

**Introduction to
“Reflections on Land, Office and Wealth in the
South African Republic, 1850-1900”**

Stanley Trapido's chapter, "Reflections on Land, Office and Wealth in the South African Republic", was published in 1980 at a time when few if any academics had dealt effectively with social and economic relations and structures in the Transvaal, especially for the pre-industrial period. Trapido correctly pointed out that, because of the emphasis on nationalism in the study of Afrikaner people in South Africa, the important social relations in the South African Republic had been neglected. Characteristically modest about his own attempt to redress this, regarding it as "tentative and preliminary", Trapido's intervention is nevertheless particularly noteworthy when one remembers that it was originally presented as a seminar paper as far back as 1973.¹ In 1980 he included important additional information and perspectives.² At the same time, his contribution was put into perspective by the editors of the collection in which his chapter was published. They observed that up to that point, little had been done to address the enormous gaps in research and conceptualisation in South African historiography since the publication of C.W. de Kiewiet's *History of South Africa, Social and Economic* in 1941.³

Trapido identifies important trends for the understanding of the structures and dynamics of the community of white settlers in the Transvaal from around the 1850s onwards. He argues convincingly that this settler community was an extension of "relationships of power and property which existed in the Cape Colony". He also emphasises the important role of land in the economy of the fledgling state and in class formation among Afrikaner settlers. At a stage when the state was too weak to generate sufficient revenue for its military expeditions and own

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1. "The South African Republic: Class Formation and the State, 1850-1900", *Societies of Southern Africa in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, 3, 1973, pp 53-65.
 2. He adds, for example, a more elaborate explanation of the "reproduction of relationships of power and property which had existed in the Cape Colony" (pp 351-352), more information on the farms of S.J.P. Kruger and others, Kruger's concessions policy, the Reverend Kestell's testimony in 1938 on *bywoners*, and the largest addition on the "change in property relationships in agriculture" and the "increase in food production" after the Anglo Boer War.
 3. S. Marks and A. Atmore (eds), *Economy and Society in Pre-Industrial South Africa* (Longman, London, 1980), p 1. Also see: P. Richardson, "Review of Economy and Society", *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 6, 2, 1983, p 315.

civil administration, land was used *inter alia* in lieu of salaries, as security for the so-called *Mandaaten* for services rendered to the state and for the issue of paper currency, as well as in attempts to establish a bank. The accumulation of land in the hands of Afrikaner notables and land companies was partly responsible for the establishment of classes in Afrikaner society. Afrikaner notables occupied the offices of *landdrosts*, field cornets, commandants and members of the *Volksraad*, which gave them various advantages over other people when it came to accumulating land. This was a contributing factor in the creation of a class of *bywoners*: “Rural impoverishment should be set against land accumulation and the relationship between the two should be noted”. The standing of the *bywoner* in Afrikaner society diminished once the land of the landowner became more commercially viable.

The latter part of the nineteenth century saw the emergence of mining capitalists, and a struggle for power between them and the governing class ensued. In discussing the results of the South African War, Trapido points out that relatively little consideration has been given to the “change in property relationships in agriculture and to the attendant increase in food production”. He explains trends in this regard, with special reference to the roles of the Transvaal Land Bank and the Transvaal Department of Agriculture.

In this chapter, republished here, Trapido succeeds in analysing complicated social relations in a remarkably clear-cut way. With it he made a significant contribution to South African historiography at a time when it was necessary to break new ground. His chapter “opened up stimulating perspectives on the processes and forces inherent to the nineteenth century Transvaal agrarian history”, providing historians and others with important instruments of analysis.⁴

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4. J.S. Bergh, “‘To Make Them Serve’: The 1871 Transvaal Commission on African Labour as a Source for Agrarian History”, *History in Africa*, 29, 2002, p 40.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

*Reflections on land, office and
wealth in the South African
Republic, 1850-1900*

Stanley Trapido

The emphasis on nationalism in the study of Afrikaner people in South Africa has meant that important, probably crucial, social relations in the South African Republic (between 1850 and 1900) have been very largely ignored. In particular there has been little or no examination of property relationships and the forms of production which these created. By focusing our attention on these relationships we may gain new insights not only into the development of classes within Afrikaner society but also into the state which supported and maintained those structures. This essay must serve as a tentative and preliminary attempt to outline some important aspects of these social relationships.

A partial market in land existed from the beginning of white Afrikaner occupation of the territory north of the Vaal River, which led to rapid accumulation among Afrikaner notables but also to landlessness among their clients. The major source of profit from agriculture (and the source of support for both notables and clients) lay in the various forms of rent paid by African producers who had often been the cultivators of the land prior to its seizure by Afrikaner settlers. The state which emerged from these property relations was created by the dominant, quasi-feudal notables who, with their functionaries, used their dominant position to acquire more land. In addition to the accumulation of land by Afrikaner notables, speculative land companies owned by South African-based entrepreneurs with European financial connections, contributed to the proletarianisation of sections of the Afrikaner population.

Partly in an attempt to alleviate intra-Afrikaner conflict, Afrikaner notables who controlled the state used their position to make irregular exactions upon the internationally financed deep-level gold-mining industry which was established in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Because profits from deep-level gold-mining investments were delayed, these exactions caused intense anxiety about costs. In addition, the system of

land-holding (determined by custom or speculative ownership) led to under-utilisation and made it impossible to meet the need of the gold mines for cheap food. The systems of agricultural production and gold-mining production were incompatible, and after the South African War of 1899-1902, property relationships in agriculture swiftly changed. But while the notables were transformed into capitalist farmers, the proletarianisation of their former clients continued to its ultimate conclusion.

In 1850, ten years before the final unification of the four major Voortrekker communities north of the Vaal, the white settlers were a relatively homogeneous population committed to providing large tracts of land to members of their *maatskappy*. The leaders of the several parties of pastoralists were already wealthy and they and their kin were as a result in an advantaged position when the original distribution of land took place. The result was the reproduction of relationships of power and property which had existed in the Cape Colony from which they had migrated.

