

CITIES AND CITIZENSHIP:

**Towards a normative analysis of the urban order
in South Africa, with special reference to
East London, 1950-1986**

Doreen Atkinson

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Whose support made all the difference.**

ABBREVIATIONS

ANC	African National Congress
BAC	Bantu Affairs Committee
BLA	Black Local Authority
COSAS	Congress of South African Students
CMC	Coloured Management Committee
DBAD	Department of Bantu Administration and Development
DCD	Department of Co-operation and Development
DCDP	Department of Constitutional Development and Planning
DNA	Department of Native Affairs
DVCC	Duncan Village Community Council
DVRA	Duncan Village Residents Association
ECAB	East Cape Administration Board
ELCC	East London City Council
ELSCO	East London Students Council
FAK	Federasie van AFrikaanse Kultuurverenigings
HHNEAC	Health, Housing and Non-European Affairs Committee
IANA	Institute of Administrators of Native Affairs
IMC	Indian Management Committee
JAB/JLAB	Joint Locations Advisory Board
NAC	Native Affairs Committee
NSL	Native Services Levy
PFP	Progressive Federal Party
PHNEAC	Public Health and Non-European Affairs Committee
RSC	Regional Services Council
SABRA	South African Bureau for Racial Affairs
UCASA	Urban Councils Association of South Africa

INTRODUCTION

This thesis attempts, with the aid of a case study of urban policy in East London, to elaborate themes of public life hitherto unexplored in South African political life.

These themes have a particular urgency. Events of the 1990s have dramatically illustrated that South African political analysis is at a crossroads. As political scholars, we have yet to develop adequate explanations for the behaviour of key political actors, such as F.W. de Klerk; and we are even more in the dark when we contemplate the immense task of reconstructing the South African political community on acceptable normative and practical foundations.

There was some warning, even before 1990, of the inadequacies of our understanding of politics in South Africa. However, the theoretical waters have been so muddled that some important questions have been lost from sight. The overriding theoretical problem was to account for the strange longevity of the South African state; and political observers spent much time investigating issues of race, class and state power.

We believe that the nature of political life needs to be considered from a fresh perspective. As Donald Horowitz accurately observed, much of the conflict in South Africa is about what the conflict is about:

'Whereas in other settings knowledge about a society can proceed cumulatively, in South African virtually every interpretive effort involves some return to first principles, even to first facts. The plethora of contributions also means that every new contribution must struggle with nuances of difference in the understandings of its predecessors. South Africa is characterized by cognitive dissensus.'¹

¹ D. Horowitz, A Democratic South Africa? (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), p. 2.

Horowitz's statement justifies our attempt, in this thesis, to explore some 'first principles'. This thesis will explore some theoretical issues that have not received adequate attention in the existing literature on South African political history.

Our initial and overriding concern was to explain a series of unusual historical events, viz. the attempts by white City Councils during the mid-1980s to reunite the racial sectors of their cities, despite the extraordinary levels of polarisation and conflict in South Africa at that time. Cities and towns as diverse as Cape Town, Port Alfred, East London, Oudtshoorn, Swellendam, Pietermaritzburg, and Sandton² began to explore ways of overcoming racial fragmentation in municipal institutions. The puzzle was the following: How did local politicians manage to transcend the prevailing mood of paranoia and stalemate sufficiently in order to explore adventurous new visions of the local order, often in the face of express opposition of the central government? This question gave rise to three theoretical themes.

Why did ordinary people at the local level begin to experiment, during the mid-1980s, with new definitions of the urban community? This, in turn, implies a more fundamental question: Under what circumstances may a dominant and anxious minority, which has systematically backed into institutional exclusivism, re-orient itself into a new, inclusive conception of local community boundaries? These questions will form the background to our first theme, viz. the dimension of 'ethical life' - a Hegelian concept referring to individuals' normative definitions of their identity, subjectivity, and reciprocal rights and obligations. This problem is theoretically analysed in Chapter One, where we claim that South Africa's 'ethical life' has always been deeply controversial and unresolved. In this thesis, we

² Some of these events are documented in D. Atkinson, Local Government Restructuring: White Municipal Initiatives, 1985-1988 (Institute of Social and Economic Research, Rhodes University, 1989, Working Paper no. 44).

will explore various South African responses to the quest for a coherent ethical life, viz. patriarchalism (Chapter Four), Verwoerdianism (Chapter Seven), and the beginnings of non-racialism (Chapter Twelve).

A second issue arising from the phenomenon of local-level negotiation initiatives during the mid-1980s, is the role of individual choice and innovation in political affairs. In each city, a significant individual (or a few of them) rose above the political stalemates and dead-ends of politics in their particular communities, and began to experiment with new political ideas. Of course, not all political innovations prove to be wise ones, as Dr. Verwoerd's visions have proved. Nevertheless, it seems that political events cannot be understood solely as results of socially-defined causes. This leads us to our second theme, viz. the importance of **political judgement** in public life. Furthermore, people's judgement is often normative, and crucially concern questions of morals and values. Ordinary people (and hence politicians) like to consider themselves morally decent.

In the light of this claim, a central paradox in South African political life needs to be confronted: How is it possible for a highly unpopular system of government to be implemented by people who, like most ordinary people, considered themselves decent and wanted to be considered in such a way by the people they administered? The combination of good intentions, moral concerns and an unjust system of government remains an awkward problem for political theory. Few studies of government have attempted to examine the normative imperatives and relationships which characterise oppressive states.³ On closer examination, we find that the entire universe of political life in oppressive states is shot through with unexpected ambiguities and ironies. The ways in which people make sense of their world, and justify their actions, do not correspond nicely with theorists' and

³ A notable exception is Hannah Arendt, Eichmann in Jerusalem (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977),

political observers' preconceptions about rights and wrongs. The world of public life is a messy and contradictory world of normative relations between people and between groups of people. In South Africa, we have failed to understand the moral dynamics of an oppressive state. For this reason, the analyst or historian needs to develop certain qualities often lacking in the existing studies of South African politics - most notably, a strong sense of irony and pathos. The question of moral and political judgement is theoretically examined in Chapter Two.

Thus far, we have referred to the normative issues of ethical life and individual judgement. At this point, it may well create the impression that social life is largely consensual and benign. A sceptic may well ask, What about power? For this reason, we have introduced our third theme, viz. **modernity and discipline**, which is discussed at some length in Chapter One. At first sight, this thesis appears to to downplay substantive issues of repression, exploitation and coercion in South African public life. In fact, however, this thesis attempts to explain repression and coercion in a new way - as situated within the normative preconceptions of their perpetrators, and as responses to the dilemmas of modernisation. South African political history should be understood as taking place against the backdrop of the overriding problems of modernity, a loose term encompassing industrialisation, economic development, urbanisation, individual rights and new forms of collective action. In South Africa, a crucial dimension of the spread of modernity has been the quest for a viable form of ethical life compatible with modern norms. This, in turn, has taxed political actors' political acumen to no mean degree. It has also given key political actors the incentive - which often bordered on desperation - to delineate and impose a grid of social categories on the turmoil and flux of society. As we argue in Chapter One, the implementation of discipline in any society is a coercive process, and South Africa has proved no exception.

The reason why modernisation in South Africa has been a

particularly oppressive experience is because the question of community boundaries (i.e. 'ethical life') has remained fundamentally controversial. Hence any attempt to impose a set of modern categories (in the past or in the future) is bound to alienate large sectors of the population. In the light of the sombre theme of modernity, we should expect further attempts to discipline the population in any future post-apartheid society - and this implies that coercion of various forms will remain a feature of South African life. The local experiments in re-uniting the cities reflect a particularly euphoric moment in South African history; but we should not be deceived into thinking that democracy and non-racialism will obviate the need for coercion in future.

In this thesis, we attempt to provide a normative approach to these questions. The author is explicitly motivated by values and preferences regarding ethical life, and it is claimed that the establishment of a racially inclusive local community as a positive value. We also argue that good political judgement should be recognised and encouraged. Finally, we accept modernity as ultimately desirable, despite the fact that it entails disciplinary coercion.

To deal with these three theoretical themes simultaneously has required some philosophical eclecticism. The argument has borrowed from at least three main theoretical traditions, viz. a Hegelian understanding of subjectivity and ethical life (sittlichkeit); a conception of modernity drawn from Michel Foucault; and an exploration of individual political conduct informed by Hannah Arendt and by Anglo-Saxon moral theorists such as Bernard Williams and Stuart Hampshire. Such a theoretical pot-pourri can only be justified by the fact that the social reality in South Africa is simply too complex to be squeezed into one theoretical paradigm.

Furthermore, to explore these theoretical themes, the thesis has to range along a disconcertingly wide spectrum of abstraction and

concreteness. At least three different levels of theoretical abstraction can be discerned. First, in exploring our main themes of ethical life, political judgement and modernity, we have to ask fundamental philosophical questions about human meaning, value and epistemology. This is done in Chapters One and Two. Chapter Three examines the existing historical and political literature in South Africa against the foil of our three themes. The powerful influence of the revisionist or 'radical' school of historiography in South Africa is examined, partly in order to point out its weaknesses, and partly to indicate some tentative indications of a fresh approach to be found in various authors' work.

Second, in the light of these questions, we attempt to elucidate three specific historical solutions to the question of 'ethical' life in South Africa. In Chapter Four, we consider the 'patriarchal order' which characterised cities such as East London until and during the 1950s; in Chapter Seven we explore the utopian visions of Dr. H.F. Verwoerd; and in Chapter Twelve, we describe the notion of 'strong democracy' as a form of ethical life.

A third level of inquiry is empirically concrete, and attempts to illustrate our three themes in the context of public life in South African cities. Drawing on the example of East London (c. 1950-1986), we have presented detailed vignettes of individuals and events as recorded in obscure municipal documents. Only by drawing the unarticulated world views of ordinary people from within the interstices of their everyday language can we explore how they conceive of their community, their own identity, and their political life; and only by looking at their concrete actions can we understand and evaluate the quality of their political judgement. These historical illustrations of our themes can be found in Chapter Five (the relationship between white local authorities and the 'Native Advisory Boards' representing urban African communities), Chapter Six (the East London City Council's attempt to introduce municipal beer

brewing), Chapter Eight (the planning of Mdantsane as part of the Verwoerdian vision of ethical life), Chapter Nine (the administrative attempts to implement influx control in East London), Chapter Ten (the impact of the Department of Bantu Administration and Development on race relations in East London), and Chapter Eleven (the effect of the Eastern Cape Administration Board on East London). The last chapter explores the rise of 'strong democracy' during 1985-6 in East London.

East London's attempt to negotiate its way out of its local political stalemate was highly symbolic, for it represented an attempt at developing a local polity on the basis of formal equality, democratic participation, and a racially inclusive ethical life. As such, it was a new beginning, and a triumph for the creative human will. It also indicated how much work is left to do in South Africa, in order to achieve a viable political order. In the postscript, we will summarise our argument in this thesis, and illustrate how recent political debates in South Africa have taken East London's achievements further.

PART ONE

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

CHAPTER ONE

TOWARDS A NEW THEORETICAL APPROACH: COMMUNITY, ETHICAL LIFE AND MODERNITY

The problem of finding a viable conception of community and citizenship haunts South African politics - a problem that has afflicted our cities with extraordinary severity. In this thesis, we will offer a normative interpretation of the problem, with the ultimate intention of exploring ways in which meaningful civic bonds can be instituted in South African cities in the 1990s. The thesis will, therefore, be value-laden in two senses: it will analyse history and politics from the perspective of the values of social actors, and it will postulate a better form of urban political life than any of those which have been attempted during the last four decades.

In the next two chapters, we will distinguish between two normative dimensions of human experience, viz. the concept of 'ethical life', which refers to the social constitution of people's identity within shared communities; and the concept of political morality, which refers to individual choice, judgement and responsibility.

In this chapter, we will argue that community boundaries are vital to maintain a sense of community and ethical life. In some situations, however, such boundaries become vague and confusing, giving rise to deep existential anxiety. The process of 'modernisation', which includes phenomena such as industrialisation, urbanisation and demographic shifts, undermined traditional kinds of communal boundaries. In South Africa, however, the imposition of modern forms of 'discipline' (in Michel Foucault's sense) has often foundered on the inability

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to determine new social categories appropriate to modernity. The search for communal identity has therefore become an overriding priority in South African politics since the turn of the century.

In the next chapter, we will argue that individual moral choices only make sense in relation to a backdrop of community life. The confusion regarding the nature of political community in South Africa has produced, and in turn been produced by, weak moral and political judgement on the part of individual political actors. This thesis will attempt to account for the distressing suffering, callousness, and betrayals of the apartheid era, without resorting to arguments of bad faith or bad motive. Instead, we will attempt to provide the theoretical means to evaluate the quality of political actors' moral choices by placing them squarely within the traumatic social and existential context in which they had to operate. This chapter will argue that the cities were led towards their disastrous fate, not primarily due to the cynical or selfish goals of political actors, but due to unresolved questions regarding communities and ethical life.

A. The limits of 'interests' in explaining meaning

To produce a meaningful understanding of community and identity in the context of South African political analysis, it is necessary to revise thoroughly the realist and functionalist emphasis on 'interests' as an explanatory device.

In political and social life, people's motives are extremely complex and diverse. The public world cannot be reduced to private material interests.¹ As Hannah Arendt noted, politics is not intrinsically degrading and corrupting. People engage in politics for many different reasons, ranging from enjoyment, novelty, conformity, thrill and self-fulfilment, to the pursuit of power or morally-defined goals. For Arendt, the world of

¹ Hannah Arendt, The Human Condition (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1959), p. 48.

public affairs is often intrinsically satisfying and valuable to those who participate in it, and she criticised Western political philosophy for neglecting this. Arendt's points are summed up by Bhiku Parekh:

'Many areas of inquiry have received insufficient attention at the hands of political philosophers; for example, the nature of opinion, the way it is formed and mediated, the nature and structure of political judgement, the structure and dynamics of political action, the nature of political argument, the logic of persuasion, the nature and forms of political consciousness, the way men define, perceive and interpret political reality, the manner in which a group of men develop and define their collective identity, the basis of a community 's individuality, the manner in which a political agent defines his public identity, the way a political community appropriates its past, projects its future and conceptualizes its historical continuity, and the nature and structure of political language'.²

Ideas and ideologies cannot be reduced to interests:

' The most subtle ideologies are not merely accommodations to greed, or to the simplest needs of people, though. They must solve the problems of existence, of the meaning of life, of the meaning of the social order ...'³

The quest for the 'meaning of the social order' is a fundamental part of human interaction, including political activity. The world of intersubjectivity, of people's conscious interactions with others, cannot be explained in terms of a more 'profound' ontological level. Reality simply is **what is experienced**, and politics only makes sense in terms of people's own experiences. For Hannah Arendt, social existence should be understood phenomenologically:

² B. Parekh, Hannah Arendt and the Search for a New Political Philosophy (London: Macmillan, 1981), p. 54.

³ P. Du Preez, The Politics of Identity: Ideology and the Human Image (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), p. 50.

'[T]he human sense of reality is intersubjectively derived, that our sensations and perceptions are inherently fragile and require intersubjective corroboration ... [W]e acquire the capacity to think by engaging in a dialogue with others, and ... each of us is epistemologically and ontologically dependent upon the organized presence of others'.⁴

Hence political activity itself helps to define people's individuality, identity, and their place amongst their peers. Political activities are forms of human sociability; hence they do not only make sense in terms of their consequences, but also as important expressions of inter-subjective meaning. For Arendt, the entire Marxist tradition avoided the issue by judging political actions solely in terms of their consequences, rather than the character, political principles and the virtuosity of the actors involved.⁵

An indispensable part of human sociability is moral life. All human actions are intrinsically **moral and normative**, not because we judge them to be **virtuous** (they often are not), but because they always take place within a social framework of meaning and notions of justice (the only exceptions are the actions of psychopaths). All normal social conduct is structured by rules, and by notions of rights, obligations and appropriateness. 'All properly social relations are moral and customary'.⁶ Even the Marxist concept of 'relations of production' inevitably includes normative concerns:

'It is quite impossible to define (relations of production) except in terms of the claims which men make upon one another and recognize - except in terms of admitted rights and obligations. Where there are such rights and obligations, there are accepted rules of conduct, rules which require and forbid and are supported by sanctions; there are, in the broad sense

⁴ B. Parekh, Hannah Arendt (1981), pp. 3-4.

⁵ B. Parekh, Hannah Arendt (1981), p. 43.

⁶ J. Plamenatz, Man and Society (Vol. 2) (London: Longman, 1963), p. 283.

of the word, laws'.⁷

It is worth emphasising that it is quite possible to discuss the morality and normativeness of social actions without thereby expressing approval of them. Questions of the normative dimension of action should be distinguished from virtue in human conduct. To say that all actions are intrinsically normative means that they take place within a social framework of meaning and notions of justice.

For our purposes, it is necessary to attempt to disentangle the concept of 'normative political conduct'. Following Hegel, we can distinguish two normative dimensions in society, viz. 'ethical life' and 'morality'. The former refers to the social and normative constitution of persons' identities; the latter refers to individual choice and responsibility in specific situations. We will discuss these in turn.

B. Social identity and ethical life

The importance for people of achieving a satisfactory sense of identity and communal belonging cannot be overstated. People engage in politics, not simply to satisfy material interests, but because they need to clarify, defend or change prevailing social categories, rights and obligations:

'People experience themselves - in their various transactions - and naturally take this experience to show what human beings are ... (T)hey derive a general view of human identity and passionately defend this view because the questioning of it leads to anxiety ...'⁸

Individual identity is created and refined by the categories in

⁷ J. Plamenatz, Man and Society (Vol. 2) (1963), p. 281.

⁸ P. du Preez, The Politics of Identity (1980), pp. 48 and 66.

which people find themselves, and with which they identify. Identities are not simply attached to people; they are normative roles without which people find it impossible to conceptualise themselves and others. The maintenance of social identity always involves the interaction of people with their fellow citizens as they judge and classify one another:

'Identity is not maintained in isolation. Identities exist in systems of relations ... which maintain each other. When we examine any system of identities, their reciprocal definition becomes obvious. Masculine identity has its particular meaning in relation to feminine identity; black to white; Protestant to Catholic; proletarian to bourgeois'.⁹

The problem of defining and maintaining a sense of identity also forms much of the substance of politics:

'Politics ... is centrally concerned with maintaining or imposing an identity system. It is concerned with the consolidation of interlocking symbols which give a sense of integrity and continuity to action'.¹⁰

In the political sphere, these identities are debated, expressed and implemented in public law. In the sphere of public affairs, 'men hope for the exchange of symbols of acceptance and admiration while searching for confirmation of what they are'.¹¹

The notion of community is fundamental to our sense of identity. For Anthony Cohen, 'Community is that entity to which one

⁹ P. du Preez, The Politics of Identity (1980), p. 3.

¹⁰ P. du Preez, The Politics of Identity (1980), pp. 2-3.

¹¹ P. du Preez, The Politics of Identity (1980), p. 3.

belongs, greater than kinship but more immediately than the abstraction we call "society"'.¹² It is the arena in which people acquire their most profound and substantial experience of social life outside the confines of the home. 'Community, therefore, is where one learns and continues to practice how to "be social" '.¹³

Our experience as members of a community has an inescapably normative dimension. An important component of Hegel's notion of ethical life (Sittlichkeit) is that persons are constituted by their recognition of one another qua persons.¹⁴ People cannot be abstracted from society; it is through social involvement that they become recognisably human. This view implies the rejection of the fiction of the isolated and self-sufficient individual. Inter-subjective meaning and sociability is central in the constitution of ethical life. Common life is an ongoing affair, and our fulfilment of our obligations sustains it.¹⁵ Communities are deeply permeated with shared moral preconceptions. 'Ethical life' involves morality and custom, the

¹² A.P. Cohen, The Symbolic Construction of Community (London: Tavistock, 1985), p. 15.

¹³ A. P. Cohen, The Symbolic Construction of Community (1985), p. 15.

¹⁴ It should be noted that the term 'ethical life' here bears little resemblance with the notion of 'code of ethics'. In the rubric of the latter it is possible to act unethically; in our usage, all social behaviour is, perforce, 'ethical' in that it is meaningful within a context of social rules, rights and obligations.

¹⁵ C. Taylor, Hegel and Modern Society, (Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 83.

diffuse patterns of social obligations and decencies, including 'absolute prohibitions, elementary decencies, the recognition of a plurality of prohibitions which do not all serve a single purpose'.¹⁶ The rituals, good manners and social mores of a society help to define more abstract principles of political morality.¹⁷ It is in this sense, then, that we can talk of 'ethical communities'. It is only in terms of a backdrop of ethical life, i.e. our experience as constituted members of a specific community, that our individual moral choices make sense.¹⁸

Stuart Hampshire uses the vague phrase 'way of life' to describe communities' shared sense of proper conduct.¹⁹ People's community life determines what they experience as moral or immoral behaviour. Responding to others in a morally appropriate way means that the exercise of virtues such as sympathy, benevolence, gratitude and forgiveness is not only dictated by abstract notions of duty or virtue, but is often a direct, affective response to the specific interests and needs of other

¹⁶ Stuart Hampshire, 'Morality and Pessimism', in S. Hampshire (ed), Public and Private Morality (Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 15.

¹⁷ Stuart Hampshire, 'Public and private morality', in S. Hampshire, Public and Private Morality (1978), p. 26.

¹⁸ This discussion is based on Paul Stern, 'On the relation between rational autonomy and ethical community: Hegel's critique of Kantian morality', in Praxis International (vol. 9, no. 3, 1989).

¹⁹ S. Hampshire, 'Morality and Pessimism', in S. Hampshire (ed), Public and Private Morality (1978), p. 12.

people with whom people identify.²⁰ For Hegel, moral principles spring from a comprehension of a network of socially necessary relationships that comprise ethical life.²¹ Moral development is only possible within the context of an ethically structured community, defined as a system of laws, customs and institutions constituting a unified public order:

'Each society, each generation within it, and in the last resort, each reflective individual, accepts, and amends, an established morality expressed in rituals and manners, and in explicit prohibitions; and he will do this, in determining what kind of person he aspires to be and what are the necessary features of a desirable and admirable way of life as he conceives it'.²²

Social manners often play an important part in the constitution of social morality:

'Our patterns of behaviour, from infancy onwards, are permeated by explicitly learnt, and by imitated, rituals and set forms of address in more or less finely discriminated social situations and family situations. There is a large overlapping, even in modern societies, between the claims of good manners and moral claims'.²³

Both morals and manners are often fully internalised as stable dispositions 'which lead, effortlessly and immediately, to reasonable conduct and to reasonable assessments of situations demanding action, and to making the assessments without too much

²⁰ P. Stern, 'On the relation between rational autonomy and ethical community' (1989), p. 239.

²¹ P. Stern, 'On the relationship between rational autonomy and ethical community' (1989), pp. 242-3.

²² S. Hampshire, 'Morality and Pessimism' (1978), p. 19.

²³ S. Hampshire, 'Public and private morality' (1978), p. 26.

brooding and effort'.²⁴

The normal patterns of interaction between individuals (and between categories of individuals) are thoroughly permeated by notions of propriety, decency and morality. It is simply not possible to distinguish, in any tidy way, between that which people consider proper and that which they consider morally right. Well-entrenched patterns of social interaction simply 'feel right' to social actors, and any contrary actions will be experienced as socially offensive, hurtful, disturbing, and/or morally wrong.

