Agricultural Census No. 35 - No. 43*. African maize production during this period declined from 16692 to 11023 bags, while cattle numbers dropped from 13921 to 6372. Although it is possible that the number of labour tenants declined during this period, the drastic drops reflected in these figures strongly suggest that resources were becoming ever more sparse for the remaining tenants.

10 Interview with Mr Malatje, Marulaneng, 12 April 1992; Ella Shabangu, Jane Furse, 7 February 1992; Rose Masilela, Jane Furse, 8 February 1991; Anna Mapanga, Mashishing, 20 September 1992.

11 CAD, BAO, No. 39/1396, Vol. 3128, Labour Bureaux to BAD, 21 February 1961; 22 January 1962; 13 February 1963; 30 October 1964; Lydenburg Farmers Union to Minister of Bantu Affairs, 12 July 1965; No. C43/1396, Vol. 3322, B. de Kock (Burgersfort) to Secretary of Bantu Affairs, 23 August 1967: 'Ons boerdery leen hom toe tot gebruik van baie deeltydse arbeiders.'

12 CAD, BAO, No. 39/1396, Vol. 3128, A. Swart to Chief Bantu Commissioner (Northern Areas), 30 October 1964; SWVK to Chief Bantu Commissioner (Northern Areas), 13 February 1963.

to keep them busy during harvesting and ploughing seasons.[13] The practice was also made easier by the extension of the pass laws to women, a process that was near completion in 1962, and which gave farmers greater control over their seasonal labour.[14] Statistics on the wages that these women received are not readily available, although the figures for 1965 indicate that each seasonal worker received R34 per anum.[15] As a result of this shift to a new source of cheap labour farmers became less dependent on resident tenants, and the state was provided with a foundation from which a new labour system could be constructed.

Thus the bargaining power and resources of Africans resident in Lydenburg diminished dramatically. The neighbouring 'reserve', Sekhukhuneland, did not provide these tenants with an attractive rural alternative. Population growth - caused by natural increases, resettlement policies and the barriers preventing urbanisation - meant that agricultural land was not available for incoming residents. People moving into Sekhukhuneland had to settle in closer settlements, where residents received, at most, a quarter of an acre.[16] It was almost impossible to maintain cattle under these circumstances and the proportion of families with cattle declined throughout Sekhukhuneland during the 1960s.[17]

The best economic opportunities for Africans were located in the booming urban areas. African job opportunities in the manufacturing industries located mainly around Johannesburg rose steadily during the 1960s, and African wages did the same.[18] However, while these job opportunities were attractive, the same cannot be said about residential life in Johannesburg 'townships' like Soweto. In these

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13 CAD, BAO, No. B24/8/19, Vol. 2150, Chief Bantu Commissioner (Northern Areas) to Secretary of Bantu Affairs, 7 July 1964; No. D45/1396/01, Vol. 4446, W.D. Thompson to Secretary of Bantu Affairs, 4 February 1969.

14 CAD, BAO, No. 39/1396, Vol. 3128, Inspector of Bantu Labour, Memo, 22 January 1962.

15 *Agricultural Census No. 39.*

16 CAD, BAO, No. B24/8/19, Vol. 2150, Chief Bantu Commissioner (Northern Areas) to Secretary of Bantu Affairs, 7 July 1964.

17 P. Delius, 'Migrants, Comrades and Rural Revolt: Sekhukhuneland, 1950-1987', in *Transformation*, No. 13, 1990, pp. 12-13.

18 G. Bloch, 'Sounds in the Silence: Painting a Picture of the 1960s', in *Africa Perspective*, No. 25, 1984, p. 16.

areas crime, which had long been a problem, became endemic.[19] In a survey conducted in 1967, 53 % of the respondents in Soweto rated crime as the most important problem that they faced, compared to only 36 % who cited the high cost of living and 9 % who complained about poor housing.[20] The high crime rate contributed to a growing feeling of urban alienation amongst erstwhile rural residents, some of whom returned 'home' in the 1960s.[21]

APARTHEID

African alienation was exacerbated by Apartheid policies aimed against urban residents. From 1960 the Bantu Affairs Department began to attack urban residential rights, and although they never completely abolished these rights, the direction adopted by the Department often had dire consequences for individual urban dwellers.[22] The state adopted a very hard line on urban residential qualification and, as a result, frequently broke up families. Newspaper stories of the time described how the state deported widows who successfully ran their late husbands' businesses and confined children, sent to their grandparents to be educated, to the rural areas for the rest of their lives.[23] These policies made the urban areas extremely unattractive, while the tightening of influx control made them inaccessible. As I showed earlier, labour bureaux in both white farming and urban areas had resolved to prevent farm workers from entering cities, and they became increasingly successful at achieving this aim.[24] In the 'reserves', influx control also became more efficient, which made it difficult to migrate to the urban areas without a contract signed at the Native Commissioner's office.[25] However, getting access to a contract was easy because, in the context of the urban boom

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19 C. Glaser, 'Public enemy Number One: Crime and Policing in the era of High Apartheid', Unpublished Seminar Paper, Univ. of Wits, April, 1992, p. 1.

20 M. Braun, *Das Schwarze Johannesburg: Afrikaner im Getto* (Frankfurt, Otto Lembeck, 1973), p. 200.

21 B. Bozzoli, *Women of Phokeng: Consciousness, Life Strategy and Migrancy in South Africa, 1900-1983* (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1991), p. 199.

22 D. Posel, *The Making of Apartheid: Conflict and Compromise* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1991), pp. 231-235.

23 Braun, *Schwarze Johannesburg*, pp.187-192.

24 Chapter Seven, pp. 283-285. See also T. Marcus, *Modernising Super-Exploitation: Restructuring South African Agriculture* (London, Zed Books, 1990), p. 81.

25 Delius, 'Migrants, Comrades and Rural Revolt', p. 11; See also J. Ferguson, *The Anti-politics Machine: Development, Depoliticization and Bureaucratic State Power in Lesotho* (Cape Town, David Philip, 1990), p. 116.

and the BAD's emerging preference for migrant labour, a large demand for contract labourers from the 'reserves' was created.[26] As rural conditions deteriorated, so compelling reasons emerged for Africans from white farms to take advantage of the job boom in the urban areas by becoming migrants resident in a 'reserve', even if this option involved giving up access to cattle and crops.[27]

Thus Apartheid policies drew Lydenburg's Africans to the 'reserves', while, at the same time, the policies that aimed to regulate white farming districts pushed people out of Lydenburg. In 1960 the Nel Commission, which represented many of the poorer farmers who had clung to labour tenancy in the 1950s, recommended that the state abolish the labour tenant system.[28] Although it took the state four years to turn this recommendation into law, labour tenants were affected much earlier by the decision. Labour Tenant Control Boards used the improving relationship with farmers, as well as the gradual rejection of labour tenancy by farmers themselves, to adopt a much tougher line on 'surplus tenants'. For example, at the end of 1959, the board instructed the two owners of sub-divided portions of the farm Vygenhoek that, instead of the large number of Africans living on their farms, they could only keep two labour tenant families each.[29] As a result, on one of the portions of Vygenhoek, the owner, Smuts, had, by 1961, expelled fifteen tenant families.[30] On the other portion of the farm, Mrs Breytenbach evicted 11 families, but was able to obtain exemptions for nine tenants who were said to be aged.[31] These exemptions were, however, overturned by BAD head office, which instructed the Commissioner of Lydenburg to find homes in the 'reserve' for the aged tenants.[32] As a result the retired tenants lost

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26 Personal Communication, P. Delius. For the BAD's growing preference for migrant labour see Posel, *The Making of Apartheid*, pp. 231-235.

27 See Below, p. 308.

28 Marcus, *Modernising Super-Exploitation*, p. 80.

29 CAD, NTS, No. 971/323/17, Vol. 7155, Native Commissioner Lydenburg to Secretary of Native Affairs, 12 September 1959.

30 CAD, BAO, No. 24/1396/1, Vol. 2228, BAD Memo re Vygenhoek 455, 1 June 1961.

31 CAD, BAO, No. 24/1396/1, Vol. 2228, Magistrate Lydenburg to Chief Bantu Commissioner (Northern Areas), 17 March 1961.

32 CAD, BAO, No. 24/1396/1, Vol. 2228, Secretary of Bantu Affairs to Chief Bantu Commissioner (Northern Areas), 12 June 1961.

their access to land and cattle.[33]

The 1960s have often been referred to as the era of 'high Apartheid'. The BAD's behaviour in Lydenburg confirms the appropriateness of this label, as officials, especially those in head-office, confidently and relentlessly pursued a policy that undermined the position of blacks in white areas. This determination led, for example, to the closing down of the two most important missions in Lydenburg: The Catholic Maria Trost Mission on the farm Frischgewagd and the Lutheran Mission on the farm Leidenburg.[34] African residents of these missions were removed to 'closer settlements' on the edge of Sekhukhuneland. 'Coloured' mission residents were even less fortunate, and their treatment is a clear example of how uncompromising the administration could be during this period. The 'coloured' residents were told by local officials that they would receive compensation for their houses but head-office denied them this compensation after the mission had been bulldozed. Even an impassioned plea from the Lutheran Missionary, whose Mission Society had a close and cordial relationship with the state, failed to have an effect.[35] The BAD maintained that they could not create a precedent of paying compensation to coloureds.[36] The same logic, in which the drive for a consistent policy overrode concerns for legitimacy and compassion, was applied to requests from aged Africans to be spared the strain of removal. Officials argued that such Africans would still constitute a 'black spot' and no such exceptions to the grand-scheme ('beleid') could be tolerated.[37]

In this context labour tenants, with their access to 'white land', contradicted the segregationist vision cherished by Apartheid officials. Thus in 1963, before the 1964 revision of the Land Act made direct provision for the banning of labour tenancy, the BAD informed Labour Tenant Control Boards throughout the country

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33 CAD, BAO, No. 24/1396/1, Vol. 2228, Bantu Commissioner Sekhukhuneland to Bantu Commissioner Lydenburg, 27 September 1961.
34 CAD, BAO, No. B24/8/19, Vol. 2150, First Admin Official (Squatter-Control) to Under-Secretary (White-Areas), 18 September 1964.
35 CAD, BAO, No. B24/8/19, Vol. 2150, O. Eberhardt to Magistrate Lydenburg, 6 May 1968.
36 CAD, BAO, No. B24/8/19, Vol. 2150, Secretary of Bantu Affairs to Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas), 30 January 1969.
37 CAD, BAO, No. B24/8/19, Vol. 2150, BAD to W.P.H. Schultz, 14 March 1962.

that many boards had been too permissive when it came to determining the number of tenants that farmers were allowed to keep. The boards were told to realise that surplus Africans in rural areas were 'an evil', and that labour tenants should be limited to an absolute minimum in order to stifle systematically this labour system.[38]

One of the methods adopted to achieve this aim was to work with school inspectors. The Minister of Bantu Affairs instructed these inspectors to report any incident of thirty or more pupils from the same farm attending an African school.[39] This gave the Labour Tenant Control Boards a way of ascertaining which farms housed large numbers of labour tenant families, without relying on farmers to provide this information. As a result many labour tenants were located and evicted.[40] In about 1964 the Labour Tenant Control Board in Lydenburg was given an additional instrument to assess labour tenant numbers independently of the farmers involved. The board gained access to the 'Inspector of Squatters' stationed in Barberton and then used this inspector to engineer another removal on the recently cleared farm, Boomplaats.[41] A complaint reached the board that a large number of tenants were congregated on the portions of Boomplaats that had now been allocated to white farmers Treurnicht and Rabe, as well as on the portions owned by coloured farmers, who had not been affected by the 1961 removal. Many of these 'coloured' land owners accommodated a number of former Boomplaats residents, who were trying to remain in the vicinity of the land they once occupied.[42] The inspector effectively put an end to this last-ditch attempt to retain land in Lydenburg. He arrived personally to count the number of surplus tenants on Boomplaats, and then returned periodically to check that the surplus

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38 CAD, BAO, No. 24/1396, Vol. 2227, Secretary of Bantu Affairs to Magistrate Lydenburg, 3 October 1963.