In the Dutch settlement at the Cape, popular elections played no part in the institutions of government and the major offices were held by metropolitan officials of the Dutch East India Company. These transient officials sought the assistance of the wealthy settlers in administering the colony. Both in the advisory *Burgerraad* in Cape Town and in the courts of *heemraaden*—the institutions created for the settlement of local disputes—in the districts of the interior, it was the wealthiest property owners who received the company's nomination. Similarly, the landdrosts, the chief administrators in the district, were also drawn from the Cape Town economic hierarchy to which they ultimately retired. Their reasons for being willing to undertake this service were twofold. First, it was the outlying districts which contained grazing lands for cattle which were either owned by, or would have to be sold to, the monopoly butchers of Cape Town. Since the meat trade provided the colonial elite with a major part of its wealth, it had a crucial interest in the maintenance of frontier stability, for when this stability broke down, so did the cattle trade. Secondly, service to the company was rewarded by grants of land in the districts in which they served and helped the already economically dominant group by providing it with additional grazing facilities.¹

Serving the courts of *heemraaden* and the landdrost was the veldcornet. In law, veldcornets were appointed by the landdrosts but it was the *heemraaden* who selected them. Though more representative of the whole population, the veldcornets were men of greater substance than their fellow burghers. The major function of the veldcornet was the organising of the commandos, the mounted militia in which every male burgher had by law and custom to serve. The main role played by the commando was

the acquiring of forced labour and the seizing of stock from Khoisan and then Nguni people. It is interesting, however, that these activities were not sufficiently legitimate to go without the justification that they were acts of retaliation. When the events known as the Great Trek of 1834-8 took place its leaders emerged from the wealthiest of the migrants. This leadership ultimately derived its power from its ability to maintain the commando in the field, to provide it not only with food but also with largely imported arms and ammunition which had to be paid for in negotiable currency.²

The administrative machinery of the embryonic Transvaal state was incapable of collecting sufficient revenue to finance both military expenditure and the barest essentials of civil administration, including the collecting of taxes. Between 1850 and 1876 the cost of acquiring and defending land was far more than the republican exchequer could pay, and payment was therefore made by securing land against debts. This in its turn inevitably involved the state in the search for new land with further expenditure which was again secured by the provision of land against Republican currency. Land used to secure debts was no longer available for burgher occupation, and provided a further reason for the conquest of more land.

In an attempt to solve the financial problems caused by military expenditure and the initial inability to raise revenue, two related sets of financial manipulations were attempted. Within the first set of proposals the simplest aspects involved providing land in lieu of salaries for administrators and directing creditors to taxpayers who were in arrears. More complex was the issuing of exchequer bills or *Mandaaten* for services rendered to the state. *Mandaaten* were not legal tender, but were secured by government farms.³ The next measure, taken in 1865, five years after all the Transvaal burgher communities had combined to form the South African Republic, was the issuing of paper currency. The notes also were secured by government farms and were intended to recall the *Mandaaten*. The number of *Mandaaten* issued exceeded the notes issued by the Republic, and a further issue again secured against government farms—three hundred on this occasion—was made in 1867. These notes were insufficient to meet new government expenditure and in 1868 a finance commission was established which proposed, among other things, the issue of more notes against no less than one thousand farms or 3 million morgen.

It is extremely difficult to summarise the variations of these schemes which were introduced not only by the *Volksraad*, but also by landdrosts who issued an unrecorded number of *Mandaaten* and failed to recall either their own or the state's issue when required to do so. In addition clergymen, traders, and private individuals issued credit notes which became

known as *good-fors* because of the monetary chaos. It is hardly surprising that the Republic's currency was unacceptable in most commercial transactions and there were occasions when even government departments refused to accept currency which was supposedly legal tender.⁴

The second set of financial proposals concerned attempts to establish a bank among the burgher communities. These had less impact than the monetary programme but they help to illustrate the use to which land was put. The earliest proposal was made by a Hollander, Jacobus Stuart, who had very close connections with Amsterdam merchants involved in the South African trade.⁵ Stuart's proposals, accepted by the Potchefstroom Volksraad in 1853, involved his being given the right to sell a hundred 3 000 morgen farms in Holland for £450 each. The capital raised by the sale of these farms was to be invested in the *Landsbank* and the Dutch settlers Stuart hoped to attract were to be invited to subscribe additional share capital to the bank. Stuart had no success in Holland. Whatever chances of success he may have had were in any case reduced by the scepticism of rival Dutch merchants.⁶

Similar proposals were made a decade later in 1863 by a Scottish adventurer, Alexander McCorkindale, who advocated the establishment of a *Bank der Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek*. McCorkindale had previously undertaken to establish the London and South African Commercial, Agricultural and Mining Company which was to purchase two hundred farms from the government at £40 each and settle these with European immigrants. Eventually eighty farms were purchased—in all about 110 000 morgen—in an area of the eastern Transvaal named New Scotland. McCorkindale made a variety of industrial and commercial proposals to Pretorius and the Volksraad. He proposed building a harbour on Delagoa Bay and making the Maputa and Pongola Rivers navigable. In addition he proposed constructing roads, improving the postal service, and attracting engineers, mechanics, doctors and teachers from Europe to the Republic. To undertake these schemes he required that the government provide him with a hundred farms as security for the raising of a loan of £250 000 and for his services he proposed that the government give him two hundred farms. Nothing came of these later proposals but they indicate the profligate way in which commercial adventurers were ready to dispose of land.⁷

The Republic failed to establish a bank of its own but its new President, Thomas François Burgers, was able to negotiate a favourable loan with the Cape Commercial Bank and the state was therefore able to *redeem* its outstanding debts. The bank was heavily involved in supporting the Burgers regime for what de Kiewiet describes as 'political and not financial' reasons.⁸ Burgers's attempt to raise a further European loan was apparently

intended to free himself from the Cape Bank's tutelage. It was also intended that capital be raised for building a railway from Delagoa Bay to the Republic which would have freed the Republic from dependence on the ports of British colonies. No sooner had Burgers made these attempts, however, than the Republic was involved in another and very costly war against the Pedi. The Commercial Bank despaired of recovering its loans and the Republic's creditors played an important part in persuading the British Government to annex the territory, which was also at that time part of a wider imperial political programme in South Africa. Annexation did not save the Cape Commercial Bank which went into liquidation in 1881, claiming land worth £400 000 which it had been given as security for its loans.⁹