A particularly important dimension of a moral community is its shared sense of appropriate rights and obligations. People's understanding of their rights and obligations is central to their understanding of what it is to be a person and a citizen. A consciousness of rights (whether these are equal or unequal rights) pervades any society, and helps to define people's sense of appropriate, proper and just relationships and actions.

This view implies a rejection of the notion of 'natural rights'. People's social and political rights are given substance by the inter-subjective context in which they find themselves. Individuals are not discrete social entities, holding certain human rights as part of their human nature.²⁵ In Stern's words, 'the well-structured social whole ... provides the axis of reference for all legitimate rights and obligations that may be

²⁴ S. Hampshire, 'Public and private morality' (1978), p. 27. The same point is made, with reference to South Africa, by R. M. Hare, who distinguishes between 'critical' and 'intuitive' moral thinking ('Liberty, equality and fraternity in South Africa', in P. Collins, Thinking about South Africa, London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990, , p. 55).

²⁵ M. Frost, Towards a Normative Theory of International Relations (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 162-3.

imposed upon the individual'.²⁶ A person has rights to the extent that he or she can make claims for a certain kind of **recognition** from other persons, within certain social arrangements. Rights and institutions imply one another, a view which 'aims to bring to light the internal connections between being an individual rights holder of a particular kind and being a member of a certain kind of social or political institution, where both the rights and the institution are conceived of as being components of a wider practice'.²⁷

The recognition of rights is extraordinarily pervasive, despite social and institutional inequalities. Only in the extreme case of total slavery, where the slave is reduced from a person to an object, without will or humanity, can it be said that a person in a community has no rights at all. Even highly unequal societies usually recognize the right to life of those at the bottom of the social ladder (Nazism was an exception). A condition of total rightlessness is not easy to achieve; as Genovese has shown, in his study of the slave society of the American South, the mere recognition amongst slave-holders that their slaves were indeed human, implied the obligation to recognise at least the slaves' right to life.²⁸

To understand a community's ethical life, therefore, we should adopt a hermeneutic method. We need to understand its entire **weltanschauung**, including the conception of rights and obligations which are held to be meaningful in that particular community. In the words of Paul Stern, we must start from a 'reconstruction of the shared conceptions of citizenship and of

²⁶ P. Stern, 'On the relation between rational autonomy and ethical community' (1989), p. 242.

²⁷ M. Frost, Towards a Normative Theory of International Relations (1986), p. 165.

²⁸ E. Genovese, Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), pp. 28-30.

social co-operation...'.²⁹ Mervyn Frost has made the same point:

'Thus the task for normative theory becomes the one of showing how we as individuals are constituted as such through our participation in a particular set of social, economic and political institutions which in turn are grounded in our adherence to certain norms. What we are called upon to do is to stand back from the multiple institutions in which we live in order to show how each contributes to the kind of individuality we value ...'.³⁰

The constitutive theory of community, rights and individuality also has implications for our understanding of the state. The state should now be studied as a hermeneutic, socially-constructed whole; it is a short-hand term for the myriad complex ways in which private citizens and government officials participate in maintaining, evaluating, challenging, and changing patterns of community and authority. In the very process of government actors implementing policies, they are making sense of themselves, their role, and the rights of citizens. They are constituting others, and being constituted in turn. The 'state' is a collective noun for a myriad relationships of recognition, a process, a constant activity. In this thesis, therefore, the study of the changing conceptions of the 'community' in South Africa will attempt to show how different sectors of the local and central government have 'stated' their relationship with civil society.

²⁹ P. Stern, 'On the relation between rational autonomy and ethical community', p. 245. For this reason, it is simply inappropriate to evaluate the political ethics of historical actors with some abstractly derived system of universalistic morality - a tendency which implicitly informs much of revisionist and post-revisionist writing in South Africa.

³⁰ M. Frost, Towards a Normative Theory of International Relations (1986), p. 167.

C. The importance of community boundaries

For Anthony Cohen, the notion of 'community' suggests that members of a group of people have something in common with each other, which distinguishes them in a significant way from the members of other groups. 'Community' thus implies simultaneously both similarity and difference.³¹ This sense of discrimination is embodied in people's intuitive sense of community boundaries. Boundaries are marked because communities interact in some way with other entities from which they are, or wish to be, distinguished. Such boundaries could include national or administrative boundaries, or may be enshrined in law. Some boundaries are physical, such as a mountain range or an ocean. Some may be racial, linguistic or religious. But boundaries are not all totally objective. Some components of any boundaries exist in the minds of their beholders; they convey meanings to people. Hence boundaries are symbolic, and often have a great deal of emotional content:

'[T]hey refer to an entity, a reality, invested with all the sentiment attached to kinship, friendship, neighbouring, rivalry, familiarity, jealousy, as they inform the social process of everyday life. At this level, community ... hinges crucially on consciousness'.³²

Community boundaries are crucial to human existential meaning, since they allow us to have a sense of belonging. Furthermore, people go to great lengths to preserve the sense of order and coherence which proper community boundaries confer. For example, people experience political challenges not simply as a challenge to their own material welfare, but to their entire sense of meaning:

'... When we see individuals defending an ideology it

³¹ A. P. Cohen, The Symbolic Construction of Communities (1985), p. 12.

³² A.P. Cohen, The Symbolic Construction of Community (1985), pp. 12-13.

is often because they believe that the alternative is chaos, an undoing of themselves as persons, the annihilation of their identity. They preserve the practices of their society because these preserve their identity'.³³

Where the boundaries between communities are diffuse and contested, the social dimensions of morality may well contribute to anxieties, misconceptions and conflicts. If a social setting contains various sub-communities, differentially integrated with one another, it is quite possible that different conceptions of social manners and decency allow people to misinterpret each others' moral standards and motives, thereby giving moral offence to one another.

It is tempting to ask, at this point, how we can explain the emergence of certain community boundaries as opposed to others. What causes a certain group of people to feel themselves sufficiently similar to constitute a community? It appears that no final causal explanation will ever account for community sentiments, as all causal factors will invariably be mediated by people's sense of meaning. Our explanation, therefore, will hinge crucially on what people understand their own community life as such to be. For some people, their experience of community life leads them to understand 'normal' social interaction as close and intimate; other people, in contrast, feel more comfortable with more individualistic, privatistic and universalistic linkages with their fellow men. In some cases, a group of people have a strong sense of group identity, and easily recognise an outsider, and rights are differentially applied to insiders and outsiders; in other cases, the boundaries are more porous and the system of rights and obligations applies evenly to all residents. This does not mean that exclusivist groups wish to reciprocate the liberal ethical life; and this could be a cause for conflict over communal boundaries.

³³

P. du Preez, The Politics of Identity (1980), p. 48. Emphasis added.

Such different conceptions of community life often produce different conceptions of moral conduct and choice, along a continuum of 'openness' and 'closure'.³⁴ At the one extreme, very open (or universalist) forms of ethical life tend to postulate moral claims that apply to all people, whatever their local affiliations. In such situations, moral laws are said to hold without (much) distinction of persons. People accustomed to a more universalistic type of ethical life tend to downplay special treatment of people because they have different social characteristics. In Western society, these values are generally expressed under the rubric of 'liberalism'.³⁵ This does not mean that 'liberal' societies do not have a sense of boundaries - they invariably do. But their experience of community bonds tends to allow a greater degree of individual private space, and hence it is easier to apply universalistic principles to people who they feel to be different.

In contrast, 'closed' systems of morality emphasise intimate social bonds within a particular community. Such social bonds tend to counteract deviance, and people with different social habits find little place in such a form of ethical life. In such communities, the very thought of including such people may arouse hostility, revulsion and even horror.³⁶ From a relatively 'closed' understanding of ethical life, morality is first and foremost an affair internal to a particular community rather than a phenomenon covering the whole of mankind. 'Hence the virtues

³⁴ I am adapting the argument of W. H. Walsh, 'Open and closed morality', in B. Parekh and R. N. Berki (eds), The Morality of Politics (London: George Allen & Unwin), 1972.

³⁵ W. H. Walsh, 'Open and closed morality' (1972), p. 20-1.

³⁶ For example, the Afrikaans appellates 'Oom' and 'Tannie' denote very intimate terms of respect. It is unthinkable for Afrikaans people to use such terms for black people, or even for whites of another culture. The terms 'Oom' and 'Tannie' denote more than respect for elders; they also imply a shared awareness of a community boundary.

on which [closed moral systems] insist are in the first instance communal virtues, and the vices they seek to avoid are modes of conduct which would disrupt social life as such'.³⁷

For adherents of both 'open' and 'closed' forms of ethical life, the importance of viable moral communities, with which social actors genuinely identify, cannot be overstated. A problem arises, however, in conditions of rapid economic and social change. This chapter will explore the ambiguities regarding ethical life and community bonds which have plagued South African politics throughout this century. It will be argued that the problems of colonialism, together with rapid economic development and urbanisation have prevented the emergence of a shared understanding of ethical life in South Africa generally, and in the cities in particular. For this purpose, some of the insights of Michel Foucault will be employed.

E. Modernity, power, and the problem of 'social discipline'

In this thesis, the term 'modernity' will be used to denote various loosely-associated processes such as technological development, industrialisation, individualism, market forces, urbanisation, and the growth of large-scale organisation. These social changes were important, because they contributed to the chronic dilemma of community which has characterised South African politics in the 20th Century.

Modernity does not only involve 'objective' social changes. It is also a way of social interaction, which entails new forms of ethical life. In a modern society, individuals are constituted by new kinds of social rights, obligations and social recognition. As Michel Foucault has recognised, modernity involves a new form of individuality and subjectivity. This constituting cannot be done without the subjection of people to

³⁷ W.H. Walsh, 'Open and closed morality' (1972), p. 19.

'disciplinary' forms of social interaction. 'Discipline' simultaneously refers to forms of social control and to types of organised knowledge, which inform those patterns of control. People are moulded into 'normal' individuals as opposed to 'abnormal', 'delinquent' or 'deviant' problem cases.³⁸ Whereas our discussion of community solidarity and ethical life interpreted the phenomenon of social order as the consensual (and perhaps rather deceptively benign) process of human interaction, we now need to analyse human association within key constraining and coercive dimensions of social life.

Foucault's notion of 'discipline' is centrally concerned with power relations. However, it is an understanding of power which differs crucially from the repressive notion of power which has generally prevailed in Anglo-Saxon social theory. Instead of the conventional 'uni-linear' conception of power as a form of domination exerted by one actor on another³⁹, Foucault emphasises 'productive power:

'... If power were never anything but repressive, if it never did anything but to say no, do you really think one would be brought to obey it? What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse...'.⁴⁰

Modern individuals have new kinds of desire and behaviour. Hence they do not have to be constrained by the will of a sovereign or

³⁸ D.C. Hoy, 'Introduction', in D.C. Hoy (ed), Foucault: A Critical Reader (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), pp. 12-13. Foucault's claim is a radical one, for it postulates that there is no transcendental 'human nature' or 'self'.

³⁹ Which is the essence of the three definitions of power discussed in Steven Lukes, Power: A Radical View (London: Macmillan, 1974).

⁴⁰ M. Foucault, extract from Power/Knowledge, in P. Rabinow (ed), The Foucault Reader (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), p. 61.

a dictator. Through learning certain disciplines, such as the disciplines of organised bodily movements, of the employment of time, of ordered living and working space, the individual 'interiorises' a modern identity.⁴¹ This identity is reinforced in all the various modern institutions such as the barracks, the hospitals, the schools, and the factories. 'The dominated co-operate in their subordination. They often come to interiorize the norms of the common activity; they go willingly'.⁴² In fact, modern individuals often feel that they are enhancing their own freedom when they subject themselves to coercion and constraint - when they visit their psychologist, for example, or when they enrol for examinations at universities. For such activities, repression is not necessary in order to secure conformity. Like the convict who ultimately 'loves his warder ... because he is gentle and sympathetic'⁴³, well-socialised modern individuals identify with and respect their disciplinarians.

Significantly, such forms of subjectivity have a normative component. In the name of humanity, humanist reformers since the 18th Century set about diagnosing and improving society's ills and shaping the character of individuals. These reforms were produced by the new forms of technical, social and political inquiry since the 18th Century. New knowledge of historical, geographic and demographic conditions became part of a thorough and rigorous system of administration.

In punishing crimes, for example, new forms of 'humane' punishment were developed in order to simultaneously redress the wrong done to society and bring the offender back to his rightful

⁴¹ C. Taylor, 'Foucault on freedom and truth', in D.C. Hoy (ed), Foucault (1986), p. 77.

⁴² C. Taylor, 'Foucault on freedom and truth' (1986), p. 84.

⁴³ M. Foucault, Discipline and Punish (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), p. 238.

and useful place in society.⁴⁴ The individual would discover 'in the depths of his conscience the voice of good; solitary work would then become not only an apprenticeship, but also an exercise in spiritual conversion; it would rearrange not only the complex interests proper to homo oeconomicus, but also the imperatives of the moral subject'.⁴⁵ Both the body and the soul were to be transformed.

The spirit of discipline produces individual docility: 'A body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved;. Although it is not the first time in history that human bodies have received such attention, there are at least four radically new aspects to these 'techniques of docility' as they manifest themselves in modernity. First, there is the scale of control: 'It was a question not of treating the body, en masse, "wholesale", as if it were an indissociable unity, but of working it "retail", individually'.⁴⁶ The scale of discipline is vast; it includes all members of a society, and reaches deeply into their private habits. A modern community is a community of distinct individuals.

Second, one of the main aspects of disciplinary order is the categorisation of individuals into compartments:

'...All the authorities exercising individual control function according to a double mode; that of binary division and branding (mad - sane; dangerous - harmless; normal - abnormal); and that of coercive assignment, of differential distribution (who he is; where he must be; how he is to be characterized; how he is to be recognised;

⁴⁴ H.L. Dreyfus and P. Rabinow, Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics (University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. 148.

⁴⁵ M. Foucault, Discipline and Punish (Vintage Books, 1979), as quoted in H.L. Dreyfus and P. Rabinow, Michel Foucault (1983), p. 151.

⁴⁶ M. Foucault, Discipline and Punish (New York: Vintage, 1979), p. 137.

how a constant surveillance is to be exercised over him)...⁴⁷

Third, discipline implies surveillance, 'an uninterrupted, constant coercion, supervising the process of the activity rather than the result'.⁴⁸ Administrators and disciplinarians in schools, hospitals and army barracks typically pay meticulous, total and continuous attention to the movements, gestures, and attitudes of each individual.

Fourth, in contrast to the repressive, 'uni-linear' conception of power, discipline is mutual. Discipline is co-operative as well as coercive, and depends on the participation of everyone, including the lowliest member of society. Inmates in institutions observe and evaluate each other; they also evaluate those who are placed in authority:

'[I]ts functioning is that of a network of relations from top to bottom, but also to a certain extent from bottom to top and laterally; this network "holds" the whole together and traverses it in its entirety with effects of power that derive from one another; **supervisors, perpetually supervised** ... This enables the disciplinary power to be both absolutely indiscreet, since it is everywhere and always alert, since by its very principle it leaves no zone of shade and constantly **supervises the very individuals who are entrusted with the task of supervising**'.⁴⁹

This view of power relations is very important. It implies that power is 'decentered' in society. Subjugation is not something imposed on one class by another; it increasingly permeates and characterises all aspects of society.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ M. Foucault, Discipline and Punish (1979), p. 199.

⁴⁸ M. Foucault, Discipline and Punish (1979), p. 137.

⁴⁹ M. Foucault, Discipline and Punish (1979), p. 177. (Emphasis added).

⁵⁰ D.C. Hoy, 'Power, repression, progress: Foucault, Lukes and the Frankfurt School', in D.C. Hoy, Foucault (1986), p. 131. It should be noted that Foucault's notion of 'decentered power' is far from clear.

From these four principles of individualisation, categorisation and surveillance and mutuality, several practical policies follow. They will only be briefly recounted here, as they will be elaborated on more fully in a later chapter:

1. Discipline requires 'enclosure'. Hence distinct locales are established, in which the participants/inmates can be supervised with the greatest efficiency and economy. Examples are 'barracks, boarding schools, manufacturing spaces'⁵¹;
2. The most advanced form of disciplinary enclosure is the architectural device of 'Panopticism'. A Panopticon is a structure consisting of a circular building forming a periphery. In the middle is a tower with windows, from which a supervisor can observe the entire periphery. The circular periphery is divided into cells or components, in which individuals (pupils, patients, soldiers or convicts) can be placed, all perfectly visible to the supervisor, but not (fully) visible to one another⁵²;

Charles Taylor, for example, argues that it is incoherent ('Foucault on freedom and truth', in D.C. Hoy, *Ibid*, pp. 86-7.).

⁵¹ M. Foucault, Discipline and Punish (1979), p. 141.

⁵² M. Foucault, Discipline and Punish (1979), p. 200. This structure need not be physically represented in architecture, but merely notional: the classroom, the hospital ward and the parade ground have the same effect of separating out individuals, and displaying them to the evaluative gaze of the teacher, nurse, sergeant or warder. Furthermore, if inmates are physically visible to one another, they tend to participate in the surveillance and judgement of one another, becoming the omnipresent eyes and ears of the supervisors. Of course, the supervisors always retain for themselves certain key information regarding each inmate; and this serves to render each inmate more visible to the supervisor than he could ever be to his

3. There is an emphasis on ranking and evaluation. Individuals are categorised according to age, performance, behaviour and other measurable criteria. This is often reflected in statistics, lists, tables and cross-tabulated lines and columns, and individuality may well be reduced to 'the point at which a line and a column intersect'⁵³;
4. Documentary records assume great importance. Individuals are situated within a 'network of writing: it engages them in a whole mass of documents that capture and fix them'⁵⁴;
5. Discipline requires constant examinations: 'It is a normalizing gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify and to punish'.⁵⁵

Exploring the reasons for the emergence of disciplinary controls is a vast enterprise that cannot be attempted here.⁵⁶ For our purposes, we can trace the emergence of disciplinary reforms in South Africa to a pervasive anxiety about disorder on the part of officialdom. This is not an unusual phenomenon. In periods of rapid social change, established social institutions and patterns of behaviour lose their cogency; older forms of authority and self-restraint begin to disappear, and population

fellows.

- ⁵³ M. Foucault, Discipline and Punish (1979), p. 145-8.
- ⁵⁴ M. Foucault, Discipline and Punish (1979), p. 189-90.
- ⁵⁵ M. Foucault, Discipline and Punish (1979), p. 184.
- ⁵⁶ Foucault, for example, attempts to associate the development of 'discipline' with the rise of the bourgeoisie, due to the need to protect property against crime and to increase productivity (Discipline and Punish, 1979, pp. 84-5, 218).

shifts create new and unanticipated concentrations of people. In Foucault's words, 'Behind the disciplinary mechanism can be read the haunting memory of contagions, of the plague, of rebellions, crimes, vagabondage, desertions, people who appear and disappear, live and die in disorder'.⁵⁷ Officials and social reformers feel the need to 'provide a hold over this whole mobile, swarming mass, by dissipating the confusion of illegality and evil'.⁵⁸

The urge to categorise people is an indispensable component of the disciplinary urge:

'[D]iscipline fixes; it arrests or regulates movements; it clears up confusion; it dissipates compact groupings of individuals wandering about the country in unpredictable ways; it establishes calculated distributions'.⁵⁹

For our purposes, we should regard officials' urge to impose social categories as an entirely normal response to the sense of social disintegration. While discipline often appears arrogant in its implementation, it stems from ordinary people's existential anxiety about community coherence in their society. As such, then, 'discipline' is an entirely appropriate social accompaniment to the technological and demographic trends of modernity.⁶⁰

The fundamental problem with the development of discipline in South Africa is not its coercive character. For one thing, discipline is not purely coercive, for it also involves a co-

⁵⁷ M. Foucault, Discipline and Punish (1979), p. 198.

⁵⁸ M. Foucault, Discipline and Punish (1979), p. 144.

⁵⁹ M. Foucault, Discipline and Punish (1979), p. 219.

⁶⁰ This view goes beyond Foucault, who is generally highly critical of discipline as a form of social order. He tends to portray it as a forceful and even savage imposition on defenceless victims, and curiously implies that it is morally suspect (C. Taylor, 'Foucault on freedom and truth', 1986, p. 91).

operative re-definition of the moral subject; for another, the use of widespread coercion is a normal part of modernity. The process of modernisation involves painful processes of establishing new forms of moral communities. Rather, the problem with the imposition of discipline in South Africa lies elsewhere, viz. that there have been no boundaries, categories or classifications that are obviously and a priori appropriate to the imposition of discipline. The fatal flaw in official attempts to develop disciplinary patterns in South African society has been the inability to reach consensus, between elites and between different constituencies, on appropriate lines of difference, partitioning, enclosure and rank for South African society. Throughout our history, a Western sector has been superimposed on other cultural systems. In South Africa, with its neo-colonial heritage, the existential confusion has gone much deeper than in Europe. Furthermore, the boundaries of the nation-state are very recent. South Africa in the 20th Century has consisted of a bewildering combination of languages, cultures, classes, degrees of urbanisation, and modes of acculturation to the rising giant of capitalism. The processes of modernisation were constantly bedevilled by the fundamental lack of clarity regarding the proper 'categories' which would constitute the urban community.

These social cleavages bedevilled the universal application of disciplinary techniques by both governmental and non-governmental agencies. At the heart of the issue has been a normative problem, viz. to delineate new forms of identity, subjectivity, ethical life and community boundaries which would, simultaneously, satisfy the imperatives of discipline and modernity, as well as be morally meaningful to members of society. This has proved almost impossible to achieve in South Africa. Established communal solidarities have broken up, collided with new and unfamiliar communal patterns, and been interpreted and re-interpreted by political leaders. Not surprisingly, this has led to severe existential anxiety - a problem which still haunts every aspect of South African politics

in the 1990s.

This, in turn, has produced various dogmatic political responses: Communities with a relatively 'closed' understanding of ethical life experience more anxiety when community boundaries become fluid than those accustomed to a greater degree of individualism and privacy. In the South African case, Afrikaner nationalists, with their experience of intimate community life, have displayed a particularly severe degree of anxiety about establishing appropriate community boundaries.

These difficulties were especially marked in the cities, which faced rapid growth and changing social structures. The history of South African cities can be regarded as the history of attempts by the local and central realms of public affairs to resolve the ambiguities of local community membership, with all the complex questions of rights and moral conduct that this entails. The problem was amplified because sub-communities in urban contexts have not been totally isolated from one another. A substantial degree of acculturation and friction (between ethnic or political cultures) has taken place at various points along the boundaries separating these sub-communities from one another. Some boundaries have systematically become more porous, allowing individuals from each side to gradually absorb some of the norms and standards of decency of the other. Other boundaries have become rigid and inflexible. Because of this, the notion of the 'ethical community' becomes very complex in practice.