39 CAD, BAO, No. 24/1396, Vol. 2227, Secretary of Bantu Education to Secretary of Bantu Affairs, 5 August 1961.

40 CAD, BAO, No. 24/1396, Vol. 2227, G. Vermaak to Magistrate Lydenburg, 28 August 1961; Bantu Affairs Commissioner Lydenburg to Chief Bantu Commissioner (Native Affairs), 15 December 1961; Magistrate Lydenburg to South African Police Lydenburg, c1964.

41 The system of Inspectors launched in the 1950s reached the eastern Transvaal in 1962; See Chapter Seven, p. 276.

42 Interview with Maria Mkhonto, Jane Furse, 9 December 1990; CAD, BAO, No. 24/1396, Vol. 2227, Secretary of Bantu Affairs to Chief Bantu Commissioner (Northern Areas), 16 September 1964.

families had vacated the farm. Approximately forty labour tenant families were evicted from Boomplaats before 1965 as a result of this process.[43]

The state continued to find new ways of making life unpleasant for tenants in Lydenburg. It became impossible for a household head to undertake a contract on behalf of an extended household, as the Control Board insisted that an African male could only work for a farmer on behalf of his wives and children.[44] Further, the BAD stopped supporting African farm schools and closed down the mission schools in Lydenburg, many of which were transferred to the reserves.[45] African parents who wanted their children to receive an education thus had very little choice except to relocate to a 'reserve'. Lastly, the only remaining way in which farmers and their tenants could avoid the attention of the state, by registering *de facto* labour tenants as full-time employees, came to an end in 1967, when, in terms of the 1964 Land Act amendment, the Labour Tenant Control Board was converted into a Labour Control Board, which had the jurisdiction to evict full time employees if these were considered 'excessive in number'.[46]

WHITE RACISM AND THE COLLAPSE OF THE MORAL ORDER

The state clearly played a leading role in pushing Africans out of Lydenburg. White farmers also made a fairly important contribution towards this process. They often took the initiative, either by evicting tenants themselves or by demanding that the state evict their neighbour's tenants.[47] In addition, farmers made life unpleasant for the remaining tenants by adopting an increasingly violent and uncompromising racism. It was shown that prejudices against 'independent' Africans emerged in the nineteenth century but, at the same time, whites compromised on their opposition to African land occupation in order to attract

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43 CAD, BAO, No. 24/13906, Vol. 2227, Inspector of Squatters (Barberton) to SWVK, 6 October 1964.
44 CAD, BAO, 24/13096, Vol. 2227, Arbeid Skakel Beampte to Magistrate Lydenburg, 10 December 1965.
45 CAD, BAO, No. 24/13096, Vol. 2227, Magistrate Lydenburg to Chief Bantu Commissioner (Northern Areas), 16 February 1965; Dr W. Kühner to Department of Bantu Education, 8 July 1965.
46 CAD, BAO, No. B23/2, Vol. 2086, BAD Memo: Bantoe Arbeidsbeheerrade: Pligte en Werksaamhede, 14 August 1967.
47 CAD, NTS, No. 971/323/17, Vol. 7155, Nic Fourie to Minister of Native Affairs, 19 January 1959; BAO, No. 24/13096, Vol. 2227, Arbiedsbeampte Barberton to Magistrate Lydenburg, 22 January 1965; Bantu Commissioner Lydenburg to Chief Bantu Commissioner (Northern Areas), 28 February 1967.

cheap labourers.[48] From the 1950s onwards, when farmers began to campaign in earnest for the removal of the 'black-spots' on Boomplaats and Aapiesdoorndraai, the flexible attitude was gradually replaced with the notion that it was impossible for whites and blacks to occupy land in the same area under any circumstances.[49] The paternalist elements of white racism became increasingly less audible as farmers demanded strict segregation.[50]

Thus rather than looking for ways to accommodate resident African labourers within a context of racial subservience, whites in Lydenburg now rejected the possibility of such an accommodation. To some extent this rejection was influenced by Apartheid notions that white domination could only survive in the context of strict separation. For example, the Lydenburg Member of Parliament, Liebenberg, explained in 1954 that Apartheid meant that:

> 'The Native who comes out of his territory to the area of the white man, comes to that area to work there and he has no rights there. The squatter who is here, squats here because he does work here; he also has no rights here. Just as little as the white man has the right to go into the territory of the Native, just so little has the Native the right to come into the area of the white man and enjoy rights here.'[51]

The quotation suggests that labour tenants ('squatters') occupied a rather uneasy position within the Apartheid world-view. Tenants did not have their 'own areas' to which they could return. They occupied land in 'white areas'. But the quotation also shows that Apartheid gave whites the confidence to be unambiguously assertive in 'their area'. In the 1960s, when conditions made farmers less dependant on labour tenants, the farmers used this ideology to ask 'their state' for protection from the perils of living next to 'uncontrolled, thieving, dirty blacks'. For example, Schoeman, a resident on the white Ohrigstad settlement, told the Department of Lands in 1958 that he was upset about the number of Africans that

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48 Chapters One, Four and Five.

49 See S. Schirmer, 'Racism and White Farmers: The Initiation of Racial Land Divisions at the Local Level', in *Africa Perspective*, Vol. 2, No. 1, December 1993, p. 41.

50 This argument is developed below. For the western Transvaal see, C. van Onselen, 'The Social and Economic Underpinnings of Paternalism and Violence on the Maize Farms of the South-Western Transvaal, 1900-1950', *Journal of Historical Sociology* Vol. 5, No. 2, June 1992: Van Onselen perceives similar processes affecting the relations between farmers and share-croppers in the western Transvaal during the late 1940s and early 1950s.

51 *Assembly Debates*, 17 February 1954, p. 701, Mr. Liebenberg.

lived on the settlement. He threatened the Department:

> 'I am irritated. If you do not do something I will be forced to take the matter further, because I won't farm amongst kaffirs. It is getting worse by the day. There are already six homesteads, and on top of it they are situated just above my house. All their mess is running into my drinking water, and it is causing a strain on my plot. Its [taking] water and stealing and so on.'[52]

In 1962, 1963 and 1965 further complaints emanated from the Ohrigstad settlement. Most of these centred around the labour practices of one enterprising settler, who had expanded his production by buying up numerous other plots, and had installed his workers in the houses of the previous settlers. The complaints of the remaining white settlers, who now lived next door to Africans, can be summed up in the words of settler J.H. Hoffeld: 'We are, after all, white people, and we don't like being bothered by natives.'[53]

The principal way in which white Lydenburgers claimed they were being bothered by blacks, was by the latter's 'thieving habits'. These complaints were not new,[54] and they were partly a response to a well established African resistance strategy aimed at redressing some of the inequalities created by whites. July Lusiba, a labour tenant in Barberton, explains this strategy in the clearest terms:

> '[The farmer] said the farm was his. And so the people decided to reap the field at night and compensate their losses. They said they had to do that since those fields were rightfully theirs.'[55]

Similar ideas were expressed in Lydenburg.[56] Lucy Magagula recalls that while she lived on a farm, from about 1956 to 1970, stealing was regarded as necessary for survival:

> 'Because we were not getting anything, we would steal things, eggs and even washing. If you don't take things then you would not survive. If you were caught the farmer would beat you and send you to jail, and then you would come back and

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52 CAD, NTS, No. 971/323/17, Vol. 7155, E.W. & P.W. Schoeman to Department of Lands, 12 February 1958: (Trans in Text) 'Ek is omgekrap, as u nie [iets onderneem nie] sal ek verplig wees om verder te gaan want ek boer nie met die kaffer deur mekaar nie. Dit word elkedag [erger], daar is al ses statte, en dit net bokant my huis, al hul gemors spoel in my drinkwater en dis 'n oorlas op my plot, dis water en steel en so voorts.'

53 CAD, BAO, No. 24/1396/2, Vol. 2228, J.H. Hoffeld to Hiemstra, 26 April 1965; J.W. Fouche to Secretary of Bantu Affairs, 25 October 1962; B.J. Hoffeld, to Minister of Lands, 30 December 1963.

54 CAD, NTS, No. 274/323 Vol. 7109, A. Op t' Hof to Minister of Native Affairs, 5 September 1921.

55 African Studies Institute (ASI), Oral History Project (OHP), Interview with Mr. July Lusiba, Barberton.

56 Interview with Abram Motau, Jane Furse, 9 December 1990.

work there. He would beat you with a sjambock.'[57]

It therefore appears that farmers had genuine cause for concern. In previous decades they expressed this concern at most Transvaal Agricultural Union conferences, where they demanded stronger state action against cattle thieves.[58] But in the 1960s complaints about African stealing increased dramatically. Numerous farmers in Lydenburg described the district as over-run by uncontrolled African hordes, who were congregated on 'labour farms' owned by absentee landlords, and helped themselves to any field, fence, cow or crop that was left unguarded. For example, P.J. Hattingh, a sheep farmer from the Dullstroom area, declared that the grazing farm he owned had become worthless because any attempt to send his sheep there resulted in massive stock losses. On one occasion in 1962, he declared, 'the kaffirs stole 89 of my sheep'.[59] C.M. Wilken complained that he only reaped 35 bags of wheat and maize in 1963; 'the reason: Theft! Everything is stolen off the land'.[60]

Many of the complaints about theft came from farmers who lived on farms bordering on Trust farms. These farmers, like the farmers above who lived near 'labour farms', claimed that it was impossible to live in the immediate vicinity of large groups of 'thieving, irresponsible blacks'. They explained that their farming operations were threatened by massive animal poaching, the destruction of fencing, and the grazing and crop destruction of roaming 'scrub cattle'.[61] As a result, war-like conditions broke out in the vicinity of three farmers who lived on the Sekhukhuneland border. Jaap Zeeman shot an African on his farm ('because that is the only way to deal with them'), A. Erlank was frequently engaged in physical battles with his African neighbours (which he did not always win), and

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57 Interview with Lucy Magagula, Jane Furse, 6 February 1991.

58 CAD, NTS, No. 3/371, Vol. 9257, TAU Agenda for the 42nd Annual Meeting, 5-7 September 1945; TAU Agenda for the 50th Annual Meeting, 25-27 August 1953; TAU to Secretary of Native Affairs, 28 April 1958.

