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Public Enemy Number One: Crime and Policing in Soweto in the 1960s

Clive Glaser

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PUBLIC ENEMY NUMBER ONE
Crime and Policing in Soweto in the 1960s

Clive Glaser

Since the 1940s crime has been a major, if not the major, social grievance of Witwatersrand township residents. By the late 1950s Soweto experienced a murder rate which made Chicago and New York seem tame by comparison.[1] Night life was virtually destroyed in the townships while public transport, particularly trains, became extremely hazardous. Workers returning home on Friday evenings had to run a regular gauntlet of muggers and pickpockets and the rate of sexual assault was staggeringly high. The apparent lull in gang formation during the 1960s had little bearing on township crime.[2] In the impersonal environment of Soweto crime was carried out by faceless individuals; relocated residents often found that they had lost the relative protection in familiarity which their old communities had afforded them. Crime and juvenile delinquency continued to increase. Pinnock observes a similar pattern on the Cape Flats during the late 1970s and early 1980s. But, as I have argued elsewhere, youths did not necessarily need to be organised into gangs to commit crime. Big and distinctive gangs took time to cohere after relocation; the upward curve in crime predated the major gang era of the early 1970s. Nevertheless, when prominent youth gangs did emerge they were often seen, in the eyes of both residents and police, to be the embodiment, rather than merely one manifestation, of crime.

The crime "problem", as perceived by the mass media and local administrators, grew steadily throughout the 1950s, levelled off to an extent around 1960-1961, and then continued to escalate throughout the remainder of the 1960s.[3] It is extremely difficult to unravel the complex relationship between "real" crime and "moral panic", as discussed by, for instance, Stuart Hall.[4] My sources tend to concentrate on media and social responses to crime. Certainly official figures, which, for a variety of reasons, are easily as unreliable in reflecting reality on the ground, concur that there was "a staggering increase in Rand crime" during the mid 1960s.[5] Moral panics emerge in a context of social crisis and it is important to plot them historically. In the case of Soweto in the 1960s the moral panic around crime reflected a deteriorating sense of security amongst residents and a growing sense that urban youth were out of control. As far as the periodisation of crime, or moral panic, is concerned, my conclusions are drawn from dozens of

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[1] An article appeared in the New York Times, 4 January 1959, featuring crime in Johannesburg. Murder statistics in Soweto, the writer claimed, were substantially higher than those of New York or Chicago. In 1972 Soweto experienced a murder rate of 84 per 100000 people, over four times that of New York with 20,58 per 100000; see The Star 8 July 1972.

[2] In the period March 1966 to February 1967, for instance, there were 891 murders and 1156 cases of rape in Johannesburg. See The Star April 1967, undated clipping, IAD WRAB N9 vol 2. I attempt to deal more fully with statistics below. For an analysis of violent juvenile crime on the Rand in the 1940s and 1950s see Glaser, "Anti-Social Bandits", pp 134-138.

[3] These conclusions are drawn from references too numerous to list. My sources include crime reports from The Star, RDM, The World and Post, minutes from Advisory Board meetings and Johannesburg NEAD letters and memoranda.

[4] S. Hall, Policing the Crisis: mugging, the state, and law and order, Basingstoke, 1978.

[5] The Star, April 1967, undated clipping in IAD WRAB N9 vol 2. It is extremely difficult to find official crime figures broken down to the Soweto or Johannesburg area for the 1960s. There are numerous impressionistic reports in the WRAB archives but official statistics in Justice Ministry reports are only given nationally.

crime reports plotted against a time scale. Feature articles and editorials, I would argue, indicate a particularly heightened awareness of the issue. From early 1960 through to at least the middle of 1961 there was a clear drop in Soweto crime news. In 1965 and, even more strikingly, in 1966 a spate of news features, editorials and letters to the editor dealing with crime appeared in The World and Post, the two most widely read Sowetan newspapers. In March and April 1967 a series of memoranda on the crime issue were prepared by the Johannesburg NEAD.[6] In December the Rand Daily Mail ran an unprecedented series of five full-page features on crime in Soweto.[7]

The apparent deceleration of crime in the very early 1960s was probably a result of the state of emergency and the heavy police presence which this entailed. Although the police presence was primarily aimed at suppressing political activity, it probably had a spin-off effect on crime, particularly since police, perceiving urban youth to be dangerously politicised, conducted massive indiscriminate swoops on young African men.[8] Once the immediate political threat subsided and the police presence normalised, township crime spiralled again. Although the police conducted sporadic raids and blitzes on the "criminal element", something which will receive greater attention later in this chapter, they made little perceptible impact on overall crime.

Most juvenile crime in Soweto took the form of unorganised sexual assaults, mugging and theft carried out by nameless individuals or small indistinguishable groups. Township youths turned to crime because most of them lived in poverty while maintaining consumerist aspirations, because of the disparity in employment opportunities between young and old, because of the absence of adequate schooling or recreational facilities, because of a dominant masculine ethos which rejected steady employment as a route out of poverty.

According to most Sowetan residents, local crime was dominated by young men during the 1960s.[9] I have been unable to unearth systematic localised crime statistics. Clearly, though, the proportion of African criminal activity carried out by young males in South Africa as a whole increased steadily through the 1950s and 1960s. African juvenile crime, officially incorporating convicted offenders aged between seven and twenty, as a proportion of total African criminal convictions went up from 16,7% in 1949 to 22,5% in 1960 and reached 25,2 % in 1965/66. The figure for Johannesburg in 1965/66 (this is the only useful statistic available which provides a regional breakdown) is 23,9%. This regional figure includes all races without offering a racial breakdown. Given that the proportion of juvenile crime nationally was lower for other race categories (12,9% for whites, 22,8% for coloureds and 18,7% for Asians), it is safe to assume that the African figure for Johannesburg was well over 24% and probably well over the national average. In the juvenile category offenders were concentrated in the later years. Nationally, roughly 70% of juvenile crime was committed by seventeen to twenty year-olds; for those aged seventeen to twenty the proportion of total national crime went up from 11,6% in 1949 to 15,5% in 1960. For those aged just eighteen to twenty the figure had reached 14,4% by 1965/66. The incidence of juvenile crime per 10000 of the total African population went up from 37,65 in 1949 to 51,4 in 1966/67. This is an extremely high incidence of juvenile crime given that a large number of juvenile offenders were not convicted and that the official juvenile category excludes men in their early twenties. The juvenile proportion of the general African population gradually increased during the 1950s and 1960s but the rate of increase did not match the rising proportion of juvenile crime. Between 1950 and 1970 the proportion of ten to nineteen year-olds nationally went up from about 22% to about 23,5% (although the steady rise in the youngest category

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[6] See IAD WRAB N9 vol 1.

[7] RDM 18-22 December 1967. The features were written by Michael Cobden.

[8] See discussion on pass swoops on youth in Chapter Two.

[9] This is based loosely on observations of informants, newspapers and JNEAD reports.

probably accounted for the gradual rate of increase). In the metropolitan areas the increase in the ten-to-nineteen category was far more pronounced; it rose from about 15,5% of the total in 1950 to about 23% in 1970. Even though the general increase in the juvenile population may have accounted for a large part of the juvenile crime increase, the escalation of the problem was no less real. A high proportion of juvenile crime, moreover, was constituted by serious crime. Out of the total of juvenile convictions between 1963 and 1967, 28,5% were for murder, attempted murder and various kinds of assault; 35,1% were for theft and housebreaking. In 1963/64 the ratio of male to female convictions in the eighteen-to-twenty category was about 6,45:1. By 1966/67 the ratio had gone up slightly to about 6,8:1.[10] Although it is important to allow for massive regional variation, these national statistics do provide some sense of the scale and growth of juvenile crime more generally during the 1960s.

Sowetan residents and the mass media tended to perceive crime and juvenile delinquency as one and the same problem. As one speaker commented at a National Council of Women conference held in Orlando in 1964 to discuss crime: "It is our children who are doing this to us".[11] In March 1967 The World opened its front page lead article with these words: "Teenage gangsterism has become Soweto's Public Enemy Number One. Latest figures just released show that young hoodlums under the age of 21 made up more than half the people convicted for cases of death by violence."[12] Parents regarded the control and discipline of youth as the key to crime prevention.