In response, some perspectives (such as that of white patriarchalists), tended towards more 'open' and inclusive forms of community; while others (such as Verwoerdianism), postulated more 'closed' and intimate community bonds. The Verwoerdians' self-defined problem was to define the urban community in such a way as to exclude blacks, and yet include some notions of human moral decency. During the 1970s, the Verwoerdian officials in government agencies desperately attempted to reconstruct the

urban order, but achieved the paradoxical response of stimulating several new and incompatible conceptions of the city - ranging from populism and liberalism to technicism and militarism. Even in the 1990s, the concept of a coherent and broadly legitimate urban citizenship remains as elusive as ever.

Conclusion

The South African experience can be posed as a problem of deriving appropriate boundaries for ethical communities, especially due to its rapid experience of modernisation. In the process, the identity of individuals, and their appropriate relations with one another, have constantly been controversial. Consequently, attempts to define 'community' were central to various state policies.

In the final chapter, we will return to the questions raised in this chapter. We will argue that East London's experience of local negotiations in 1986 was extremely important, since it implicitly began to forge a viable new conception of community and urban citizenship. The idea of ethical life implicit in those momentous events was one that recognised that individuals are not motivated by interests alone; that they need relationships with their peers in order to enjoy meaningful rights and obligations; and that communal relationships and civic bonds are not a priori constructions, but are the products of experience and interaction. We will also develop the notion of 'strong democracy', and argue that the events of 1986 approximated this form of political action. Furthermore, our analysis of the history of East London will be unashamedly value-laden, for we will present the 1986 negotiations as a most fruitful and promising response to East London's need for meaningful community bonds and effective social discipline. As such, this thesis can be considered primarily to be a normative treatise on political and ethical life.

However, a full appreciation of the normative dimension of

political life cannot remain at the level of social constructs alone. The post-1950 history of local government in East London repeatedly illustrates the role of specific individual actors, who shaped events, more or less deliberately, in ways that were not socially determined. To complement our analysis of community, ethical life and social discipline, the next chapter will concern questions of individual political judgement and moral responsibility.

CHAPTER TWOMODERNISATION AND DILEMMAS OF MORAL CHOICE

In the previous chapter, we considered the profound ambiguities in South African community life, brought about by modernisation, cultural difference, and the country's colonial history. It was argued that human beings need, as a condition for being truly human, a coherent understanding of their identity in relation to one another. People are not motivated only by material and acquisitive interests; they also have social needs, such as recognition, approval, and social solidarity.

In contrast to the ethical life of a community, morality is a question of individual conscience. We have moral obligations to do the right thing. Such obligations exist, not by virtue of our being part of a larger community life, but because we have individual rational wills.¹

This chapter will attempt to relate the larger social concerns of ethical life to the problem of individual choice. In this way, we hope to avoid a deterministic account of human behaviour, and thereby to sustain a conception of human freedom, dignity and moral responsibility. As the rest of the thesis will show, the travail of the cities in South Africa was not only the result of the impersonal forces of modernisation, but also of individuals' responses to the moral dilemmas they faced.

A. Political choices and moral dilemmas

Political morality is centrally concerned with moral choice. Because the moral alternative is often not self-evident, social actors have to make up their own minds, using their own information and moral sensibilities.

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C. Taylor, Hegel and Modern Society (Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 83.

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This problem is partly caused by the opaqueness of our situation. Reality, as social actors experience it, often does not clearly indicate the right choice. It is not always clear how moral principles should be applied to practical realities. Practical problems yield themselves to very different interpretations²: Robbing a man of what legally belongs to him is usually not deemed morally acceptable; but taking from the rich to give to the poor may well be.³

Furthermore, moral claims sometimes come into conflict with one another:

'It is typical and essential, not marginal and accidental, that moral reasoning should be concerned with such conflicts. Unavoidable conflict of principles of conduct, and not a harmony of purposes, is the stuff of morality, as we ordinarily experience it ...'⁴.

Such situations are especially prevalent in politics, and Michael Oakeshott depicted politics as 'a boundless sea [where] there is neither harbor nor shelter nor floor for anchorage, neither starting-point nor appointed destination, [and where] the enterprise is to keep afloat on an even keel'.⁵ In the moral murkiness of political life, actors are often torn between the claims entailed by effectiveness in action, and the moral claims derived from the ideals of scrupulous honesty and integrity. Such choices may well appear when political actors (especially officials) have to choose whether to acquiesce to an unpalatable

² W.H. Walsh, 'Open and closed morality', in B. Parekh and R.N. Berki (ed), The Morality of Politics (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1972), p. 27.

³ W. H. Walsh, 'Open and closed morality' (1972), p. 27.

⁴ S. Hampshire, 'Public and private morality' (1978), p. 42.

⁵ M. Oakeshott, Rationalism in Politics (New York: Basic Books, 1962), p. 127; quoted in B. Barber, Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p. 120.

measure originating elsewhere in government, usually on a higher level.

The possibility of moral dilemmas implies that we should reject social determinism as a theoretical perspective which tends to absolve social actors from moral responsibility. This point is important, in order to temper our sociologistic inclinations towards causal analysis. We need to recognise and evaluate cases of moral judgement and moral abdication.⁶ We expect people to be aware of moral choices, and to make meaningful moral decisions. In fact, as Stuart Hampshire notes, the moral dilemmas of everyday life are a precondition for any form of true moral grandeur, on occasions when ordinary individuals extend themselves, showing 'leaps of the imagination, moments of insight ... which will lead to transformations of experience and to new moral ambitions and to new enjoyments of living'.⁷ On the other hand, people's choices can also indicate moral paralysis and even betrayal. There is no guarantee that individuals will live up to the moral demands made of them.

At this stage of our argument, a provisional evaluation of political conduct may well involve the simple concept of 'decency'. Decent political conduct requires a constant awareness of moral principle, and crucially, some reluctance to break such principles. As Williams emphasised, 'only those who are reluctant or disinclined to do the morally disagreeable when it is really necessary have much chance of not doing it when it

⁶ For example, we may be tempted to argue that political actors' breaches of morality must be excused on account of their deprived background, intellectual isolation, etc. While it is crucial that their social circumstances be taken into account, we should also recognise that political decisions almost invariably involve moral choices.

⁷ S. Hampshire, 'Public and private morality' (1978), p. 53.

is not necessary'.⁸ Such a reluctance, refers to a genuine disquiet when taking decisions that have moral costs, and an active sense of moral costs and moral limits.⁹ Deciding when the ends justify the means is one of the hardest lines to draw in public policy, and it is often only the individual actor's conscience that stands between moral reluctance and total ruthlessness:

'If results were the only basis for public morality then it would be possible to justify anything, including torture and massacre, in the service of sufficiently large interests ... [However], the strongest constraints of individual morality will continue to limit what can be publicly justified even by extremely powerful consequentialist reasons'.¹⁰

In the light of this approach, we will argue, for example, that East London's patriarchal city fathers during the 1950s tended to be more sensitive to the moral dimensions of their actions, at least partly because they were in closer emotional and geographical proximity to their subjects. In contrast, the bureaucratic edifices created by the Verwoerddians were directed towards the achievement of overriding utopian goals, which tempted them to resort to extremist methods. Furthermore, their distance from local people tended to blind them to the suffering caused by their policies. Human decency can only flourish where people have genuine knowledge of one another.

⁸ B. Williams, 'Politics and moral character', in S. Hampshire (ed), Public and Private Morality (Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 64.

⁹ B. Williams, 'Politics and moral character' (1978), pp. 65 and 69.

¹⁰ T. Nagel, 'Ruthlessness in public life', in S. Hampshire (ed), Public and Private Morality, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 89.

We do not need to ascribe the failure of urban policies to cynicism or moral bad faith.¹¹ Instead, decision-makers' organisational environment can be interpreted as a main cause of weak moral insight. The patriarchal city fathers found themselves floundering in a highly ambiguous urban ethical order; while the Verwoeradians had to impose a coercive bureaucratic apparatus due to their complete misunderstanding of the dynamics of modernity. The following sections will elaborate on the constraints on moral judgement, viz. the effect of ethical life on individual moral decisions; the need for political seriousness about interests and power; and the problem of moral dilemmas or 'dirty hands'. Later chapters will continue this line of enquiry by showing how, in the case of East London, local leaders were increasingly overwhelmed by the constraints on their moral consciousness, and the importance of their moral revival during the 1980s.

B. Moral choice against the background of ethical life

However, individuals also do not make moral choices in a vacuum. They are influenced by the forms of ethical life which sustain communal relationships. Individuals' moral choices are usually part of a 'way of life', or a typical way in which the community deals with moral problems.

In this regard, we can usefully distinguish between two broad styles of political morality, viz. moderation and extremism in political morality. Moderation and extremism are different forms of moral commitment. At stake is the relationship between **means** and **ends** in political conduct. Moderation is the acceptance of moral limits in the choice of means to achieve a political end,

¹¹ It could be argued, for example, that Verwoerdianism was cynically directed at removing the black franchise in order to entrench white power. Such arguments deserve further investigation. For the purposes of this thesis, however, we will reject arguments based on cynicism, and attempt to illustrate that the complexities of practical politics often led to poor moral vision and a lack of insight.

and is usually evident in communities where values such as individual life, liberty and property are highly valued. Furthermore, because of such values, moderation often implies an awareness of a plurality of possible and reasonable ends, and an awareness of the plurality and mutual limitation of ends. Moderates usually do not regard existing society as wholly negative; their actions are characterized by caution and a special regard for those features of existing society that still appear to have merit.¹²

Extremism, in contrast, is usually the practical consequence of an agent's fastening on one single, overriding end, together with the willingness to use exceptional means to achieve it.¹³ An extremist is an activist who looks upon his desired end as the sole and total remedy of all the ills and defects at present disfiguring his society.¹⁴ The most extravagant form of extremism is utopianism, in which the ultimate Common Good is so profound that it may justify the use of extreme measures to achieve it.¹⁵

The distinction between moderation and extremism can play a useful role in analysing the political morality of different actors in concrete contexts, as our study of East London will attempt to show. For example, the patriarchal city fathers of the 1950s can be described as 'moderates', with an a priori preference for compromise and reconciliation between the

¹² R.N. Berki, 'The distinction between moderation and extremism', in B. Parekh and R.N. Berki (eds), The Morality of Politics (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1972), p. 74.

¹³ R.N. Berki, 'The distinction between moderation and extremism' (1972), p. 69.

¹⁴ R.N. Berki, 'The distinction between moderation and extremism' (1972), p. 74.

¹⁵ It may be noted that neither moderation nor extremism has a priori superior moral worth. Any judgement concerning their merits is a complex matter which cannot be addressed here.

interests and preferences of various parties; the Verwoerdians, in contrast, felt a sense of mission, with definite and one-sided commitments to achieving ultimate social end-states.

These 'styles of morality' can often be related to the form of ethical life to which they are accustomed and which they consider to be preferable. Choices between different moral styles, such as moderation and extremism, are not trivial, for they do not merely involve abstract reasoning. Individuals' styles of moral conduct arise from dense personal experience, as a consequence of a person's particular conditions of life, and of his philosophical beliefs. There is a sense, then, that ethical life and individual morality overlap. To some extent, people's moral intuition is guided by their personal and social history:

'[Their] commitment may emerge from prolonged reflection and from a review of philosophical, religious, political and scientific beliefs; and yet the final intuitions of the right way, as it seems, may be very incompletely explained'.¹⁶

This dimension of political morality is very important for our analysis, for it will form an important backdrop to different, and competing, visions of the city in South Africa. These visions often implicitly contained different styles of political morality, with different conceptions of legitimate means and desirable ends. Disputes between specific concrete courses of action invariably involved implicit understandings of a moral way of life, in terms of which such specific actions made cognitive and moral sense.

It is worth noting that the quality of political morality is often affected by the atmosphere within formal institutions or organisations. All organisations involve shared dispositions and

¹⁶ S. Hampshire, 'Public and private morality' (1978), p. 48.

mutual expectations.¹⁷ The institutional constraints on political and governmental actors have consequences for people's moral sensibility. The more closed an institution becomes vis-a-vis its environment, the more chance there is that it develops its own 'ethical life' in miniature, replete with a sense of identity, rights, and obligations.¹⁸ This can have important consequences in political life. Institutions may so encapsulate their members that they become shielded from some of the consequences of their actions. Also, official roles tend to justify actions which would be impermissible from the point of view of individual morality¹⁹:

'[T]he ability to say that one is only following orders or doing one's job or meeting one's responsibilities, the sense that one is the agent of vast impersonal forces or the servant of institutions larger than any individual - all these ideas form a heady and sometimes corrupting brew'.²⁰

Within a certain 'bureaucratic culture' in governmental or political organisations, a certain style of political morality develops; for example, some organisations will take the moral quality of political means as seriously as they take the achievement of political ends, while other institutions may favour one or the other. Institutions involve, in Williams' words, 'patterns of sentiment and reaction':

'In a body of persons considering a practical question, it essentially involves their shared dispositions and their mutual expectations - what considerations can be heard, what kinds of hesitation or qualification or obstacle it is

¹⁷ Bernard Williams, 'Politics and moral character', in S. Hampshire (ed), Ibid., p. 64.

¹⁸ This issue is pursued more fully in our discussion of the Department of Bantu Administration and Development (see Chapter 10).

¹⁹ T. Nagel, 'Ruthlessness in public life' (1978), p. 79.

²⁰ T. Nagel, 'Ruthlessness in public life' (1978), p. 76.

appropriate or effective to mention'.²¹

In the South African context, the powerful bureaucracies which developed in the field of urban African administration after the 1950s produced a certain calibre of moral judgement.

C. Political seriousness and Machiavellian conduct

One important dimension in moral choices in politics is that of Machiavellianism²² - a phenomenon which entails three claims. First, public policy often involves greater responsibility than private actions, because it has more far-reaching consequences. Second, the occasional use of force or other unpalatable methods is a normal part of government. According to Machiavelli, ruthlessness, deceit, guile, the breaking of promises, and violence, are all to some extent normal in political affairs. Public policies, according to this view, are rightly judged by their consequences, and not by the intrinsic quality of the acts involved in their execution. Success is measured in terms of continuing power, prosperity, high national spirit and political survival.²³

We need to recognise that a certain degree of Machiavellian calculation is appropriate in politics. In politics, there is a professional (and in itself perfectly proper) commitment to staying in power or to gain power.²⁴ Machiavelli offers a valuable reminder that public affairs are centrally concerned with the successful implementation of policy. Political actors

²¹ B. Williams, 'Politics and moral character' (1978), p. 64.

²² S. Hampshire, 'Public and private morality' (1978), p. 49.

²³ S. Hampshire, 'Public and private morality' (1978), p. 49.

²⁴ B. Williams, 'Politics and moral character' (1978), p. 68.

may rightly believe, in certain circumstances, that the end justifies the means. Stuart Hampshire has also argued for the importance of 'political seriousness':

'In addition to moral seriousness in justice and fairness to individuals, in love and friendship, constituting the sphere of private life, there is also political seriousness, seriousness in the use of power; and this requires higher priority for some duties and corresponding virtues and lower priority for refinements'.²⁵

We should recognise that the realm of public affairs has certain qualities of its own, which must be recognised and appreciated. According to Bernard Williams, 'if politics is to exist as an activity at all, some moral considerations must be expected to get out of its way'²⁶; Machiavelli argued that rulers should learn not to be good; and Sartre raised the possibility that it is not possible to govern both well and innocently.²⁷ It should, however, be noted that the more extremist forms of political morality tend to have a greater predilection for resorting to Machiavellian means. This will be of some significance in our discussion of Verwoerdian utopianism in later chapters.

Machiavelli's third claim is that the notion of 'political interests' is certainly an indispensable theoretical tool in political analysis. Political actors are reasonably required to protect the interests of those they represent, whether they be fellow party members, a social group, or fellow citizens. As we noted in the previous chapter, certain communities are more 'closed' than others, and therefore make more specific and uncompromising demands on their leaders. In situations of social change and disarray, political leaders' attempts to promote their

²⁵ S. Hampshire, 'Public and private morality' (1978), p. 52.

²⁶ B. Williams, 'Politics and moral character' (1978), p. 64.

²⁷ M. Stocker, Plural and Conflicting Values (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 18.

followers' interests should not strike us as particularly surprising or illegitimate.

D. Evaluating the morality of political judgements: The problem of 'dirty hands'

Thus far, in this chapter, we have argued for both the importance of politicians' moral principles, as well as for a recognition of the normality of Machiavellianism in politics. These arguments give us the theoretical tools with which we can evaluate and judge the merits of political action. **Our analysis of political action within the context of ethical life and morality should not be confused with the claim that all political action is virtuous.** If we give careful justifications, we (as observers) are entitled to judge the quality of moral choices which political actors make. In this regard, the philosophical debates around the concept of 'dirty hands' assumes particular importance, and will form the substance of this section.

In evaluating political actions, we should note that there can be actions that are justified, even obligatory, but none the less wrong and shameful.²⁸ For example, can it be justified, even obligatory, for an official to torture someone to force him to tell where his fellows have hidden a time bomb among the innocent populace?²⁹ 'Dirty hands' moral conflicts refer to cases where a choice is forced by competing moral considerations, in such a way that the actor has to take responsibility for whatever unpalatable option he or she chooses. Even if the act is justified, it is morally wrong, it stains the actor, and should be regretted.³⁰

²⁸ Our discussion of 'dirty hands' will be largely based on M. Stocker, Plural and Conflicting Values (1990).

²⁹ M. Stocker, Plural and Conflicting Values (1990), p. 9.

³⁰ M. Stocker, Plural and Conflicting Values (1990), pp. 11-13.

More specifically, there are at least three ways in which an action can be a case of 'dirty hands'. First, **people** may be wronged; 'they and their trust, integrity, and status as ends are violated, dishonoured, and betrayed: innocents are killed, tortured, lied to, deceived'.³¹ Second, dirty hands can involve harm or destruction to a **thing of value**, such as a holy place or a great work of art. Third, they may involve the violation of a **principle**, e.g. agreeing not to prosecute terrorists in order to end a hijacking.³²

Another important distinction needs to be made. In East London's political history, violations of persons, value and principles took place against the background of two major, over-arching rationales - which we have already termed 'extremism' and 'moderation'. Each involved immoral actions for moral ends, but in different ways.

The extremist style of moral conduct mainly characterised central Government actors, such as the Verwoerdians (during the 1960s and 1970s), and the Department of Constitutional Development and security agencies (during the 1980s). Their actions were based on an over-arching assumption that moral ends justify immoral means. To the extent that government officials recognised that their means were indeed immoral (i.e. to the extent that they were not blinded by their bureaucratic insulation from the suffering caused by their actions), their conduct can indeed be described as moral cases of 'dirty hands'. In this thesis, the moral quality of central Government actions will not receive the attention it deserves; and we will simply supply pointers to a fuller analysis which should be done at a later stage.

This leaves us with the second major type of 'dirty hands', viz. those cases where immoral actions are forced upon moral agents

³¹ M. Stocker, Plural and Conflicting Values (1990), p. 17. Emphasis added.

³² M. Stocker (1990), Plural and Conflicting Values, p. 18. Emphasis added.

by circumstances that are, themselves, immoral.³³ A classic example of this phenomenon is that of Sophie in the film 'Sophie's Choice'. Upon entering a Nazi concentration camp with her two children, Sophie is told by an officer that only one of the children will be allowed to live, that she must choose which of them this will be, and if she does not choose, both will be killed. Sophie picks one, and does so with dirty hands. The agent is immorally coerced to take part in an immoral project. The circumstances at once (1) necessitate and (2) justify the wrongful act.³⁴ Our analysis of the East London City Council's problematic relationship with the Department of Native Affairs will illustrate several cases of dirty hands.³⁵

In his discussion of such cases, Michael Stocker makes the poignant suggestion that the immorality of the world can irredeemably stain our acts and lives. The phenomenon of dirty hands show that not only one's own immoralities, but also another's immoralities, can make it impossible to avoid doing

³³ M. Stocker, Plural and Conflicting Values (1990), p. 19.

³⁴ M. Stocker, Plural and Conflicting Values (1990), p. 19-21. However, it may be argued that Sophie actually has no choice at all, and is therefore not responsible for her action.

³⁵ Most notably, during the 1960s, the Council had to choose whether to implement Group Areas (and thereby get funds for badly-needed coloured and Indian housing, at the cost of removing African residents against their will to a distant homeland city), or whether to sustain their opposition to Group Areas and thereby lose out on housing funds altogether. This situation is very similar to Stocker's example of a captain of a sinking ship, who has to choose which passengers will get a place on a limited number of lifeboats. Some passengers will surely die. The captain is ordered by his superiors to choose the survivors on the basis of their religion or race, with the threat that otherwise all the boats will be smashed, thus preventing anyone from being saved (M. Stocker, Plural and Conflicting Values, p. 19-21).

what is immoral. Contrary to Kant, we should recognise that our acts are not fresh moral starts; they depend on what we have done previously, as well as on the actions of others. The moral nature of our action is, in an important sense, within our control, but in an equally important sense, outside our control.³⁶ This insight is an important antidote to both social determinism and existential individualism. Even good people may be unable to remain innocent and avoid shame and guilt.³⁷ They must also be judged against a consideration of what was deemed politically possible at the time.³⁸ In the case of East London, Stocker's view will help to temper our criticism of the actions of local Councillors and officials - while still allowing us to judge the quality and sophistication of their appreciation for the moral implications of their situation.

There are indeed, according to Stocker, important cases of 'moral immorality'. Despite good intentions, political reality (especially in conditions of rapid social change) is such that practical political choices are seldom simple choices between good and evil. Many political alternatives involve 'dirty hands'.

Nevertheless, we should be able to evaluate the ways in which political actors deal with their moral dilemmas. In practice, unfortunate individuals forced to choose between immoral acts may

³⁶ M. Stocker (1990), p. 23-4. This raises the problematic issue of integrity - the least harmful option may well be preferable from a pragmatic point of view, but little remains of the actor's sense of integrity. Is it, therefore, a moral action? It can be argued (against the utilitarians) that it is not. See J.J.C. Smart and B. Williams, Utilitarianism For and Against (Cambridge University Press, 1973), pp. 93-99. I am indebted to M. Ingle for drawing my attention to this issue.

³⁷ M. Stocker, Plural and Conflicting Values (1990), p. 33-4.

³⁸ M. Stocker, Plural and Conflicting Values (1990), p. 45.

well resolve their dilemma by means of **overvaluing** one moral duty and undervaluing another.³⁹ For example, a person may overvalue truth-telling, with the concomitant undervaluing of causing hurt. Such overvaluing, Stocker maintains, **can** be admirable, under certain conditions: (1) The reasonableness of overvaluing that value (e.g. equality or freedom, in contrast to something more trivial, like etiquette); (2) The reasonableness of thinking that the overvalued value will be satisfied (i.e. that freedom will actually result from a certain course of action ; and (3) The reason for overvaluing a specific value (e.g. acting from a sense of compassion is more reasonable than acting from neurotic fear of a contrary value). In East London, decision-makers sometimes overvalued a duty which we may consider unwarranted (such as balancing budgets); they pursued harmful courses of action which showed little prospect of achieving their values; and they often acted on the basis of relatively unworthy reasons (such as pleasing their superiors). In contrast, there were cases of dirty hands in which admirable values were overvalued - and our analysis will attempt to give praise where such is due.