59 CAD, BAO, No. 45/1396/01, Vol. 4446, P.J. Hattingh to Minister of Bantu Affairs, 25 May 1962.

60 CAD, BAO, No. 24/1396, Vol. 2227, C.M. Wilken to Minister of Agriculture, 31 October 1963.

61 CAD, NTS No. 24/1080, Vol. 2227, SWVK to Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas), 29 June 1961; BAO, P45/1396/01, Vol. 4446, J.H. Zeeman to BAD, 20 February 1962; BAO, No. D45/1396/01, Vol. 4446, J.R.C. Louw to Minister of Bantu Affairs, 28 November 1963; Bantu Commissioner Sekhukhuneland to Chief Bantu Commissioner (Northern Areas), 27 October 1967; Dr. H.C. Boshoff to Secretary of Bantu Affairs, 9 March 1970; J.H. Zeeman to M.C. Botha, 17 September 1969.

both Doctor Boshoff and Jaap Zeeman explained that more farmers would soon resort to arms on this 'frontier'.[62]

It thus became widely accepted that whites could not live alongside 'large congregations of blacks'. This notion was initially applied to Africans on Native Trust farms and to Africans on the land of absentee landlords, but also came to include labour tenants regarded as excessive to the requirements of a landowner.[63] Farmers were thus motivated to support Labour Tenant Control Board attempts to restrict the number of Africans in white farming districts.[64] This had not been the case in the previous decade, when the Boards had complained that farmers were not prepared to act against neighbours retaining large numbers of Africans.[65] Clearly these farmers had been hesitant about informing on a neighbour whose practices successfully attracted resident labourers. During that decade the conditions offered by individual farmers could still determine their ability to farm successfully. In the 1960s, however, this situation was rapidly changing. There was no labour shortage, and any attempt by labour tenants to boycott individual employers was undermined by the availability of cheap seasonal labour that could be recruited from Sekhukhuneland.[66] A clear example of the new way in which resident Africans were perceived is provided by J.D. Meeuwis. He was the son-in-law of E.T. Quinlan - whose family had resided in Lydenburg since the turn of the century.[67] Meeuwis inherited the farm Sterkstroom 110 on Quinlan's death and discovered that there was a Catholic school for Africans on the farm. This school was exactly

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62 CAD, NTS, No. 24/1080, Vol. 2227, SWVK to Chief Native Commissioner (Northern Areas), 29 June 1961; BAO, P45/1396/01, Vol. 4446, J.H. Zeeman to BAD, 20 February 1962; BAO, No. D45/1396/01, Vol. 4446, J.R.C. Louw to Minister of Bantu Affairs, 28 November 1963; Bantu Commissioner Sekhukhuneland to Chief Bantu Commissioner (Northern Areas), 27 October 1967; Dr. H.C. Boshoff to Secretary of Bantu Affairs, 9 March 1970; J.H. Zeeman to M.C. Botha, 17 September 1969.

63 CAD, NTS, No. 971/323/17, Vol 7155, N.C. Fourie *et al* to Minister of Native Affairs, 19 January 1959; CAD, BAO, No. 24/1396, Vol. 2227, C.M. Wilken to Minister of Agriculture, 31 October 1963; BAO, No. A25/1396, Vol. 2074, J.P. Le Grange to Magistrate Lydenburg, 20 April 1968; BAO, D45/1396/01, Vol. 4446, Dr. H.C. Boshoff to Secretary of Bantu Affairs, 15 November 1968.

64 *Ibid.*

65 Chapter Seven, p. 276.

66 CAD, BAO, No. 39/1396, Vol. 3128, Bantu Commissioner Lydenburg to Chief Bantu Commissioner (Northern Areas), 21 February 1961.

67 *Lydenburg News*, 25 August 1944.

the kind of facility that had given 'enlightened' farmers an adequate labour supply during the previous decades. But Meeuwis was not interested in such considerations. Instead he asked the BAD to move this school off his farm as he felt that the congregation of Africans would reduce the value of the land.[68] The labour potential of these Africans was no longer valuable; they were now only a liability and were regarded as potential thieves who contravened the segregation venerated by the state and its supporters.

The rampant complaints about African thieving cannot be separated from these changes. To some extent the theft was probably produced by the poverty stricken conditions that prevailed on the farms and Trust land. Evicted mission residents and labour tenants were settled on minute pieces of land.[69] Those who sought to maintain cattle and plant crops found the conditions extremely difficult, and, at least in the opinion of some farmers, these Africans were pushed by their circumstances into supplementing their diets with the relative abundance available on neighbouring white farms.[70] It is also possible that tenants in Lydenburg were motivated to steal with greater abandon by the deterioration of the moral order.[71] This process led to the disappearance of earlier constraints, as Africans realised that farmers were no longer interested in rewarding or punishing certain behaviour.[72] Whether a tenant stole from his employer or not, he or she could still expect to be evicted for no other reason than his or her family being designated as 'surplus labour' by a board that continually changed the criteria for making this decision. Farmers contributed to this by supporting the actions of the board, by undertaking their own evictions, and by displaying a new kind of racism, which was no-longer modified by the need to accommodate African interests.[73]

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68 CAD, BAO, No. 24/1396, Vol. 2227, J.D. Meeuwis to Secretary of Bantu Affairs, 26 May 1963.

69 CAD, BAO, No. B24/8/19, Vol. 2150, Chief Bantu Commissioner (Northern Areas), to Secretary of Bantu Affairs, 7 July 1964.

70 CAD, BAO, No. D45/1396/01, Vol. 4446, W.D. Thompson to Secretary of Bantu Affairs, 4 February 1969.

71 Interview with Lucy Magagula, Jane Furse, 6 February 1991.

72 Interview with Anna Ndlovu, Jane Furse, 15 June 1993: Described a neighbouring farmer who would break the teeth of African trespassers.

73 CAD, BAO, No. 24/13096, Vol. 2227, Arbiedsbeampte Barberton to Magistrate Lydenburg, 22 January 1965; Bantu Commissioner Lydenburg to Chief Bantu Commissioner (Northern Areas), 28 February 1967.

As Anna Ndlovu explains: 'We were dying, but we were not aware what was killing us. We would think that you were killed by baboons, only to find that you have been shot, because blacks were no longer welcome on the farm. The people then ran to the Trust lands.'[74]

Thus the racism promoted by the National Party, which claimed that blacks had no rights in 'white areas', was reinforced by new labour practices. These practices gave farmers access to an alternative labour supply and allowed them to ignore the interests of resident Africans, whose stronger position in the previous decades had produced numerous white compromises and a moral order that had some influence on both whites and blacks.[75] The gradual collapse of this moral order during the 1960s probably encouraged unrestrained African theft, which, in turn, reinforced racist notions that whites could not live alongside blacks. This racism then gradually pushed Africans out of Lydenburg. It also justified the white decision to abandon labour tenancy in favour of a new kind of labour system in which the majority of workers were resident in black areas, spent a designated time in the white area and, during that time, were housed in restrictive compounds.[76]

AFRICAN RESPONSES

These conditions provided the context - and limited the options - for the African response. However, despite the overwhelming nature of the forces stacked against them, I still contend that African reactions cannot simply be deduced from these conditions. It is true that, as I show below, many tenants moved in the direction that white farmers and the state intended. However, the reason for their compliance was not simple obedience. This section shows that the African exodus out of Lydenburg to the 'reserves' was shaped, to some extent, by ongoing conflicts within African societies and, more importantly, by the same concerns that had motivated previous defences of labour tenancy. The decision to leave white farming

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74 Interview with Anna Ndlovu, Jane Furse, 15 June 1993.
75 See Chapter Five, p. 197.
76 Interview with Mrs. Kloppers, Lydenburg, 1990.

districts therefore partly grew out of the resistance strategies described throughout this thesis.

One source of internal tension that apparently contributed to the African decision to abandon Lydenburg was ethnicity. In 1968 the BAD received the following letter from a group calling themselves the Lydenburg Leopard Party:

> 'We are your children and we ask from you an area, our committee from Lydenburg under chief Mahlele Mkhonto, because we want to return home, but we do not know where to. We were born in Lydenburg. Our Shangaan tribe does not get the right school instruction because there is only one Tsonga-Bantoeskool for our children ... in Lydenburg.'[77]

Later the writer of this letter, Adam Mkhonto, told the Bantu Commissioner that the members of the Leopard Society asked 'to be moved as quickly as possible to their own little place in the homeland' where their children could be taught in their own language without being subjected to Northern Sotho.[78] These declarations suggest that the approximately 300 members of the Leopard Party wanted to leave Lydenburg largely because it was dominated by Northern Sotho speakers who threatened the cultural identity of Tsonga speakers. However, a closer look at the origins and formation of the Party suggests that ethnicity was not as central an issue as the leaders claimed in their representations to the state.

The Leopard Party was started by two relatives of Chief Mahlele Mkhonto. They were called Adam Mkhonto and Million Thonga, and they lived on the banks of the Oliphants River in the lowveld to the north of the Lydenburg district, which, until very recently, was part of the Lebowa 'homeland'. Chief Mkhonto and his family had lived in Lydenburg since the nineteenth century but they left in 1938 to settle in the lowveld area known as the Willows.[79] However, they remained in contact with Lydenburg because the chief and his family became traders, using donkey carts to transport their tropical fruit to Lydenburg.[80] Adam Mkhonto and Million

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77 CAD, BAO, No. 24/1396, Vol. 2227, Lydenburg Leopard Party to BAD, 25 March 1968.
78 CAD, BAO, No. 24/1396, Vol. 2227, Minutes of Meeting in the Lydenburg Post Office, 24 November 1969.
79 Interview with Harry Maluleke, Green Valley, 17 November 1993.
80 Interview with Johannes Mathaba, Green Valley, 18 November 1993.