The administration of the Transvaal (as the annexed Republic was called) was placed under Theophilus Shepstone, the powerful Natal Secretary for Native Affairs. Shepstone made J.C.A. Henderson his honorary financial Commissioner, which promised little for a change in the Transvaal's property relations. The latter had been a banker, was one of the prime movers in attempting to raise capital for a railway from Durban to the Transvaal which left him hostile toward Burgers's Delagoa Bay proposals, and, while in Shepstone's service, established what de Kiewiet has called 'one of those land-jobbing companies'. Henderson's Transvaal Board of Executors and Trust Company included the Government secretary, two managing officials of the Cape Commercial Bank and George Moodie, 'the entirely dishonest promoter of the Lebombo Railway Company'.¹⁰ Before the Cape Commercial Bank went into liquidation Henderson had appropriated British funds to give its claims preferential treatment. His activities undermined British policy and went a long way toward creating the conditions which rallied republicans to overthrow the regime, but his association with the Transvaal was not to end there. In 1900 Henderson's Consolidated Corporation Limited owned eighty farms in the Transvaal, and it is very probable that he was himself a director of other land companies.¹¹

In 1900 when the Lands Settlement Commission took evidence it was told that 1 400 farms were owned by land companies. Intelligence reports, however, indicate that at least another seven hundred farms were owned by companies.¹² J.S. Marais reports that in 1899 the Colonial Office received a letter from a committee claiming to represent companies who owned over eight million acres in the Republic. The view that these land companies were merely ancillary to mining activities is not well founded. The prospectus of the Oceana Land Company, published in London in 1891, offered 105 farms suitable for agricultural purposes and by 1900 the

Company owned 224 farms.¹³ Many of the Transvaal Consolidated Land Exploration Company's 656 farms were acquired before 1883, and it offered a large number of farms suitable for agricultural purposes for sale in 1894. For its part the Republic continued to use land to secure its debts; Paul Kruger was reported, for example, to have given 'a large amount of land' to, among others, the Netherlands Railway Company.¹⁴

It should be apparent that the usual explanation for 'landlessness' in the Transvaal is unsatisfactory. It is not enough to posit a group of unprogressive farmers lacking initiative, but set on providing a landed inheritance for all their sons by subdividing land until it was no longer economically viable. Rural impoverishment should be set against land accumulation and the relationship between the two should be noted.¹⁵ The process by which land became the Republic's major resource in its dealings with outsiders was initiated in its dealings with its own officials. Land accumulation began among officials who were given land in lieu of salaries and who were thereby gradually encouraged to perceive land as a marketable asset. To begin with this may have created hardship.¹⁶ But it was ultimately perceived as gain when land values increased. When we ask what kind of people within the various communities became officials we see that the situation was one which provided opportunities for certain members of the community to consolidate already existing advantages. Most officials were elected and the landdrost—the only appointed official—was dependent upon local approval for the confirmation and retention of his appointment.¹⁷ The veldcorner who had most local authority was almost inevitably elected from a family of local notables. Status was acquired from wealth in cattle, and wealth in cattle enabled the owner to settle down and hire others to do the arduous task of herding. Thus, with large herds, activities were centralised, and kin and others were employed to take cattle to widely-dispersed pastures. In a community where there was constant movement among burgher farmers, some of them abandoning old and seeking new pastures, few other people were settled long enough to acquire local prestige.

The veldcorner—the pivotal official of the burgher state—played interchangeable military and civil roles. He was responsible to the *Krygsraad* (Military Council) and to the administrative and judicial authority of the landdrost. In his military role, he was entrusted with maintaining a list of combatants in his ward and for summoning these for military service. But, above all, the veldcorner was responsible for inspecting claims to farms to enable them to be transferred from the state to citizens of the republic, and for placing in service every coloured person not subordinate to any of the African chiefs.¹⁸ It is apparent, therefore, that whatever the rules of

the constitution (and for all that he was usually a benign paternal figure),¹⁹ the veldcornet, with so much power in the apportionment of land and African labour in a community of constant flux, was well placed for accumulating landed property. The landdrost, who was responsible for putting up for sale land for which taxes had not been paid, had access to valuable information about land on the market. His responsibility for the issuing of licences to 'shopkeepers, itinerant foreign traders, auctioneers' and his role as chief judicial officer enhanced his authority. Moreover the office of veldcornet was most often a stepping stone to higher office and a very high proportion of those who became members of the legislature, the Volksraad, began their careers as veldcornets.²⁰

In the two decades between 1850 and 1870 the burgers of the Transvaal were relatively prosperous and one should not equate the condition of the state's finances with those of its citizens. Ostrich feathers, ivory, cattle, hides and wool provided substantial exports, particularly from the Potchefstroom district.²¹ The traders who came originally as *smouses to nagmaal* remained to establish permanent stores. They exchanged their goods for agricultural products or products of the hunt which they sold or passed on to their principals in the coastal ports. Despite their hinterland, Transvaal dorps had a solid core of English businessmen who were joined or replaced at the end of the nineteenth century by East European Jews.²²

The combination of President Burgers's loan, the discovery of gold in the Lydenburg district and the experience of administration made for greater efficiency, and by 1870, for example, officials were receiving their salaries in cash. In the main, however, an improvement in administration primarily meant an improvement in tax-collecting. It coincided with a general decline in prosperity among the republic's citizens which was possibly intensified by relatively efficient tax-collection. Game was now a wasting asset, and those who had primarily been hunters abandoned or sold farms and followed the diminishing elephant herds. Between 1850 and 1868 various Volksraads attempted to raise taxes by exhortation, fines, proclamations and hectoring instructions to landdrosts, with little or no effect.²³ By 1873 the situation had changed dramatically. It is significant that the Volksraad found it necessary to pass a resolution instructing landdrosts not to sell free-hold farms of debtors for less than the owners owed the state.²⁴ For those who owed the state money and were faced with having to leave their farms, to sell was more to their advantage than merely to abandon, and who was better placed to know that an owner wished to sell (or barter) his farm than local officials involved in tax assessment and collection?