From the late 1940s, residents, generally under the leadership of Advisory Board members, organised local civic guards and parents' associations to protect themselves from criminal youths. There were constant appeals to the government to provide better policing as well as social services which would indirectly tackle the crime problem, such as schooling and streetlighting. In the political vacuum of the 1960s the Advisory Boards were an important mouthpiece for residents. Although technically powerless, the AB members, who were elected officials, retained a certain legitimacy. During the 1940s and 50s the ANC and SACP, taking advantage of the institution's potential for local-level mobilisation, actively participated in the ABs. Although the ANC and SACP rejected ABs as "dummy institutions" by the end of the 1950s, a number of prominent and respected local figures, such as P.Q. Vundla and James Mpanza, continued to participate throughout the 1960s. In the absence of alternatives, thousands of residents looked to AB members to articulate their grievances.

Residents received a sympathetic hearing from the local Johannesburg Non-European Affairs Department (JNEAD) on the issue of crime but, whereas the local government saw solutions in terms of improving urban social conditons, the central Native Affairs Department solution hinged on the control of African mobility. From the late 1950s until the early 1970s urban crime was a social problem which the central government felt could best be combated through the strict implementation of influx control. The government took little notice of Advisory Boards, residents associations and other township bodies which appealed for improved urban services, choosing instead to deal with crime unilaterally. It consequently lost a real opportunity to enhance its legitimacy amongst large sections of the township community who were desperate for effective action against crime.

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[10] Department of Welfare and Pensions, Jeugmisdaad in die Republiek van Suid Afrika: 'n ontleding van beskikbare statistiek ("Juvenile Crime in the Republic of South Africa: a summary of available statistics"), Publication No 1 of 1972. The Publication draws on all available figures from the Department of Statistics. My figures are drawn compositely from Tables 2, 4, 7, 10, 14 and 16. The section on regional breakdown, even by the admission of the compilers, is extremely disappointing. Few of the gradations which appear in the national figures are repeated for the regions. The figures on the juvenile proportion of the overall population are garnered from official 1950, 1960 and 1970 Census statistics.

[11] GCP 23 February 1964.

[12] The World 1 March 1967. For furhter evidence see, for example, The World editorial, 13 August 1964, and a letter to the editor from M.M. Itumaleng of Diepkloof, 3 February 1966.

In the first section of this chapter I assess central government policy towards township crime during the 1960s. In the second section I will examine the role of the Johannesburg local government, struggling to deal with pressures from both above and below. Finaily, I focus on the response of residents and ABs to crime in Soweto in the era of high apartheid.

The Central Government and the South African Police

The apartheid answer to township crime involved three basic elements: spatial containment, controls on mobility and the raid system. Essentially, it was a strategy based on maximising white security rather than tackling crime head on. The National Party's strengthening commitment to bantustan development and influx control during the 1960s consolidated this approach to policing through, on the one hand, stunting African urban services - most importantly for the focus of this chapter, policing - and, on the other hand, promoting spatial solutions to South Africa's political problems.

The strategy of containment was simple enough. It involved separating African residential areas from white suburbs. The levels of township crime were tolerable as long as crime did not spill over into the suburbs. With the townships isolated beyond buffer zones, the South African Police could concentrate on providing security to the white residential areas. The Western Areas removals in the late 1950s may have been motivated by additional factors but clearly the removals fitted in neatly with the SAP's approach to policing in Johannesburg.

Central to the second strategy was the use of influx control to curb crime. This entailed the equation of illegal urban status with criminality. Those who had no fixed home, who were unemployed, who did not have their passes in order, were assumed by the SAP to make up the "criminal element". Senior police officials believed that if "vagrants", "idlers", "loafers" and "undesirables", most of whom were young men, were removed from Johannesburg the crime problem would decline significantly. Under the Native (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act of 1945 police had the right to arrest "idle and undesirable Natives" in an urban area without a warrant. In response to a spate of payroll robberies and street attacks in November 1960, a senior Johannesburg police officer argued that insufficient measures had been taken to enforce this act. He promised an intensification of its enforcement to curb crime.[13] In the same month it was announced that camps would be established on the fringes of Johannesburg for the rehabilitation of delinquents who had not necessarily committed specific acts of crime. The Minister of Justice, Erasmus, observing that "among non-Whites, lawlessness and delinquency are again reaching proportions that militate against the orderly development of their communities", informed the public that the law "would be tightened up to make it easier for magistrates to commit young idlers and deviates to these rehabilitation centres."[14] In 1967 Nationalist MP S.P. Potgieter argued explicitly that an intensification of pass laws was the best way of dealing with crime.[15]

As a weapon against urban crime, the Nationalists saw influx control operating on two levels. First, as I have outlined above, as a means of controlling the "criminal element" who were already in the city. Second, and perhaps more importantly, as a means of keeping rural Africans out of the city and thereby reducing the competition for urban employment. The urban labour preference policy (ULPP), it was hoped, would keep urban unemployment to a minimum as well

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[13] The Star 22 November 1960, "Rand Police clamp down on vagrants"

[14] The Star 29 November 1960.

[15] RDM 17 April 1967, editorial.

as reduce pressure on urban resources.[16] Although ULPP was aimed at reinforcing a range of apartheid control objectives, its role in combating crime, and particularly juvenile crime, should not be underestimated. The M.C. Botha Commission of 1962, looking into the problem of "ledige en nie-werkende Bantoe" ("idle and unemployed Bantu"), made an explicit connection between juvenile delinquency and youth unemployment. Botha pointed out that urban unemployment was concentrated in the 16-25 age group and argued that the best way to tackle delinquency was through the creation of jobs for urban youths. The biggest threat to urban youth job creation was "werksoekende Bantoe van buite die stedelike gebiede" ("Bantus from outside of the urban area looking for work").[17] A similar observation was made at a meeting of South African municipal officials in 1962.[18] In 1966 Colonel D.H. Botha of the Newlands Police Station, commenting on the regular monthly deportation of several hundred "illegals" from Soweto, insisted that it was for the good of most Sowetans because there were too few resources for all. The deportations were "to safeguard people legally in the townships from being unemployed and overcrowded."[19] The complementary strategy to influx control was the development of the homelands with the idea of decentralising population concentration. This, the Government hoped, would reduce the threat of political instability and take pressure off the the major cities in terms of providing services.

To the extent that the SAP dealt directly with crime, it depended heavily on the raid system. There was no constant police presence in Soweto. The area was regarded as too big to control effectively.[20] Police patrols, particularly at night, were few and far between and the SAP were unlikely to appear at the scene of a crime.[21] Instead, police would periodically swoop on the townships in large numbers, indiscriminately arrest and screen hundreds of residents and then withdraw. Raids reached a peak in 1965 and 1966, probably in response to urgent appeals from residents to do something about crime. The biggest raids tended to coincide with peak crime periods such as Christmas and New Year. During the Christmas week of 1965 about 2000 people were arrested in two huge raids. 2500 police carried out a house-to-house raid on the homes of about 200000 people in what Philip Vundla described as a "mass invasion" of the townships. Most of the arrested were screened and released. Almost 500 were charged with apartheid related offenses. Senior police officials stated that the raids would "continue until the criminal element has been stamped out".[22] The intensity of raids continued into 1966. According to Vorster, then both Prime Minister and Minister of Police, during 1966 the police undertook 33 special operations to combat crime in the urban and peri-urban areas of Johannesburg and the townships of Soweto and Alexandra. The number of police used varied from 75 to more than 1000 and a total of more than 8000 were arrested. More than 7600 were convicted at

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[16] See Posel, The Making of Apartheid, for a fuller discussion of this issue.

[17] Verslag van die Interdepartementele Komitee insake Ledige en Nie-werkende Bantoe in die Stedelike Gebiede, chaired by M.C. Botha, 1962.

[18] IAD WRAB 401/44/20, extract from minutes of meeting of the United Municipal Executive of SA 20/21 February 1962.

[19] Post 24 July 1966; see also Die Transvaaler 23 January 1964.