Thonga did not immediately participate in this trade. They were migrant workers, who first worked at Premier Mine and then, after obtaining some night school education, moved on to more skilled positions in various factories around Johannesburg. They settled in the East Rand township of Tembisa but they aspired to become homeland-based businessmen. It was this aspiration, Million Thonga explains, that led them to demand their own ethnically defined land. In Lebowa it was difficult for Tsonga speakers to set up an enterprise

> '[because of] those Pedis. If we look at the way they run their business. If we want to start a business then the Pedis would say: "No! This is not your place." That is why we wanted our own place.'[81]

If the aspirant businessmen under chief Mkhonto were to have a claim to an area of land in the Tsonga homeland then the chief needed followers. It appears that the chief was recognised as such by some of the Mkhontos still living in Lydenburg but his claim to a broader Tsonga following was, at best, tenuous.[82] Further, while it is possible that the issue of Tsonga education drew some support from Lydenburg residents, the broader issue of ethnic discrimination - which powerfully affected Tsonga speakers in lowveld 'reserves' like Bushbuckridge - was not significant in Lydenburg.[83] Samuel Sibande, a Seswati speaking son of a Lydenburg labour tenant, recalls that he was frightened by the Xhosa, Zulu and Venda groups that he encountered when he came to the mines in Witbank. He explains that he was not 'used to the multi-ethnic character of the compound', even though he grew up alongside Pulana, Tsonga and Pedi families on the farms.[84] His association of ethnic divisions with the mines rather than the farms strongly suggests that labour tenant families did not organise themselves on ethnic lines. This tallies with the memories of Nellie Ngwana who claims that she first experienced discrimination against Tsonga when she left Lydenburg in the 1960s and settled in the Pulana dominated 'homeland' of Mapulaneng.[85] Even on Boomplaats, where chief Dinkwanyane presented himself as a Pedi chief and

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81 Interview with Million Thonga, Enable, 15 November 1993.
82 Interview with Nellie Ngwana, Cottondale, 14 November 1993.
83 Interview with Nellie Ngwana, Cottondale, 14 November 1993; Trecky Mnisi, Okkernootboom, 14 November 1993; Sarah Shabangu, Acornhoek, 15 November 1993.
84 Interview with Samuel Sibande, Marulaneng, 6 July 1993.
85 Interview with Nellie Ngwana, Cottondale, 14 November 1993.

where Hlanganu lived in a separate village, there was widespread intermarriage between ethnic groups and there was no attempt to prevent Hlanganu from attending the chief's court.[86]

Despite the disjuncture between the ethnic focus of chief Mahlele's Leopard Party and the experiences of Lydenburg tenants, the tenants nevertheless joined up with enthusiasm and in great numbers. These followers did not, in fact, respond to the ethnic messages of the party but were mobilised instead by the call for 'our own little place in the homeland.' Million Thonga describes how and why Lydenburg tenants joined the party: 'We walked around from farm to farm in Lydenburg. We were saying we are looking for land. Most people were strongly in favour of moving.'[87] Consequently, nearly 300 adult tenants signed up for the Leopard Party. A large proportion of these members were Pulana, Pedi and Swazi, and the ethnic diversity of the Party's followers is the final proof that, rather than wanting an ethnically constituted refuge from Pedi domination, tenants joined the Leopard Party to get access to land away from Lydenburg and white farmers.[88]

The story of the Leopard Party therefore shows that African tenants were able to manipulate the ethnic creations of the Apartheid state in order to move out of Lydenburg on their own terms. It proves that Africans continued to be creative, even when they broadly accepted the destiny planned by the state and white farmers. The story also shows that, contrary to initial appearances, ethnic tensions do not provide an additional reason for the African decision to leave Lydenburg. Our search for such an additional reason must therefore move onto an examination of conflicts within the African family, a factor that, in the past, pushed individual Africans out of Lydenburg.

In order to understand fully the African response to the objective conditions

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86 Interview with Mrs Mnisi, Acornhoek, 18 November; Michael Mashupje, Mashishing, 11 April 1992. In contrast, this kind of ethnic discrimination was rampant in Mapulaneng, see E. Ritchken, 'Leadership and Conflict in Bushbuckridge', Unpublished Thesis, p. 178.

87 Interview with Million Thonga, Enable, 15 November 1993.

88 CAD, BAO, No. 24/1396, Vol. 2227, Bantu Commissioner Sekhukhuneland to Director, Lebowagebiedsoverheid, 14 October 1964.

created by the state and white farmers, it is necessary to remind ourselves that Africans on the land were organised into household structures stratified along gender and generational lines. As a result, adult men, women and youths reacted differently to the opportunities and constraints faced by Africans in the 1960s. Male household heads had a greater interest in keeping the family together. They were more committed to the white farming areas and, even now, they are the ones who are nostalgic for the lifestyle they left behind. Sekwatane Mosehla, who was evicted from a farm with his whole family, explains that he did not like the Trust areas, and preferred the farms:

> 'In the Trusts we don't have any land. My children went to town to get some employment. The children don't have land they just go to town to work and then they come back here. It is not better here because we don't have land and we don't plough, whereas there [on the farms] we had land and we could plough and get something from the land.'[89]

Younger men, however, were less attached to farm land. This applied especially to those men who had acquired skills during the more mechanised decades of the 1940s and 1950s. Abraham Motau, for example, became a driver on the farm where he lived, which gave him access to both a driver's licence and a better salary. He made use of both resources to buy a small bus, which he employed in the 1960s to establish himself as a businessman in Sekhukhuneland, transporting the people leaving Lydenburg to their new home in the 'reserve'.[90] As a youth Piet Jonas Makola had been the subject of his employers special interest. The latter believed that Makola was more intelligent than the other tenants and therefore taught Piet to drive and maintain the tractor. Consequently Makola acquired skills which he was determined to use as his ticket off the farms:

> 'You would find that you would work in a place where you do not get paid, and it seemed like you worked for nothing. So I wanted a place where I can be paid because I had working experience. I can do almost anything. I can drive a tractor. I can service machines. I can operate a forklift.'[91]

Makola settled in Sekhukhuneland and became a construction worker.

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89 Interview with Sekwatane Mosehla, Jane Furse, 22 January 1992.
90 Interview with Abraham Motau, Jane Furse, 10 December 1990.
91 Interview with Piet Jonas Makola, Jane Furse, 12 June 1993.

In a number of instances younger men were prevented by their fathers from leaving the farms, and were only able to leave when their fathers died. Ephraim Mosehla explained that he left the farms in 1969 'because he was tired of farm life'. Until that time he had provided farm-labour in terms of his father's contract, but when his father died and Ephraim had to take over the contract, he said: 'No! I want to be free to work for money.'[92] The sons of Elise Mdluli followed the same path as the one trodden by Mosehla. As Elise explains:

> 'The reason we left the farm was because my husband passed away and then the children, as they were growing up, said they were not going to work on the farm, they heard there were firms, industries in town to go and work in town and the best thing is to take their mother to Trust land like this one here.'[93]

On the whole, women were in favour of the move to the Trust land,[94] but they hardly ever took the initiative for this move. Those who would have preferred to remain in Lydenburg, were often forced by their children to leave. Mrs Mashegoane's grandmother, for example, had to sell all the cattle her late husband left behind because her sons were working in town and there was no one to look after cattle: '[Her sons] were still alive but because they did not like having to work on the farm without pay, they left to seek work elsewhere.'[95] Without cattle, the grandmother saw no reason to remain in Lydenburg and moved to Sekhukhuneland.

In many of the examples cited above the death of the patriarch led directly to the severing of links with the white farms, which suggests that, in some instances, heads of households were still able to exert some control over their families. In other instances, a husband and wife were abandoned by their children but the husband was able to continue on a farm by herding cattle, or doing odd-jobs.[96] After the husband's death, the farmer would be unwilling to support the

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92 Interview with Ephraim Mosehla, Jane Furse, 22/1/92

93 Interview with Elise Mdluli, Marulaneng, 6 June 1992.

94 Interview with Emily Mkhonto, Jane Furse, 8 February 1991; Trecky Mnisi, Okkernootboom, 14 November 1993; Martha Mashele, Jane Furse, 16 June 1993; Betty Mnisi, Marulaneng, 6 June 1992.

95 Interview with Mrs Mashegoane, Praktiseer, 13 June 1993.

96 ASI, OHP, Tape No. 24B, 27A, 56A, Interview with Mrs E. Sibanyoni, Mhluzi Township, Middelburg, undated.

'unproductive' widow.[97] These women were then forced to leave the farms. The lucky ones were able to link up with relatives in the reserves, where they often became part of their brother's household.[98]

Apart from the cases of children abandoning their widowed mothers, influx control also prevented some husbands from returning to their wives on the farms. Moses Manana explains that he left his wife on the farm while he went to work in Brakpan. His wife had to work and do laundry for the farmer because 'there was no way that she could stay on the farm without working'.[99] Manana had resolved that he would not be placed under the same obligations, so, rather than returning periodically to visit his wife, risk being detected by pass officials and becoming permanently defined as a 'farm-worker', Manana stayed in Brakpan as long as he could. But his attempt to become fully urbanised ended in about 1968. While trying to move into a better paying job, he was caught by the pass officials and sent back to Lydenburg. Re-united with his wife, he remained determined that he would 'never again stay on a farm because I have seen their dirty system'. He moved with his wife to Sekhukhuneland.[100]

However, although the forces pushing people off the farms often led to the destruction of family obligations and structures, many families maintained their coherence during this time. The same processes that fragmented some families diminished the intensity of the conflict within other families. Unlike during the 1930s and, to a lesser extent, during the 1940s, many fathers were no longer unambiguously opposed to their children seeking wage earning opportunities off the land because the standard of living that could be attained on the land had become unattractive even to household heads. As a result, numerous fathers now strongly supported their children's desire to get educated. These fathers took their

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97 CAD, BAO, No. 24/13096, Vol. 2227, Inspector of Squatters (Barberton) to SWVK, 5 October 1964; No. B24/8/122, Vol. 2162, Secretary of Bantu Affairs to Chief Bantu Commissioner (Northern Areas), 12 September 1961.

98 I.A. Niehaus, 'Disharmonious Spouses and Harmonious Siblings: Conceptualising household formation among urban residents in Qwaqwa, South Africa', Forthcoming; Interview with Annetjie Sibande, Marulaneng, 6 July 1993.

99 Interview with Moses Manana, Jane Furse, 17 April 1993.

100 *Ibid.*

families away from Lydenburg and settled in Sekhukhuneland because they heard that, in the latter area, 'people are free, children can go to school, and they could work wherever they wanted'.[101]

Thus, while it is true that 'many African youths decisively broke the power of farm elders' in the 1960s, these incidents undermined, but did not destroy, the family as a viable institution in the Lydenburg-Sekhukhuneland region.[102] Youths did often take the initiative for the exodus out of Lydenburg and fathers did sometimes prevent their families from abandoning white farming areas. However, while conflict within the family gave an additional impetus to the African exodus out of Lydenburg, the dominant cause of this exodus was the overwhelmingly negative effect that the combination of Apartheid, racially defined economic growth, and white racism had on the world that tenant families had tried to defend since the nineteenth century. As a result of these changes, women, men and children became filled with the desire to get away from the white farms, where the white farmer now seemed omnipresent and African independence had vanished.[103] In this context, and from the perspective of a still vigorous desire for some African autonomy, the Trust lands began to represent a free world, or, in the words of numerous seSwati speakers, *dlau lale*: a place where Africans could eat and sleep away from the intrusions of the white man.[104] As Daniel Mnisi puts it:

> 'We came to the Trusts as we were tired of working on the farms. We were told that at the Trusts one could own a piece of land that could become his permanently. Conditions are slightly better at Jane Furse compared to the Farms. One can wake up at his own time in the morning.'[105]

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101 Interview with Mr. Malapo, Marulaneng, 12 April 1992; Mr Malatje, Marulaneng, 12 April 1992; Maria Malebe, Jane Furse, 5 July 1993; Steve Ngwenya, Glen Cowie, 17 June 1993.

102 H. Bradford, 'Highways, Byways, and Culs-de-sac: The transition to agrarian Capitalism in revisionist South African history', in J. Brown *et al, History From South Africa: Alternative visions and practices* (Philadelphia, Temple Univ. Press, 1991), p. 46.

103 Interview with Mrs. Mahongele, Mashishing, 8 February 1991; Maria Mkhonto, Jane Furse, 9 December 1990; Kate Ndlozi, Jane Furse, 20 December 1990; Kleinboy Makola, Glen Cowie, 15 June 1993; Nellie Ngwana, Cottondale, 14 November 1993; Trecky Mnisi, Okkernootboom, 14 November 1993; Martha Mashele, Jane Furse, 16 June 1993; Henry Selahle, Alverton, 4 July 1993; Sarah Shabangu, Acornhoek, 15 November 1993.