Although the imminent auction of abandoned farms had to be advertised

in the *Staats Courant*, and later also in the local papers, local officials were in the best position to know whether land was coming on to the market.²⁵ As a young veldcornet Paul Kruger is said to have acquired several farms 'by barter' before 1846 and before he came president he acquired much land at a time when it 'went begging'. His major biographer, D.W. Krüger, reports that he received a large number of farms for services rendered to the state. In addition, between 1855 and 1866, he bought and sold at least fourteen farms.²⁶ By the late 1850s Kruger no longer had the time for hunting, and like other burghers 'hat by hom reeds geruime tyd op grond-spekulasie toegelê'. The future Commandant-General of the Republic, Piet Joubert, had, as a veldcornet, acquired over a dozen farms by 1871. A veldcornet and a native commissioner in Vryheid, Louis Botha, acquired or purchased six farms, in all 16 000 acres, before he was elected to the Second Volksraad in 1895, to begin a political career which culminated in his being the first Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa.²⁷

In the last two decades of the century the dominant group of Afrikaner landowners had established an informal network which provided them with information and enabled them to accumulate profitable land-holdings.

Piet Joubert was in a fortunate position since 'persone wat hulle vaste eiendom wou verkoop het hom dikwels, en selde te vergeefs om 'n aanbod genader'.²⁸ Paul Kruger 'immediately saw the possibility of good speculation' when gold was discovered on the Witwatersrand. In August 1886, together with his son-in-law, Frikkie Eloff, he bought the farm, Geduld Springs, for £700. In July 1891 he bought Eloff's share for £4 000, before ultimately selling the 4 000 morgen farm to the Springs Real Estate Company for £107 700. By the last decade of the century, Piet Joubert owned no less than twenty-nine farms, most of them in the established districts of Piet Retief, Wakkerstroom, Lydenburg, Potchefstroom and Middleburg.³⁰ The Republic's last Registrar of Deeds said of one of Kruger's close associates, Alois Nellmapius, who bought a large number of farms at public auctions after 1883, that he 'knew the country well himself and obtained good information'.³¹ But who could have had better information than the very same Registrar of Deeds, Christoffel Minhaar, who was a director of the Transvaal Land Exploration Company, or the Surveyor-General of the Republic, Johannes Rissik, who was the company's chairman?³² Similarly, Louis Botha 'had his connections everywhere'. He not only managed a 'land syndicate' with his patron, the first Volksraad member for Vryheid, Lucas Meyer, but his syndicate, we are baldly told, 'yielded its thousand pounds from time to time'. Immediately after the South African war he was able to profit from selling land and 'indulging his speculative bent'.³³

Because the rich are always with us, so are the poor. The device to which the republic's governments always resorted in an attempt to cope with poverty was expansion into African areas, whether within or beyond the state's customary boundaries. This was never more than a palliative measure, and ultimately it made the situation worse. If land acquired from Africans provided a tolerable surplus from agriculture or mining, then it was almost certain to fall into the hands of rich burghers or land companies. Expeditions undertaken to seize new land—supposedly for the landless—were as often as not financed by speculators who received a half share from each of the freebooters whom they had provisioned.³⁴ If new land did not attract the attention of notables or speculators, then the poor who were settled on it—'de arme klas waar uit onze bevolking grootlyks bestaat'³⁵—were unlikely to succeed in getting the necessary attention of the central government.

New settlements at the very least need administration to establish access to water and to secure the issuing land-titles. Yet it is evident from the experience of the burghers granted land in that territory known to them as the 'Mapoch's gronden' that without the ability to influence the president, his executive or the Volksraad, even minimum administration was not forthcoming. The Mapoch settlers, although they owned little property were not without political energies, and it was the unresponsiveness of the administration which wore them down.³⁶ Their attempts to acquire title deeds were frustrated for more than twenty years and were only finally granted after the fall of the Republic and the establishment of Crown Colony rule. It took the central administration of the Republic ten years to make provision for the issuing of 'occupation-farm' title deeds. This was partly the result of the Executive Council's failure to inform the Volksraad of the need to provide for this modified form of tenure. Between 1883 and 1889 the settlers constantly petitioned the Volksraad to look into their affairs. Finally in 1895 they were asked to provide transfer fees which were beyond their means. These were quickly waived, but the Volksraad resolution doing so was not published for another eighteen months. In the meantime, the settlers were asked to pay survey costs, stamp duties and for title deeds.

There were other examples of government inertia and inefficiency which had a debilitating effect on the settlers. Regulations were required for the distribution of water in order to stop disputes which began immediately after the first settlers took possession. The Executive instructed local officials to settle all disputes out of court, but when this was found to be impossible the local veldcornet and the landdrost of Middleburg proposed draft regulations to the Volksraad at regular intervals between 1884 and

1889—the year in which these were finally adopted. Even then the regulations were printed but never distributed. It is inconceivable that burghers with large landed and other interests would have been neglected in the way in which the 'Mapoch settlers were.'³⁷

Although the subdivision of land and the diminution of game may have left many to eke out a precarious livelihood, it is probable that many burghers never owned land at any time. Not all of these can be described as 'indigent'.³⁸ Many who arrived after the initial land grants had been made, became tenant- or squatter-farmers on the land of large owners. The form of tenure by which these tenants held land varied considerably though it was always informal, and although all tenant-squatters are now categorised as 'bywoners' it is probable that a number of relationships are subsumed under this heading. It may well be that the usual description of bywoner is derived from observations made during the crucial period of change when land was being transformed from non-capitalist to capitalist production. Grosskopf reported that 'several of the old Transvaalers objected to the word "bywoner". "We used to say [he was told] "that we obtained '*vergunning*' (concession) on the farm."'³⁹

Many who were to become known as bywoners came from the Orange Free State and from the Cape in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and were men with movable property. They provided the landowner with a share of their crops and added to his status; the landlord was able to call upon his bywoners for commando service and they provided his family with affinal society. The bywoner's status declined and his tenure became more precarious, not because there was a shortage of land, but because land became commercially viable. The bywoner who previously had added to the landlord's status in a changed situation became an encumbrance. The South African war provided the opportunity for many landlords to refuse to resume patronage for those bywoners who had left the land to serve with Boer commandos.⁴⁰ As the Dutch Reformed Church Minister, the Reverend Kestel, revered among Afrikaner nationalists for his activities during and immediately after the South African war, told the 1938 Peoples Economic Congress called to consider measures to alleviate the lot of the poor whites,

Our forefathers had time for *bywoners*. The children learned to respect the *bywoner*. He ate at the same table as the landowner and he could feel that blood crawls where it cannot run.