[20] The Star 13 July 1972, "Violence in Soweto".

[21] See IAD WRAB N9 vol 1, minutes of Jabavu AB meeting 17 November 1962; IAD WRAB N9/4, letter from Dube Residents' Committee, UBC General Purposes and Housing Committee, UBC 95/1971. In 1972 prominent Soweto businessman and Councillor, Richard Maponya, complained that the SAP very rarely came to the scene of a crime in Soweto; see IAD WRAB N9 vol 3, minutes of meeting of the Liaison Committee on Crime 18 May 1972.

[22] Post 2 January 1966 and 9 January 1966; RDM 30 December 1965, 31 December 1965 and 4 January 1966; The World 31 December 1965; see also IAD WRAB N9 vol 1, extract from minutes of Non-European Affairs Committee meeting 13 January 1966.

Magistrate's and Bantu Affairs Commissioner's courts.[23]

It was in the nature of raids that police were not reacting to specific acts of crime. They could only deal with pass offenders, illegal beer brewers and perhaps those found with dangerous weapons. In the absence of a real police presence, they could only hope to rid the townships of "criminals, vagrants and undesirables". Although the raids often had some short-term impact on crime and some AB members, such as those of the Mofolo AB and Richard Maponya, approved of raids during the 1965/66 crime spiral, their effectiveness was negligible.[24] Readers of the Post and World complained regularly that the real criminals got away in raids. Take, for example, "R.N." in 1964 who asked, "Will the police leave the innocent working people and check on the murderers, loafers and gangsters... [?]"[25] Or Douglas Ndebele in 1966: "While law-abiding citizens are humiliated in the morning raids, thugs go free in the townships. These raids are almost useless. Most of our crimes are committed at the weekends when the criminals come out of their hide-outs."[26] Or Oka Sopisi in 1969: "Why are these raiders not on duty during the weekends when such crimes as rape, assault and murder take place?"[27]

Not only were apartheid policies ineffective in dealing with township crime but, I will argue, they profoundly deepened the crime crisis.

The harsh implementation of the pass laws, coupled to the raid system, turned township residents against the police. Residents, angered by this failure to differentiate urban illegality from criminality, tended not to cooperate with the SAP. Police were regarded with great suspicion in Soweto.[28] Following the massive raids during the Christmas period of 1965, Peter Lengene and Philip Vundla, two hardliners on crime, raged against the raid system. Lengene told Post "... that the raids in Soweto shocked the law-abiding people, particularly those whose houses were searched. The feeling of these people was that they were regarded as suspects or criminals, he said... To conduct indiscriminate raids would only turn the people away and the police would fail to get the cooperation they expected." Vundla insisted that in the pursuit of criminals there had to be some alternative to "mass invasions" of the townships.[29] Soweto crime thrived as long as the police themselves were mistrusted and lacked credibility.

Pass controls and discriminatory laws damaged the credibility not merely of the police, but of law more broadly. The Johannesburg socioligist, Ellen Hellmann, argued this point in a letter to William Carr in April 1967:

> It seems to me that when large areas covered by the law are regarded as unjust and people feel no inner compulsion whatsoever to conform - falling foul of the pass laws carries about as much social stigma as if I get caught for a parking offense - respect for the law as such is undermined. You go to gaol

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[23] The World 1 March 1967, p1 lead story; see also Post 14 August 1966 and 27 March 1966.

[24] For approval of the raids see Post 1 May 1966, 9 January 1966 and 24 April 1966.

[25] The World, letter from "R.N." of Alexandra, 9 October 1964.

[26] Post, letter from Douglas K. Ndebele of Westonaria, 11 December 1966.

[27] Post, letter from Oka Sopisi of Diepkloof, 9 November 1969; for other examples see The World, letters from Yeta Mashiya, 1 February 1966 and F. Nhlapo of Zola, 6 March 1967 and Post 8 December 1968, "The Doc Bikitsha Show".

[28] See letter from Philip Vundla in The World 2 September 1966; IAD WRAB N9 vol 2 "Causes of Crime in Soweto" by Y. Merafe (undated, c March 1967) and "Crime in Soweto", WJPC/MH 20 April 1967, p 3.

[29] Post 9 January 1966.

> for a pass offense if you happen to have no money to pay the fine, and you go to gaol for assault or robbery. (I believe the same gaols.) How does one retain the distinction in the public mind and harness the indispensable sanction of public opinion? ... I think we are inclined to confuse enforced African acquiescence in the racial order here with acceptance of it. I don't think even the most apparently subservient sell-outs accept the racial hierarchy... and I think the thugs and gangsters are sheltered by common animosity to the law.[30]

Although Soweto residents felt brutalised and persecuted by local criminals there was a powerful tendency to draw on their own resources rather than place their trust in the South African law and police force. In terms of combating township crime, influx control backfired viciously. Throughout the 1960s residents, AB members and administrators identified influx control as one of the main contributors to the crime problem. This was articulated clearly in a 1960 World editorial:

> A major cause of crime in the towns is the out-of- date network of apartheid laws which is creating a class of permanent outlaws, not only on the Rand, but throughout the Union's many urban areas. [Apartheid laws are] creating a growing class of men, women and children who have no prospect of permanent jobs and no hope of ever having a permanent roof over their heads. They live like hunted beasts, on the fringes of the towns, always on the move and always hungry. From an early age, they learn to take their sustenance where they can, and how they can. They also try to live one jump ahead of the pass- raiding squads.[31]

In 1961 several Soweto AB members observed that teenagers became gang members and delinquents in response to having been endorsed out of the urban area.[32] World journalist, Stanley Motjuwadi, made a similar point in a 1965 crime feature:

> When the Influx Laws were first introduced the sole purpose was to curb crime by keeping a check on people who do not belong to a particular town. But lately, the same laws have ironically had the opposite effect. Many youths who find themselves in the urban areas and cannot get jobs because of the laws turn to crime as a source of making a living.[33]

A series of letters in the World in 1966 blamed influx control prominently for crime. Writers argued that people could not move around freely to seek work and the resultant unemployment stoked the crime problem.[34] In March/April 1967 the JNEAD took note of this connection in a series of in-house memoranda on the crime situation. I.D. Klapka, the Chief Officer of Community Development, wrote: "It is my experience that a number of young men looking for

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[30] IAD WRAB N9 vol 1, letter from Ellen Hellmann to William Carr, April 1967; similar arguments appear in The Star features on crime, 25 November 1966 and 13 July 1972.

[31] The World 9 January 1960, editorial.

[32] IAD WRAB 351/2, minutes from SWBT No 3 AB meeting 15 June 1961; see also an article in The World 22 February 1963 which looks at a wave of crime in Zone 5, Meadowlands, being caused by a gang of youths without proper passes.

[33] The World 27 September 1965; see also The Star 27 July 1965, "Forced to be idle", which stresses that unemployed city-born youths are often endorsed out and Pretoria News 2 October 1964, which focuses on homeless urban children who turn to crime when their parents are endorsed out of town.

[34] The World, letters from K.Z. Sibanda of Meadowlands, 7 February 1966, N. Letsoatsa of Orlando west, 28 January 1966, and Philip Vundla of Dube, 2 September 1966. See also letter from Boy Mafora of Meadowlands, 26 May 1969.

work can not get it because their papers are not in order. This is because they cannot prove that they are legal residents due to a lack of birth certificates and similar reasons."[35] Mrs Y. Merafe of the Welfare Branch argued that large numbers of illegals in the area "do not stand a chance of getting legitimate employment and take to crime as a career".[36] William Carr himself stressed that "it is impossible for Bantu who are illegally in the City to obtain lawful employment or to be housed in a Municipal township or hostel. Many such people refuse to accept the order to return to their place of origin, and go underground in the Cities, and because they cannot obtain lawful employment, resort to crime in order to live."[37] By 1971 the problem was still there. A joint UBC-NEAD circular in the same year reiterated this: "It has been found that some youths take to crime because their reference books are not in order and they cannot seek work. In some cases this is because they are unable to produce proof that they have been in the area since birth."[38]

The homeland development policy also indirectly stoked urban crime. The policy diverted potential resources from the cities during the 1960s, creating a squeeze on vital urban social services such as policing, secondary schooling and social welfare. Although the situation was probably no worse than during the 1950s, it should be remembered that the South African economy was in a boom phase during the 1960s yet, despite this, townships like Soweto experienced very few of the benefits usually associated with rapid economic growth. The Acting Deputy Manager of JNEAD observed in 1968: "The attitude adopted by the Minister presupposes that... the Bantu Homeland Policy is going to take care of all Urban Areas' problems."[39] Fringe extremists aside, the Nationalists accepted during the 1960s that the permanence of an African urban population was irreversible. But the government did hope to curb further growth, and control urban Africans more effectively through the bantustan system and influx control. When it came to the distribution of state revenue, therefore, bantustan development took priority over improvements in urban services.