104 Ibid.

105 Interview with Daniel Mnisi, Jane Furse, 13 April 1991.

The theme of fatigue, of exhaustion induced by the increasingly futile attempts to limit white intrusions into the social and productive activities of black families, emerges from numerous interviews.[106] Clearly the majority of tenants in Lydenburg came to accept that the only way to prevent the complete collapse of the residual autonomy defended in previous decades was to abandon the 'white areas' completely.

Thus, although the Trust lands turned out to contain an independence that was connected to a particularly harsh form of poverty, requiring long trips into the world of the whites, and further undermining the coherence of the family, the quest for African independence motivated families to settle in the 'reserve'. Therefore, the 'obedience' of Africans in the 1960s came about because the state, after being pushed into an outright rejection of labour tenancy by African resistance in the 1950s, created the conditions in which both the quest for autonomy and the desire for access to wage employment could only be achieved by moving to the 'reserves'.

THE NEW POLITICAL ECONOMY OF LYDENBURG

The compliance of Africans, and the shift undertaken by many farmers away from an exclusive reliance on labour tenancy, eased the state's task of stamping out labour tenancy. However, the implementation of the policy was by no means straightforward. The chapter has concentrated so far on the dominant trends in Lydenburg. The majority of farmers became less responsive to the demands of resident tenants, while the majority of tenants decided to abandon Lydenburg. But not all farmers and tenants participated in these trends. A significant minority of farmers had not switched over to seasonal labour to such an extent that they were completely unconcerned by the growing exodus of tenants.[107] Many farmers remained suspicious of the new state plans. This suspicion first emerged in 1963

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106 Interview with Mrs. Mahongele, Mashishing, 8 February 1991; Maria Mkhonto, Jane Furse, 9 December 1990; Kate Ndlozi, Jane Furse, 20 December 1990; Kleinboy Makola, Glen Cowie, 15 June 1993; Nellie Ngwana, Cottondale, 14 November 1993; Trecky Mnisi, Okkernootboom, 14 November 1993; Martha Mashele, Jane Furse, 16 June 1993; Henry Selahle, Alverton, 4 July 1993; Sarah Shabangu, Acornhoek, 15 November 1993.

107 CAD, BAO, No. 39/1396, Vol. 3128, M.E. van Zyl to G.F. Froneman, 18 December 1967.

when rumours circulated of a state policy that would evict all African labourers and force white farmers to do their own work.[108] BAD officials clarified the situation by telling farmers that state policy would permit seasonal and permanent labourers on the farms. This assurance calmed white fears somewhat, but by 1968 the Lydenburg Farmers Union was still not ready to abandon labour tenancy and once again requested that a BAD official come to the district to explain the new policy.[109] The Farmers Union had initially given the green light to an abolition of labour tenancy by 1970 but objections from farmers in the Waterfall Valley led to a suspension of that resolution. The farmers in the Waterfall Valley were worried that their tenants did not understand the new law, which suggests that they feared resident labourers would leave in protest once the new law was applied.[110] In other mid-eastern Transvaal districts obstacles to the quick implementation of the labour tenancy ban also emerged. The sheep farmers in Ermelo, who still relied on winter grazing farms, continued to support labour tenancy as the most efficient system, a system which 'kept the labourer happy'.[111] Poorer farmers in Middelburg objected to the imminent ban on the grounds that a conversion to wage labour would cause their tenants to seek employment on the better paying Middelburg mines. These farmers had not shifted over to the seasonal labour system.[112] They therefore remained dependent enough on resident labourers to worry about their tenants resorting to the tried and trusted method of protesting with their feet.

In the districts of Middelburg and Ermelo these vulnerable farmers were a tiny minority, whose objections did not prevent the banning of labour tenancy before 1968. But in Lydenburg the minority was strong enough to hold off the process for a little longer. By 1970 labour tenancy had been banned in 24 districts in the Transvaal. The BAD decided to take action against recalcitrant districts like

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108 CAD, BAO, No. 39/1396, Vol. 31228, G. Lubbe to J. Coetzee, c1963.
109 CAD, BAO, No. 23/1396, Vol. 2116, Lydenburg Farmers Union to Transvaal Agricultural Union, 1 July 1968.
110 CAD, BAO, No. 23/1396, Vol. 2116, Lydenburg Farmers Union to BAD, 1 July 1968.
111 CAD, BAO, No. B23/1110, Vol. 2115, Secretary of Bantu Affairs to Bantu Commissioner Ermelo, 6 September 1969.
112 CAD, BAO, No. 23/1430, Vol. 2116, Stoffberg Farmers Association to Secretary of Bantu Affairs, 21 November 1966.

Lydenburg, and from the 1 August 1970 labour tenancy was 'frozen' in Lydenburg. Labour tenant contracts could no longer be entered into legally, although existing tenant contracts continued to be valid. The Labour Control Boards could not increase the number of tenants allocated to a farmer, although they could decrease the number, and would continue to encourage farmers to move over to a system in which 'the number of fulltime families on their farms is limited to the indispensable, and their labour needs are met by seasonal labourers on a year by year basis, with housing taking the form of compounds.'[113] Consequently, a further wave of tenant evictions occurred in the early 1970s.[114] During the course of that period the farmers of Lydenburg eventually adopted the system promoted by the BAD.[115] For the time being, labour tenancy ceased to exist in Lydenburg.

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113 CAD, BAO, No. 24/1396, Vol. 2227, Secretary of Bantu Affairs to Du Plessis, 11 May 1970: (Trans. in Text) 'Die aantal voltydse gesinne op hulle plase is tot die noodsaaklike beperk en hulle arbeids benoodighede is aangevul met seisoenaarbeiders op 'n enkellopende basis en behuising is voorsien in die vorm van kampongs.'

114 M. Morris, 'State Intervention and the Agricultural Labour Supply Post-1948', in F. Wilson *et al*, *Farm Labour in South Africa* (Cape Town, David Philip, 1977), p. 71: 'An estimated 400 000 labour tenants were removed between 1971 and 1974.'

115 Interview with Mrs Kloppers, Lydenburg, 1990; Johan Steyn, Lydenburg, 1990; Makgetwa Madigage, Jane Furse, 23 January 1992; Lucy Magagula, Jane Furse, 6 February 1991: 'In 1970 there was a population census and then on the farms there was a ruling that if there were six families on the farm then three should move.'

CONCLUSION

This thesis has described the political and economic transformation of a farming district. Lydenburg was initially a 'white district' where the majority of people were Africans on the land. By the mid-1970s the district contained no landed Africans. Lydenburg's economy in the 1930s was dominated by undercapitalised, low-productivity farmers who paid their workers in land rather than wages. By the 1970s farmers used land more extensively and intensively, relied on mechanised production techniques, and employed seasonal wage earners. These transformations are, in themselves, not in dispute. Various authors have presented similar descriptions, and, although a much more detailed regional picture of rural change is offered here, this was not the main purpose of the thesis.[1] Instead, it was my intention to present an alternative view of the *process* of transformation and, in so doing, raise questions about the analytical status of these changes.

The thesis has tackled this task by focusing on the way Africans influenced the changes in Lydenburg. Thus, rather than a view in which transformation followed an orderly course, driven by the 'logic of capitalism' or an omnipotent state, it has been demonstrated that every stage of the process was affected by African resistance. The thesis concentrated first on the period after the Great Depression, when farmers needed more labour in order to expand their production, but were unable to prevent African household heads from leading their families in opposition to new and longer labour periods. Farmers called on the state to overcome this African resistance, and in 1938 the state responded with an attempt to bureaucratise the farm labour market, a procedure contained in Chapter Four

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1 See for example, S. Jones & A. Müller, *The South African Economy, 1910-1990* (London, Macmillan, 1992), pp. 238-240; M. Morris, 'State Intervention and the Agricultural Labour Supply post-1948', in F. Wilson *et al*, eds, *Farm Labour in South Africa* (Cape Town, David Philip, 1977), p. 71.

of the 1936 Land Act. After being proclaimed in Lydenburg, the Chapter was supposed to extend tenants' period of labour from three to six months, and allow the local state to distribute labourers according to the needs of farmers. Neither of these requirements came into effect. The state withdrew when confronted with African tenants who, firstly, refused to be registered and, secondly, either left or threatened to leave the district.

After the outbreak of World War Two farmers resorted once again to the less coordinated method of demanding more labour from African families within the confines of individual farms. This method proved increasingly successful because, within the expanding white agricultural sector, attractive opportunities for families seeking access to land and some independence had diminished significantly. Alternatives for those Africans less concerned about 'land and freedom' had, however, opened up in the urban areas, where jobs outside of the harsh mining sector became available to blacks. Younger men were particularly drawn to these opportunities because they regarded urban jobs as a way to obtain independence from their fathers or guardians. This strategy, like all the resistance described in the thesis, was shaped by conflict within African society. Household-heads struggled to retain control over the labour and income of women and younger men. They tried to tie sons to the land by either using force, or by providing sufficient land and cattle to ensure that sons would return from their periodic visits to urban jobs. When these tactics became less effective, parents increasingly relied on controlling the marriages that sons entered into. Women were kept in a dependent, domestic position, and tied into cattle exchanges that defined social relations. But, despite these mechanisms, during the 1940s youths and women succeeded in gaining greater access to urban jobs and families as a whole began to see education and access to wage paying jobs in a more positive light.

These African initiatives made an important contribution towards the urbanisation and 'uncontrolled' African movement that caused whites to vote for the National Party in 1948. The National Party promised to counteract this process by keeping

farm labourers in white farming districts, by stabilising the urban labour force, and by extending the regulation of migrant labour in the 'reserves'. Although Africans in white farming districts struggled against these state controls, the new pass-laws and labour bureaux succeeded in reversing the trend towards urbanisation. This success can only be understood with reference to the combination of, on the one hand, the new resolve and coercive capacity of the state and, on the other hand, the reaction of Africans. Within the new context, Africans began to focus once again on defending the remaining aspects of their autonomy on the land. They therefore concentrated on opposing state initiatives that aimed to regulate racial and labour relations *within* white farming districts.

The African battles in Lydenburg during the Apartheid era were less successful than earlier struggles, but they nevertheless had important consequences. Firstly, the struggle of 'black spot' communities against removals was only successful in one case, but the process of opposition in the other cases produced links between rural communities and urban political movements, introduced democratic ideas into rural cultures and promoted new attitudes towards chiefs. The African opposition also caused the state to intervene with force, a process that allowed removals to become a symbol of Apartheid's evil nature.

Secondly, the struggle against the labour bureaux and the 1954 version of the Land Act's Chapter Four failed to repeat the success of 1938. But the avoidance of the bureaux, the boycotting of undesirable employers, and the movement away from farmers who tried to impose new demands, prevented the new controls from measuring up to the expectations of both state officials and white farmers.

The state's response to this situation was to work for the complete abolition of labour tenancy. This resolution took more than ten years to implement, but the state's intention eventually became an effective reality. This success can, once again, only be understood if it is combined with an appreciation of the African reaction. This reaction was shaped both by ongoing conflict within African families and by the continued vitality of the quest for some form of African autonomy.