After the Second War of Independence a new spirit was abroad, a spirit of each for himself. Then we had no more time for *bywoners*.⁴¹

In addition, land which was worked by the extended family, and which

for practical purposes was treated as a single farming unit, became the source of considerable rural misery and poverty when some members of the family sought to establish legal rights to sections of a farm. Then the greater part of those resident on the land were left as the owners of miserable holdings which were ultimately purchased, often under guise of charity, by those with the largest holdings.

By the last decade of the nineteenth century, when capital intensive gold-mining was well under way, the dominant class had maintained non-capitalist property relationships for a quarter of a century. The gold-mining industry at Barberton and then on the Witwatersrand created new entrepreneurial opportunities for this class. In order to raise revenue for the state after independence was regained in 1881, Paul Kruger's concessions policy was brought into being, the intention of which was to encourage those with capital and technical and managerial skill to come to the Republic by granting them monopolies to produce industrial goods. 'As far as internal policy is concerned', Kruger declared in 1883,

the first essential is the development of the resources of the country, so that our imports are reduced and our exports increased; or to speak more clearly, so that we export goods and import money, and not (as happens too frequently now) import products, to pay for which money flows out of the country. . . . Why should our products, such as wool, etc. be processed in foreign countries and expensively re-purchased by us. Already, under the government's protection, factories are being erected to manufacture our own gunpowder and ammunition, from the products of the country; a concession has been granted for a wool factory; and others have been requested for the preparation of leather. I shall always, insofar as it does not interfere with the freedom of trade, advance the cause of factories . . .

Mining concessions, Kruger continued, would ensure that 'proper machinery' was imported 'and that the mines would run in the best way, with less costs and more profit'. Moreover, the concessions policy would mean that the mining population was brought 'under the better control of responsible persons'.⁴²

In many ways these proposals were a revival of the McCorkindale schemes.⁴³ Kruger envisaged that the concessions would provide the state with substantial revenue, create a market for local raw materials, and allow the concessionaire to make a handsome profit from his monopoly position. In practice the policy did not have this effect. From the very beginning concessions were granted to those who were close to the President's coterie (the so-called 'third Volksraad') or were members of it, to members of the Executive Council or the Volksraad (both to those who supported the policy and to those who were its bitterest critics) and to high officials

of the government. Without the requisite skills, most concessionaires treated their concessions as one more resource with which to speculate. And speculation brought them into conflict with mining capital.

Within the agrarian economy, the major productive groups were African cultivators, who either worked their own lands and paid tribute or farmed rented land⁴⁴ or worked—largely under duress—as labourers where white farmers were engaged in productive activities. This resulted in Africans, most of whom came to the gold fields from outside the Republic, having to run a gauntlet of veldcornets set on acquiring labourers for themselves and their fellow burghers. Those who controlled the state in the South African Republic came into conflict with mining interests at every point in their economic activities. The concessions policy (particularly the dynamite concession) added significantly to the cost of gold-mining and delayed their becoming profitable. A struggle for power between the governing class and mining capitalists became inevitable, but this is not to argue that the form which it took was inevitable.

The weakening of client-patron relationships and this growing, but regionally uneven, impoverishment might have led to intra-Afrikaner class conflict. Afrikaners had taken to arms against Afrikaners before, and they were to do so again. The Lichtenburg commando which took to the field during the 1914 rebellion was made up of impoverished cultivators, while the Afrikaners of the eastern Transvaal who rallied to Botha's call were from a prosperous region which was benefiting from their Parliamentary leader's agrarian policy. Intra-Afrikaner class conflict was delayed by the mining capitalists, who were new men of economic and political power. They were unversed in the pragmatic politics of older capitalist classes, and the extent to which power was concentrated in their hands had given them the belief that they could do anything. The result was the Jameson raid which, when combined with later agitations, helped to create a climate which prepared both sides for war, and for a time reduced intra-Afrikaner tensions. At the same time the post-war policy of conciliation was intended to blur the antagonistic divisions which had emerged in Afrikaner society.

The results of the South African war were, as we know, many and far-reaching. Although much emphasis has been placed on the explicitly political consequences of the war little attention has been given to the change in property relationships in agriculture and to the attendant increase in food production.⁴⁵ The colonial state, established in the Transvaal after the war under the direction of the British High Commissioner, Lord Milner, sought to create a class of commercial yeoman farmers. The political aspect of this policy which is always given the

greatest prominence was the attempt to anglicise the countryside and the failure of this aspect of his policy. But far more important was the outcome of the overall policy which resulted in substantial state involvement in agriculture.

This statism was explicitly enunciated by F.B. Smith, Milner's director of the Transvaal Department of Agriculture and permanent secretary of the Union Department of Agriculture from 1910 to 1920. 'If the agriculture of a country is to be developed,' he wrote in 1908, 'it must be by radical measures.' These radical measures were to be initiated and directed by a department of state. Smith claimed that

with the exception of Great Britain, where centuries of experience and enterprise of private individuals and societies have atoned for the short-comings of the Government . . . the condition of the agriculture of a country can be gauged with a fair degree of accuracy by the quality of its Department of Agriculture.⁴⁶

The resurgence of the dominant group of Afrikaner landowners, meant that they, rather than the British yeomen, were the beneficiaries of an ideology and a state apparatus intended to bolster commercial agriculture. This was not, however, a passive acceptance of useful institutions. Because of their accumulation of land the dominant Afrikaner agrarian class was the only group capable of taking advantage of British statism. In one crucial respect, moreover, the Afrikaner leaders had to improve upon their inheritance from the Transvaal colonial government. They had to see to the procuring of labour. It was the apparent failure of the colonial government to bring about the conditions which would create an indigenous labour force which had been one of the causes of Afrikaner resurgence. When the Transvaal government accepted the demand by the mining houses to 'recruit' outside South Africa, particularly in China, the hostile reaction from Afrikaner leaders had as much to do with the implications of this policy for the procuring of labour within southern Africa, as it had to do with the racial implications of a Chinese labour force.