The inadequacy of police services in Soweto has to be seen not only in terms of SAP strategy, but also in terms of resource shortages and priorities. As I pointed out earlier, there were constant complaints about the absence of police patrols, especially in danger zones, the inefficiency of police and the shortage of police stations.[40] The Moroka Police station, which came under particular criticism for its inefficiency during the 1960s, had to service seventeen Soweto townships.[41]

As I observed in Chapter Three, urban African higher education was starved of funding

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[35] IAD WRAB N9 vol 1, "The reasons for crime wave in Soweto", Recreation and Community Services Branch, Welfare Section 20 March 1967.

[36] IAD WRAB N9 vol 2, "Causes of Crime in Soweto" by Y. Merafe (undated, c March 1967).

[37] IAD WRAB N9 vol 2, NEAD memo. "Crime in Soweto", WJPC/MH 20 April 1967; see also vol 1, "The Background to Crime", (unnamed and undated, c March 1967).

[38] IAD WRAB N9 vol 3, "Measures to Combat Crime Amongst Idle Youth", circular for information 2 August 1971. See also IAD WRAB W32, "Report on Alcoholism and Dagga Smoking", Community Services Branch, Welfare Section 25 June 1971.

[39] IAD WRAB N9/8, letter from acting deputy manager to the manager JNEAD 30 May 1968.

[40] See, for example: The World 15 December 1964, "Fear riddled Soweto needs protection now" and 8, 10 and 13 March 1967; IAD WRAB N9 vol 1, extract from discussion at Joint AB meeting 23 February 1967 and "Reasons for crime wave in Soweto", Recreation and Community services Branch JNEAD 20 March 1967; UNISA UBC Acc 244, minutes of meeting of General Purposes and housing committee 8 August 1968.

[41] The World 23 July 1965; Post 12 March 1967, 26 December 1967 and 8 August 1971, "Moroka police blasted again".

throughout the 1960s and early 1970s. Even in the case of lower primary and primary education, Sowetans were forced to pay for a large proportion of their education out of their internal revenue account administered by the JNEAD. In addition, the JNEAD was only authorised to build primary schools from this fund. Largely as a result of stretched resources, standards in urban centres like Soweto were lower than in the rural areas.[42] School shortages, particularly in secondary schooling, and high dropout rates contributed to the juvenile delinquency problem. By prioritising homeland schooling and neglecting urban schooling, then, the Nationalists indirectly encouraged urban crime.

As in the case of schooling, Soweto's recreation and social welfare had to be financed by limited local government or private funding. There were drastic shortages of sports facilities, libraries, creches and youth centres. The Government failed to check the massive population of "idle and loitering" youths partly as a result of neglecting urban services.[43]

Intensive influx control, along with the absence of urban ownership rights, deprived Africans of a sense of permanence and stability in the cities. In a 1965 World editorial Soweto's crime was blamed on lack of ownership and a sense of impermanence: "People do not easily yield to crime if they have a stake in a country, if they feel the country is theirs, that it belongs to them to treasure, cherish and safeguard."[44] Both William Carr and Ellen Hellmann made similar observations in attempting to explain the crime crisis in 1967.[45]

In 1970 the Black Sash emphasised the disastrous effects of influx control on family stability and, by extension, crime. "With no security of tenure and little stability for family life it is inevitable that the rate of illegitimacy must increase ... Whole generations of young people will turn into lawless, rootless, bitter people filled with hate and imbued with a desire for revenge."[46]

The Efforts of Local Government

While the central government issued legislation from Pretoria, it was the Johannesburg NEAD which had to deal directly with Sowetan residents. From 1948 onwards a very tense relationship developed between the National Party government and the old United Party dominated local administration. Whereas the central state emphasised regulation and control of urban African mobility, the JNEAD concentrated on improving urban living conditions. William Carr recalls that government inspectors were placed permanently in his office to monitor his department's activities.[47] Carr's paternalist liberal administration attempted, within the constraints of its resources, to cater to the needs of Sowetan residents as articulated by the ABs. The JNEAD and ABs and, later, the UBCs were in constant communication through letters, circulated minutes and joint AB meetings. By the 1960s the Nationalists had hardened their position, placing even

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[42] See, for instance, RDM 15 March 1968. In 1968, the article reports, only 20% of urban African matriculants passed while the average pass rate at rural schools was 48%.

[43] See, for example, IAD WRAB N9/8, letter from the acting deputy manager to the manager JNEAD 30 May 1968 in which the former expresses frustration at the lack of state assistance in urban social services.

[44] The World 5 February 1965, editorial.

[45] IAD WRAB N9 vol 1, "Crime in Soweto", WJPC/MH 20 April 1967 and letter from Ellen Hellmann to Carr 5 April 1967.

[46] Post 19 April 1970, letter from Black Sash Office, Johannesburg. See also feature on crime by Michael Cobden in RDM 21 February 1967.

[47] Interview, Carr (a).

more pressure on the JNEAD to conform and further restricting its administrative resources. The department continued to field township grievances sympathetically but was unable to act with real effectiveness.

The issue of crime highlighted the JNEAD's double bind. As early as 1957 Carr expressed frustration at the lack of support from the central state in dealing with the juvenile delinquency issue. Social welfare services needed to be extended significantly to offset the growing juvenile delinquency problem. At a Technical Subcommittee meeting he argued that "the lawlessness of young Native children was symptomatic of what would happen in the future". The situation would get much worse "particularly if the children were not kept off the streets". The Chairman of the Subcommittee agreed with Carr that "it should be the responsibility of the Government and not the local authorities to finance welfare services".[48] In 1965 the JNEAD, experiencing a starvation of social welfare funds, was forced to withdraw staff from four Soweto playcentres to concentrate efforts on combating teenage delinquency.[49]

Carr, in his 1967 memorandum, "Crime in Soweto", recommended that the government establish a commission of enquiry on the "uncertainty" of Africans in the urban areas. In 1968 the Native Affairs Minister dismissed the enquiry as unnecessary. Carr's acting Deputy Manager, Robinson, reacted strongly to the dismissal. In a letter to Carr he wrote:

> I wonder if [you] would care to raise the matter with the Deputy Minister on the 17th July in an attempt to put verbally what your report has not succeeded in doing in writing, namely, that there are children running around the streets by the thousands for whom schooling is not available, for whom jobs are not available and that uncertainty as to the future of the millions who will always be in Urban Areas is clear for all to see.[50]

One possible response to the funding crisis was to appeal to the private sector. For example, once it became clear by the late 1960s that little state assistance would be forthcoming for Soweto schooling, the JNEAD made public appeals for assistance. In 1969, Carr, in a letter to The Star, called on public assistance in acquiring desks. There was a massive backlog in desks and thousands of pupils were working on the floor.[51] In the early 1970s The Star set up the TEACH fund which enabled the local authorities to build hundreds of additional classrooms in Soweto. This helped in some small way to address the growing demand for schooling.

Despite the lack of state support, the JNEAD coordinated three sections which dealt, directly or indirectly, with crime and juvenile delinquency: the Community Development and Social Welfare Department, the Juvenile Employment Section and the Municipal Police.