Our method of evaluating political conduct consists of the following claims:

1. Moral conduct alone is not sufficient for effective politics, especially when political actors believe that there are good political reasons to acquiesce to unpalatable measures.⁴⁰
2. Machiavelli's insights are important, but limited. To be truly effective in politics, Machiavellianism must take moral limits into account. This caution stems from two sources. First, intelligent political actors are usually aware that unethical means may well have undesirable

³⁹ M. Stocker, Plural and Conflicting Values (1990), p. 42.

⁴⁰ B. Williams, 'Politics and moral character' (1978), p. 59.

political consequences; and second, political actors are also social beings, steeped in their society's norms of decent conduct and moral sensitivities. Machiavellianism in public life does not imply that 'anything goes' or that any political conduct is justifiable.

3. Given that politics involves both Machiavellianism and moral conduct, we needed to find a way of evaluating the moral quality of political action - without judging actions solely in terms of morality or in terms of political interest. The concept of 'dirty hands' takes us some way to understand political actors' situatedness within morally problematic situations, in which they may have to make complex trade-offs between morality and political prudence.

These considerations lead us to the concept of **political judgement**. Political analysts in South Africa need to enhance their understanding and appreciation of qualities such as statesmanship, persuasiveness, foresight, empathy, and breadth of vision. On a more sombre note, we may also on occasion judge the use of force or coercion to be appropriate.⁴¹ Yet political judgement always takes place against the backdrop of ethical life. Writers such as Hannah Arendt have offered a vision of a politics that while embedded in culture (or 'ethical life') nevertheless enhances the possibilities of human freedom. According to Arendt,

'Culture and politics, then, belong together because it is not knowledge or truth which is at stake, but rather judgement and decision, the judicious exchange of opinion about the sphere of public life and the common world, and the decision what manner of action is to be taken in it, as well as how it is to look

⁴¹ This contrasts with Hannah Arendt's rejection of force and coercion as genuine forms of power. Her understanding of politics is a great deal more consensual than the one employed in this thesis.

henceforth ...⁴²

The question of political judgement will inform our entire analysis of East London's political history, and will be explored more theoretically in Chapter Twelve.

E. Moral and political choices in South Africa, against a background of modernisation and social change

Because of the context of ambiguous moral communities in South Africa, the derivation and application of policy to different groups of people has always been a hazardous affair.

Due to unclear boundaries between communities, the question of appropriate rights and obligations has been highly problematic in practice. Different sub-communities have different institutions, and such institutions are often associated with different conceptions of moral decency and appropriateness. This is especially true of urban communities, where different sub-cultures live side by side with their boundaries in flux. Ordinary people not only have to make sense of the shifting fortunes of their own institutions, but with the relatively alien institutions of the other communities living nearby. In determining appropriate conduct, political actors have had to constantly navigate the boundaries between moral communities, with only the fragile signposts of their own moral preconceptions to guide them.

The result has been an extremely complex social and moral universe which ordinary people have to negotiate day by day, in which mistakes and misinterpretations can have far-reaching consequences. There is great scope for ambiguity and misunderstanding. For example, individuals from two communities may agree on the appropriateness of a specific action; but they may agree for very different reasons, derived from fairly different intuitively-held moral 'ways of life'. In other

⁴²

Quoted in B. Barber, Strong Democracy (1984), p. 166.

situations, individuals from different moral communities may share certain fundamental moral outlooks (such as the need for moderation), but these moral outlooks may be reflected very differently when it comes to specific proposals for action.

Since people's conceptions of their rights and obligations form part of their most fundamental understanding of their identity and worth, they experience great distress, hurt and confusion if their rights are disregarded. Such situations may produce quite explosive results, as the history of East London repeatedly demonstrated. In brief, therefore, the moral dimension of politics in societies with differentially integrated moral communities becomes a minefield - a constant hazard of misinterpretations, superficial agreements, underlying differences, and competing moral demands. In such a context, the frequent lack of insight, wisdom and sensitivity in political conduct becomes tragically understandable; and instances of sensitive political judgement are to be admired.

Ultimately, a sequence of unfortunate moral choices, by local as well as central government actors, had disastrous effects on the quality of ethical life in the cities. In East London, the white city fathers' sense of social instability tempted them to employ Machiavellian measures to bring about peace and progress; the Verwoerdian central Government officials used coercive measures in a hopeful (and ultimately hopeless) quest to impose a viable urban order; municipal officials found themselves in distressing 'dirty hands' situations; and new political currents in the townships tempted uncomprehending decision-makers into (often fatal) errors of judgement.

However, the East London experience also shows that the bonds of ethical life can be surprisingly durable. Even though East London's city fathers steadily lost their moral bearings between the 1950s and the 1970s, the memory of an earlier ethical order enabled a breakthrough in the political wasteland of the 1980s.

F. Morality, ethical life and pathos in social history

The value of a normative interpretation of social reality is that it points to the common features in the human condition, which trap all people in similar problems of making sense of the world. One common feature is the need for a coherent community life. People desire confirmation of their identity in their interaction with other people; they prefer the consent and approval of others in their public conduct; and they depend on a sense of moral decency in their actions and interactions with others.

This is not to deny that interests affect people's actions, but it does raise the prior question of how those interests are defined, and the systems of meaning which underlie those definitions. People's interests are simply not self-evident; they are interpreted and influenced by their sense of community, their experience of ethical life, and crucially, by a general human urge to feel morally decent. Political actors may resort to Machiavellianism - but they may do so to remedy their extreme alienation in a context of a fragmented ethical life. People also experience painful moral dilemmas, from which they emerge feeling compromised and ashamed.

From this perspective, the writing of social history becomes steeped in a sense of pathos and poignancy. People participate in oppressive systems, not always by design, but often in the very attempt to act morally.

Furthermore, political actions have unintended consequences, as illustrated by the unintended development of bureaucratic empires which resulted from the benign utopian goals of the Verwoerdians. This phenomenon resembles the tragic fate of Leninism in the Soviet Union, when a movement aimed at liberation and radical democratization ended up effectively destroying these noble ideals. People truly make history, but the consequences are often not those that were intended.

From these perspectives, history appears filled with tragic ironies. This thesis suggests an empathetic and human-centered approach for the writing of South African history. The problems of racism, inequality, unfreedom and bureaucratic callousness are, despite their offensiveness, nevertheless profoundly human problems. Ordinary human beings are constantly caught in complex situations beyond their full grasp and control. We need to approach our history with due appreciation of the ironies and the pathos, the misunderstandings and miscalculations, and the perplexities of creating meaning in a world which has been changing its nature at an exponential rate. Once we take human beings seriously, our political analysis may even begin to share certain characteristics with literature, viz. empathy, imaginative reconstruction of human sentiments, and an awareness of human frailty against a backdrop of bewildering events.

In studying the meaning of 'the city' in South Africa, we need to recognise the intrinsically normative and emotive dimensions of community-feeling as distinctly public sentiments that cannot be reduced to private interests. Local political actors of all sectors have also sought a sense of belonging; they have wrestled with various interpretations of the rights and obligations of other urban residents; they tried to reconcile moral notions of citizenship with administrative constraints; and they faced moral perplexities and choices in profoundly ambiguous circumstances induced by modernity.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we attempted to integrate the problems of individual moral choice with the social background of an unresolved ethical life in South Africa. We also argued that institutional constraints, Machiavellianism, and 'dirty hands' are normal dimensions of politics, and their use should be evaluated with reference to the social context of the actors concerned.

This approach allows us to appreciate and evaluate individuals' decisions, without reducing history to either the extremes of individualism or determinism. It also enables us to avoid constructing caricatures, demonologies or 'victimologies'. By placing individuals against the background of their situation, we can criticise cases of moral abdication when actors could have acted otherwise; we can understand moral lapses when decision-makers were constrained by social circumstances; and we can praise examples of moral insight and grandeur when individuals transcend the limits of their situation.

In the next chapter, we will consider the main strands of South African historiography and political analysis in the light of the concepts developed in Chapters One and Two.

CHAPTER THREE

REALISM, FUNCTIONALISM AND HOBBSIANISM: COMMON THEMES IN SOUTH AFRICAN POLITICAL ANALYSIS

During the 1970s, the prevailing 'liberal' or 'reformist' approach to South African political analysis was decisively dethroned by a materialist paradigm. This new perspective has set the tone for various subsequent approaches to political analysis. For example, the 'state-centric' theorists throughout the 1980's emphasised the role of the state in political affairs, while 'ideology-critique' and discourse analysis of the late 1980s paid closer attention to language, subjectivity and thought. In this chapter, these approaches will be collectively termed 'radical historiography', and will be explored and assessed.

It will be argued that the materialist approach effectively set certain hitherto unexamined parameters for political analysis. Some of their assumptions have formed a procrustean bed, imprisoning later theorists into certain ways of viewing the world. Certain dimensions of political life have been subjected to exaggerated scrutiny, while others remain, at best, barely visible.

The common characteristics of materialist and post-materialist approaches to political understanding will be analysed in this chapter, and their various merits and shortcomings will be highlighted. It will be argued that the political analysts have, increasingly, come up against the limits of radical forms of thought. However, the positive dimensions of later political analysis can only be fully explored if we radically rethink the

analytical traditions which we have inherited.

The chapter will be arranged as follows:

1. The common themes and pitfalls of the materialist approach will be analysed under the headings of 'realism', 'functionalism', and 'interests'.
2. We will then consider the application of materialist methodologies to the sphere of urban studies and local government.
3. Subsequently, we will briefly examine the 'state-centric' theorists, as well as their effects on urban studies.
4. We will then devote more detailed attention to the new forms of radical thought, viz. 'ideology-critique' and discourse analysis. The work of Adam Ashforth, Saul Dubow, and Deborah Posel will receive particular attention, as they are of the most adventurous and progressive members of 'radical' historiography;
5. Finally, we will consider some of the work of the 'History Workshop' school, arguing that their weaknesses need to be critically examined, and their strengths developed further.

A. Key characteristics of the materialist approach to South African political analysis

Social analysis always rests on prior, even if unarticulated, philosophical assumptions. In this section, we will consider the unexamined methodological and epistemological principles of the 'radical' historians and political analysts. This exercise is of more than academic import, for historical analysis is always

value-laden. The works of the 'radical' school have been particularly heavily coloured by the authors' political values, in the selection of their material and interpretation of their findings. In fact, many radical scholars have also engaged in political activism. This is certainly not illegitimate, but it does indicate the ways in which philosophical and social analysis and political action can inform one another. The epistemological foundations of social enquiry will be further explored in Chapter Twelve, where we will offer a new epistemology as foundation for a new conception of community and citizenship. For the rest of this chapter, we will confine ourselves to a consideration of the epistemological and theoretical characteristics of 'radical historiography'.

a) Realism

The South African 'revisionist' or 'radical' historians of the 1970s were methodological realists. This means that causal power was attributed to underlying, invisible structures and forces, existing beyond the flux and variety of immediate sense impressions.¹ Ken Smith has summarised the revisionist enterprise in the following way:

'Instead of histories comprised of masses of facts "that were left to speak for themselves", the radicals wanted to get behind the "facts", to understand **what it was all about**, to lay bare the patterns and processes of history'.²

This approach inevitably led to a certain normative approach to the subject matter, an attitude which Ricoeur has called a '**hermeneutics of suspicion**' and what Sloterdijk has termed

¹ John Wilson, Social Theory (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1983), p. 168.

² Ken Smith, The Changing Past: Trends in South African Historical Writing, (Johannesburg: Southern Book Publishers, 1988); p. 165. Emphasis in original.

'cynical reason'.³ According to this spirit of enquiry, everyday symbols and interpretations conceal 'true', or more fundamental, forces or structures. A 'hermeneutics of suspicion' typically encourages social analysts to destroy masks and illusions in a relentless rational effort at 'demystification'.⁴ Typically, social actors' moral claims are dissected for hidden (and suspect) motives.

Marxism exercised particularly great influence on the work of the revisionists, and contributed to their efforts to demystify South African politics. For Wolpe, for example,

'...(R)acial laws, in common with many other laws, appear as neutral to the capitalist structure of the society by taking that structure as given, but more importantly, they actively operate to mask the capitalist nature of the society altogether and the consequence they have for the functioning of that system'.⁵

For the revisionists in South Africa, the dynamics of the state and the content of ideologies were largely determined by powerful class forces. Economic classes, not race ideology, was the motor of history, and classes were structured according to the relation of the members of the society to the means of production. This reductionism has been strongly criticised⁶; nevertheless, as will be argued below, the realist impulse has remained an important part of 'critical' South African political

³ P. Sloterdijk, Critique of Cynical Reason (New York: Verso Books, 1988), p. 36.

⁴ Richard E. Palmer, Hermeneutics, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969), p.44.

⁵ H. Wolpe, 'Ideology, Policy and Capitalism in South Africa', in R. Benewick (ed), Knowledge and Belief in Politics (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1973), p. 283.

⁶ For example, see D. Posel, 'Rethinking the "race-class debate" in South African historiography' (Social Dynamics, vol. 9, no. 1, 1983).

analysis.

b) Function, structure and agency

Having delineated social reality into relatively superficial structures and more fundamental ones, revisionists then argued that the former was functional to the maintenance of the latter. In the context of South African history, it was argued that racial discrimination was functional to the development of capitalist exploitation.⁷

The notion of 'function' has been responsible for important ambiguities and confusions in political analysis. The first problem can be described as the fallacy of division. Once the assumption had been made that segregation was conducive to class exploitation, revisionists concluded, illogically, that segregation served the interests of specific sectors of society. This is a fallacy. The claim that a totality has a certain characteristic does not logically imply that the same characteristic applies to the elements which constitute the totality. Just as it is illogical to conclude that the functional effect of AIDS on population control can be reduced to the interests of specific members of the society, so it is illogical to claim that the functional effect of segregation on capitalism means that segregation was functional to a specific class's interests. Segregation may well have been the unintended product of the interplay of diverse actors' motives, without it being conceived of as in any specific group's interests.

⁷ The most thorough criticism of the functionalist dimension of revisionism has been provided by Deborah Posel. However, even her lucid critique did not significantly transcend the functionalist paradigm, for her analysis merely adds the notion of 'dysfunction' ('Rethinking the "race-class debate"' (1983), p. 54).

A second problem is that functionalism, as a form of teleological inquiry, only makes sense when applied to social wholes. In functionalism, social practices are explained by reference to the systemic functions they serve. These purposes are not reducible to the motives of social actors. For example, church attendance may enhance social integration; but this is not why worshippers go to church.⁸

In revisionist historiography, however, the holistic discourse of 'function' soon drifted into the psychological and individualistic discourse of 'motive'. This confusion had far-reaching consequences. For example, a systemic functionalist argument that capitalist expansion required some form of social distinctions, in order to reduce one sector of the population to a super-exploitable labour force, was often held to imply that it was the motive of social actors to institute segregation so as to specifically promote capitalism. In fact, however, such actors may equally well have instituted segregation for other reasons, such as cultural or moral reasons. 'Serving a function' is an argument based on methodological holism; 'serving interests' may easily become an argument based on methodological individualism.⁹ The former refers to the requirements of structures; the latter tends to include reference to human agency and design. The two kinds of argument are based on two completely different notions of 'function'.¹⁰ As Saunders pointed out,

'In arguing that the reserves were functional to capital, (the revisionists) implied that they had been created to serve capitalist interests. But though the

⁸ J. Wilson, Social Theory (1983), p. 64.

⁹ Although 'serving interests' is not necessarily based on methodological individualism. The claim that interests can be 'objective' is reconcilable with methodological holism (such as the theory of 'objective class interests'). However, it should then be very carefully distinguished from human agency and motive.

¹⁰ J. Wilson, Social Theory (1983), p. 72.

reserves did eventually come to subsidize capital, they had not come into existence for that purpose: in the early twentieth century, many capitalists had seen them as a problem, not a solution, for they locked up labour away from the mines... To explain the reserves, many different factors had to be taken into account'.¹¹

John Plamenatz has traced this ambiguity right to the heart of Marx's thought. On some occasions, Marx and Engels speak of the State as an **instrument** of class rule. On other occasions, they regarded the state as a **condition of class exploitation**, without being controlled by a class; it could maintain a legal system enabling one class to exploit another without actually being in the hands of the exploiting class or their agents. The former argument is an individualistic one, emphasising human agency and motive; the latter is a holistic argument, derived from society's own needs.¹²

Revisionists have often confused function with purpose. An extract from a paper by F. A. Johnstone captures this confusion between function and intention:

'These different groups [employers, white workers and the Afrikaner nationalists] all **seek to maximize** their own particular interests ... The **function** of actual apartheid is to regulate this [conflict] in such a way as to permit the maximisation of different white interests in the two goal areas of prosperity and white supremacy without jeopardising the essential security of either'.¹³

¹¹ C. Saunders, The Making of the South African Past (Cape Town: David Philip, 1988), pp. 188-9.

¹² John Plamenatz, Man and Society (Volume 2), (London: Longman, 1963), pp. 364-6, 367. Emphasis added.

¹³ 'White Prosperity and White Supremacy in South Africa today' (African Affairs, vol. 69, 1970), p. 130. The confusion is not always apparent. Posel, for example, praised Johnstone for replacing the methodological individualism associated with 'liberal historiography' with a structuralist conception of class as a set of social relations (D. Posel, 'Rethinking the "race-class debate"' (1983), p. 60).

The revisionists' materialist realism has proved unable to explain adequately phenomena such as Afrikaner nationalism, African nationalism and the state's technocratic discourse of the 1980s. Increasingly, analysts included reference to individual purposes, choices or designs in their accounts of historical events. Revisionists have often lapsed back into methodological individualism. The revisionists' claims would only remain significantly structuralist if it could be shown that actors' motivations and purposes are linked together in structured ways that transcend human motives. Yet invariably, the revisionists' 'structures' had to be populated by people, who have to make sense of their situations and choose how to promote their interests. What capitalists do with their capital cannot simply be read off from the fact that they have capital.

As Posel has argued, an account of class relations is not sufficient, for an understanding of the South African state:

'The political power of one class alliance over another requires in part, its electoral majority, at least, which is in turn affected by such variables as ideological and political control, individual leadership, ethnic cleavages and nationalistic sentiment, and historical contingencies such as wars or droughts'.¹⁴

This recognition of individual choice is, of course, greatly to be welcomed. Yet the key aspect of the old revisionist model - its functionalism - still remains in place. The various challenges to revisionism have not seriously addressed this weakness. The only effect of the various improvements on revisionism has been to direct a relatively structural, or holist, functionalism into the direction of individual, or Hobbesian, motivation. Revisionists retained a very specific conception of individual motivation. According to revisionists, capitalists are always busily promoting their interests, making alliances, worrying about their labour supplies, and promoting

¹⁴ D. Posel, 'Rethinking the "race-class debate"' (1983), p. 61.

the conditions for accumulation of capital. We are left with a world populated by supremely self-interested individuals. The increasing recognition of political agency has been distorted by its origin in systemic functionalism, because it has led to a specific conception of human meaning and motivation. From the claim that ideological and racial structures are **functional** to class domination, revisionists tend to assume that these structures were **intended**, in a very utilitarian way, to be functional to class domination. Or, in different terms, revisionists have confused **interpretation** (saying what a policy or a practice means) with **imputation** (attributing a particular motive to a social actor).¹⁵ Social function and human purpose have been fatally welded together in the notion of 'interests' - a concept which merits further examination.

c) Interests

Whereas liberals saw capitalism as a beneficial modernising force, revisionists regarded it as a class exploitative system.¹⁶ In a spirit of 'cynical realism', revisionists posed their set of key questions:

'Who owns what? Who does what? Who gets what? Who does what to whom? Who does what for whom? How are who does what and who gets what linked to who owns what and who controls what? How is all this linked to what is going on in society and history?'¹⁷.

The phenomena of inequality and racism in South Africa provides much fertile soil for the flourishing of cynical reason. Revisionists claimed that the apartheid state was an instrument

¹⁵ I am indebted to Dave Christianson for this distinction.

¹⁶ Smith, The Changing Past (1988), p. 167.

¹⁷ F. Johnstone, ' "Most painful to our hearts": South African through the eyes of the new school', Canadian Journal of African Studies (vol. 16, no. 1, 1982), p. 5; Quoted in K. Smith, The Changing Past (1988), p. 167.

developed by dominant classes to serve their interests.¹⁸ An entire Hobbesian understanding of politics has been built on the analysis of 'capitalist interests'. Terms such as 'control', 'exploitation', 'needs of capital', 'class alliances', 'compromises' between capitalist sectors, 'dominant and subordinate classes', 'interests', 'material needs', 'mobilised capital', 'onslaughts', 'accumulation of capital', and 'hegemony', became an insistent litany of the materialist perspective. Such analysis has little sensitivity for the complexity of human meaning. In the spirit of 'cynical reason', analysts become ever-intent on exposing, in Peter Sloterdijk's words, 'the egoisms, class privileges, resentments, steadfastness of hegemonic powers'.¹⁹

As Dennis Wrong notes, the idea that a 'power drive' or a 'will to power', as a major constituent of human nature, has been very powerful in Western philosophy. It is central to the Machiavellian tradition, and Hobbes refers to the 'perpetual and restless desire of power after power, that ceaseth only in death'.²⁰

The revisionists' emphasis on class interests has, not surprisingly, led to a conception of political actors as irrevocably antagonistic. Their writings often portray a society divided into two or more insulated worlds, inhabited by self-contained classes, who were connected solely in the process of material production and exploitation. Stanley Greenberg, for

18. For example, R. Davies, Capital, State and White Labour in South Africa 1900-1960, (Harvester Press, 1979), and D. Kaplan, 'The South African State: The origins of a Racially Exclusive Democracy' (Insurgent Socialist, (X (2), 1980). See H. Wolpe's discussion of these works in Race, Class and the Apartheid State, (London: UNESCO, 1988), p. 37.

¹⁹ P. Sloterdijk, Critique of Cynical Reason (1988), p. 19.

²⁰ Quoted in D. Wrong, Power: Its forms, bases and uses, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979), p. 218.

example, referred to

'... the lack of "social will" between the dominant and subordinate populations, which facilitates the dispossession and coercion necessary to labor control, and the racial divide itself, which keeps groups opposed to the framework of rural control from aligning with one another ...' ²¹.

Heribert Adam also portrayed South African society from an inherently conflictual perspective:

'...(T)wo apparently diametrically opposed race or class castes face each other in visible polarization; white and non-white, ruler and ruled, privileged and underprivileged, exploiter and exploited, a numerical minority against a four-times stronger majority...' ²².

Ultimately, therefore, revisionists produced a powerful fusion of holistic functionalism, sociological realism, a 'hermeneutics of suspicion', conflict theory, and a Hobbesian understanding of individual motivation. Added to this was a strong streak of intuitive and unexplored moral outrage at the apparently cosy relationship between apartheid and capitalism, and the prevailing self-interested ethos of social actors.

Various authors have criticised the radicals' emphasis on material interests. For example, Ken Smith has drawn attention to the shallowness of Dan O'Meara's interpretation of Afrikaner nationalism²³; and Rodney Davenport, in his discussion of liberalism, has valiantly attempted to provide an alternative view to that of the revisionists:

'The most distinctive feature of nineteenth-century liberalism in the Southern African experience was a concern for the rights of other cultural groups or

²¹ S. Greenberg, Race and State in Capitalist Development, (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1980), p. 69.