Shorn of their commando system, both by the defeat of their state and by the decline of the social relationship which made it possible, the dominant landowners had to make a bid to share state power if they were to have available non-economic mechanisms for the procuring of labour. In successfully gaining a share of state power the Afrikaner landowners were not only to acquire the mechanisms for obtaining labour but also many of the resources originally intended for British yeomen.

The most important resource of all was the Transvaal Land Bank, with its initial capital provided by the British Government. In addition the Transvaal had a Department of Agriculture, which its director claimed was

the 'only department in South Africa that at all answers to the description of what a department should be'.⁴⁷ It is of some consequence, therefore, that the first Afrikaner government after the defeat of the republic was led by Louis Botha who filled not only the office of Prime Minister but also that of Minister of Agriculture. In these circumstances it is hardly surprising that the ubiquitous Johan Rissik was Minister of Lands.

Production increased dramatically and from being a large importer of maize before the South African war, the Transvaal soon became a substantial exporter. After the unification of South Africa, the Transvaal retained the greatest share of state assistance to agriculture. In 1917 Transvaal farmers owed the Land Bank £367 000, while their counterparts in the Orange Free State owed the bank £49 000, those in Natal £6 000, and because of Cape law—which was only changed in 1923—farmers in that province were unable to obtain loans from the bank at all.⁴⁸ Moreover, all these loans were for the most part never repaid and were to be written off in less than a decade.

In addition, the state used its resources not only to provide capital but also to intervene in the marketing of maize, with the result that existing marketing channels as well as sources of supply for the market were at least partially by-passed. The Transvaal maize co-operatives—which came into being under the Botha government in the years immediately before Union—were not able to dispose of their crops successfully and the largest purchaser of maize, the mining companies, were initially unwilling to accept a joint tender from them. Before they would do so they required a guarantee, acquired from the Land Bank, that the co-operatives would not only provide maize at the price which they had tendered, but also that the Bank would make good any shortfall in the quantity which the mining companies had commissioned. To ensure the purchasing and delivery of co-operative-produced maize, a central agency was established with state aid.⁴⁹ These facilities reduced competition from the then most productive white maize farmers, the large Afrikaner producers of the Orange Free State. It was surely not mere coincidence that in the year in which the Orange Free State members were to break away to form the first post-independence Nationalist party, the secretary of the Co-operative Division of the Department of Agriculture, A.E. Marks, should note that there were hardly any Free State farmers involved in the Maize Agency. 'The explanation of this apparent apathy' he wrote,

probably lies in the fact that facilities similar to those afforded to the Transvaal Societies for receiving expert advice and assistance in the formation and carrying on such undertakings have not been placed at the disposal of Free State farmers by the Government. It is probable that until such time as a government depart-

ment of sufficient capacity and numerical strength effectively to supervise operations in the two provinces is established, the movement will make very little progress in the Free State.⁵⁰

Against this background it is possible to see that much conflict between Afrikaners has been as a result of a struggle, not simply for patronage, but for the control of the State.

Notes

- 1 The famous van Reenen family would appear to illustrate many of the points made in this paragraph. As the most progressive farmers in the late eighteenth/early nineteenth century Cape Colony, its members were nevertheless heavily dependent on their income from their meat contract to the government based on their farms in the interior. Their various services to the government were not infrequently rewarded with the grant of further lands. See W. Blommaert and J.A. Wüid (eds.), *Die Joernaal van Dirk Gysbert van Reenen*, Cape Town, 1937, pp. 1-8, Biographical Sketch.
- 2 F.H.D. Arndt, *Banking and Currency Development in South Africa, 1652-1927*, Cape Town, 1928, pp. 94-121. In 1854 the ammunition used at the battle of Boomplats in 1848 had not yet been paid for and the Volksraad called for public subscriptions. C.J. Uys, *In the Era of Shepstone*, Lovedale, 1933, noted 'The Sekukuni War had taken a big slice out of the revenue of the state and in August 1876 the Government was obliged to mortgage the private properties of its members to raise sufficient money for purchasing ammunition... As [Paul Kruger's] property had already been bonded for the loan of £19000 raised by the Government, he suggested that the members of the Executive Council should forfeit their salaries to enable the Government to purchase ammunition', (p. 439).
- 3 Arndt, *Banking and Currency Development*, p. 96.
- 4 In the three years before 1867 commandos had been called out against the Ndzundza Ndebele under Mabhogo in the eastern Transvaal, the Republic had been involved in a war against the Basotho in 1865 which considerably undermined the new currency since it cost the government Rds. 85 000, and, before the full effect of this expenditure was felt, further commandos against the Zulu and the Basotho resulted in Rds. 162 000 being spent on ammunition and clothing for the combatants. There were further military expenses incurred in the Zoutpansberg in 1867 and the calling out of commandos once more in 1869. *Ibid.*, pp. 98-104. Arndt notes 'It further appeared while they had budgeted for an expenditure of £1588; in 1866 the actual expenditure amounted to roughly £46 000. They had budgeted for £1500 in contributions from the natives and £3 000 for fines, whereas the corresponding receipts were £358. 9d. and nil' (p. 104).
- 5 Stuart was one of the many Hollanders influenced by U.G. Louts. For Stuart's merchant connections and his various schemes to raise capital in Holland see T.A. du Plessis, 'Jacobus Stuart en die Transvaalse verdeelheid van 1855-6', *Historiese Studies*, June 1947.