In January 1966, in response to a ministerial enquiry into juvenile delinquency, the Chief Officer of Community Development reported: "This Department has since its inception been aware of the problem of juvenile delinquency and has taken measures to combat it, particularly by helping to keep youth usefully occupied in their leisure time through constructive activities." By 1966 the Department had built, and maintained, three stadia, 84 sports fields, 65 basketball courts, two swimming pools, forty tennis courts, two cycling tracks and three athletic tracks. It made these facilities available for community and school sport and encouraged local football teams. Departmental welfare workers ran 21 youth clubs catering for about 2600 boys and girls in the

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[48] IAD WRAB 110/3, extract from minutes of Technical Subcommittee meeting 5 September 1957.

[49] IAD WRAB W30/1/1, letter from Carr to Isaacson Playcentre Committee 4 August 1968.

[50] IAD WRAB N9/8, letter from the acting Deputy Manager to the Manager JNEAD 30 May 1968.

[51] The Star 21 January 1969.

nine-to-eighteen age group. Youth club activities included sport, drama, music, dancing, handwork and arts and crafts. During 1965 "four juvenile gangs were broken up by staff members" and the gang members were reported to have joined youth clubs. An all-day club for non-schoolgoing "maladjusted and neglected children" operated in Jabavu. In addition, the Department issued grants in aid totalling R124 000 to 100 independent welfare organisations which helped, "directly or indirectly", in the combating of juvenile delinquency.[52] By July 1972 the Department was running 24 youth clubs, some operating all day throughout the week, some only in the afternoons or mornings, some for two or three days a week.[53] Despite the urgency of its efforts the Community Development branch did not have sufficient resources to stem the tide of delinquency significantly. The 2600 youths it reached through its youth clubs represented only a tiny fraction of the unemployed non-schoolgoing youths in Soweto, particularly since many of the club members were schoolgoing.[54]

In response to the same 1966 ministrial enquiry mentioned above, the Juvenile Employment Officer reported:

> The increase in the number of unemployed Bantu youths and the inclination of the group to form rival gangs in the Bantu residential areas of Johannesburg and in general to engage in all sorts of mischief, called for special attention by the Non-European Affairs Department. Accordingly a separate Youth Employment Section was established in May 1960 as a section of the Registration Branch and under the immediate supervision of a graduated and experienced female welfare worker.[55]

By March 1961 the Section reported that a daily average of 150 youths, aged sixteen to nineteen, were streaming in to seek employment. The Section was usually able to find work for about twenty per day.[56] The Section liaised with commercial and industrial employers to encourage them to give jobs to local unemployed youths. It also employed two welfare officers who worked in the townships, making contact with youths, encouraging them to find work and informing them of the facilities available. The welfare workers were successful in breaking up several gangs and organising truces between warring gangs. Many ex-gangsters were placed in employment.[57] Like the Community Development Section, the Juvenile Employment Section had a disappointing impact on juvenile delinquency. Of the roughly 11700 boys who reported for

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[52] IAD WRAB N9/1, "Ministerial Enquiry: Juvenile Delinquency in Bantu Townships", memo from chief officer, Community Development to acting deputy manager JNEAD 21 June 1966; see also The Star 7 May 1964, "More schools and better jobs"

[53] IAD WRAB N9/1, Report from assistant manager, Community Services, enclosed in UBC minutes 13 July 1972; see also IAD WRAB N9 vol3, "Measures to Combat Crime Amongst Idle Youth", circular for information 2 August 1971

[54] See the 1961 Botha Commission and Chapter Two for an analysis of the size of the juvenile delinquency problem by the beginning of the 1960s. See also annual SRRSA for school attendance figures.

[55] IAD WRAB N9/1, "Ministerial Enquiry - Juvenile Delinquency in Bantu Townships", memo from Juvenile Employment officer to Municipal Labour officer 14 February 1966; see also RDM 21 October 1967, "Jobless Africans roaming in gangs".

[56] IAD WRAB 351/2, Report on Juvenile Unemployment Section, record of discussion between manager JNEAD and Joint AB 1 March 1961.

[57] Interviews: Tloteng and McMurchie; IAD WRAB 285/7, letter from Carr to the Town Clerk 28 September 1960 and letter from the Juvenile Employment officer to the manager 24 May 1961; IAD WRAB N9/1, memo from Juvenile Employment Officer to Municipal Employment Officer 14 February 1966.

work in 1967 only 2189 were placed in employment.[58] The central government was consistently supportative of the Juvenile Employment Section as its emphasis on absorbing urban labour dovetailed excellently with the ULPP. The limited success of the Section was due not so much to a lack of resources as a combination of employer prejudices, low levels of school qualification and the disinclination of city youths to accept badly paid, demeaning work.[59] Moreover, the Section made no headway at all amongst youths without legal urban status. All youths reporting to the Section had their passes examined according to labour bureau rules. If their passes were not in order they would be given a month to furnish proof of urban status.[60] Few urban youths with dodgy urban status, no matter how desperate for employment, were prepared to expose themselves to this process.[61]

The Johannesburg Municipality ran its own Municipal Police Force which, in the 1950s, was aimed at protecting its interests in mine locations and two hostels. By 1955 the local government employed 319 municipal police who were popularly known as "Blackjacks".[62] Initially it was not their task to combat general crime but gradually they came to play an important supplementary crime-fighting role in Soweto. By 1965 there were 637 Blackjacks attached to the municipal offices and a further 212 stationed at beerhalls and municipal hostels.[63] By comparison, the SAP had only 1020 African policemen based in Soweto in 1972.[64] Although Blackjacks were generally regarded as better than nothing, and occasionally even established a good local reputation, they were not a very effective crime-fighting force.[65] For a start, they were unarmed, badly trained and ill-equipped. They were incapable of dealing with armed criminals and often found themselves the victims of attack.[66] It was only in 1969 that the Blackjacks were given walkie-talkies for radio contact while, in the same year, 200 were given formal training.[67] Blackjacks were poorly paid and susceptible to corruption and there were a number of reported incidents of Blackjack violence and brutality.[68] In addition, the force's credibility, like that of the SAP, suffered from carrying out discriminatory laws such as pass and permit controls.

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[58] Post 14 January 1968, "Dead-end jobs - dead-end kids".

[59] Post 14 January 1968.

[60] IAD WRAB N9/1, memo from Juvenile Employment Officer to the Municipal Labour Officer 14 February 1966; IAD RAB N9 vol 3, "Measures to Combat Crime Amongst Idle Youth", UBC/NEAD circular for information 2 August 1971.

[61] For youths and legal urban status see Black Sash AE862, Advice Office Reports, particularly for November 1968 and July 1969.

[62] RDM 16 February 1955.

[63] The World 28 July 1965.

[64] The Star 13 July 1972, "Violence in Soweto".

[65] Chief Seargeant Isaac Lebojoa, known as "LBJ", apparently established an excellent reputation for crime-fighting in Diepkloof. He commanded a force of 70 Blackjacks in 1968 but argued that he needed 100 men under him to do a really effective job in Diepkloof; see Post 27 October 1968.

[66] It was reported in the Post 22 January 1967, for instance, that a municipal policeman in Killarney, Soweto, "with a swollen face and closed eyes ran for his dear life as blood spurted from two knife wounds... He had been attacked by a mob of hoodlums that robbed him of his identity card, a police overcoat and wrist watch." See also IAD WRAB N9 vol 1, extract from discussion at Joint AB meeting 23 February 1967 and letter from Ellen Hellmann to Carr 5 April 1967.

[67] The World 10 October 1969 and 21 December 1969.

[68] See, for example, Post 15 September 1968 which reports on three Blackjacks jailed on several counts of extortion. See also The World 13 March 1969 and Post 3 November 1968 and 4 August 1968.

The expansion of the municipal police represented the first attempt by the local administration to intervene directly in crime control. Residents, however, were dissatisfied with policing and persistently demanded the right to form their own crime-fighting units. The JNEAD, although often sympathetic to these demands, was not prepared to stick its neck out to the point of authorising civil guards which had been banned by the SAP and central government. Carr himself had doubts about civil guards because of numerous complaints of brutality and the fear that "hooligans and criminals" were able to penetrate the operations.[69] Instead, the JNEAD sought compromise solutions which involved civilian participation in tightly monitored administrative operations. Two good examples during the 1960s were Superintendents' Patrols and Police Reservists.