Within the particular context of the 1960s these factors caused most Africans to move willingly to the 'reserves', where they hoped to gain access to wages and land, and avoid the interference of whites.

It was possible for African resistance to have the effects outlined above, partly because it encountered neither an all-powerful state, nor an inevitable journey on the path to capitalist relations. The state's intentions were modified by conflicts between departments and between local and central officials. Africans were frequently able to gain a voice within these ongoing debates. At the same time economic development produced contradictions between the need to maximise profits and the needs of poorer farmers. They were marginalised by economic competition but remained important rural voters, who, as they did in 1948, could swing an election. Political power helped them to retain their land and, by doing so, to offer Africans land in return for their labour. Ironically, this political clout also allowed farmers to enlist the state's help in order to undermine the independence of Africans in white farming districts. This was not a straight forward process. The state always had its own interests to protect, which introduced elements of ambiguity into all state responses to white farmers' demands. The post-1948 state was, nevertheless, more sympathetic to the needs of poor farmers. It articulated interests that were closer to the professed concerns of those farmers who still relied on labour tenants. This factor, in combination with the coercive and determined character of the state, explains why African resistance became less effective in the 1950s and 1960s, which, in turn, explains why a stricter form of racial segregation and larger-scale, capitalised farming had become dominant by 1970.

Did these changes represent a fully developed capitalist transformation of Lydenburg? On the one hand, the destruction of labour tenancy and the prominence of larger farmers who used tractors, combine harvesters and, during the 1970s, even adopted mechanical sprinkler systems, suggests that capitalist values and capitalist relations of production had taken over in the district on a permanent basis. But, on the other hand, these farmers still relied on a cheap

form of labour created by the Apartheid state's homeland policy. They also relied heavily on the state for the capital that facilitated their large-scale commercial farming activities. In the present situation both forms of state assistance have been drastically curbed. Impressionistic evidence gained during a visit to the district in 1990 suggests that it is the individual farmers who invested heavily in machinery who are facing bankruptcy and the loss of their land. It seems probable that the farmers who will survive on the land will be large corporate farmers - who recently established kiwi-fruit plantations in the district - as well as less capitalised farmers who fall back on the well established tactic of entering into agreements with Africans willing to trade their labour for access to land.

Thus, although the transformations described in this thesis have had important historical consequences and have established a new context, the struggles that produced this context have not been made redundant by the emergence of a new, ideal-type, historical stage. Instead, the African struggle for land in white farming districts is ongoing, which means that this thesis can provide some valuable lessons for the future. The processes described above show, firstly, that massive injustices were perpetrated against blacks in the past. Contrary to the hopes of white politicians, like the present Minister of Agriculture, these injustices should not be forgotten. Secondly, the obstacles faced by the governments which tried to intervene in this area should demonstrate to future administrations that policies imposed from above will always be modified by the particular, conflicting interests on the ground. Land reform programmes will not proceed according to a clearly worked out, centrally driven plan. In the words of Francis and Williams:

> 'Dependence on the state to provide the instruments for redistributing resources presumes on the capacity of government agencies to manage the process impartially and expeditiously. It abstracts from the pressures which diverse interests within and outside the state will exercise on the implementation of any policy. Most significantly, it shares the misplaced faith of previous social engineers in their capacity to use the state to plan the direction of social change.'[2]

The thesis has also shown that the African demand for land and autonomy remained vital, and could therefore still play a role in new struggles over land. In

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2 E. Francis & G. Williams, 'The Land Question', in *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 1993.

the Transkei, for example, these aspirations have been retained by some rural residents who in 1989 were making 'good use of the cultural resources at their disposal to maintain a degree of independence from the wider system'.[3] But, the thesis has argued, the struggle for land shifted constantly in reaction to new contexts, and there will therefore be major changes in the way people respond to the contemporary context.

Some continuities nevertheless remain. Although many of the structures of racial domination have now been dismantled, this does not necessarily mean that racism has disappeared in white farming districts, and we can probably expect this important source of conflict to remain vigorous for some time. On the one hand, Africans will possibly continue to stick together against whites, but, on the other hand, the African struggle for land never involved, and unquestionably does not involve today, an egalitarian community fighting harmoniously for its uniform interests. All future developments in the countryside will therefore be shaped by numerous local conflicts. These will be located within African families and in all situations where there is an unequal distribution of power or wealth.

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3 McAllister quoted in W. Beinart, 'Transkeian Smallholders and Agrarian Reform', in *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 2, (1992), p. 186.

APPENDIX I

NOTES ON SOURCES

The sources used in this thesis can be divided into five broad categories: Government departments and commissions, newspapers, Standard Bank inspection reports, agricultural statistics and oral sources.

GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND COMMISSIONS

Government commissions that visited the district of Lydenburg provided the most detailed and useful archival evidence for the thesis. The Stubbs and Beaumont Commissions contained helpful details on farming practices in the early twentieth century, on white farmers attitudes to Africans on the land, and on the processes shaping Lydenburg's border. The South African Native Affairs Commission also provided valuable insights into white farmers' attitudes to Africans on the land. The Native Economic Commission, used extensively in chapter three, yielded rich material on labour relations in 1930. The Native Farm Labour (Herbst) Commission contained similar evidence for 1937, and also provided specific evidence on why white farmers wanted the Land Act to be proclaimed in their district. The Wheat Commission of 1943 also contained evidence from Lydenburg farmers like Op t' Hof, but lacked insights into the changes that occurred during the war years. The Tomlinson Commission of 1952, in contrast to the Commissions of the 1930s, did not question many people from the Lydenburg-Sekhukhuneland region and those few who were questioned were given very little space to express their own opinions. The Nel Commission, an inter-departmental Commission whose evidence and findings were never officially published, provided numerous clues to the state of labour tenancy in the mid-eastern Transvaal (and elsewhere) in 1960. However, very little evidence from Lydenburg was recorded by this

Commission. Some of the evidence collected by these Commissions can be found in the State Archives in Pretoria. The evidence of the Native Economic Commission can be found in the Wits Historical Papers Library, while the evidence of the Nel Commission is kept in the Wits Government Publications Library.

The letters and memos of the Justice, Agriculture, Lands and Native Affairs Departments do not contain the same kind of detail as the Commissions. African voices are hardly ever heard in these letters and memos. The voices of labour-tenant farmers are also relatively muted before 1948, although they become much stronger after the National Party came to power. This can be explained by the greater responsiveness of the National Party to these farmers' demands and to the creation of the Streeks-Werk-Verskaffings-Kommisaris, an official who personally investigated farmers' complaints and who wrote detailed reports on his findings. The evidence of the government departments can be found in the Central Archive Depot in Pretoria, where their indexes are stored in a computer system that allows the researcher to access the relevant material by typing in key words.

NEWSPAPERS

The government archives provided extensive material for understanding the internal workings of the state, and some information on the attitudes of white farmers. Further information on the second subject, as well as a more detailed sense of the regional economy, can be found in newspapers like the *Lydenburg News* and the *Farmers Weekly*. Both these newspapers contain numerous letters in which farmers expressed their opinions on what they regarded as appropriate labour relations and state policies. The *Lydenburg News* also provided a wealth of information on local events, local personalities and agricultural conditions. These newspapers can be found in the State Library in Pretoria. Copies of the *Lydenburg News* published before 1938 appear to be lost.

STANDARD BANK INSPECTION REPORTS

The Standard Bank established a branch in Lydenburg sometime in the late nineteenth century, and from 1902 till 1943 an inspector wrote an annual report on the progress and feasibility of the branch. These reports gave details on both the kind of debtors that the bank maintained, and the overall economic conditions in which the bank operated. Although the inspector seemed to be very unsympathetic towards the white farmers of Lydenburg (and one often wondered why the Standard Bank maintained a branch in the district) his opinions nevertheless pointed to the problems and economic cautiousness within the district. The reports also provided an often detailed sense of the developments and economic fluctuations of the Lydenburg district. Branches and similar reports also existed for the districts of Belfast, Carolina, Ermelo and Middelburg. These reports are housed in the Standard Bank Archives in Johannesburg, where they are arranged by district and in chronological order. Unfortunately they are not available for the period after 1943.

AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS

The agricultural statistics contained in the annual reports compiled by the Department of Agriculture were used cautiously and mostly in combination with the more qualitative evidence produced by the other sources discussed above and below. Hendrie has raised a number of questions about the reliability of the agricultural statistics in South Africa.[1] She argues that the postal survey method used by the Department of Agriculture confuses farmers as to the kind of data required from them. They are, for example, unsure which items should be included under the category of 'payments in kind', nor do they receive any guidelines on how to value the items included in this category. In addition, I would argue, the postal character of the survey allows each annual return to include data from different farmers, which leads to significant fluctuations. Not all Lydenburg farmers submitted returns every year, which suggests that some farmers only

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1 D. Hendrie, 'Agricultural Statistics: A Need for Reform', in F. Wilson, *et al*, eds., *Farm Labour in South Africa* (Cape Town, David Philip, 1977), p. 188.

submitted returns occasionally, and when they did their data could have changed the regional picture considerably. This practice would explain why all attempts to discover a noticeable trend in production per morgen, in any mid-eastern Transvaal district, ended in failure. In those cases where I used the figures I also tried to overcome such limitations by calculating averages for three-year periods. The lack of statistics for the depression period, 1931-33, and the war period, 1940-1945, was a further frustrating problem that limited attempts to discover economic trends in Lydenburg.

ORAL SOURCES

Between September 1990 and December 1993 interviews were conducted with white farmers in Lydenburg, with ex-labour tenants who now reside on Trust farms around Sekhukhuneland and Bushbuckridge, and with members of black-spot communities who now find themselves in various parts of Lebowa. Interviews with white farmers were the least successful. I received no help from the Lydenburg Cooperative. They claimed that they did not have an archive, and all they could give me was a few recent copies of their newsletter. I was only able to link up to one network, namely the friends and neighbours of an English farmer who had previously lived in Johannesburg. It was clear to me that I had to restrict my questions to agricultural issues other than labour, as even my narrow concern with mechanisation and production figures provoked feelings of suspicion amongst some white residents. The limited information I received was combined with the fairly rich material that I found in the archives.

In order to complement the inadequate archival evidence on African views, African resistance, and African family structures, I conducted over one hundred interviews with Africans who had once lived in Lydenburg. These interviews produced useful information despite the problems that I invariably encountered during my research trips. Most of the interviews were with individuals, and were conducted by myself and a research assistant. The first problem that I encountered was my inability to speak the languages of the people I interviewed. Interviews were conducted in Swazi, Zulu, SePedi and Tsonga. Communication was a laborious

process, but many of the difficulties were overcome with the help of extremely competent and experienced research assistants. In particular, Philip Mnisi and Philip Mbiba, who worked with me during the first two years of my research, made major contributions towards getting my ideas across during an interview, translating the responses of the interviewees, and using their own ideas and insights to shape interviews. I transcribed some of the tapes of those interviews myself, but I was able to check the accuracy of my assistants' translations with the help of Itumeleng Tsatsi. He contributed towards transcribing the tapes, and his efficient work allowed me further to overcome my language problems.