- 6 Stuart's major Dutch commercial rival was Johannes Smellekamp who had arrived in Natal in 1842 to work for the Amsterdam trading-house, J. A. Klijn and Co.
- 7 D. W. Krüger, 'Die Weg na die See', *Archives Year Book for South African History*, (AYB), iv, 1, Pretoria, 1938, pp. 174-85
- 8 C. W. de Kiewiet, *The Imperial Factor in South Africa*, Cambridge, 1937, p. 104
- 9 G. T. Amphlet, *History of the Standard Bank of South Africa Ltd., 1862-1913*, Glasgow, 1914, p. 85
- 10 de Kiewiet, *Imperial Factor*, p. 143
- 11 *List of Farms in Districts of Transvaal (Intelligence Department)*, Pretoria, 1900; British Parliamentary Papers (BPP), 1901 XXIV, Cd 626, *Report of the Land Settlement Committee*, p. 58
- 12 BPP, 1901 XXIV, Cd 626, p. 58
- 13 Oceana Land Company Prospectus 1891; BPP, 1901 XXIV, Cd 626, p. 58, evidence of Johannes Christoffel Minnaar, Registrar of Deeds, South African Republic; J. S. Marais, *The Fall of Kruger's Republic*, Oxford, 1961, p. 5
- 14 BPP, 1901 XXIV, Cd 626, p. 58, evidence of H. Struben. In 1903 the Transvaal government claimed 29 million acres of land, 19 million being unsurveyed. Of the 11 000 farms in the new colony 2 861 were registered in the name of the state, BPP, 1903 XLV, Cd 1551, *Progress of Administration in the Transvaal*, p. 96
- 15 The original land grants were for two 3 000 morgen farms, one pastoral, the other for cultivation. *Law of the Transvaal up to 1899*, Volksraad Resolution (VRR) No. 149 of 28 September 1860 ('Wordt besloten dat alle Emigranten in dezen staat ingekomen tot en met het einde van jaar 1852 gerechtigd zullen zijn voor twee plaatsen van het Gouvernement te ontvangen, en wel eene zaai—en eene veeplaats'). The extent of accumulation can be gathered from successive resolutions concerning taxation to be paid on land being surveyed. In 1875 the Volksraad resolved that for all farms 'surveyed by land surveyors of a greater extent than one hour this way or that, or 3 750 morgen, a tax of 2/6d shall be paid for every 100 morgen over 3 750'. VRR No. 118 of 24 May 1875. By 1891 surveyors were provided with a table indicating the state fees for holdings ranging from ten to ten thousand morgen and including a method for easily arriving at the cost of surveying land exceeding ten thousand morgen. Act 9 of 1891, Annex. No. 1. It is of some interest that Kruger purchased large tracts of land 'near Zoutspansberg for poor whites' in the decade after 1890. BPP, 1901 XXIV, Cd 626, pp. 55-8
- 16 F. A. van Jaarsveld, 'Die Veldkornet en sy aandeel in die opbou van die Suid Afrikanse Republiek tot 1870', *AYB*, II, Pretoria, 1950. In 1865 one veldkornet wrote 'als ik den nog myne groote salaris narekenen die nimmer betaald wordt, dan kan ik door moedeloosheid mijn wagen oppakte en dit district verlate', *ibid.*, p. 338
- 17 *Ibid.*, p. 333. 'Wanneer veld-kornette egter nie een van hulle (landdrost) gehou het nie, het geen burger vir hulle gestem nie, Honderd-agt-en-sewentig burgers het in 1853 versoek dat P. J. van Staden landdroos van Rustenburg moes word maar die vier veld-kornette was daarop teë, so dat die aanstelling gekanseller is'
- 18 G. W. Eybers, *Select Constitutional Documents Illustrating South African History*, London, 1918, pp. 384-97, Grondwet (1858), Articles 96-145

- 19 Van Jaarsveld, 'Die Veldkornet', p. 331. 'In die oog van die Volk was die veldkornet hulle beskermer, opsiener, vader en nie in die eerste plek 'n amptenaar op 'n kantoor wat die regerings belange behartig het nie'
- 20 *Ibid.*, pp. 341-7
- 21 F.J. Potgieter, 'Die Vestiging van die Blanke in die Transvaal, 1837-86', *AYB*, Pretoria, 1958, ii, p. 195
- 22 A. Aylward. *The Transvaal of Today*, Edinburgh/London, 1878, p. 155. J.A. Agar Hamilton, *The Road to the North: South Africa, 1852-86*, London, 1937, p. 247, wrote, 'as in the rest of South Africa, the town population was predominantly British. It is only of late years that the descendants of the African farmer has become a dweller in towns, and until the twentieth century was some years old even such places as Potchefstroom, Bloemfontein and Pretoria were markedly British in character'. F.J. Potgieter, 'Die Vestiging', observes that the storekeepers in Rustenburg in the 1860s were said to be of English, Dutch, German and French origin
- 23 VRR, 26 November 1864, Article 318. The instructions to landdrosts on the collection of taxes evolved gradually. In outline they required taxes to be paid by the first of July each year. If they were not paid the landdrost was required to issue a writ to attach movable and immovable goods of taxpayers without judgment, and to sell them for the state treasury. This writ had to be shown to the taxpayer and payment was required before it was executed. If the address of the owner was unknown the writ had to be advertised three times in the *Staats Courant*. The execution of the writ could be suspended by a protest accompanied by reasons for the protest. The landdrost could then give judgment but no appeal could be allowed so long as the tax remained unpaid. Law 10 of 1885; amended by Law 11 of 1896
- 24 VRR, 5 June 1873
- 25 C.T. Gordon, *The Growth of Boer Opposition to Kruger 1890-5*, Cape Town, 1970, pp. 91-108, has shown that in the case of the Johannesburg stands scandal, the fact that land had to be advertised did not mean that it was. Although local conspiracies for self aggrandisement may have taken place it was equally probable that inefficiency on the part of either the landdrost or the office of the *Staats Courant* would lead to the advertisements failing to appear in print
- 26 D.W. Krüger, *Paul Kruger*, 2 vols., Johannesburg, 1961, i, pp. 76-8. In the ten years between 1858 and 1868 the Rustenburg *Registratierregister* showed
- Kruger taking possession of the farms Kleindoornspuit (1858), Kookfontein, Boschfontein (1859), Beeskraal, Welgevonden, Modderkind, Middelkuil, Losperfontein and Koedoespruit, Beesfontein (1860), Bavianskrans, Saulspoor, (1866) Turfontein. In 1866 Kruger was given the farm Saulspoor for his services to the state, and sold it to Henri Gonin in 1868. Gonin was a missionary acting on behalf of 'kaptein Magamajan en sy volk'. The asking price for the farm was £900. This was paid for partly in cattle valued at £360 (at £3 sterling a head), £240 in Transvaal notes and three payments of £100 in sterling
- 27 C. Jeppe, *The Kaleidoscopie Transvaal*, 1906; J.A. Mouton, *General Piët Joubert in die Transvaalse Geskiedenis*, *AYB*, Pretoria, 1957, p. 201; F.V. Engelenburg, *General Louis Botha*, London, 1929, p. 34. Mouton reports of Joubert that 'In Januarie 1874 het hy deur middel van 'n advertensie in die pers aan immigrante wat te arm was om grond in die Republiek te koop, elf van sy plase en 'n groot aantal erwe aangebied om te kom bewoon "onder goede en billike voorwaarden