The Superintendents' Patrols were first mooted by the JNEAD as early as 1957 but seem to have started operating in the early 1960s. The Patrols were designed specifically to deal with juvenile delinquency and they were to be carefully monitored by local Superintendents. Carr made this clear in a 1960 circular.

> The purpose of the patrol is to combat juvenile delinquency and idleness amongst the Native youths under the age of 18 years in the Council locations and Native villages. Native youths found at railway stations, bus termini, taxi ranks, shops and other places where Natives tend to congregate, will be interrogated and those who are unable to give satisfactory account of themselves, taken to the respective Superintendent's office for attention. A written report of the circumstances relative to each case must be submitted to the Superintendent.[70]

The Patrols, equipped with a radio-linked truck, were not authorised to deal with anyone over the age of eighteen. Their main targets were "loitering" young men. Any suspected adult offenders were referred directly to the Superintendents or SAP. Carr received monthly reports from various township Superintendents between 1962 and 1969 detailing substantial numbers apprehended. In most cases just under half of those apprehended were under eighteen years of age. These youths were screened and usually released. The older cases were referred to the SAP, many of which resulted in influx control related charges.[71]

Carr was particularly enthusiastic about the formation of a Police Reserve which was finally given the go-ahead by the SAP in 1967. "The latest announcement by the Chief of Police about the formation of a Bantu Police Reserve," he commented in a memorandum, "is of the utmost importance as it now makes it possible for ordinary law abiding citizens in Soweto to play their part on a properly organised and disciplined basis, in doing something positive about crime in their area." The JNEAD, he said, had urged this step for many years.[72] The SAP authorised a Reservist force, made up of Soweto citizens, consisting of 500 men. The creation of the new force was met with enthusiasm by the World newspaper while Peter Lengene announced in July 1967 that 400 men in his constituency had quickly volunteered to join up.[73] Like other JNEAD stopgap measures, however, the power and resources of the Reservists were too limited to make a significant impact on the overall crime crisis.

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[69] IAD WRAB N9 vol 2, "Crime in Soweto", WJPC/MH 20 April 1967.

[70] IAD WRAB N9/4, circular from Carr to Superintendents and Chief Inspectors 21 December 1960; see also circulars dated 4 December 1957, 15 September 1959 and 5 April 1962 dealing with the proposed scheme.

[71] IAD WRAB N9/4, monthly Superintendents' reports; interview, Carr (b). See also Carr, Soweto, p149.

[72] IAD WRAB N9 vol 2, "Crime in Soweto", WJPC/MH 20 April 1967.

[73] The World 17 July 1967 and 12 December 1967, lead p1.

Advisory Boards and Civil Guards

Once crime started to accelerate again around mid 1961 adult Sowetans turned to Advisory Board members and, from 1968, Urban Bantu Councillors, for leadership. Residents regularly aired their grievances at local township meetings, which were organised by the ABs/UBCs. In October 1961, for instance, over 1000 residents attended a meeting on crime in Pimville.[74] In May 1963 The World reported on a crime meeting which it described as "the largest meeting to be held in far Soweto".[75] Between 1964 and 1968 there were reports of residents' meetings on crime in Orlando, Dube, Zola-Emdeni, Mofolo and Jabavu.[76] The credibility of Boardmen often rested on their ability to combat crime. In October 1966, for example, "The Naledi Township Advisory Board members were bitterly attacked at a rival Residents Association meeting for failing to give a lead in fighting the ever increasing wave of crime".[77] Boardmen, whose official powers were purely advisory, responded, first, by appealing vigorously to the authorities and, second, through organising practical community defence, usually in the form of illegal civil guards.

Throughout the 1960s Boardmen (and Councillors) made repeated requests to the JNEAD and SAP for improved police services. They asked for more police stations (by the late 1960s there were only four stations to service the entire Soweto complex), the expansion of both the municipal police and SAP, better pay, improved efficiency and more foot patrols.[78] Moreover, Boardmen and other prominent Sowetans were eager to cooperate directly with the SAP to combat crime. For instance, in March 1963 "high police authorities and leading figures in Soweto" worked together to come up with an anti-crime strategy.[79] In December 1965 Brigadier Steyn of the SAP met with Soweto businessmen, including AB member and president of Nafcoc, Richard Maponya, to discuss the "appalling" crime wave in the townships.[80] Boardmen participated directly in a big 1966 New Year's Day anti-crime swoop.[81] In November 1966 senior SAP officers held a meeting to discuss crime with AB and business figures at the house of P.Q. Vundla, a prominent AB personality.[82] Boardmen and businessmen, then, were willing to explore any available avenue to combat crime, including the SAP. But, as I have

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[74] The World 28 October 1961.

[75] The World 13 May 1963.

[76] GCP 23 February 1964; Post 15 May 1966; The World 7 February 1964, 15 November 1965, 30 July 1965, 6 October 1966, 18 December 1967 and 1 August 1968.

[77] The World 5 October 1966.

[78] IAD WRAB N9 Vol 1: letter from members of the Phiri, Mapetla, Senaoane, Moletsane, Tladi, Zola and Naledi ABs 31 December 1962; letter from the secretary of the Orlando AB to the manager JNEAD 13 October 1964; extract from discussion at meeting of Joint AB 23 February 1967. See also UNISA UBC Acc 244, special meeting of UBC 13 May 1968; IAD WRAB N9/4, UBC 95/1971, General Purposes and Housing Committee memorandum; The World 26 September 1963, 4 October 1965 and 6 October 1966; Post 6 November 1966 and 26 February 1967. By 1972, following the establishment of the Jabulani Police Station, there were five stations in Soweto. The others were Moroka, Meadowlands, Orlando and Diepkloof; see IAD WRAB N9 Vol3, memo entitled "South African Police Stations in Soweto".

[79] The World 5 March 1964.

[80] RDM 3 December 1965.

[81] The World 3 January 1966.

[82] Post 6 November 1966.

shown, the SAP, at best, were ineffectual and, at worst, exacerbated Soweto's crime crisis.

Apart from direct policing, residents and Boardmen called repeatedly for a variety of services which they felt would offset crime. Recreation facilities were seen as essential to keep unemployed youth off the streets. Peter Lengene, AB member for White City Jabavu, emphasised this in 1962: "The lack of amenities in the townships is the direct cause of the gangsterism there".[83] Residents wanted more private and public telephones so that they could feel less isolated from police posts.[84] They also called for improved streetlighting.[85] Perhaps the most important and persistent appeal was for additional school facilities. Many residents saw compulsory schooling as the only solution to juvenile delinquency. Councillor Rathebe, for example, observed in 1968 that "lack of schools is the reason for children gathering around the shops and being mischievous".[86] Despite the efforts of the local JNEAD, very little was done to fulfil these requests for urban social services during the high apartheid era. Although many residents were partially satisfied by the expansion of schooling, older teenagers continued to be neglected through the urban secondary school freeze. Residents were increasingly forced to draw on their own resources and take the law into their own hands.

Central to the project of combating crime was the reassertion of age hierarchy and parental discipline, something which older residents felt, with some justification, had disintegrated through the process of urbanisation.[87] Corporal punishment was perceived as a necessary element of parental discipline. In 1961 a prominent Soweto businessman, Paul Mosaka, tabled a proposal with the JNEAD to form the African Parent-Child Association aimed primarily at combating juvenile delinquency. He called for joint parental action and the use of corporal punishment. His proposal was greeted with enthusiasm by AB members.[88] There is no evidence to suggest that the association was ever formally constituted. It is likely that it ran into the same bureaucratic obstacles and delays that dogged the civil guard movement, which I discuss later. In 1966 T.W. Kambule, the popular and widely respected headmaster of Orlando High School, argued in a newspaper article that children had to be disciplined effectively in order to create an ordered society.[89] It was widely believed, moreover, that not only immediate family but any adult should have the right to discipline wayward children. This custom had fallen away in the context of "overprotective" urban nuclear families. Local leaders also felt hamstrung by white laws. At a special AB meeting discussing crime in April 1967 Boardmen, in particular James Mpanza, argued that parents should be given more legal latitude in disciplining and, if necessary, assaulting children. Juvenile law, it was argued, protected delinquents from serious punishment

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[83] The World 28 December 1962; see also editorial 13 February 1966.