The second problem that I faced was the suspicion with which many 'reserve' residents regarded a white man who asked questions about African experiences on neighbouring farms. The resulting recalcitrance was in itself quite revealing. It showed the extent to which white farmers used violence and fear to keep their farm workers submissive. On a number of occasions African men and women refused to speak to me because they believed that I would hand over the information to white farmers, who would come to the 'reserve' and beat those who spoke ill of them. However, not all ex-labour tenants were this fearful, and for everybody who was reluctant to express him/herself about the character of farmers, there was somebody else who was determined to explain the suffering on white farms. The suspicion I faced was also overcome, once again, with the help of research assistants who had connections to Lydenburg, and who put me into contact with family networks. They also eased the fears of ex-labour tenants by carefully explaining the purpose of my research.

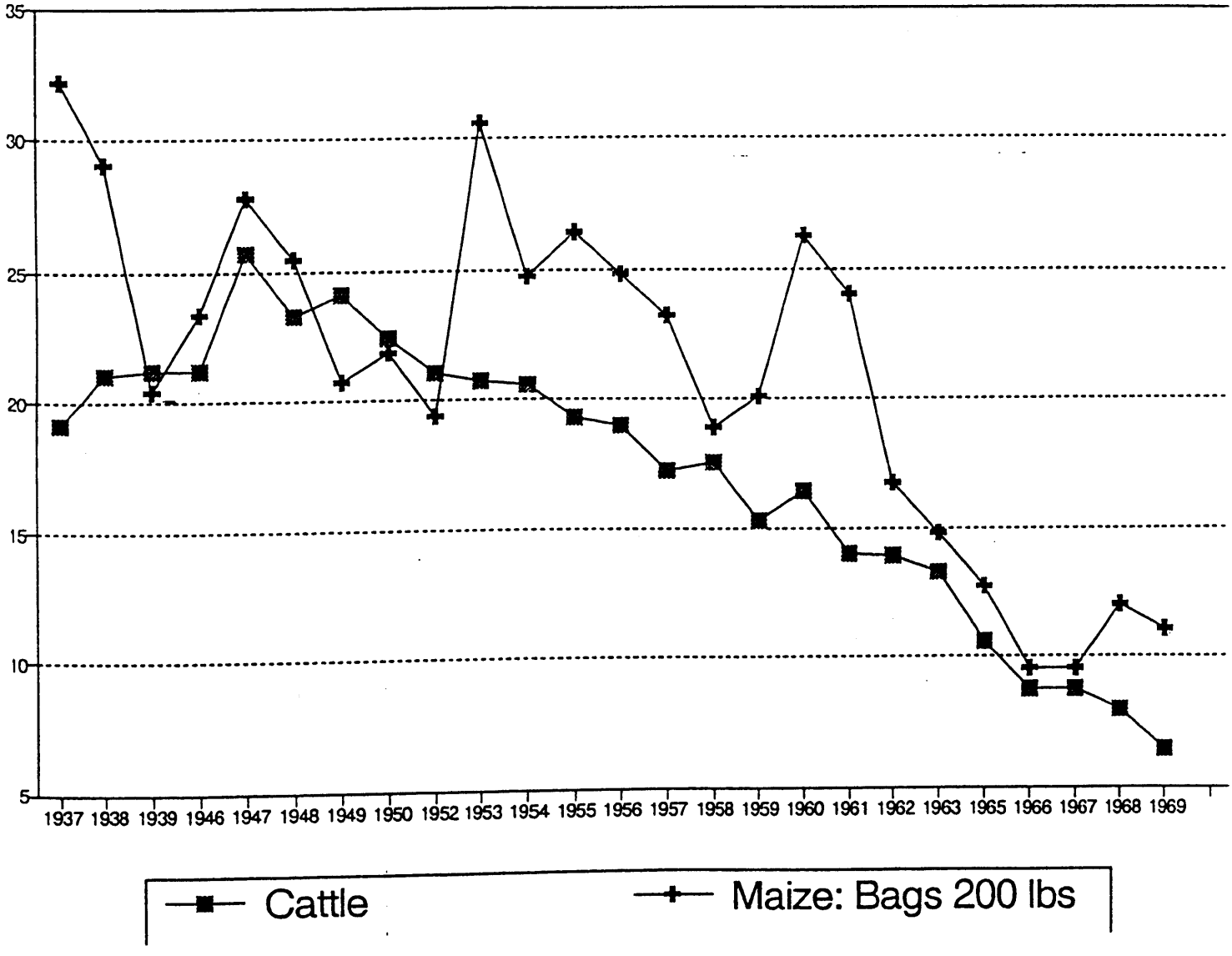
Therefore, my interviews with ex-labour tenants were usually difficult, but mostly useful, and the thesis has hopefully made an adequate case for the rich insights provided by those who agreed to speak to me. A further problem that should be mentioned in this context was the sometimes oppressive gender relations that prevented a few women from speaking to me. This was a fairly minor difficulty as men were mostly absent from the home. On two occasions, however, husbands interrupted interviews on the basis that we had not asked their permission to

interview their wives. On one of the occasions the interview had to be re-scheduled and, on the other, where the husband was extremely drunk, it had to be abandoned altogether.

Interviews with members of the black-spot communities encountered the same kind of problems, and, in two cases, a further problem in the shape of chiefs who were concerned with boosting their own legitimacy, rather than with explaining the past. Chief Hendrik Manok took up a lot of time during the interview defending the importance of traditional leaders in the new South Africa, and making a claim to be the 'Chief of the Lydenburg district'. The rest of the interview did, however, provide some interesting historical details and insights. Another chief, Chief Lengwai II Masha, is now determined to lead his followers back to Kalkfontein, and is therefore mainly concerned to present a version of the past in which the previous chief, his father, played a leading role in the resistance against removal. This story is directly contradicted by archival evidence that includes versions as disparate as those told by the ICU and the Native Commissioner. Fortunately chief Masha arrived late for the interview, and I was able to participate in a lively discussion with his council before he arrived.

The archival evidence on the experiences of 'black-spot' communities was richer than the evidence on labour tenancy. Nevertheless, interviews conducted with people who participated in the opposition to removals added valuable details to the stories contained in the archives. Invariably they also raised issues that I would not even have considered had I confined myself to the air-conditioned reading rooms of the various archives in South Africa. The same can, in conclusion, be said of all the interviews conducted for this thesis.

AFRICAN MAIZE PRODUCTION & CATTLE OWNERSHIP IN LYDENBURG, 1937-1969



Source: *Agricultural Census No. 17, 1937* (U.G. 18-39) - *No. 43, 1969* (Gov. Printer, Undated)

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and the Mid-Eastern Transvaal

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Dep.	No.	Vol.	Date	Description
JUS	552/29	462	1929-34	LYDENBURG STAFF
JUS	3/324/21	310	1915-27	MAGISTRATES LYD
JUS	1/41/42	1555	1942	FARM LABOUR COMMITTEE

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (LDB; LDE; LON; MLD)

Dep.	No.	Vol.	Date	Description
LDB	R1074/5	952	1916-33	CROP REPORTS LYD.
LDB	R1074/5	952	1936-44	CROP REPORTS LYD.
LDB	R3710	2085	1925-47	FARM LABOUR INVESTIG.
LDB	R3633	2066	1928-38	FARM WAGES
LON	157/12	268	1935-38	SPEKBOOM
GBR	SCB966	128	1962	SOIL CONSERVATION
BB	H5100/L	878	1948-63	SOIL CONSERVATION
MLD	14/13	17	1954	LETTERS TO MINISTER
MLD	14/14	17	1952	LETTERS TO MINISTER
MLD	14/20	19	1954	LETTERS TO MINISTER

NATIVE AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT (NTS)

Dep.	No.	Vol.	Date	Description
NTS	6/371	9287	1956	EAST. TVL. COOP
NTS	4/371	9258	1955-60	SAAU
NTS	3/371	9256	1955-61	TAU
NTS	97/362	8835	1956-62	LABOUR TENANT COTROL
NTS	1078/110	742	1954-55	BERLIN MISSION SCHOOLS
NTS	859/323	7143	1939	LEIDENBURG
NTS	521/323	7124	1928	OHRIGSTAD SQUATTERS
NTS	444/323	7120	1926-53	KALKFONTEIN
NTS	429/110	711	1940-52	DUTCH REFORM, RIETFONT
NTS	274/323	7109	1921-48	BOOMPLAATS
NTS	212/323	7104	1923-49	NATIVES ON FARMS
NTS	136/323	7099	1922-35	STEELPOORTDRIFT
NTS	49/323	7088	1921-35	NATIVES ON JOBSKOP
NTS	14/110	694	1924	DUTCH REFORMED SCHOOL
NTS	367/313S	6504	1951-58	SQUATTING
NTS	367/313	5682	1939-60	CHURCH & SCHOOL LYD.
NTS	647/302	3855	1945	FARM SCHOOL SWAGGERS.
NTS	235/2308	3779	1938-58	REMOVALS
NTS	2331/308	3774	1939-60	BOOMPLAATS
NTS	337/308	3516	1913-57	STEELPOORTPARK
NTS	289/308	3504	1918-54	STEELPOORTDRIFT
NTS	628/302	2855	1944	NATIVE SCHOOL OHRIGSTD
NTS	586/302	2852	1943-44	NATIVE SCHOOL MOOIPLS
NTS	334/302	2841	1940-42	FARM SCHOOL ENKELDRN
NTS	343/302	2840	1940-48	BOMPLAATS, SPEKBOOM
NTS	256/302	2829	1938-40	OHRIGSTAD SCHOOL
NTS	247/302	2823	1938	KLIPFONTEIN
NTS	2472/308	2791	1941-51	KLIPFONTEIN
NTS	897/280	2316	1938-59	RECRUITING LYDENBURG
NTS	625/280	2256	1947-49	HIGHVELD LABOUR
NTS	463/280	2229	1944-52	SAAU
NTS	436/280	2223	1942-54	FARM LABOUR BUREAUX
NTS	415/280	2221	1945-46	NATIVE ADVISORY BRDS.
NTS	401/280	2216	1939-48	RATION SCALE
NTS	741/280	2167	1952-60	LABOUR BUREAUX
NTS	289/280	2167	1952-60	LABOUR BUREAUX
NTS	289/280	2144	1932-50	NATIVE LABOUR EXCH.
NTS	128/280	2066	1924-25	RECRUITING
NTS	334/280	2064	1933-50	EVASION OF CONTRACTS
NTS	30/280	2027	1921-22	LYDENBURG FARM ASSOC.
NTS	10/280	2010	1909-55	FARM LABOUR CONDITIONS
NTS	9/280	2009	1920-48	FARM LABOUR APPLI.
NTS	3/280	1994	1952-55	LABOUR BUREAUX

Dep.	No.	Vol.	Date	Description
NTS	138/276	1812	1951-55	CNC CONFERENCES
NTS	122/276	1804	1944-45	NC CONFERENCES
NTS	674/162	1196	1938-41	TRADING ON WINTERVELD
NTS	P/1	10721	1950-55	PERSONNEL
NTS	222/280 7	2094-209	c1920-1960	SHORTAGE OF NATIVE LABOUR ON FARMS
NTS	97/362	8850	1956-62	CONTROL BOARDS
NTS	97/362	8834-38	1938-52	CHAPTER FOUR

TREASURY (TES)