²² H. Adam, Modernizing Racial Domination, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), p. 9.

²³ K. Smith, The Changing Past (1988), p. 184.

individualsFor the most part, (liberals were) intelligent people who agonised humanely and with integrity about difficult situations...'²⁴

Yet it has been difficult for critics to challenge the revisionists on their conception of human motivation. The interest-based view of motivation derives not only from the Marxist and functionalist theoretical traditions, but lies deep in the heritage of Western political philosophy.

The heirs to revisionism have, however, retained the radical assumption regarding the 'will to power' in their critiques of state power and dominant ideology in South Africa. After a brief consideration of the materialist approach to the analysis of city politics and urban development, we will take up these themes in more detail.

d) Revisionism and the study of urban political economy

The original revisionist paradigm also made its mark on studies of urban government (the so-called 'local state') during the late 1970s. From a perspective of methodological realism, government policies regarding the cities were reduced to underlying class forces.²⁵

From this perspective, the state's overriding aim was seen as the securing of the general conditions of the production and reproduction of capital, as well as the political domination of the bourgeoisie. According to these theorists, legislation such as the Natives (Urban Areas) Act of 1923 was introduced in order to control the urban working class and other marginal classes,

²⁴. South Africa: A modern history (1987), p. 119-20; Quoted in K. Smith, The Changing Past (1988), p. 201.

²⁵ For example, see R. Bloch and P. Wilkinson: 'Urban control and popular struggle: A survey of state urban policy, 1920-1970', in Africa Perspective (No. 20, 1982), p. 2.

and to promote the conditions for further capitalist growth.²⁶

In their analysis of local politics, revisionist theorists tended to emphasise the class-based nature of City Councils, representing 'local commercial and landed capital and the white petty-bourgeoisie'.²⁷ The separation of locations from white towns meant that all the costs of collective consumption (such as housing and infrastructure) would be paid by the dominated classes themselves.²⁸ Local businesses benefited from this, because it lowered the costs of reproduction of labour power. However, the maintenance of an adequate labour force also compelled constructive steps to be taken to improve township conditions.²⁹ Certain analyses derived this contradiction from 'the heart of capital itself': 'Capital desires the capacity to work - it does not desire the worker. A contradiction is introduced by this desire for labour accompanied by antagonism towards the worker'.³⁰ To resolve this contradiction, Councils tended to devote their energies to tightening control over residents, and reducing the population, rather than improving the conditions and increasing the facilities.³¹ African workers were marginalised from the main currents of life in the city: 'The project of locations is to "contain" labour power - in both senses: ... to make it available to the process of accumulation,

²⁶ Bloch and Wilkinson, 'Urban control and popular struggle' (1982), p. 11.

²⁷ For example, see J. Cohen, 'Twatwa: The working class of Benoni during the 1930s', in Africa Perspective (No. 20, 1982), p. 84.

²⁸ Bloch and Wilkinson, 'Urban control and popular struggle' (1982), p. 15.

²⁹ For example, see J. Cohen, 'Twatwa' (1982), p. 85.

³⁰ Ditshwantsho tsa Rona Study Group, '"They like our hands, not us': A study of policy bearing on Alexandra from 1948 to 1963' (n.d.), p. 3.

³¹ J. Cohen, 'Twatwa' (1982), p. 87.

and to insulate it from citizenship'.³²

This interpretation of local government and politics was inherently conflictual. The metaphors of repression and resistance were frequently used in this mode of analysis. Black residents were depicted as pitted against arbitrary and emotionless township officials.³³

Furthermore, some studies also analysed African urban communities through class analysis. These differentiated between working class and petty-bourgeois black residents; this laid the basis for a class critique of Black Local Authorities (BLAs) during the 1980s. Robin Bloch, for example, maintained that black councils were simply 'agencies of control and division, created by the state to extend co-optive but effectively meaningless "political" rights to sections of the dominated classes on the urban terrain ... monopolised by a small (and often corrupt) section of the petty bourgeoisie'.³⁴

In general, the state was seen as a cohesive and fairly monolithic entity. One author even portrayed local authorities as merely a part of the state, functioning 'as an "obedient" branch of the State to reproduce the conditions necessary for the accumulation of capital in general'.³⁵ Some authors, however, acknowledged the divisions between different forms of

³² Ditshwantsho tsa Rona Study Group, 'They like our hands', p. 4.

³³ For example, J. Cohen, 'Twatwa' (1982), p. 89.

³⁴ R. Bloch, 'All little sisters got to try on big sister's clothes: The Community Council system in South Africa', (Africa Studies Institute, University of the Witwatersrand, 1982), p. 5.

³⁵ R. de Villiers, 'The state, capital and labour allocation - the Johannesburg Municipality 1948-1962', (Africa Perspective, no. 12, 1979), p. 37.

governmental authority³⁶; this was explained by the various (and often conflicting) demands made on the state by competing interests within the dominant classes.³⁷

B. Theorising the state: power, domination and interests

a) State-strategy theorists and the analysis of national politics

During the late 1970s, revisionists developed a greater appreciation for the state as political actor. By the 1980s, a generation of 'state-centric' theorists, who emphasised the notion of 'state strategy', had emerged. In the words of Jonathan Hyslop,

'[T]heoretical viewpoints which break with the notion of the state as a simple instrument of the dominant classes, ... giving due attention to the autonomy of its internal structures, may add depth to our interpretation of current political processes'³⁸.

The state has increasingly been portrayed as having a mind of its own. It is a deeply voluntarist perspective, in which state actors perform relatively independently of outside forces. This perspective reached its apogee with analyses of the 'P.W. Botha state'. For example, it was claimed that 'The complex reform-cum-security programme which was introduced in the early 1980s not only transformed South African politics, but turned the

³⁶. For example, Ditshwantso tsa Rona Study Group, 'They like our hands', p. 5.

³⁷ R. Bloch and P. Wilkinson, 'Urban control and popular struggle (1982)', p. 5.

³⁸ J. Hyslop, 'Introduction' in G. Moss and I. Obery (eds), South African Review Five, (Johannesburg: Ravan Press), 1989; p. 1.

position occupied by P W Botha into the epicentre of state power'.³⁹ The discourse of systemic function, which had informed revisionist analysis, had all but disappeared by the mid-1980s.

In this paradigm, the Hobbesian conception of motivation and meaning remained, based on the theoretical primacy of the concept of interest. For these authors, the state's motives were regarded as relatively uncomplicated, being based on selfish, illegitimate or vicious purposes. In fact, the notion of the autonomy of the state actually strengthened the Hobbesian flavour of analysis, since it was even easier to attribute self-interested motives to an organization than to the relatively abstract notion of 'class'. In the process, a new repertoire of terminology emerged. Instead of the rhetoric of economic determination and class exploitation, the state-centric theorists relied on concepts such as 'control', 'co-ordination', 'strategy', 'co-optation', 'centralisation', 'repression', 'designs', 'consolidation', 're-organisation', 'alliances of interests', 'onslaughts', 'initiatives' and 'instigation'.⁴⁰ State-centric analysts lost almost all sense that political actors had to conduct their business against a backdrop of meaning. Individuals were portrayed as larger than life, cut loose from the constraints of their cultural background, so that they could endlessly promote and legitimate their political interests. It was seldom asked in what way these interests were meaningful to political actors. The underlying philosophical and moral issues which faced governmental actors were not deemed worthy of analysis - except to the extent that such issues were

³⁹ M. Swilling and M. Phillips, 'The powers of the thunderbird: Decision-making structures and policy strategies in the South African state', in Centre for Policy Studies, Policy Perspectives 1989: South Africa at the End of the Eighties (Johannesburg: 1989), p. 30.

⁴⁰ The studies contained in the South African Review series, edited by the South African Research Service, prominently employed this discourse.

seen as ideological concealments of sinister motives.

However, the new emphasis on the state had the benefit of providing a more nuanced perspective on the internal workings of governmental bodies. The 'state-strategy' theorists criticised the naive instrumentalism of the revisionists, on three main grounds. First, the state was no longer conceptualised as being primarily interested in questions of economic exploitation; it had political and military concerns of its own. Second, the divisions and conflicts within the state were increasingly recognized. Third, the state was portrayed as fighting a losing battle to manage the various contradictions of government policy.

The impact of state-centric analyses on our understanding of South African politics has been uneven. The bulk of state-strategy analysis has been done by 'policy scientists', who have concentrated on contemporary (mainly 1980s) political events.⁴¹ The impression has been created, willy-nilly, that the dynamics of South African politics have narrowed to a more personalistic system. This may be quite untrue; for example, it may be quite possible to analyse the regimes of General Smuts and Dr. Verwoerd from the same assumptions of methodological individualism as that of P.W. Botha - in which case their regimes would appear equally dominated by single personalities.

Certain historians have also begun to adopt state-centric assumptions and individualistic assumptions. In his analysis of segregation, for example, Saul Dubow has explicitly rejected the materialist conception of the state as an 'omnipotent agent operating directly on behalf of capitalist interests'.⁴² He wrote that '[S]egregation was primarily a defensive strategy

⁴¹ See, for example, the collected essays in M. Swilling, Views on the South African State (Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council), 1990.

⁴² S. Dubow, Racial Segregation and the Origins of Apartheid in South Africa, 1919-1936 (London: Macmillan, 1989), p. 53.

aimed at consolidating white supremacy in the face of the challenge posed by the emergence of an African proletariat'.⁴³

Furthermore, Saul Dubow has provided an extensive analysis of the inter-departmental conflicts during the 1920s and 1930s, and the rejuvenation of the Native Affairs Department after 1924. Similarly, in the work of Deborah Posel, the state has also moved to centre stage. In a paper devoted to the study of 'mechanisms of power and decision-making within the state' during the 1960s, she maintains that the Bantu Affairs Department's 'determined bid to impose its will was orchestrated and propelled by the large and powerful Departmental bureaucracy'.⁴⁴

Furthermore, to the extent that the state-centric approach has permeated into the ranks of the historians, the methodological assumption of 'cynical reason' was also adopted. Saul Dubow has analysed political motivation largely in terms of interests -he has merely broadened the range of interests which are promoted by ideology to include those of white domination.⁴⁵ Posel emphasises the activist dimensions of governmental experience: by 1960, she maintains, Afrikaner agricultural interests were also 'in the throes of Broederbond infiltration', and certain local authorities had also been 'thoroughly infiltrated and colonised' by the Broederbond'.⁴⁶ In sum, history is being rewritten in the light of contemporary methodological assumptions.

b) State-strategy theorists and the study of local government restructuring

⁴³ S. Dubow, Racial Segregation (1989), p. 180.

⁴⁴ D. Posel, 'The state and policy-making in Apartheid's second phase', (History Workshop, February 1990), p. 11.

⁴⁵ S. Dubow, Racial Segregation (1989), p. 3.

⁴⁶ D. Posel, 'The state and policymaking in Apartheid's second phase' (1990), pp. 8, 14.

During the mid-1980s, the state-centric approach filtered through to urban studies. This perspective emphasised the central state as an active and purposeful agent in local government issues. This shift was not a tidy one: elements of class analysis often formed a backdrop to the new state-centric approach.⁴⁷ The emphasis on the state did lead, however, to a more nuanced view of the relationship between 'the state' and 'capital' than that portrayed by the revisionists. For example, the analysis by Chaskalson et.al. of the 1984 Vaal rent boycott mentions that employers expressed their sympathy with residents' demands and their frustration by the intransigence of government authorities.⁴⁸

One significant trigger which produced this theoretical shift was the introduction of the 1983 tricameral constitution, a drastic piece of constitutional engineering by the National Party government. The new constitution entailed a new local government system. Another spur was the declaration of the states of emergency of 1985 and 1986, which indicated the government's willingness to deploy its resources in order to stay in power. These examples of governmental initiative caused many observers to shift their terms of theoretical discourse from 'class analysis' to 'state strategy'.

According to these observers, the question of local government 'restructuring' became a key component of state-strategy

⁴⁷ For example, J. Cole, Crossroads: The Politics of Reform and Repression, 1976-86 (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1987); and M. Swilling, 'Social movements and apartheid's urban and regional system: An East London case study', in R. Tomlinson and M. Addleson (eds), Regional Restructuring under Apartheid (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1987), pp. 138-153.

⁴⁸ M. Chaskalson, K. Jochelson and J. Seekings, 'Rent boycotts and the urban political economy', in G. Moss and I. Obery (eds), South African Review Four, (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1987), p. 66.

analysis.⁴⁹ According to Jeremy Grest, 'current state strategy' was aimed at maximum devolution of authority to the local level in order to 'recreate the former structures of control on a new footing with a firmer indigenous base'.⁵⁰ The state's 'strategies' were portrayed as extensive and finely conceived interventions in social life. For example, Josette Cole argued that 'By the end of 1986, the political terrain of the Cape Peninsula had been radically restructured by a state determined to maintain control over the majority of its black population'.⁵¹ According to Andrew Boraine, the state set out to create and maintain a variety of social, geographical and political divisions. The policies of privatisation, deregulation, and the establishment of Regional Services Councils were key mechanisms in this regard: 'The intended consequence of these policies is to create divisions between middle-class home-owners in new elite suburbs and working-class residents of council housing and back-yard shacks ...'.⁵²

The rationales and justifications of government policy were often interpreted from the perspective of 'hermeneutics of suspicion'; they were regarded as mystifications of underlying motives. For example, Todes et.al. claimed that the language of technocracy

⁴⁹ See for example, A. Todes, V. Watson and P. Wilkinson, 'Local government restructuring in South Africa: The case of the Western Cape', in R. Tomlinson and M. Addleson (eds), Regional Restructuring (1987), p. 115; and J. Grest and H. Hughes, 'State strategy and popular response', in SARS (ed), South African Review Two (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1984), p. 60.

⁵⁰ J. Grest, 'Crisis of Local Government', in P. Frankel, N. Pines and M. Swilling (eds), State, Resistance and Change in South Africa, (Johannesburg: Southern, 1988), p.88.

⁵¹ J. Cole, Crossroads (1987), p. 162.

⁵² A. Boraine, 'Managing the urban crisis, 1986-1989: The role of the National Management System', in South African Review Five (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1989), pp. 109, 110.

was used in order to conceal attempts at political control.⁵³ Mark Swilling's analysis of local politics made the same point: 'In order to hide the racist objectives of the reforms, reformers have had to de-politicise the language of reform'.⁵⁴

The emphasis on state power maintained a conflictual view of social dynamics. Instead of depicting the South African conflict as fundamentally a worker-bourgeois struggle, as the revisionists had done, the state-strategy theorists analysed state and popular organisations pitted against one another. Numerous studies of the political organisations of the 1980s were undertaken, in which civic associations featured prominently. The 'civics' were analysed in terms of their own strategies which countered those of the state⁵⁵; most notably, these were strategies of mobilisation and politicisation. In fact, it was claimed, civic associations began to 'construct their own organs of popular government, rather than those of a white minority regime...'.⁵⁶

In contrast to these cynical-realist interpretations of the state's motives, the bona fides of the opponents to the state were usually accepted as self-evident. This has produced a theoretical schizophrenia, in which different methodological assumptions are applied to different actors in the political arena. Later in this chapter we will examine this phenomenon in more detail. In the light of our discussion of political action in Chapter Two, however, the application of different governing

⁵³ A. Todes, V. Watson and P. Wilkinson, 'Local government restructuring' (1987), p. 128.

⁵⁴ M. Swilling, 'Taking power from below' (1988), p. 182.

⁵⁵ For example, Chaskalson et al, 'Rent boycotts' (1984); p. 68.

⁵⁶ M. Swilling, 'Taking power from below: Local government restructuring and the search for community participation', in C. Heymans and G. Totemeyer, Government by the People?, (Cape Town: Juta, 1988), p. 183.

assumptions regarding different groups' motivation and sense of moral conduct seems unwarranted, if not perverse.

C. Contemporary radical thought: Ideology, discourse analysis and 'History from Below'

From the early 1980s, various thinkers began to explore the issue of beliefs more fully. In the process, they moved away from the crude utilitarian view of belief-systems which had been inherited from the Marxist tradition. Some noteworthy advances have been made; however, these theorists have still found their endeavour constrained by the assumptions of their predecessors. Since this thesis will argue for the importance of beliefs and subjectivity, we will explore the merits of the 'ideology-critique' approach in some detail.

a) Theorising ideology: Power, manipulation and interests

The relevance of contemporary trends in the analysis of belief-systems must be understood against the intellectual backdrop of revisionist thought. In this section, we will argue that these intellectual constraints have provided a quite distorted view of human meaning and motivation.

For revisionists, the concept of 'ideology' was used to refer to 'subjective' consciousness and belief-systems. In the spirit of methodological realism, ideology was largely reduced to a facade, behind which the 'real' forces of history were played out. These real forces were material class interests.

This understanding of the nature of ideas can be traced to certain crucial ambiguities in Marx's thought. As regards beliefs and ideas, Marxists have made at least two different kinds of claims - the one individualistic/instrumental, and the other structural. First, Marx on occasion maintained that the

function of ideology is not to explain the world but to support people's interests. As Plamenatz put it, the important question (for Marx) is not 'Is an ideology true?', but rather, 'Who benefits from it?' Marx and Engels frequently seemed to imply that an ideology is a more or less fantastic theory which promotes beliefs which are to the advantage of some class or other.⁵⁷ As Abercrombie noted, this carries with it the suggestion that ideology is an **instrument** in the hands of the ruling class; and this has important similarities with instrumentalist theories of the state.⁵⁸

Other Marxists have rejected the instrumentalist understanding of ideology. Althusser and Poulantzas, for example, maintained that the dominant ideology arose from the structure of capitalist social relations, and not from the specific interests of social classes.⁵⁹ This view of ideology is based on the concept of **deception**. Drawn from Marx's theory of commodity fetishism, it claims that people are systematically deceived by beliefs which mask the real social relations.⁶⁰ Hence a belief-system is not an ideology because it is used to promote certain interests, but because it is false; it conceals the truth.

Both explanations, however, make the realist claim that the analyst understands political actors better than they understand themselves. As Peter Sloterdijk has noted in his satirical account of the modern Enlightenment, 'Ideology critique wants to operate with precision, in the surgical ... sense: to outflank

⁵⁷ J. Plamenatz, Man and Society (Volume 2), (1963), p. 330.

⁵⁸ N. Abercrombie et.al., The Dominant Ideology Thesis (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1980), p.24. Emphasis in original.

⁵⁹ N. Poulantzas, Political Power and Social Classes, (London, 1975); quoted in N. Abercrombie et.al., The Dominant Ideology Thesis, (1980), p. 26.

⁶⁰ N. Abercrombie et.al., The Dominant Ideology Thesis (1980), p. 28-9.

and expose opponents, to reveal the opponents' intentions. Exposing implies laying out the mechanism of false and unfree consciousness....'.⁶¹

In South African historiography, the attitude of 'cynical reason' and ideologie-kritik have dominated radical analyses of the state. Yet these two versions of ideology have seldom been analytically explored. The result has been diffuse attempts at 'demystification', intended either to expose the **interests** or the **deceptions** of belief-systems in South Africa. Not much real understanding of the subjective world of political actors has resulted. In Sloterdijk's words, radical thinkers have recognized only two or three grounds for falsity. There is **error** and **ill will**; and error can be further divided into two different phenomena: the **simple error**, based on logical or perceptual delusion and which can be corrected relatively easily, and persistent, systematic error, or **ideology**. Thus, concludes Sloterdijk, 'arise the classic series of forms of false consciousness: **lie, error, ideology**'.⁶²

For many South African radical theorists, the Machiavellian notions of interest, deception and manipulation have been central to analyses of the ideas of both the dominant and subordinate sectors of the population. The true goals of the state, for example, were said to be concealed from the world by a justificatory apartheid ideology. Hence state actors were conceptualised as deliberately using ideology as an instrument to further certain interests.

Since the late 1970s, however, the rediscovery of the state as an autonomous agent has led to a new sensitivity to the independent power of belief systems. If political events could not simply be traced to economic causes, but were at least

⁶¹ P. Sloterdijk, Critique of Cynical Reason (1988), p. 15.

⁶² P. Sloterdijk, Critique of Cynical Reason (1988), p. 15.

partially dependent on the deliberate choices of political actors, then their motives and beliefs assumed a new importance. Adam and Giliomee, for example, maintained that 'Class analysis remains mute or unconvincing on the crucial question as to why people everywhere are susceptible to the call of agitators even though the mobilization goes against their real interests. To blame false consciousness begs the question'.⁶³ Herman Giliomee referred to the Afrikaners mobilised by 'cultural entrepreneurs' for the sake of elite-defined Afrikaner interests.⁶⁴ There have also been analyses of ideological conflicts⁶⁵, of 'legitimation'⁶⁶, and discourse.⁶⁷

Such theoretical developments are to be welcomed. In these works, we can sense a growing willingness to push the existing

⁶³ H. Adam and H. Giliomee, The Rise and Crisis of Afrikaner Power (Cape Town: David Philip, 1979), p. 50.

⁶⁴ H. Giliomee, 'The Nationalist Party and the Afrikaner Broederbond', in R.M. Price and C.G. Rosberg (eds), The Apartheid Regime (Cape Town: David Philip, 1980), p.17.

⁶⁵ For example, S. Greenberg, 'Ideological struggles within the South African state', in S. Marks and S. Trapido (eds), The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa (England: Longman, 1987).

⁶⁶ For example, D. Posel, 'Language, Legitimation and Control: The South African state after 1978', (Social Dynamics, vol. 10 (1), 1984); S. Greenberg, Legitimizing the Illegitimate (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); and the work of Dr. S. Booysen (Rand Afrikaanse Universiteit), and Prof. W. van Vuuren (University of the Western Cape).

⁶⁷. For example, A. Ashforth, The Politics of Official Discourse in Twentieth-Century South Africa (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990); S. Dubow, 'Race, civilisation and culture: The elaboration of segregationist discourse in the inter-war years', in S. Marks and S. Trapido (eds), The Politics of Race Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa (England: Longman, 1987); and D. Posel, 'The language of domination, 1978-1983, in S. Marks and S. Trapido (eds), Ibid. (1987).

theoretical frontiers back, towards a more genuine appreciation of the complexities of human meaning. The contemporary treatment of the question of beliefs and subjectivity will be illustrated by means of a closer look at the work of three authors, viz. Adam Ashforth, Saul Dubow and Deborah Posel. A close analysis is useful, in order to disentangle the remnants of revisionism from their more creative and valuable insights. It is only by means of a healthy awareness of our habitual and obfuscatory patterns of thought that we can avoid making the same mistakes in the future.

b) Adam Ashforth: The Politics of Official Discourse in Twentieth-Century South Africa

One of the more traditional formulations of the interest-based perspective appears in Adam Ashforth's study of South African Commissions of Inquiry into policies regarding Africans:

'The "Native Question" was the intellectual domain in which the knowledge, strategies, policies, and justifications necessary to the maintenance of domination were fashioned ... [Commissions of inquiry] have sought to fashion workable schemes of policy by devising coherent schemes of legitimation ... ⁶⁸

Many of the realist, functionalist and Hobbesian assumptions remain. Despite disclaimers, Ashforth constantly makes the distinction between appearance and reality. The abundant use of scare quotes warns us of the essential dubiousness of almost everything said by Commissioners, and that their point of view does not represent reality in any meaningful sense. Ashforth concludes that the real significance of Commissions of Inquiry 'should be interpreted less as instruments of 'policy' and 'intelligence' and more as symbolic rituals aiding in establishing and reproducing the power of modern states'.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ A. Ashforth, The Politics of Official Discourse (1990), p. 1-3.