- voor 'n lange reeks van jaren, aangesien hy die plasen nimmer wil verkoop en maar als erfins aan zyn kindered, die nog zeer jong zyn, wil laten zoodat deze goede kans is". (*Ibid.*)
- 28 Mouton, *General Piet Joubert*, p. 201
- 29 Krüger, *Kruger*, p. 79
- 30 Mouton, *General Piet Joubert*, p. 201
- 31 BPP, 1901 XXIV, Cd 626, p. 31, evidence of Johannes Christoffel Minnaar. Nellmapius was a Hungarian mining engineer who made his way from Kimberley to the Lydenburg gold-fields. He established a transport service from Lydenburg to Delagoa Bay for which he received 'several grants of land'; S.P. Engelbrecht, *Thomas Francois Burgers*, Pretoria, 1946, p. 144. Later Nellmapius became an associate of Sammy Marks and Frikkie Eloff, Kruger's son-in-law
- 32 BPP, 1901 XXIV, Cd 626, p. 30, evidence of J.P. Fitzpatrick
- 33 F.V. Engelenburg, *Botba*, pp. 21 and 33
- 34 Agar-Hamilton, *Road to the North*, pp. 129, 310, 442
- 35 François Stephanus Cillie, 'The Mapoch's Gronden: an aspect of the Poor White Question', unpublished M.A. thesis, Pretoria University, 1934, p. 66
- 36 *Ibid.*, p. 95
- 37 *Ibid.*, pp. 43-50
- 38 Even within a poor community there was some differentiation. This is brought out by Cillie in his reporting the exchange relationships which the plottolders had with the neighbouring Pedi. 'If a plottolder had cattle he would slaughter an ox and barter the meat to the natives for 25 to 30 bags of grain; or he would purchase a bag of salt in Middleburg and barter that for 8 to 10 bags of grain. If he did not have meat or salt he would plough for the Natives in Secuniland at the rate of two buckets of grain per 1200 square yards ploughed' (p. 76)
- 39 J.F.W. Grosskopf, *Rural Impoverishment and Rural Exodus*, i, (*Carnegie Report on the Poor White Problem*), Stellenbosch, 1932, p. 38. But this suggests confusion with the state loan farm system. In a *Volksraad Besluit* (decision), 5 June 1869, the word 'afstand' is substituted for 'vergunning'. According to *Cassal's Dutch Dictionary* 'afstand' can be used to mean 'cede', while 'vergunning' is defined as concession
- 40 BPP, 1903, XLV, Cd 1551. *Progress of Administration in the Transvaal and the Orange Free State*, PE3. Enclosure 4 in No. 1 states 'During September and October numerous reports were received showing the ex-Military Burghers of the poorer class who had, at an early stage, taken advantage of Repatriation Aid in order to proceed to farms on which they had previously lived as bywoners were finding life upon such farms socially unpleasant. The owners in some cases were returned prisoners-of-war of others, whose political feelings were opposed to the residence upon their farms of men who had served on our side during the war. Of actual violence but few cases were reported, and these were unimportant in themselves. But a spirit of unfriendliness, developing in cases of more isolated farms into actual boycott, was common'
- Appendix C of this enclosure (pp. 75-91) provides evidence which undermines the assertion that bywoners were less committed to the republican cause than landowner. Of the 127 heads of families settled under Burgher Land Settlement schemes—most of whom had been bywoners or tenants before the war—twelve had been National Scouts, fifteen had surrendered before the war

- ended, and had been allowed to return to the Transvaal and can be described as *hensoppers*, fourteen were either invalids or too old to fight and eighty-six had either fought to the war's end or had been taken prisoner. These last had refused to swear an oath of allegiance to the British Crown and had been held in prisons or camps in South Africa, India, Ceylon, St Helena and Bermuda.
- 41 *Press Digest*, Memorandum 433, Appendix A speech by Reverend J.D. Kestell, quoted by Laurence Salomon, 'Socio-Economic Aspects of South African History, 1870-1962', Ph.D., Boston University, 1962, p. 127
- 42 J.P. la Grange Lombard, *Paul Kruger die Volksman* (1925), pp. 147-8, quoted in Gordon, *The Growth of Boer Opposition to Kruger*, p. 36
- 43 They are also reminiscent of latter day development programmes. In some ways the Uitlanders of the Witwatersrand were expatriates who stayed.
- 44 See S. Trapido, 'Landlords and Tenants in a Colonial Economy: the Transvaal, 1880-1910', *J.S.A.S.*, v, 1, 1978, pp. 26-58
- 45 'The Union of South Africa has become known to the principal markets of the world as one of the foremost fields for the production of maize of good quality'. So wrote the *Official Year Book of the Union of South Africa* (Union Office of Census and Statistics, 1, 1917, p. 398. Whatever the exaggerations in this statement, it is nevertheless true that before the South African war South Africa was a maize-importing region. By 1910 South African maize exports were valued at £693 413
- 46 F.B. Smith, *Some Observations upon the probable effect of the Closer Union of South Africa upon Agriculture*, paper read at the meeting of the South African Association for the Advancement of Science, Grahamstown, 1908, p. 11
- 47 *Ibid.*, p. 19
- 48 *International Review of Agricultural Economics*, 1918, p. 493
- 49 A.E. Marks, 'Agricultural Cooperation in South Africa', *Monthly Bulletin of Economic & Social Intelligence*, International Institute of Agriculture, Rome, September 1914, p. 28
- 50 *Ibid.*, p. 35