[84] The World, letter to the editor, Hornsby Gqwaru of Johannesburg 28 January 1966; Post editorial 4 July 1971; IAD WRAB N9 vol 3, notes on meeting of Liaison Committee with officials of the SAP 23 August 1972.

[85] The World 28 February 1962; IAD WRAB N9 Vol 1, extract from discussion at meeting of Joint AB 23 February 1967; Post editorial 4 July 1971.

[86] UNISA UBC acc244, minutes of special meeting of Education and Health Committee, Jabavu 18 June 1968; The World 27 September 1965 (Stanley Motjuwadi's seven point plan to combat crime includes "compulsory education to the age of 16"), letter from S. Sidyiyo of White City, 1 March 1966, letter from Fraser Mothae of Kwa Thema, 16 October 1964.

[87] For a discussion of this with reference to the 1940s and 1950s see Glaser, "Anti-Social Bandits", pp 23-30.

[88] IAD WRAB 351/2, record of discussion between the manager JNEAD and Joint AB 1 March 1961.

[89] The World 4 March 1966; see also letters to the editor, P. Ngwenya of Orlando East 28 February 1966 and a nameless contributor 18 March 1966.

and they often literally got away with murder.[90]

There were a number of prominent strongmen in Soweto, usually involved in the AB and UBC structures, who established substantial followings through taking a tough line on crime. They were prepared to operate on the boundaries of legality, if necessary, in organising community responses to crime. Foremost amongst them were James Sofasonke Mpanza of Orlando and Peter Lengene of Jabavu. Mpanza's reputation stretched back to the 1940s squatter movement where he proved himself as a man of action. He retained a power base in the Orlando AB during the 1950s and 1960s. Many residents looked to him to discipline unruly youth. It was generally known that Mpanza ran a "parent's court" which tried youths and often sentenced them to corporal punishment. Officially, Mpanza denied the existence of the court as it was illegal.[91] As I mentioned earlier, Mpanza was at the forefront of demands for the removal of legal constraints on parental discipline. He also harrangued the police for providing inadequate services and underestimating the crime problem in Soweto.[92] Mpanza always supported the transition from ABs to UBCs because the latter promised a certain widening of authority to include some policing functions. In the annual AB elections in 1962 Mpanza's candidates, standing on an explicitly pro-UBC ticket, swept all four Orlando seats in spite of the ANC's strong opposition to the concept of the UBCs. Mpanza clearly retained a powerful support base amongst older settled members of the community. A Zola resident writing to The World in 1965, articulated the feelings of many older Sowetans: "Sir, we are being attacked by our children. I wish to make a suggestion that Mr Sofasonke Mpanza be made the head overseer of all the locations."[93] From the early 1960s Lengene was extremely vocal on the issue of crime. His constituency, Jabavu, was known to be amongst the worst crime spots in Soweto. He called for better social services and for parental participation in disciplining children.[94] In 1966 K. Mlaba, a member of the AB who served under him, began organising "able-bodied men" for street patrols. Mlaba had also been running a parents' court to deal with minor cases.[95] In early 1967 Lengene backed a scheme by Soweto Boardmen to organise civic guards in the hope of making the townships "too hot for the thugs".[96] Like Mpanza, Lengene clearly had a substantial support base. At a meeting attended by over 500 people at the Mavis Isaacson Hall in December 1967 "hundreds of residents shouted hoarse approval... when Mr Peter Lengene, chairman of the Jabavu AB, said a 'tight connection' between the parents and the Boards to fight teenage crime would be made" in the following year.[97]

Civic guards were not new to the 1960s. From the late 1940s through to the late 1950s informal

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[90] IAD WRAB N9 vol 2, minutes of AB meeting 13 April 1967. In a Star feature on Soweto crime five years later UBC members Peter Lengene and Richard Maponya blamed Soweto s violence partly on judicial procedure which tended to give criminals what they regarded as excess benefit of the doubt. Lengene commented: "In our society it would be unthinkable that a criminal would be allowed a lawyer." Maponya called for "some kind of compromise between African traditions and White law", for example "by having Black police commanders and Black magistrates take cognisance of black traditions, such as the disciplining of Black children by elders without subsequent assault charges". See The Star 13 July 1972, "Violence in Soweto" by Jaap Boekkooi.

[91] The World 24 September 1967.

[92] The World 28 February 1964.

[93] The World 22 February 1965.

[94] The World 28 February 1962; IAD WRAB vol 1, extract from minutes of Jabavu AB 16 February 1963.

[95] The World 20 April 1966.

[96] The World 22 January 1967.

[97] The World 18 December 1967.

civic guards emerged and disappeared throughout the Witwatersrand. Initially the local authorities and police tolerated the patrols. Provided the correct application procedures were followed, the guards were allowed to operate, usually with some kind of police supervision. Gradually, though, the SAP began to clamp down on them in the second half of the 1950s. There were many reports of civil guards abusing their power and breaking the law. Perhaps more importantly, the SAP found it difficult to control the guards. In the mid- to late 1950s the ANC supported and helped to organise civic guards and it is possible that the SAP saw the guards as a potential political threat.[98] In July 1958 George Xorile, a veteran AB member and mayor of Orlando, was charged for operating an illegal civic guard. Eleven other "prominent residents" appeared with him. Although the twelve were later cautioned and discharged, it was the first high profile prosecution of its kind in Johannesburg and it appears to have dealt a blow to the civic guard movement.[99] By late 1960 there were renewed demands for civic guards from township residents.[100] In December of that year William Carr, perplexed by the spiralling crime problem, became more sympathetic to the idea. He recommended to the Deputy Commissioner of Police that permission be granted to form police-monitored civic guards.[101] His recommendation, however, was turned down by the police authorities without explanation.[102]

Goodhew argues that crime acted as an additional means of controlling urban African communities and that it was in the interests of the government to obstruct crime prevention initiatives.[103] However, the government's response to civil guards was never as coherent or as conspiratorial as Goodhew suggests. Clearly, the Nationalist administration was determined to direct as few resources as possible into improving or maintaining urban African living conditions but there is no evidence to suggest that it actively encouraged high crime rates in the townships. On the contrary, spiralling crime embarrassed the government, which liked to portray itself as a benevolent and efficient force. The SAP disapproved of civil guards because it was suspicious of any body which attempted to take the administration of law and order into its own hands. Civil guards subverted government notions of orderly top-down township administration. An independent law enforcement body of township residents was probably also seen as politically risky in the sense that its organisational energy might potentially be turned against the state rather than merely against crime.

Despite its illegality and the arduous and hazardous nature of patrol duty, there was a spate of civic guard activity in Soweto throughout the 1960s. The authorities found the movement difficult to control both because of its informal nature and its ambiguous legality. The SAP could not very well prosecute a group of established adult residents patrolling their neighbourhoods. The authorities could only clamp down when there were technical infringements or specific complaints of abuse. In February 1962, for instance, "Eleven men who went out on a weekend

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[98] See Glaser, "Students, Tsotsis and the Congress Youth League: Youth Organisation on the Rand in the 1940s and 1950s", Perspectives in Education, 10, 2, Summer 1988/89, p 11 and D. Goodhew, "The People's Police Force: Communal Policing Initiatives in the Western Areas of Johannesburg, circa 1930-1962", JSAS, 19, 3, September 1993. See also The Star 7 January 1963, "Africans evolving an answer to tsotsis" by Carnegie Buyana for a brief description of the abuses of the civic guard movement and its subsequent disappearance in the 1950s.

[99] The World 26 July 1958 and 30 July 1958.

[100] Zola residents made this demand at a big crime meeting; see The World 26 November 1960. See also IAD WRAB 351/1, letter from O.M. Makapan of the West Native Township AB to the manager JNEAD 8 November 1960.

[101] IAD WRAB 351/1, letter from manager JNEAD to Deputy Cmmissioner of Police 6 December 1960.

[102] IAD WRAB 351/1, letter from Deputy Commissioner of Police to the manager JNEAD 28 November 1960.