⁶⁹ A. Ashforth, The Politics of Official Discourse (1990), p. 7.

Once again, we are back to a pervasive functionalism; and once again, function blends with purpose: 'Hence, the constant search for **mechanisms** to remove the "Native Question" from the political arena ...'⁷⁰. For Ashforth, 'commissions of inquiry ... [were] seeking **strategies** for state power in periods when social, economic and political forces had forced a re-examination of the fundamental principles underlying state power'.⁷¹ At times, Ashforth explicitly lapses into a Hobbesian voluntarism:

'Schemes of legitimation are not merely doctrines, assertions, or "ideologies" concerning the political road to the good life. Rather, ... the phrase refers to the articulation of concrete plans of action designed to achieve the "proper" ... means and objectives of power'.⁷²

Yet Ashforth does attempt to transcend the instrumentalist notion of ideology. In so doing, he moves closer to the 'ideology as error' position, which claims that actors are trapped in systematic falsifications. For Ashforth, the attempt by Government officials to theorise the 'Native Question' is associated with the drive to mastery in modern western civilisation:

'The objectified social realm in modernity is understood as governed by observable laws subject to the same logic of cause and effect as nature. It is thus a world in which power can be understood as capable of achieving predictable results; in which "problems" can be "solved" '.⁷³

As a description of modernity, this is perfectly true; but Ashforth provides no real reasons why such endeavours are

⁷⁰ A. Ashforth, The Politics of Official Discourse (1990), p. 2. Emphasis added.

⁷¹ A. Asforth, The Politics of Official Discourse (1990), p. 3. Emphasis added.

⁷² A. Ashforth, The Politics of Official Discourse (1990), p. 8.

⁷³ A. Ashforth, The Politics of Official Discourse (1990), p. 5.

illegitimate, other than by the lavish use of scare quotes. One is led to ask: Why does Ashforth find modern forms of reason so offensive? And are the Native Commissions' reports epistemologically invalid, simply because they partake of modern forms of reason? The crucial point is that Ashforth is looking for a key to unlock the unstated paradigm of the Native Commissioners - but he is looking for it in the wrong place. Criticising modernity simply will not do, because his analysis will inevitably partake of the very essence of modern reason.

Ashforth makes a dangerous mistake: When we theorise at this level of abstraction, we are painting history with such broad brush-strokes that it is virtually impossible to exclude ourselves from the periodisation under review.⁷⁴ In condemning modernity, we, as analysts, should remember that we are as much products of the modern age as were Government officials. It becomes extremely difficult for Ashforth to maintain his privileged position as ideology-critic, from which his scalpel can lay bare the falsity of his Native Commissioners. Consider the following paragraph from Ashforth, which purportedly refers to the rationalistic tendencies of modern policy-makers, but which can, equally well, apply to any modern thinker (including Ashforth himself):

'Every "problem" in the world of the modern state-makers must have a proper name, a rational cause and a reasonable solution. ... And in so doing, ~~the~~ facts are required. Solutions of problems, then, requires individuals combining in definite institutions and sharing a common language through which to speak of

⁷⁴

The same error was contained in my earlier paper, 'Power, surveillance and the new administration in South Africa: Some insights from Michel Foucault' (Conference of the Political Science Association, October 1987), in which I criticised the disciplinary ethos of the Department of Constitutional Development and Planning. As Prof. Johan Degenaar pointed out, it is in fact part of a general ethos that pervades all of modern society - myself included.

the problems and articulate solutions.⁷⁵

As we argued in Chapter One, the key to understanding officials' beliefs lies elsewhere - not in the Commissioners' **modernistic epistemology**, but in their inability to find a **moral paradigm that was compatible with modernity**. Modernity cannot be cynically debunked as a veneer for political interests, for we are all as much implicated in modernity as the government officials we seek to analyse.

The second consequence of Ashforth's analysis is that his misunderstanding of modern thought develops into a misunderstanding of power relations. For Ashforth, there is something intrinsically illegitimate about the exercise of power:

'...[A] commission of inquiry can be thought of as a theatre of power. ... [Its] significance should be interpreted less as instruments of "policy" and "intelligence" and more as symbolic rituals aiding in establishing and reproducing the power of modern states...'.⁷⁶

For Ashforth, commissions of inquiry can be regarded as 'schemes of legitimation', or 'the articulation of concrete plans of action designed to achieve the "proper" ... means and objectives of power'.⁷⁷ Ashforth's position becomes very confusing. Ultimately, the discourse of Native Commissioners is illegitimate, because such a discourse has either (a) the effect, or (b) the function, or (c) the purpose (Ashforth never specifies), of promoting state power.

It is simply not clear what Ashforth's argument entails. On the one hand, if Ashforth is criticising a government for governing,

⁷⁵ A. Ashforth, The Politics of Official Discourse (1990), p. 6. Emphasis added.

⁷⁶ A. Ashforth, The Politics of Official Discourse (1990), p. 7.

⁷⁷ A. Ashforth, The Politics of Official Discourse (1990), p. 8.

then he is quite misguided. As we maintained in Chapter Two, a seriousness about power is at the heart of any politics. Any government exercises power, by its very nature. Like many theorists in the revisionist tradition, he is criticising politics for being politics.

On the other hand, if Ashforth is criticising political actors of an earlier era for making truth claims, then that is also peculiar. We all make truth claims; they only become dubious if they are shown to be false. Simply showing that officials 'knowledge of social realities' is somehow 'integrally connected to the formations of state power'⁷⁸, is simply not sufficient to discredit their truth claims. As we outlined in Chapter One, people's beliefs only make sense within an inter-subjective system of meaning; and to judge the epistemological status of their claims requires some analysis of how they genuinely interpreted the world.

The anger of analysts such as Ashforth is manifestly real, but misplaced. One cannot legitimately be angry with a government for having a notion of truth, or holding a moral notion of the common good, or implementing state policy. Such things are part of life, and to rage against them tends inevitably to lead to utopian projections of 'political processes wherein humans of all kinds might freely speak for themselves and act conjointly in pursuit of visions of a more desirable community'.⁷⁹ Ashforth's difficulty here is not new - the same tension between unlimited social criticism and exaggerated utopian idealism haunts Marx's own writings: 'On the one hand, it reifies every consciousness into a function of the social process; on the other, it wants to make possible the liberation of consciousness from

⁷⁸ A. Ashforth, The Politics of Official Discourse (1990), p. 10.

⁷⁹ A. Ashforth, The Politics of Official Discourse (1990), p. 1.

mystification'.⁸⁰

We need to extricate ourselves from these extremes of despair and utopianism. Officials' discourse is not as distorted as Ashforth suggests. As Bernard Williams recognized, typical political activity takes place somewhere on a continuum between total cynicism and perfect morality. We need to take the real moral dimensions of governmental discourse seriously, instead of attempting to reduce them to endless varieties of 'legitimation'.⁸¹ In this case, Ashforth is unable to discern any merit in the state's morality, but he himself paradoxically retreats into a position of high moral outrage.

c) Saul Dubow: Racial segregation and the origins of apartheid in South Africa

In Dubow's work, some of these difficulties still surface, but he has made significant progress towards new insight regarding the problem of meaning. Even though he still lapses into the discourse of function and interests, inherited from the revisionists⁸², and still advocates realist assumptions⁸³, his

⁸⁰ P. Sloterdijk, Critique of Cynical Reason (1988), p. 38.

⁸¹ As Williams recognised, 'It is widely believed that the practice of politics selects at least for cynicism and perhaps for brutality in its practitioners. This belief, and our whole subject, notoriously elicit an uncertain tone from academics, who tend to be either over-embarrassed or under-embarrassed by moralizing in the face of power' ('Politics and moral character', in S. Hampshire (ed), Public and Private Morality (Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 56.)

⁸² See S. Dubow, Racial Segregation, (1989), p. 34, where Dubow refers to the anthropological notion of culture 'serv[ing] the purpose' of validating the ideology of segregation.

⁸³ For example, Dubow claims that 'By presenting new policies in the guise of old ..., the NAD [Native Affairs Department] created for itself a dispassionate mask behind which it quietly pursued policies of bureaucratic aggrandizement' (Racial Segregation, p.

analysis shows a greater sensitivity than most of his intellectual predecessors. The result is ambivalence: Dubow oscillates between a tentative appreciation of the real motives of state officials, and a brusque dismissal of their moral claims. For example, he describes how segregationists made moral arguments for segregation, even to the detriment of whites' economic loss⁸⁴, and he recognises that 'segregation set out a well defined theory of rights and obligations', and that its proponents 'sought to invest it with at least a semblance of moral and intellectual authority'. Hence it cannot be easily dismissed as 'a thinly guised rationalisation of white domination'⁸⁵:

'One has also to consider the ethic and style of government, the living assumptions of administrative officials, and the vocabulary according to which competing interests and policies come to be formulated and contested'.⁸⁶

Dubow also notes that the Department of Native Affairs was motivated by an 'internal ideology' which was expressed in terms of a protective, paternalistic relationship towards its African 'wards'.⁸⁷ He mentions how the relations of paternalism were steadily undermined as capitalist relations eroded the personal contacts between rulers and ruled⁸⁸, and were increasingly submerged by a more repressive bureaucratic apparatus.⁸⁹ All these considerations are tantalisingly mentioned, pointing to a sensitivity for political actors' conception of moral conduct,

94); and he refers to anthropology 'serv[ing] the purpose' of validating the ideology of segregation (*Ibid.*, p. 34).

⁸⁴ S. Dubow, Racial Segregation (1989), p. 25-6.

⁸⁵ S. Dubow, Racial Segregation (1989), p. 6.

⁸⁶ S. Dubow, Racial Segregation (1989), p. 14.

⁸⁷ S. Dubow, Racial Segregation (1989), p. 12.

⁸⁸ S. Dubow, Racial Segregation (1989), p. 12.

⁸⁹ S. Dubow, Racial Segregation (1989), p. 13.

but their content is hardly explored by Dubow.

Dubow also refers to the emotional dimension of modernity. He is aware of the very real fears and anxieties of intellectuals at the beginning of the century, when the world began to take on an increasingly threatening aspect:

'[I]n a variety of ways white South Africans sensed that a qualitative change in the familiar relations between black and white was well under way. The possibility that a class or pan-Africanist sentiment might transform familiar forms of colonial domination and resistance was for many a truly frightening prospect'.⁹⁰

Following Shula Marks, Dubow perceptively viewed segregation as 'a set of policies specifically designed to cope with the strains of a society undergoing rapid industrialization'.⁹¹

Despite its origins in 'ideology critique', the work of Saul Dubow has made significant advances. Dubow transcends the urge to reduce beliefs to interests, and instead considers the role of beliefs in relation to a refreshingly wide definition of 'needs'.

d) Deborah Posel: 'The language of domination, 1978-1983'

In her analysis of the transition from Verwoerdian to technocratic discourse, Posel concentrates on the relationship between language and ideology. Like Dubow's work, Posel's paper is marked by significant strengths and weaknesses.

Posel criticises the state for its technocratic language, reflected in terms such as 'governmental effectiveness',

⁹⁰ S. Dubow, Racial Segregation (1989), p. 10.

⁹¹ S. Dubow, Racial Segregation (1989), p. 2.

'problems', 'experts', 'realities', and 'facts'.⁹² Her argument about the essential falsity of technocratic discourse in South Africa is based on an important distinction between political and technical issues. The discourse of P.W. Botha's government is misleading, she claims, because it presents political problems, the 'creations and pivots of NP policy', as engendered by the 'facts' of economic growth.⁹³

Her critique is ultimately based on two claims. The first claim takes us back to the conspiracy theory. The technocratic discourse is illegitimate, in Posel's view, because it is employed to promote certain interests and to maintain control:

'A new language of legitimation was not simply the ideological reflex of changing structural conditions and ensuing reforms; it became an instrument of control in itself, with strategic priority'.⁹⁴

However, unlike many of her intellectual predecessors, Posel actually quotes some evidence to show that there was, indeed, a deliberate strategy to popularise a new form of state discourse.⁹⁵ For Posel, demonstrating the manipulatory dimension

⁹² D. Posel, 'The language of domination, 1978-1983', in S. Marks and S. Trapido (eds), The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa (England: Longman, 1987), p. 421-2.

⁹³ D. Posel, 'Language of domination' (1987), p. 421. To some extent, Posel's analysis suffers from the same exaggerated suspicion of modern discourse as that of Adam Ashforth. Her use of scare quotes warns the reader not to be seduced into the apparent rationality of the state. Yet the philosophical basis of her critique of state discourse remains unclear. Surely **any** reasonable government will claim that it is interested in effective government, based on factual analysis and the expert solution of problems?

⁹⁴ D. Posel, 'The language of domination' (1987), p. 424.

⁹⁵ D. Posel, 'The language of domination' (1987), p. 428. However, she vacillates on this point, claiming that the production and use of this new discourse was 'not simply a well-devised and carefully orchestrated conspiracy on the part of shrewd state ideologues' (p.

of discourse is a matter of empirical proof, not a priori assumption. This recognition is an important improvement on the work of earlier authors.⁹⁶

Posel's second claim is more subtle. She is careful to avoid any Machiavellian notions of ideology: 'The communication of meaning is rooted in, but supersedes, subjective intention and control'.⁹⁷ She maintains that there is a significant difference between an 'ideology' and a 'language of legitimation'. An ideology, for Posel, has persuasive capacity; it

'embodies a set of ideas, symbols and practices, which depict the social/economic/political order as legitimate and thus worthy of popular consent ... [A]n ideology must be effectively persuasive ... Ideologies furnish a vocabulary in terms of which an individual construes his or her identity and place in society, its meaning and order'.⁹⁸

In contrast, she maintains, a 'language of legitimation' need not have such power to define the subjectivity of social actors. The new technocratic discourse was only a 'language of legitimation', because it failed to 'reshape or reconstitute the identity of those individuals who have internalised Verwoerdian values and meaning'.⁹⁹ 'Languages of legitimation' are therefore inherently less meaningful to social actors, and by implication, more open

432).

⁹⁶ Although it is not a recognition which Posel applies consistently in her work. Her work on Bantu Administration during the 1960s once again dismisses the commitment to the policy of separate development as 'the ideological means to legitimise the denial of the vote to Africans living in the country' ('The state and policy-making in apartheid's second phase', History Workshop, University of the Witwatersrand, 1990, p. 10).

⁹⁷ D. Posel, 'The language of domination' (1987), p. 420.

⁹⁸ D. Posel, 'The language of domination' (1987), p. 438.

⁹⁹ D. Posel, 'The language of domination' (1987), p. 439.

to manipulation by political power-holders. As such, it is a useful distinction, because it caters for two completely different kinds of phenomena in the realm of human meaning.

Posel's distinction between 'ideology' and 'language of legitimation' is important, for it frees us from the revisionists' crude understanding of interest-driven motivation. When individuals subscribe to an ideology, their subjectivity encompasses much more than interests - most notably, it includes a sense of identity, worth and ethics. These are the issues that must be explored by South African political theorists in future.

The shortcoming in her analysis lies elsewhere, viz. in her application of the description 'language of legitimation' to the technocratic discourse of the 1980s. She claims that the a-moral technocratic 'language of legitimation' substituted technique for politics, and 'work[ed] to banish issues of moral, social, religious identity and "ideological" principle'.

The problem with this distinction is that Posel accepts at face value that an **apparently** a-political, a-moral discourse is **intrinsically** so.¹⁰⁰ Now it is true that government technocrats of the 1980s may have perceived their endeavours as stripped of the old ethical and moral baggage of Verwoerdianism. Yet in terms of our argument in Chapter One, even technocrats must have a conception of ethical life, including an understanding of rights, obligations and proper social relations. This is not a realist claim in a new guise, for it does not claim that there is a hidden reality of which social actors are unaware. It is,

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She is not alone in this regard. It is also reflected in Louwrens Pretorius, 'Features of state ideology in South Africa - A review of recent analyses' (Paper presented at Conference on Perspectives on the Contemporary State, CPS, February 1988), on the emphasis in technocratic discourse on efficiency as a **means**, without postulating any clear **goals** (p. 9), and its tendency to denigrate moral values (p. 19). See also S. Greenberg, 'Ideological struggles within the South African state after 1978' (1978).

rather, a claim for the **ubiquity of the normative dimensions of meaning**, a claim that any meaningful discourse always constitutes social actors in a normative way.

In general, the recent work of South African 'discourse theorists' has implicitly subscribed to a curious understanding of politics. Their critiques of the Government's belief-systems are deeply ambiguous. Why, exactly, should we peer beyond social actors' express beliefs? Why should we subject such beliefs to a 'hermeneutic of suspicion'? Simply showing that belief-systems are somehow 'integrally connected to the formations of state power' is not sufficient to challenge their validity. Does the presence of interests discredit beliefs per se? Or is it the exact nature of the interests (i.e. 'illegitimate interests') that undermines the validity of beliefs? And what interests are legitimate anyway? If we seriously expect social actors, caught up in a specific historical context, to have interests different from the ones they had, we should specify on what grounds we hold this expectation.

We need to develop an understanding of political action which includes the notions (1) that political interests are not necessarily illegitimate; (2) that action **always** takes place against a normative background of ethical life; (3) that political actors take meaningful moral decisions; and that (4) modernity and discipline (in the Foucaultian sense) have not been limited to governmental behaviour, but inspire our very conception of ourselves as intellectuals. We need to abandon realism as a methodological principle, for it encourages us to look past the lived reality of social actors; and we need to transcend the functional and instrumental conception of human motivation. This will not be easy, since the evidence of unpalatable state actions often seems incompatible with notions of ethical life and moral conduct; but we have to cross this emotional barrier in order to grasp some of the ironies and complexities of South African political life. In sum, we need to write 'history from below', in which we empathise with the

predicaments of social actors.

In the next section, we will consider a new approach which has, indeed, attempted to write 'history from below'. This new approach deserves close attention, partly because it has emphasised questions of local government and urban politics, and partly because it contains explicit normative foundations. Once again, a closer analysis is valuable, to highlight the pitfalls and strengths of such an enterprise.

e) New directions in urban studies: 'History from below'

A novel approach to history-writing emerged during the 1980s. Spearheaded by the History Workshop organised at the University of the Witwatersrand, a new generation of historians has begun to explore the details of social and cultural life in South Africa. This new approach is important, because it has reacted against Marxist theoretical abstractions, and instead emphasised the perceptions of ordinary people¹⁰¹:

'Once serious cognisance has been taken of experience, it proves impossible to sustain the sort of Marxism which seeks only to generalise or perhaps even reify on a large scale and at a high level. To identify "the working class" in South Africa, or to discover the nature of "the state", "the ruling class" and "the reserve economies", becomes an impossibility'¹⁰².

In her defence of the new approach, Belinda Bozzoli argued that 'the humanistic thrust of the phenomenological viewpoint ... is a welcome antidote to mechanistic determinism'. From this perspective, 'all men are philosophers'¹⁰³; and 'experience ...

¹⁰¹ B. Bozzoli, 'History, Experience and Culture', in B. Bozzoli (ed), Town and Countryside in the Transvaal: Capitalist Penetration and Popular Response (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1983) p. 7.

¹⁰² B. Bozzoli, 'History, experience and culture' (1983), p. 17.

¹⁰³ B. Bozzoli, 'History, experience and culture' (1983), p. 10.

arises because men and women ... are rational, and they think about what is happening to themselves and their world'.¹⁰⁴ The historian takes on an important task - 'to interpret and understand, without simplifying, or attempting to reduce popular consciousness to those aspects most beloved of the intellectual concerned'.¹⁰⁵

A major strength of the 'History Workshop' approach is the willingness to break the bonds of both 'economic Marxism (as well as) a romantic nationalism'.¹⁰⁶ Their attention to local issues and municipal administration is noteworthy. There is also a meticulous attention to detail - an orientation which Bozzoli describes as 'the cultural forms of the "grassroots"'.¹⁰⁷ This orientation is reflected most strongly in the studies of specific localities and historic individuals.¹⁰⁸

These orientations are reflected in the work of numerous young historians. A few examples will suffice: Mager and Minkley's detailed analysis of the East London riots of 1952 included consideration of the complex ideological currents in Duncan Village Location, the role of tsotsi's, and the themes of masculinity and gender.¹⁰⁹ Hilary Sapire's study of administration in Brakpan provided valuable material on the politics of the local Advisory Board, the interactions between the local authority and central government agencies, and blacks'

¹⁰⁴ E.P. Thompson, The Poverty of Theory; quoted in B. Bozzoli, 'History, experience and culture' (1983), p. 15.

¹⁰⁵ B. Bozzoli, 'History, experience and culture' (1983), p. 13.

¹⁰⁶ B. Bozzoli, 'History, experience and culture' (1983), p. 42.

¹⁰⁷ B. Bozzoli, 'History, experience and culture' (1983), p. 19.

¹⁰⁸ B. Bozzoli, 'History, experience and culture', p. 17.

¹⁰⁹ A. Mager and G. Minkley, 'Reaping the whirlwind: The East London riots of 1952' (History Workshop, 1990).

responses to the changing style of location administration.¹¹⁰ Charles van Onselen's excellent study of social relations on the maize farms of South-Western Transvaal during the first half of this century addressed the complex combination of force and benevolence in rural paternalism, its relationship to gender relations and patriarchy, and the various forms of conflict and co-operation which characterised black-white interaction on the farms.¹¹¹

Yet the 'History Workshop' genre of research is fatally based on a biased definition of what should count as 'the grassroots':

'Such a history should resonate with the lives of ordinary people rather than reflect the deliberations of the ruling classes or the theoretical concerns of structuralist abstractionism'.¹¹²

This extraordinary claim highlights these historians' a priori exclusion of members of 'the ruling classes' from the category of 'ordinary people'. Despite Bozzoli's attempt to avoid pre-determined theoretical constructs, the History Workshop often **does** draw on an unexamined Gramscian concern with hegemony and resistance. This tradition is premised on historical materialism:

'[U]nless studies focusing on the local and small-scale retain a concern for the wider process of **class formation, capital accumulation and state strategy** which impinge upon the smallest of communities in profound ways, they will degenerate into the anecdotal and the parochial'.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ H. Sapiro, 'Popular politics and the rationalisation of "Urban Native" administration in Brakpan, 1943-48' (History Workshop, Wits University, 1990); p. 4.

¹¹¹ C. van Onselen, 'The social and economic underpinnings of paternalism and violence on the maize farms of the South-Western Transvaal, 1900-1950', (African Studies Institute Seminar, University of the Witwatersrand, May 1991)

¹¹² B. Bozzoli, 'History, experience and culture' (1983), p. 8.

¹¹³ B. Bozzoli, 'History, experience and culture' (1983), p. 35.