Dep.	No.	Vol.	Date	Description
TES	39/49/18	5784	1913-20	MAGISTRATES LYDENBURG

DEPARTMENT OF BANTU AFFAIRS

Dep.	No.	Vol.	Date	Description
BAO	A2/1396	174	1962-72	LYDENBURG
BAO	A15/1396	1125	1962-63	REGULATIONS LYDENBURG
BAO	A25/1396	2074	1960-73	SUBDIVISIONS LYDENBURG
BAO	B23/4/1396	2103	1968-73	CONTROL BOARDS
BAO	B23/1396	2116	1968-69	CONTROL BOARDS
BAO	B24/8/19	2150	1963-69	LEIDENBURG
BAO	B24/8/72	2157	1961-67	MARIA TROST
BAO	B24/8/122	2162	1960-64	WELGEVONDE
BAO	B24/8/138	2164	1960-68	BURGERSFORT
BAO	B24/1396	2227	1961-69	BANTOES IN LYDENBURG
BAO	B24/1396/1	2228	1961	BANTOES ON VYGENHOEK
BAO	B24/1396/2	2228	1962-65	BANTOES IN OHRIGSTAD
BAO	C27/1396	2315	1961	LYDENBURG
BAO	C31/3/142	2377	1962	MOSTERTHOEK
BAO	C31/3/1085	2518	1962	MOSTERTHOEK
BAO	C39/1396	3128	1961-72	LABOUR BUREAU
BAO	C43/1396	3322	1962-73	FORIEGN BANTOE
BAO	C163/1396	4025	1967-69	INFLUX CONTROL
BAO	D45/1396	4446	1961-67	FARMS IN LYDENBURG
BAO	A2/1430	177	1960-73	MIDDELBURG
BAO	B23/4/1430	2103	1968-73	BANTOE CONTROL BRDS.
BAO	B23/1	2086	1961-73	LABOUR TENANCY
BAO	B23/2	2086	1962-68	LABOUR TENANCY
BAO	B23/1110	2115	1967-68	TENANCY CAROLINA
BAO	B23/1185	2115	1966-68	TENANCY ERMELO
BAO	C39/143O	3133	1960-73	BUREAU MIDDELBURG

DEPARTMENT OF LANDS (LDE)

Dep.	No.	Vol.	Date	Description
LDE	25969	1263	1927-34	OHRIGSTAD
LDE	22108	1158	1908-38	OHRIGSTAD
LDE	21577	1139	1921-36	BERLIN MISSION SCHOOLS
LDE	22150	1159	1938-65	OHRIGSTAD.
LDE	22108	1158	1939-66	OHRIGSTAD
LDE	22127	1158	1936-65	OHRIGSTAD
LDE	44276	2115	1962	OHRIGSTAD
LDE	36136/1	1894	1945-65	LANGHAAI

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NK	2	TOMLINSON COMMISSION, 1952

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SNA	G828/06	517	1906	LYDENBURG
SNA	NA1053/06	64	1906	BOOMPLAATS

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S.S. = Transcriptions carried out by the author.
Itu. = Transcriptions carried out by Itumaleng Tsatsi.
No T.= Not recorded, notes made during interview.

No.	Surname	Name	Place	Date	Trans.
103	Baragwanath	Mr & Mrs	Lydenburg	15/9/1990	S.S
2	Bhuda	Martha	Marulaneng	12/6/1992	S.S.
86	Brandt	Brother	Glen Cowie	15/4/1993	No T.
55	Chauke	Maria	Praktiseer	13/6/1993	Itu.
105	Davis	Bryna	Lydenburg	15/9/1990	No T.
23	Dinkwanyane	Mrs	Mashishing	23/1/1992	S.S.
79	Gwebu	Obed	Jane Furse	19/9/1992	No T.
36	Hlatswayo	Sekwati	Jane Furse	8/2/1991	S.S.
67	Khoza	Mrs	Jane Furse	5/7/1993	Itu.
104	Kloppers	Mrs	Lydenburg	14/9/1990	S.S.
11	Letsoane	Monica	Mashishing	11/4/1992	S.S.
63	Mabilane	Wilhelmina	Marulaneng	11/6/1993	S.S.
61	Mabusa	Margaret	Jane Furse	15/6/1993	Itu.
6	Mabuza	Letta	Marulaneng	7/6/1992	S.S.
27	Madigage	&Mkhonto	Jane Furse	23/1/1992	S.S.
28	Magagula	Lucy	Jane Furse	6/2/1991	S.S.
38	Magolego	Petrus	Jane Furse	8/12/1990	S.S.

No.	Surname	Name	Place	Date	Trans.
72	Mahongele	et al	Mashishing	8/2/1991	No T.
98	Makgwatsane	Salome	Green Valley	18/11/93	No T.
51	Makola	Kleinboy	Glen Cowie	15/6/1993	Itu.
52	Makola	Piet	Jane Furse	12/6/1993	Itu.
21	Makua	Mrs	Mashishing	25/1/1992	S.S.
13	Malapo	Mr	Marulaneng	12/4/1992	S.S.
12	Malatje	Mr	Marulaneng	12/4/1992	S.S.
68	Malebe	Maria	Jane Furse	5/7/1993	Itu.
48	Malope	Hezekiel	Jane Furse	19/10/92	Itu.
97	Maluleke	Harry	Green Valley	17/11/93	No T.
56	Manana	Moses	Jane Furse	17/4/1993	Itu.
82	Manok	Hendrik	Aapiesdoorn	13/4/1993	No T.
85	Manok	&Kganane	Aapiesdoorn	15/4/1993	No T.
81	Mapanga	Sofie	Jane Furse	19/9/1992	No T.
47	Mapanga	Effy	Jane Furse	19/9/1992	S.S.
80	Mapanga	Rufus	Jane Furse	19/9/1992	No T.
44	Mapanga	Bella	Mashishing	20/9/1992	S.S.
45	Mapanga	Anna	Mashishing	20/9/1992	S.S.
25	Maphunga	Maria	Jane Furse	24/1/1992	S.S.
88	Masemola	Sister	Glen Cowie	15/4/1993	No T.
69	Masenga	Jackson	Bothashoek	14/6/1993	S.S.
50	Masha	Council	Strydkraal	15/4/1993	Itu.
87	Masha	Lengwai	Strydkraal	15/4/1993	No T.
33	Mashego	Mahlako	Jane Furse	7/2/1991	S.S.
54	Mashegoane	Mrs	Praktiseer	13/6/1993	Itu.
65	Mashele	Martha	Jane Furse	16/6/1993	Itu.
75	Mashupje	Michael	Mashishing	10/4/1992	No T.
83	Mashupje	Michael	Mashishing	14/4/1993	No T.
78	Mashupje	Michael	Mashishing	11/4/1992	No T.
35	Masilela	Rose	Jane Furse	8/2/1991	S.S.
99	Mathaba	Johannes	Green Valley	18/11/93	No T.
73	Mbiba	Spakana	Jane Furse	21/12/90	No T.
70	Mbiba	Phillip	Jane Furse	9/2/1991	No T.
90	Mbiba	Simon	Jane Furse	8/11/1993	No T.
40	Mdaka	Mrs	Jane Furse	21/12/90	S.S.
1	Mdluli	Elise	Marulaneng	6/6/1992	S.S.
30	Mgiba	William	Jane Furse	6/2/1991	S.S.
37	Mkhabela	Mkenyi	Jane Furse	20/12/90	S.S.
95	Mkhabela	Rebecca	Cottondale	15/11/93	No T.
34	Mkhonto	Emily	Jane Furse	8/2/1991	S.S.
39	Mkhonto	Maria	Jane Furse	9/12/1990	S.S.
26	Mkhonto	Emily	Jane Furse	22/1/1992	S.S.
92	Mnisi	Trecky	Okkernootnoom	14/11/93	No T.
71	Mnisi	Daniel	Jane Furse	13/4/1991	No T.
96	Mnisi	Mrs	Acornhoek	18/11/93	No T.
76	Mnisi	Phillip	Jane Furse	10/4/1992	No T.

No.	Surname	Name	Place	Date	Trans.
5	Mnisi	Betty	Marulaneng	6/6/1992	S.S.
8	Modipa	Samuel	Mashishing	11/4/1992	S.S.
10	Moela	et al	Mashishing	11/4/1992	S.S.
31	Moela	Mrs	Jane Furse	7/2/1991	S.S.
49	Moela	Stefaans	Mashishing	14/4/1993	Itu.
7	Moleke	Mrs	Mashishing	12/4/1992	S.S.
22	Moleke	Magdalena	Mashishing	23/1/1992	S.S.
77	Moleke	Jeremia	Mashishing	10/4/1992	No T.
14	Monate	&Moleke	Mashishing	10/4/1992	S.S.
4	Morele	Elizabeth	Marulaneng	7/6/1992	S.S.
29	Moretsele	Theresa	Jane Furse	6/2/1991	S.S.
18	Mosehla	Sekwatane	Jane Furse	22/1/1992	S.S.
17	Mosehla	Ephraim	Jane Furse	22/1/1992	S.S.
42	Motau	Abraham	Jane Furse	10/12/90	S.S.
101	Mpanye	Evelina	Bothashoek	14/6/1993	S.S.
53	Mputi	Johanna	Jane Furse	11/6/1993	Itu.
46	Mtete	Elizabeth	Bothashoek	14/6/1993	S.S.
20	Mthembu	Mrs	Jane Furse	24/1/1992	S.S.
62	Ndlovu	Anna	Jane Furse	15/6/1993	Itu.
43	Ndlozi	Kate	Jane Furse	20/12/90	S.S.
60	Ngomane	Mr & Mrs	Praktiseer	13/6/1993	Itu.
91	Ngwana	Nellie	Cottondale	14/11/93	No T.
9	Ngwenya	Steve	Glen Cowie	17/6/1993	S.S.
100	Paile	Mrs	Bothashoek	14/6/1993	S.S.
24	Phala	&Mashupje	Mashishing	2/2/1992	S.S.
64	Sehale	Kunana	Praktiseer	13/6/1993	S.S.
9	Sehlale	Henry	Alverton	4/7/1993	No T.
41	Sehlangu	Kitty	Jane Furse	22/12/90	S.S.
74	Sekhukhune	Mr	Jane Furse	22/1/1992	No T.
19	Sekhukhune	Letta	Jane Furse	23/1/1992	S.S.
15	Sewele	Maria	Marulaneng	11/4/1992	S.S.
66	Sewele	William	Jane Furse	16/6/1993	Itu.
16	Sewele	Amie	Marulaneng	12/4/1992	S.S.
32	Shabangu	Ella	Jane Furse	7/2/1991	S.S.
93	Shabangu	Sarah	Acornhoek	15/11/93	No T.
57	Sibande	Samuel	Marulaneng	6/7/1993	Itu.
59	Sibande	David	Marulaneng	6/7/1993	Itu.
58	Sibande	Annitjie	Marulaneng	6/7/1993	Itu.
3	Sibulele	Constance	Marulaneng	7/6/1992	S.S.
102	Steyn	Johan	Lydenburg	14/9/1990	S.S.
84	Theresa	Sister	Glen Cowie	14/4/1993	No T.
94	Thonga	Million	Willows	15/11/93	No T.

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