[103] Goodhew, "The People's Police-Force", especially p 469.

civil guard duty at Meadowlands landed up in the Meadowlands police cells a few hours later." They were all fined for carrying dangerous weapons and impersonating police.[104] In November 1965 Carr again appealed to the SAP to review its position on civic guards but Brigadier L.J. Steyn, the Divisional Commissioner of the SAP, was firm in his dismissal: "My appeal to the public to assist the police in their fight against crime does not in any circumstance warrant the formation of a body of persons to take over the functions of the S.A. Police... No necessity exists for the the establishment of organisations such as you propose."[105] Nevertheless, crime was out of control and somebody had to do the policing.

In 1959 crime in Orlando was apparently curbed fairly effectively as residents accompanied police on patrols. The Orlando AB called for a renewal of this system in 1963 "occasioned by the fact that lawlessness is increasing in the townships". The request was immediately turned down by the Divisional Commissioner.[106] But in July 1965, following persistent appeals from residents in a very rare case of official support, police granted permission for a civic guard in Orlando with limited authority. "With the rising crime wave and ingreasing number of murders in Soweto, Mr David Twala, public spirited founder of the Orlando Parents Association, has been given the green light from the police for his home guard to patrol Orlando." Twala managed to gather a guard of 50 people together in the hope that "with elderly home guardmen walking the streets at night, tsotsis are scared off."[107]

In 1964 AB members applied for permission to set up a civic guard in Moroka in response to a crime wave which had reached "alarming heights".[108] Permission appears to have been refused. A successful guard was established, though, in spite of Moroka Boardmen getting cold feet about breaching legality. In October 1964 The World reported: "Rockville residents have voted against members of the local Advisory Board and unanimously agreed that the home guards carry on their task to combat crime in the area - whether it be lawful for them to do so or not."[109]

Until late 1965 Mofolo residents rejected civic patrols, preferring instead to concentrate on pressuring the SAP to take a tougher approach on local crime.[110] However, in response to a renewed crime wave the following year, an informal guard was set up, "patrolling the streets at night armed with sticks and trying to break up the groups of teenagers who loiter on corners waiting to pounce on lonely women and old men".[111] By early 1967 Boardman Hezekiel Modiba, in response to an ambush of guardsmen by a "mob of gangsters", was appealing for more residents to get involved in the local Mofolo guard.[112]

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[104] The World 10 February 1965.

[105] IAD WRAB N9 vol 1, letter from Brig. L. J. Steyn, Divisional Commissioner SAP, to manager JNEAD 30 November 1965.

[106] IAD WRAB N9 vol 1, letter from Self Mampuru, Secretary of the Orlando AB to the manager JNEAD 7 October 1963 and letter from Divisional Commissioner, Witwatersrand, to the manager JNEAD 21 October 1963.

[107] The World 19 July 1965; for residents' appeals see 20 June 1965.

[108] IAD WRAB N9 vol 1, letter from the South West Bantu Township No 1 AB to the manager JNEAD 26 May 1964.

[109] The World 2 October 1964.

[110] The World 15 November 1965.

[111] Post 24 April 1966.

[112] Post 1 January 1967.

In the "Wild West" of Soweto, a successful civic guard emerged in Zola. At a Zola residents' meeting in November 1960, speakers, complaining that Zola had become "the toughest township in Johannesburg", called for a civic guard.[113] By the end of 1962 Boardmen announced the formation of a vigilante squad, primarily to deal with the activities of the two big local youth gangs, the Eleven Boys and the German Spoilers, alleged to have been responsible for several murders in the township.[114] By May 1963 Zola had established a reputation for success in dealing with crime.[115] The Zola vigilantes, known as "Masinghafi" ("let us not die"), were criticised by residents for abuse of power in early 1965 and the AB promised an inquiry into the abuses. Nevertheless The World described the guard as successful.[116] In July of that year a Zola Boardman, S L. Zwane, commented: "Since we started patrolling, crime has been reduced to a minimum and we feel we are getting results.[117] There are no further references to the Masinghafi after 1965.

A successful anti-crime street committee system emerged in Tladi/Moletsane in 1969 under the leadership of local strongman, Leonard Mosala. Unlike most civil guards, they obtained the approval of the nearby Jabulani Police and the backing of the local superintendent. They kept on the right side of the law by merely making arrests and avoiding the common civic guard practice of meting out justice on the spot. The organisation had an early success in 1969 when it engaged in a "pitched battle" with local youth gangs. By 1972 the results had been "sensational by Soweto standards": In Tladi there had been no street murders for two years, apart from one gang murder, and in Moletsane only one.[118]

Another successful civic guard emerged in Chiawelo as early as the late 1950s. There was a fairly well established sense of community in Chiawelo as most of the residents had moved there en bloc from a nearby squatter settlement called New Look. Initially the new township suffered from tsotsi crime particularly since street lighting was inadequate and there was little protection for workers returning home after dark. There was virtually no police presence in the area. Under the leadership of an elected induna, Mqanduli, an effective guard system was put into place. Residents used whistles to alert each other of danger. "Every male person who was not a youth," recalls an ex-resident, "was expected to perform duties aimed at the prevention of crime. It was an obligation for every older person to wake up at whatever time of the night when he hears a whistle."[119] Mqanduli organised nightly patrols which disarmed youths in the streets and escorted workers home from the Kliptown Station. Criminals caught in the act were usually beaten on the spot before being handed over to the authorities. The civil guard, it seems, virtually stamped out local crime for some time. Later in the 1960s (the chronology is vague here) the guard became less effective as the SAP intervened to curb its powers. Mqanduli from then on could only deal with domestic disputes and petty criminal cases. This, combined with a certain degree of corruption, eventually reduced the effectiveness of the guard.[120]

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[113] The World 26 November 1960.

[114] The World 20 December 1962.

[115] Residents from other "far Soweto" townships wanted to share strategies and get ideas from Zola residents at a big anti-crime meeting; see The World 13 May 1963.

[116] The World 5 January 1965.

[117] The World 16 July 1965.

[118] The Star 13 July 1972, "Violence in Soweto" by Jaap Boekkooi.

[119] Interview. Ngenyama (Bonner)

[120] Interviews: Ngenyama, Mahwayi, Mboweni, Ndlovu, Mbulane (all Bonner).

Civic guards, then, were a sporadic and uneven phenomenon during the 1960s. Their effectiveness in particular townships depended on locally specific variables such as strong leadership figures, the attitudes of local superintendents and police and levels of community cohesion. The degree of discipline of local guards and the forcefulness of personalities tended to make the difference between success and failure. It is a testimony to the depth of the crime crisis that, despite the risks of illegality and the danger of patrols, civic guards operated so persistently. Township residents were caught in a desperate double bind between rampant youth crime and unsympathetic authorities: in order to protect their lives and property they had to risk breaking the law.

Had the South African government come up with an effective anti- crime policy during the 1960s it might well have gained substantial legitimacy amongst the older, more conservative residents of Soweto who were determined to differentiate themselves from the criminal classes. There were many Sowetans who identified with The World newspaper, which stressed the importance of making "the hard and often impossible climb towards good citizenship" and called upon "the law-abiding, self-respecting element" to "make a stand for law and order".[121] They were determined to salvage a degree of safety, security and dignity in the harsh Sowetan landscape. Instead of attempting to meet these needs, however, government laws and policing strategies criminalised the entire urban African population, blurring the distinction between "respectable folk" and "hooligans". Young gangsters and adult working people were subjected to the same humiliations in pass raids; a pass offender was dealt with in the same way as a mugger or rapist. Throughout the 1960s, the central government ignored local administrators such as William Carr who perceived that the most effective way to achieve social stability and "civic responsibility" in Soweto was, first, by supplying decent housing and services and, second, "by refraining from imprisoning thousands of people for purely technical contraventions of one of many complicated laws. If only genuine criminals stood in peril of imprisonment, then the stigma of gaol and fear of its consequences may slowly be restored to the ordinary people."[122]

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[121] The World, editorials 13 June 1959 and 1 March 1967.

[122] IAD WRAB N9 vol 2, "Crime in Soweto", WJPC/MH 20 April 1967.