This claim illustrates a limited historical imagination - if historical materialism is rejected, it implies, there is no alternative system of meaning. This attitude blunts the edge of any phenomenological or hermeneutic elements incorporated into analysis.

The result is a highly jaundiced view of the real-life experience of members of 'the ruling classes'. Bozzoli's prejudices are clearly revealed: the dominant classes, she claims on one occasion, 'attempt to achieve ... a "hegemonic situation"'; and on another occasion she maintains that the various 'leading white classes' in South Africa undertook a 'class project' to overcome their divisions.¹¹⁴ The impression gained from Bozzoli's exegesis is that members of the ruling classes are not 'philosophers', and they do not think in any interesting or meaningful ways about themselves and their world.¹¹⁵

This bias is also reflected in other studies of the same genre. Since they often concern local government, we should take particular note of their shortcomings. Mager and Minkley's sensitive analysis of township dynamics contrasts starkly with their crudely materialistic understanding of the motives of the local authority.¹¹⁶ Similarly, a paper by R. E. Pretorius on township politics in Germiston during the 1950s introduces the Town Council as a deus ex machina, which continually exacerbated local tensions by increasing rents. Once again, no reasons are given for the Town Council's actions.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ B. Bozzoli, 'History, experience and culture' (1983), pp. 18-9.

¹¹⁵ B. Bozzoli, 'History, experience and culture' (1983), p. 13.

¹¹⁶ A. Mager and G. Minkley, 'Reaping the whirlwind' (1990), p. 3.

¹¹⁷ R. E. Pretorius, 'Banishment: Germiston's answer to opposition in Natalspruit Location, 1955-1957' (History Workshop, Wits University, 1987); p. 5.

Hilary Sapire's work illustrates another weakness. In her article on township administration in Brakpan, she attempts to analyse the philosophical assumptions which motivated the Township Manager, viz. '...the importance of Christian Nationalism as the basis of the ethical life of Afrikaners; the god-ordained nature of the separation of races...; the unique role of the Afrikaner in South Africa and the desirability of a radical and just policy of total apartheid'.¹¹⁸ The undiluted starkness of Sapire's formulation of Afrikaner nationalist thought makes it sound intrinsically bizarre and meaningless to the modern ear - thereby discrediting it throughout the rest of her paper. As a result, the Brakpan situation is presented as a conflict between reasonable black democrats and fanatical, incomprehensible Afrikaner zealots. Much more work needs to be done to unpack precisely what Afrikaner nationalists actually had in mind, and how their system of ethics informed their political philosophy.

The overall result of the 'History Workshop' approach is a normative, but biased, approach to history. At the heart of historical materialism is the notion of 'struggle', as Bozzoli explicitly advocates:

'[T]he work here seems to suggest that culture be viewed from a perspective which ties it inextricably to the conflicts between classes; the attempt by some to dominate others; and to the responses of the subordinated to these attempts'.¹¹⁹

The very formulation of this sentence has a built-in bias: already a set of motives ('the attempt to dominate') is ascribed to certain classes. Harking back to revisionist thought, Bozzoli has once again confused **consequence** with **intention**; if there is a relationship of domination, she implies, it must have been intended to be so by specific social actors.

¹¹⁸ H. Sapire, 'Popular politics' (1990), p.6.

¹¹⁹ B. Bozzoli, 'History, experience and culture' (1983), p. 22.

All this is not simply semantic quibbling. We are highlighting these biases to illustrate a methodological point, viz. that the 'History Workshop' theorists have made certain a priori normative assumptions: (1) They assume a conflictual model of society; (2) In this model, unequal social relations tend to be attributed to the actions (and often, the conscious intentions) of one sector of society; (3) Hence the motives of that sector are automatically morally suspect; (4) In our writing of history, we need not take their ideas seriously in their own right; (5) This contrasts with the 'ordinary perceptions', experiences, and values of those engaged in 'resistance'¹²⁰, the testimonies which are claimed to reflect and embody the attitudes of real people.¹²¹

As a result, 'history from below' has become an amalgam of the political alignments of academics choosing to focus on particular sections of society on the basis of their own unarticulated moral preferences. This is a very unfortunate form of normative analysis. In this thesis, a normative approach will be developed which does not simply consist of political bias; instead, our approach will be 'normative' in the sense that it will analyse all social actors as constituted by inter-subjective notions of identity, rights and obligations.

There are, indeed, portents of a new subtlety in recent political analysis. Studies such as Matthew Chaskalson's analysis of Bantu Administration¹²², Annette Seegers' research on security

¹²⁰ B. Bozzoli, 'History, experience and culture' (1983), p. 28.

¹²¹ B. Bozzoli, 'History, experience and culture' (1983), p. 12.

¹²² 'Apartheid with a human face: Punt Janson and the origins of reform in township administration, 1972-1976', (African Studies Institute Seminar, University of the Witwatersrand, 1988).

agencies¹²³, Jeremy Seekings' work on popular resistance¹²⁴, and the meticulous work on Administration Boards conducted by Simon Bekker and Richard Humphries¹²⁵, illustrate a refreshing concern for government officials' perspectives and ethos. It is hoped that this thesis will contribute to our understanding of these dynamics.

Conclusion

This overview of South African historiography has traced important changes and improvements in our understanding of central and local politics. In brief, we have made the following claims:

1. That the realm of government and politics cannot be derived solely from economic forces;
2. That the original revisionists' attempts to derive politics from economics was an intrinsically functionalist approach, and that those holist functional explanations have tended to slide into a conception of human motivation based on interests;
3. That the state-centric theorists and the theorists of 'ideology critique' retained this understanding of human motivation, thus neglecting the many other dimensions

¹²³ 'The South African security establishment: Theoretical and comparative perspectives', in M. Swilling (ed), Views on the South African State (1990), pp. 109-128.

¹²⁴ 'Broken promises: Discontent, protest, and the transition to confrontation in Duduza, 1978-1985' (History Workshop, University of the Witwatersrand, 1990).

¹²⁵ From Control to Confusion: The Changing Role of Administration Boards in South Africa, 1971-1983 (Pietermaritzburg: Shuter and Shooter, 1985).

of human experience - most notably, emotional experience and moral beliefs;

4. We need to take normative issues seriously, to enable us to deal more satisfactorily with complex questions of ethical life and moral conduct.

South African sociological and historical scholarship is at a crossroads. We are arguing for genuinely open-minded political and historical analysis, which would take into account the situational realities of all relevant social and governmental actors. This thesis is a plea for an understanding of South African political life - without prior prejudices, romanticisms, demonologies or 'victimologies'. It is an attempt to reconstruct history as the complex interplay of human sentiments. Politics is characterised by contradictions between conscious goals and unintended consequences, as well as the pathos of unrecognised virtue, misdirected idealism, and unintended suffering. We should study the murkiness of human moral existence, together with the disconcerting mix of moral insights, confusions, insensitivities and vicousnesses which characterise all human endeavours.

PART TWO

**PATRIARCHALISM AND PATERNALISM IN
MUNICIPAL 'NATIVE ADMINISTRATION'**

c. 1950 - 1965

CHAPTER FOUR
PATRIARCHALISM AND PATERNALISM IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT
IN THE 1950s

During the 1950s, township officials everywhere in South Africa began to experience unprecedented anxieties about township conditions. Rapid urbanisation and extreme urban poverty contributed to officials' growing sense of social disintegration in black townships. These concerns form a constant backdrop to debates in official circles about township policy.

However, social decay is never an objective datum. It always needs to be interpreted by social actors, in the light of existing moral and social assumptions. In this chapter, we will outline officials' response to social problems in terms of the two concepts we introduced in the previous chapter, viz. 'ethical life' and 'morality'. Officials tended to subscribe to a specific conception of 'ethical life' which can be characterised as 'patriarchalism'. This involved an entire system of established norms, community values, and the normative ways in which they defined African urban city-dwellers' status as persons.

Against this backdrop of 'patriarchal' social relations, officials often developed a specific conception of moral conduct, which we will term 'paternalism'. In this chapter, we will consider the various dimensions of paternalism, including 'hard' and 'soft' paternalism; 'pure' and 'impure' paternalism; and the difficulties of implementing paternalistic rule in an environment of unclear ethical principles and community boundaries. It will be argued, finally, that the never-ending moral quandaries and debates led to an inability by the 'city fathers' to impose modern discipline on the African sector of the cities.

A. Patriarchalism in urban African administration

As we noted in Chapter Two, the 'ethical life' of a community

consists of the diffuse patterns of social obligations and decencies, which are fundamentally based on people's conception of themselves and others as specific kinds of persons. Hence the sphere of ethical life is never the subject of individual choice; it forms the backdrop of any individual action, and consists of the normative inter-subjective processes whereby individuals recognise and constitute one another.

'Patriarchalism' is one way in which individuals can constitute one another. According to Donald VanDeVeer,

'The term 'patriarch' in ancient times referred to a male ruler, typically a venerated elder. A community hierarchically organized with such persons having supreme de facto authority is called "patriarchal" ... Such "authorities" control others. Whether for their own good ... is a further question'¹.

Patriarchalism is a moral order, in which normative concepts such as 'the person', 'authority', 'responsibility', and 'rights' are given meaning within the parameters of a constant and pervasive hierarchy of status and responsibility. The patriarch is in some sense a more complete and more responsible moral agent, with more rights and obligations, than his children. He is constituted as such by the recognition accorded him by the rest of the family, and he recognises them in turn as persons with fewer rights but more needs than himself.

Patriarchalism is not a morally irrational order. Our analogy of patriarchalism in families helps to highlight certain dimensions of organic societies. Some people prefer hierarchical, organic societies to highly individualistic societies, since the former may well satisfy important emotional needs. There are several possible justifications for patriarchalism, either in the family or in the broader society.

According to Hegel's notion of the family, it represents an ethical life based on feeling and intimacy. In a cohesive family

¹ D. VanDeVeer, Paternalistic Intervention: The Moral Bounds on Benevolence (Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 23.

structure, the individual is assured of belonging; his or her presence is unquestionably legitimate within a cosy social unit. A family consists of a constellation of roles; it is not merely a collection of atomic individuals. The various roles are sustained through a system of constant mutual recognition between the different role players in the family. There is little place for the loneliness and alienation found in more individualistic contexts.

In most family systems, little attention is paid to abstract rights.² In Hegel's terms, the family is the sphere of 'particularity', instead of 'universality'; individual worth is assessed in terms of the specific characteristics and needs of individuals' roles.

Hegel contrasts the sphere of the family with that of civil society. In the latter, the formal equality of persons is recognised, and social interaction is regulated by fixed and impartial rules. Civil society is the sphere of individualism - a sphere in which there is little forbearance of individuals' specific needs and frailties.³ In civil society, a very different conception of the person prevails. Individuals are constituted through their mutual recognition of each other as holders of abstract, uniform, individual rights.

In the cities during the 1950s, the different ways of visualising public life can be described with reference to the two concepts of the 'patriarchal family' and 'individualistic civil society'. For many City Councillors and municipal officials, the relationship between the white urban authorities and African residents resembled that of the patriarchal family; for others,

² W. V. Doniela, 'Hegel and the organic state', in D. Muschamp (ed), Political Thinkers (London: Macmillan, 1986), p. 166.

³ J. Plamenatz, Man and Society: Volume 2 (London: Longman, 1963), p. 234.

however, it was beginning to resemble that of modern, individualistic civil society. Hence we will use these two governing metaphors to consider the various ambivalences and permutations of the ethical life which constituted white and African urban residents alike.

B. Patriarchalism and the urban 'family'

As Hegel emphasised, in a family, the parents have a moral duty to teach the children about moral conduct and the relationships that constitute ethical life. This education process invariably has a coercive dimension. Though children cannot always be reasoned with, they must be made to act reasonably. They need firm guidance by their mentors.⁴ In the traditional conception of the family, the pater familias is often a strict, distant figure, for whom children generally have a high regard, almost bordering on fear. These hierarchical relationships often continue to exist, even after children have grown up and established their own families.⁵

The response by the children to such moral training may be complex. Since patriarchalism is a form of ethical life, the patriarch's status would be regarded as unquestionable and 'normal' by individuals in the family, even if they resent specific actions taken by the patriarch. While the junior members of the family may dislike a specific command, they may well believe that the patriarch has an unassailable right to issue commands in general.

It will be argued in this thesis that some of the typical ethical characteristics of families (as enunciated, for example, by Hegel), can help us to understand the patriarchal dimension of black-white relations in South African cities. This

⁴ J. Plamenatz, Man and Society (Vol. 1) (1963), p. 244.

⁵ G. Cronje and J.D. Venter, Die Patriargale Familie (Cape Town: HAUM, 1973), p. 35-6.

characteristic of patriarchalism approximates many white officials' attitudes to the black residents under their care. They regarded the relationship as an intimate one, involving qualities such as affection, moral education, strictness, occasional coercion, lack of privacy, and the relative unimportance of individual rights.⁶

Whether the African residents saw the relationship in equally patriarchal terms, is a more problematic question to answer. The statements of African community leaders on occasion implied that they did; but political currents in African townships were very diverse, and there were certainly certain African viewpoints that rejected patriarchalism and racial inequality. Suffice to say that African leaders often seemed to behave as if they did accept patriarchalism - or at least, white officials often got this impression. The next chapter will consider this issue by means of illustrative material from East London.

As the forces of modernisation, urbanisation and social change gained momentum, however, the patriarchal order came under increasing pressure, creating ambiguities and confusions.⁷ The city fathers found themselves anxiously groping at various strands in the patriarchal ethos, in an attempt to consolidate a coherent sense of community against intractable social problems. The next section will outline their understanding of these problems.

⁶ This attitude to government may well go beyond race relations. The provision of services to poor whites throughout this century may well be interpreted as a form of patriarchal government - a matter that deserves further investigation.

⁷ Modernisation is compatible with **paternalism**, however. The production of full citizens, in the sense of individual rights, obligations and responsibility, who participate enthusiastically in modern social institutions (whether at the workplace, marketplace, polling booth or government), invariably entails a great deal of paternalistic training.

C. Urban black administration during the 1950s: The prospect of impending urban chaos

Debates about township administration during the 1950s invariably took place against a backdrop of social disintegration. This sense of threat had been a growing part of white officials' consciousness since the 1920s, and had been fanned by General Hertzog's tendency to conflate social trends such as African urbanisation and education with miscegenation and the 'swamping' of whites at the polls. This was consonant with the prevailing mood of the time, "with its paranoia about civilisation's retrogressive tendencies and its vulnerability in the face of the 'virile' mass of 'barbarians' who were 'flooding' into the cities'".⁸

During the 1950s, the increasing social dislocation in the cities caused similar anxieties for white City Councillors and municipal officials. Local white officials were the government's front line in coming to terms with widespread urbanisation. Whereas the vast majority of white people never saw for themselves where their black employees lived, slept or socialised, the township managers were in constant close contact with the residents of the townships.

Kathy Eales, for example, has documented the Johannesburg City Council's anxiety about the effects of detribalisation:

'More serious than the horrors of urban women brewing liquor, prostituting their bodies, tempting respectable men and contributing to vice and crime, was the spectre of their "detribalised" children who, through improper socialisation and early exposure to vice and crime, would make poor workers'.⁹

⁸ S. Dubow, Racial Segregation and the Origins of Apartheid in South Africa, 1919-1936 (London: Macmillan, 1989), pp. 17, 32.

⁹ K. Eales, 'Patriarchs, passes and privilege', in P. Bonner et.al., Holding their Ground (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1989), p. 124.

By the 1950s, these anxieties were chronic, and were constantly reflected in the debates of the Institute of Administrators of Non-European Affairs (IANA) in the 1950s and 1960s. The sense of impending urban chaos was effectively portrayed in the remarks of Dr. Language, the Manager of Non-European Affairs in Brakpan:

'The fact is that urban locations became more and more overcrowded, and consequently it became more difficult to control them; squatters' camps suddenly sprang up in and around urban areas and even at places where they were not expected; amenities for maintaining the health of the communities were lacking, and in many instances the Natives lived under conditions which threatened their own health and that of the European community;...' ¹⁰

In his Presidential Address to IANA in 1957, Mr. Bourquin of Durban presented an eloquent and all-encompassing picture of severe urban dislocation:

'It should not be necessary to focus attention on the harmful effects of (social evils) such as the tremendous wastage of valuable time, of opportunities, of labour and of capital, not to mention the threats to personal life and safety and the ruination of family and of community life. This is a problem affecting the social, economic, administrative and religious institutions of the country as a whole, including all living creatures - not even the dumb animals in our locations escape injury and ill-treatment'. ¹¹

An important part of Mr. Bourquin's vision of the impending urban crisis was the moral decay of the black residents:

'...The morals of the urban Bantu have deteriorated under these undesirable conditions and statistics point towards an alarming increase of illegitimate births; in the meantime there emerged a young generation of irresponsible Bantu who refused either to attend school or to work, who preferred to pass their time in idleness, gambling and mischief to the detriment of the community; crime, especially burglary, increased and in many instances Europeans

¹⁰ IANA Annual Conference Proceedings (1954), pp. 179-80.

¹¹ IANA Annual Conference Proceedings (1957), p. 32.

were the victims ...'

According to Mr. J.E. Mathewson, Township Manager of Benoni, the 'Bantu' in the cities experienced a complete lack of family cohesion and control; standards of morality and community behaviour no longer existed. 'There is no anchor, whilst he cannot invest in land...'¹² According to Prof. Coetzee of the University of Potchefstroom, 'the tendency on the part of members of the urban Bantu communities to cheat and rob their raw countrymen, and sometimes even members of their own tribe, [is] one of the most disturbing symptoms of social and moral decline'.¹³

The entire question of the nature of the urban community was very problematic. It was a time of great social change and widespread anxiety about urban disorder. The impulse to develop a new form of social order, based on modernity and 'discipline', had become an overriding need. As unstoppable social forces rapidly altered the social conditions of the townships, the need to establish more durable forms of social organisation, became dramatically evident to the beleaguered administrators.

D. Responding to social disintegration: The ambiguous doctrine of segregation

Yet the boundaries of the urban community remained controversial. What was the proper place of Africans in society? What does 'citizenship' mean, in the context of urban 'locations'? Were African residents welcome but temporary guests in the cities, or unwelcome but permanent citizens? If urban Africans had to administer their own affairs in the locations, what would their relation be with urban whites? Would they exist as separate cities? Or would they eventually become full citizens within a shared urban polity?

¹² IANA Annual Conference Proceedings (1953), p. 42.

¹³ IANA Annual Conference Proceedings (1953), p. 87.

The philosophical problem was intensified by the ambiguities in the Natives (Urban Areas) Act of 1923, which formed the basis of government policy towards urban Africans. The Act contained two distinct philosophical strands. On the one hand, its 'liberal' incorporationist component was based on the 1919 Godley Commission, which acknowledged that suitable accommodation had to be provided for a permanent and growing urban African population. On the other hand, the 1923 Act also bore the imprint of the 1921 Stallard Commission, which regarded African urbanisation as fundamentally undesirable, and claimed that Africans had no right in urban areas other than to minister to the needs of whites.¹⁴ Consequently, the first view contained a notion of the development of an inclusive urban community, while the second involved a resuscitation of traditional, 'tribal' forms of authority in the rural areas. Each of these options drew the boundaries of the urban community in different ways.

These unresolved philosophical problems had important practical consequences in the design of urban policy. Should Africans live in close geographical proximity to whites or not? Should their standard of living be comparable to that of whites?¹⁵ What were the financial responsibilities of whites in the light of dire black poverty? Were township officials primarily responsible to their black charges, or were they beholden to the demands of the white community? White officials constantly faced the question

¹⁴ S. Dubow, Racial Segregation and the Origins of Apartheid in South Africa (1989), p. 123.

¹⁵ Before the 1940s, black poverty was not a matter for state concern except where it posed a threat to 'white civilization'. It was assumed that 'natives' had lower living standards, consumer expectations and overall ability. It was to Dr. Smit's credit that he tried in the early 1940s to portray the reserve policy as a threat to agricultural progress for the rest of the country, and thereby force the state to focus on the economic conditions of urban blacks (M.M.S. Bell, 'The Politics of Administration: A study of the career of Dr. D.L. Smit with special reference to his work in the Department of Native Affairs, 1934-1945' (M.A. Thesis, Rhodes University, 1978), p. 27.

whether African residents were part of 'our community'. Were they indeed 'our natives'? **'Whose people are they?'**

It was one thing to recognise that the traditional communal bonds were disintegrating. It was quite another to conceptualise an adequate replacement. What was the nature of Africans' status to be in the urban context? The problem was seldom clearly articulated by ordinary officials, but a notable exception was Dr. Language:

'One of the many reasons for the social decay of our urban Bantu is to be found in the process of detribalisation and urbanisation as a consequence of which their sense of tribal and community discipline has been lost with nothing to take its place. What have we done about this? ... I think we must admit that a substitute for the lost community pride and discipline for which the traditional Bantu were so renowned still has to be found'.¹⁶

While patriarchalism certainly formed a large part of township social dynamics, there was an inherent ambiguity in the application of these principles to a confusing and changing social context.

As we claimed in Chapter Two, the need for an effective normative social order is particularly felt during times of social upheaval and change. In terms of the theoretical position outlined in the previous chapter, we can rephrase the problem facing officials in the following way: **There was an urgent need to consolidate and expand disciplinary forms of social order; however, this process was inhibited by the fundamental lack of clarity about the appropriate normative categories and distinctions which should be applied to the population.¹⁷** The policy of segregation

¹⁶ IANA Annual Conference Proceedings (1957), p. 32. Emphasis added.

¹⁷ Saul Dubow approximates this view when he writes that 'segregation should be seen as a **generalised** response on the part of the state to the problems wrought by industrialisation', Racial Segregation (1989), p. 52. He maintains that segregation operated in the long-

emerged during the early part of the 20th century as a response to this problem. The ambiguity concerning patriarchalism as a suitable moral order in the cities must be considered against the backdrop of important debates, since the 1920s, about segregationism as a practical policy.¹⁸

Segregationist doctrines were usually seen by their proponents as a progressive philosophy. Segregationists did not portray their views as a return to a pre-industrial past. Instead, such views were a modernising ideology which sought to defuse the intensity of social conflict which accompanied industrialisation.¹⁹ Previous solutions to the problem were gradually found to be inadequate. The segregationists rejected the Victorian notion of progress, which was based on the value of identity and assimilation. The concepts of 'civilisation', 'progress' and 'individualism' were increasingly replaced by the concepts of 'culture;', 'progress; and 'racial groups'.²⁰

This involved a decisive shift in people's conception of their own (and others') subjectivity. Many segregationists did not justify segregation as a matter of control alone. Howard Pim, for example, expressed concern for Africans' moral conduct in the

term interests of capitalism by preserving 'the material basis of white domination'. He differentiates this from the revisionists' view, which conceived of segregation as mainly concerned with the creation and reproduction of an ultra-cheap labour supply. Both these positions, however, are unnecessarily materialist and reductionist. This thesis explores the ideology of segregation as an answer to the normative, hermeneutic and disciplinary problems of modernity.

¹⁸ S. Dubow, Racial segregation and the origins of apartheid in South Africa (1989); p. 3.

¹⁹ S. Dubow, Racial Segregation and the Origins of Apartheid (1989), p. 7.

²⁰ S. Dubow, Racial Segregation and the Origins of Apartheid (1989), p. 34.

urban environment.²¹ Similarly, the historian, Edgar Brookes, argued for moral as well as disciplinary imperatives in government policy: The duty of the white man was 'to civilise as well as control, to develop as well as protect'.²² A very prevalent idea at that time was that segregation was morally justified because it represented a golden mean between the 'Scylla of identity and the Charybdis of subordination', or between the unacceptable extremes of total integration and permanent inequality.²³

According to the segregationists, the distinction between white and black was an important social boundary with great moral significance. It was a boundary which constituted the proper subjectivity of whites and blacks, and hence, in Foucault's terms, could form the basis of an appropriate disciplinary grid. It was not simply a rationalisation for whites' interests, for true discipline involves the normative constitution of identity and personhood.

An important part of this vision was the informal anthropological knowledge which most white officials intuitively adopted. This anthropological bent can be seen as the confluence of three intellectual currents.

The first was a growing interest in anthropology at the Universities of the Witwatersrand and Cape Town since the 1920s. Anthropology was increasingly seen as a discipline that was pliable to the needs of administrators.²⁴ In 1925, an

²¹ S. Dubow, Racial Segregation and the Origins of Apartheid (1989), p. 25.

²² S. Dubow, Racial Segregation and the Origins of Apartheid (1989), p. 29.

²³ S. Dubow, Racial Segregation and the Origins of Apartheid (1989), p. 28, commenting on the position of Edgar Brookes.

²⁴ P. Rich, White Power and the Liberal Conscience (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1984), p. 54.

ethnological section was formed in the Department of Native Affairs. During the 1930s and early 1940s, an enthusiasm developed for the notion that African social structures could be used for sound administrative purposes.²⁵ These notions were taken up by the Smuts government, in an approach which can be termed 'liberal segregation', for it retained a fairly tolerant and undogmatic character. It was characterised by strongly protective elements, and made explicit reference to the patriarchal idiom of 'trusteeship'.²⁶

This approach emphasised the cultural differences between Western civilisation and African society. It also reflected intellectuals' anxieties about the social atomisation associated with western individualism, and emphasised the value of organic social communities and cultures which give meaning and coherence to people's lives.²⁷ Segregationists also explored the continuing links of first-generation African city dwellers with their pastoral and rural background.²⁸

A second segregationist current was the political platform of J.B.M. Hertzog after the late 1920s. According to Dubow, Hertzogite segregationism was 'strident [and] racist in character, and it emphasised the economic and political exclusion of Africans from a common society'. It found expression in specific policies, such as the abolition of the Cape franchise and the adoption of the white 'civilised labour' policy.²⁹

²⁵ S. Dubow, Racial Segregation and the Origins of Apartheid (1989), p. 113.

²⁶ S. Dubow, Racial Segregation and the Origins of Apartheid (1989), p. 44.

²⁷ P. Rich, White Power and the Liberal Conscience (1984), p. 68.

²⁸ P. Rich, White Power and the Liberal Conscience (1984), p. 55.

²⁹ S. Dubow, Racial Segregation and the Origins of Apartheid (1989), p. 44.

However, despite these segregationist enthusiasms, the philosophy of segregationism was never ruthlessly applied before 1948. Segregation under the United Party had been a custom more honoured in the breach than the observance.³⁰ Dr. Smit, the last U.P. Secretary of Native Affairs, tended to act from instincts of compassion and humanity, and often compromised on the principles of segregationism. In 1942, Prime Minister Smuts admitted that '...there is very great disappointment at the results which have been achieved (to implement segregation)'.³¹ By the 1940s, there was a growing appreciation by English intellectuals of individualism and African involvement in economic development and industrialisation.³²

Meanwhile, a third intellectual tradition had emerged, which kept alive the vision of territorial segregation and cultural differentiation. This was the discipline of volkekunde, which took root at various Afrikaans universities.³³ Many of the volkekundige intellectuals had roots in Afrikaans political and cultural organisations, such as the Afrikaner Broederbond, the National Party, the Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurverenigings (FAK), and the South African Bureau for Racial Affairs (SABRA). Hence these intellectual currents were easily taken up in 'native administration' once the National Party came to power in 1948.

These theorists, who included the influential Dr. W. Eiselen, as well as Dr. Language (who became the Township Manager of Brakpan), shared the earlier anthropologists' anxieties about the dangers of urbanisation and modernisation. They maintained that social problems were caused by the dislocation of the social

³⁰ M.M.S. Bell, 'The Politics of Administration' (1978), p. 132.

³¹ M.M.S. Bell, 'The Politics of Administration' (1978), p. 158.

³² P. Rich, White Power and the Liberal Conscience (1984), pp. 70-1.

³³ R. Gordon, 'Serving the volk with volkekunde' (ISER Seminar, Rhodes University, May 1986), pp. 1-3.

structure, with a consequent weakening of binding values epitomised by a spirit of egocentric irresponsible individualism.³⁴ Hence these intellectuals argued for the resuscitation of the original tribal order, by bolstering the power of the chiefs and working through youth organisations. In the words of Dr. Eiselen, 'the duty of the native ... [is] not to become a black European, but to become a better native, with ideals and a culture of his own'.³⁵

When the National Party came to power, segregationism was applied with renewed fervour. Half-hearted segregationists, such as Dr. Smit, lost their positions on official bodies such as the Native Affairs Commission and the Union Advisory Committee on Native Education.³⁶ Ironically, however, it was not the case of applying a new policy - rather, the new government was for the first time carrying out existing segregationist policy seriously.³⁷

In the field of urban African administration, the local city fathers drew on both the 'liberal' and the 'Afrikaner nationalist' versions of segregationism. These two intellectual strands informed the debates which city officials and Councillors held on the administration of urban Africans. Academics from English, Afrikaans and Rhodesian universities regularly attended IANA conferences.

All these varieties of segregationism tended to share a vision of stable and well-integrated traditional systems from which the 'Bantu' had come. For example, Prof. J.H. Coetzee of

³⁴ R. Gordon, 'Serving the volk with volkekunde' (1986), p. 6.

³⁵ Quoted in S. Dubow, Racial Segregation and the Origins of Apartheid (1989), p. 37.

³⁶ M.M.S. Bell, 'The Politics of Administration' (1978), p. 130.

³⁷ M.M.S. Bell, 'The Politics of Administration', p. 132.

Potchefstroom University emphasised the new and disorienting life which blacks encountered in the cities. Whereas traditional life was built on the 'cohesion of an ever present family complex, chieftaincy and age groups', the Bantu now had to venture into a world built on individual responsibility and decision-making.³⁸

Another common assumption, as far as these officials were concerned, was that black residents advancing to political maturity **within** white structures was unthinkable. Nobody proposed that Africans be included into white electoral systems, for example. Some kind of separate authority structure for urban blacks was indispensable.

However, the apparent clarity of the notion of segregation concealed serious philosophical confusions. The common interest in some form of segregation masked deep disagreements about the proper content of segregationism. The segregationist platform was always an amalgam of numerous specific policies:

'A natural sense of caution as shown by native administrators towards radical policy changes, the persistence of residual traces of the civilisation ideal, as well as differences of approach within regional administrations, all combined to render the process of retribalisation replete with inconsistencies and discontinuities'.³⁹

The most extreme form of segregation was that of the Stallardists, who regarded the black presence in cities as an extended form of traditional patriarchalism. From this perspective, the 'location' was in effect a tribal enclave in the city. The 'location' was not an appendage of the white town, nor even a twin town; it was an urban component of a fundamentally different social order, located in the rural areas.

³⁸ IANA Annual Conference Proceedings (1957), p. 87.

³⁹ S. Dubow, Racial Segregation and the Origins of Apartheid (1989), p. 115.

Stallardists regarded Africans as in the towns, but not of the towns. Their genuine moral development consisted in strengthening the links between the 'homeless' urban residents and their true real homes in the countryside.

In practice, a shared need for a coherent social order was superficially met with a slogan which meant different things for different people. This confusion grew from a fundamental philosophical confusion about the proper boundaries of the moral community to which urban blacks rightfully belonged. Each strand of segregationism postulated a different relationship between the urban African community, and the local white 'city fathers'.

The ambiguities in the segregationist stance would bedevil all officials' attempts to deal with the symptoms of the urban social crisis. As a result, the confusions regarding urban policy were never clarified, practical problems remained unresolved, and the chaos in the cities worsened - until the 1960s, when the Verwoerdians ultimately took the matter in hand and imposed a policy that had, at least, the merit of conceptual clarity and elegance.

Until the Verwoerdians took effective control, however, a variety of different forms of segregationism were applied in the cities. Ironically, the ambiguous character of segregation thrived in an environment where there was an urgent demand by the public for a policy.⁴⁰ It was the very flexibility of the segregationist programme added to its attraction.⁴¹ As Dubow noted, the elusive quality with which Hertzog invested the policy of segregation during the 1920s was its very strength, 'for it drew differing groups into its discourse, always promising, never quite

⁴⁰ S. Dubow, Ibid., p. 43.

⁴¹ S. Dubow, Racial Segregation and the Origins of Apartheid (1989), p. 9.

revealing'.⁴²

In this thesis, we will elaborate on three different forms of 'patriarchalism'. Before we explore them in more detail, however, we need to consider the specific form of moral conduct produced by segregationism, viz. the doctrine of 'paternalism'. After a brief analysis of the concept of paternalist moral action, we will return to the theme of patriarchalism, in order to examine the various forms of paternalistic reasoning employed by patriarchalists.

E. Paternalism and moral conduct

In asking themselves these difficult questions regarding Africans' membership of the urban polity, township officials felt themselves to be social pioneers. As Mr. Mathewson of Benoni reflected on the predicament of township officials,

'We are a small body of Europeans groping, so often at cross purposes with each other, to solve a problem which is world wide, and of which our country happens to be one of the focal points, and of which I am convinced the urban Native is one of the most important testing grounds'.⁴³

A key question, which municipal officials asked themselves, was 'Who was responsible for letting this problem get out of hand?' At the IANA Annual Meeting of 1954, Dr. Language critically examined the contribution which local authorities had made to this deplorable situation. He maintained that

'Where previous legislation did actually contain effective provision to meet certain contingencies those measures were never applied properly, and in many instances, not applied at all. In this connection local authorities must to a large extent take the blame for the state of relative chaos which

⁴² S. Dubow, Racial Segregation and the Origins of Apartheid (1989), p. 43.

⁴³ IANA Annual Conference Proceedings (1953), p. 47.

followed'.⁴⁴

Like Dr. Language, Prof. Coetzee of Potchefstroom University dwelt on the failure of white authorities to come to terms with these developments. 'It seems as if the parties responsible (and by that I do not mean only the local, provincial and central authorities, but also the body of voters and employers) have not succeeded in bringing about a gradual transition in accordance with the new demands of space, hygiene and protection'.⁴⁵ It was clear that the luminaries in the ranks of municipal officials envisaged that the local authorities should still see themselves as responsible for the moral development of black residents.

Many local officials shared this view. They saw the white local authorities as suitable agencies to remedy the distress which black residents experienced. This paved the way for local authorities to feel morally obliged to control black residents, and steer them towards their own good. This paternalistic philosophy was not new to the administration of black people in South Africa. The Department of Native Affairs had, since its re-organisation in 1910, prided itself in its benign, sympathetic attitude towards the needs of Africans.⁴⁶ This approach, in turn, had evolved out of early forms of colonial administration, and it flourished where administration involved personal contact between rulers and ruled.⁴⁷ In 1923, a senior member of the DNA referred to the Department as

'a body of carefully selected and trained officers, of high character, knowing the people, speaking the language, acquainted with their needs and shortcomings, in sympathy with their legitimate aspirations and thus best able to hold a just balance

⁴⁴ IANA Annual Conference Proceedings (1954), p. 180.

⁴⁵ IANA Annual Conference Proceedings (1957), p. 88.

⁴⁶ S. Dubow, Racial Segregation and the Origins of Apartheid (1989), p. 11.

⁴⁷ S. Dubow, Racial Segregation and the Origins of Apartheid (1989), p. 12.

between white and black'.⁴⁸

According to Saul Dubow, 'The administrator's role was portrayed in terms reminiscent at once of a chief in traditional society and a Victorian patriarch'.⁴⁹ An ethic of fatherly solicitude, altruism and 'sympathetic contact'⁵⁰ inspired several decades of 'native administration' before 1950 - most notably in the 'native reserves'.⁵¹

The same intuitive spirit of benign paternalism informed the career of the Secretary of the DNA, Dr. D.L. Smit, who occupied the office during the period 1934 to 1945, and who subsequently served as the Member of Parliament for East London City. Dr. Smit had a sense of historical mission and responsibility towards blacks, and this sense was probably shared at the higher levels of the Department. In fact, the Department was even criticised on occasion for being 'too prone to mollycoddle the native'.⁵²

The IANA debates during the 1950s contained the same

⁴⁸ E. Barrett, Secretary of Native Affairs; quoted in S. Dubow, Racial Segregation and the Origins of Apartheid (1989), p. 85.

⁴⁹ S. Dubow, Racial Segregation and the Origins of Apartheid (1989), p. 101.

⁵⁰ S. Dubow, Racial Segregation and the Origins of Apartheid (1989), p. 101; quoting various 'native administrators'.

⁵¹ This ethic was strongest in the Transkei, and to a lesser extent, in the Ciskei; it is possible, therefore, that it animated township administration in East London to a greater extent than that of cities in other parts of the country (S. Dubow, Racial Segregation and the Origins of Apartheid (1989), p. 104).

⁵² In the words of Oswald Pirow; Quoted by S. Dubow, Racial Segregation and the Origins of Apartheid (1989), p. 91.

paternalistic sentiments as those that Smit had articulated a decade previously. The legacy of personalised administration lived on in many towns and cities. According to Mr. Mathewson, Township Manager of Benoni, municipal officials had first-hand information of the 'aspirations of the urban Native; of his aspirations for home and family life and security, of his frustrations in our economic framework; of his weakness due to his backwardness and his limitations'.⁵³

The local authorities' task was now considered to be, according to some officials, to develop urban Africans' potential to develop socially and politically. Councillor Potgieter of Germiston stated, 'I think it will do us a lot of good to give (the Bantu) more responsibilities. We should let them do things for themselves, and so try to develop their sense of responsibility'.⁵⁴ This appears to have been a genuinely patriarchal concern for black residents' human moral development. According to Dr. Language of Brakpan, 'the emphasis in the performance of our duties should not only be laid on the control and administration of natives as such, but also on the protection of the spiritual values and the planning of their social welfare and development'.⁵⁵

The concept of 'paternalism' deserves to be explored more fully. In this thesis, the term 'paternalism' will not be used to refer to a system of **social relations**⁵⁶, but as a specific conception

⁵³ Mr. J. Mathewson, Native Administrator, Benoni; IANA Annual Conference Proceedings (1953), p. 47.

⁵⁴ Councillor Bezuidenhout, Brakpan; IANA Annual Conference Proceedings (1953???), p. 49.

⁵⁵ IANA Annual Conference Proceedings (1957), p. 32.

⁵⁶ As, for example, employed by E. Genovese, Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), pp. 3-7; C. van Onselen, 'The social and economic underpinnings of paternalism and violence on the maize farms of the South-Western Transvaal, 1900-1950' (African Studies Institute Seminar, 1991); S. Dubow, Racial Segregation and the

of moral **action**. It refers to that dimension of political morality which is governed by individual choice, responsibility and motivations.

The work of Donald VanDeVeer is useful in this regard.⁵⁷ His definition of paternalism is explicitly value-neutral, in order to avoid the frequent liberal assumption that paternalism is a priori objectionable.⁵⁸ According to VanDeVeer, paternalism can be defined as 'A's doing or omitting some act X to B, if (1) A deliberately does X; (2) A believes that his doing X is contrary to B's preference, intention or disposition at the time A does X; and (3) A does X with the primary or sole aim of promoting the good of B'.

This definition of 'paternalism' contains five important features. First, it should be noted that paternalism does not necessarily imply coercion. Paternalistic acts may take place without the knowledge of B. Second, for an act to qualify as a paternalistic one, A must have an altruistic aim. If A protects B inadvertently, this is not sufficient to count as paternalism.⁵⁹

Third, A usually believes that he or she is qualified to act on B's behalf.⁶⁰ The principle of legal paternalism, for example, implies that the state may know the interests of individual citizens better than the citizens know them themselves; hence

Origins of Apartheid (1989), pp. 12, 32.

⁵⁷ D. VanDeVeer, Paternalistic Intervention (Princeton University Press, 1986).

⁵⁸ D. VanDeVeer, Paternalistic Intervention (1986).

⁵⁹ D. VanDeVeer, Paternalistic Intervention (1986), p. 24; Quoting H.L.A. Hart, Law, Liberty and Morality (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), p. 31.

⁶⁰ B. Gert and C. Culver, 'The justification of paternalism' (Ethics, vol. 89, January 1979); Quoted in D. VanDeVeer, Paternalistic Intervention (1986), p. 34-40.

the state could be construed as a permanent guardian of those interests in loco parentis.⁶¹

Fourth, there is an important distinction between 'liberal', 'hard' and 'soft' paternalism.⁶² The most permissive form of paternalism is 'liberal paternalism', in which B's right to express his preferences before A undertakes paternalistic intervention, is recognised. In such cases, B's opinions may well influence A's actions - even though A may not admit this explicitly.

In terms of 'soft paternalism', it is assumed that B is in some way unable to look after his or her own interests. For example, B may be comatose, or insane, or a child. Various reasons may be put forward to justify soft paternalism. Sometimes there is not sufficient time to persuade or educate B, or B may lack the expertise to understand his or her best interests, or be under unusual social pressure.⁶³ Even soft paternalism may lead to quite extensive interventions in people's lives, as institutions in authority may judge ordinary people's own rationality to be insufficient.⁶⁴

In contrast, 'hard paternalism' is justified by the claim that intervention is legitimate, even if a subject judges his own actions to be fully rational. In effect, hard paternalism refers to the use of coercion or manipulation by A. In such cases, A would feel that he or she has very good reason to override the explicit, rational wishes of B. Such claims to consent can

⁶¹ J. Feinberg, 'Legal paternalism', in R. Sartorius (ed), Paternalism (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), p. 3.

⁶² G. Dworkin, 'Paternalism: Some second thoughts', in R. Sartorius (ed), Paternalism (1983), p. 107.

⁶³ G. Dworkin, 'Paternalism: Some second thoughts', in R. Sartorius (ed), Paternalism (1983), p. 115.

⁶⁴ D. VanDeVeer, Paternalistic Intervention (1986), p. 85.

obviously lead to great abuses.

There is, however, an important and tempting way to justify hard paternalism. This involves an appeal to the **consequences** of the paternalistic interference, such as harm prevention, enhanced freedom, life-preservation, or expanded skills:

'If ... the object aimed at is good, if the compulsion employed is such as to attain it, and if the good obtained overbalances the inconvenience of the compulsion itself, I do not understand how, upon utilitarian principles, the compulsion can be bad'.⁶⁵

Such an argument substitutes the liberal principle that an individual's freedom must not be interfered with, with a teleological principle that the agent's total freedom or welfare should be maximised over time.⁶⁶ VanDeVeer notes that such consequentialist justifications are rather suspect, because they could be used to justify the sacrifice of the rights or well-being of innocent persons for the sake of the welfare of the greater community.⁶⁷

Two further points need to be made regarding 'hard paternalism': (1) In the light of the discussion on political morality in Chapter Three, it is useful to note that **extremist** moral goals lend themselves more readily to 'hard paternalism' than a more moderate style of morality. Local patriarchal 'native administration' during the 1950s was often characterised by 'liberal paternalism', while Verwoerdianism was often based on 'hard paternalism'. Both patriarchalists and Verwoerdiens resorted on occasion to justifications of 'soft paternalism'

⁶⁵. J. Fitzjames Stephen, Liberty, Equality, Fraternity (1892); quoted in R. Sartorius, 'Introduction', in R. Sartorius (ed), Paternalism (1983), p. xi.

⁶⁶ D. H. Regan, 'Paternalism, freedom, identity and commitment', in R. Sartorius (ed), Paternalism (1983), p. 117.

⁶⁷ D. VanDeVeer, Paternalistic Intervention (1986), pp. 41-2.

(claiming the incapacity of blacks to understand their situation or needs). (2) The imperatives of **discipline and modernisation** are often represented in terms of hard paternalism, for they involve the claim that individuals have to be trained or disciplined for their own good.⁶⁸ This was the case under Verwoerdianism, which attempted to use modern methods in order to reconstitute society; however, it is also a typical characteristic of disciplinary institutions in general.

A fifth point is the distinction between 'pure' and 'impure' paternalism. This distinction refers to the parties who should benefit from paternalistic acts. On the one hand, **pure paternalism** attempts to justify interference by referring exclusively to the protection or promotion of the welfare of the subject of paternalism, viz. B. On the other hand, **impure paternalism** invokes the protection or promotion of the welfare of persons other than B. This may occur when A believes that B's actions will harm other people.⁶⁹ In practice, these justifications may well be difficult to distinguish; justifications invoking the ultimate benefit of B may well blur into justifications invoking the ultimate benefit of the community, of which B is presumably a part.

Judging whether certain paternalistic acts are justifiable or not, is not an easy task. As Sartorius notes, virtually everyone would agree that there are instances in which paternalism is justified and instances in which it is not. Even serious libertarians recognize that children and the mentally incapacitated are proper objects of paternalistic intervention.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ This theme will be explored more fully in Chapter Six (on municipal beer production in East London), and Chapter Nine (on influx control in East London).

⁶⁹ G. Dworkin, 'Paternalism' (1983), p. 22. His approach differs somewhat from that of VanDeVeer, who denies that 'impure paternalism' is paternalism at all. See VanDeVeer, Paternalistic Intervention (1986), p. 28.

⁷⁰ J. Feinberg, 'Legal Paternalism' (1983), p. 8.

The moral difficulty arises when one tries to draw the line between legitimate and illegitimate cases of interference. Different moral theories may involve quite different conceptions of the individual's good, thus generating different accounts of when freedom of choice can be compromised.⁷¹ This usually entails an underlying philosophy about the normative constitution of persons:

'The guiding general conception behind these derivative principles of permissible and impermissible paternalistic intervention concerns what would respect competent persons as independent centers of will and choice possessing a reasoned conception of the good'.⁷²

It will be argued in this thesis that the concept of paternalism as a theory of moral action helps us to understand the peculiar relationship between the white 'city fathers' and black residents of South African cities during the 1950s. They frequently introduced measures which, they claimed, were to the benefit of black residents, regardless of those residents' opposition. They also invoked justifications of superior knowledge and expertise (a claim similar to that of in loco parentis); they resorted to arguments of 'soft' paternalism and to ones of 'hard' paternalism, on different occasions; and they often justified their actions on consequentialist grounds. Furthermore, examples of pure paternalism alternated with ones of impure paternalism.

White local officials during the 1950s tended to regard various forms of intervention in the lives and privacy of African residents as quite normal. This phenomenon had two implications. First, township officials did not feel the need to justify their paternalistic interventions as intensely as would a member of a highly liberal or individualistic society. Second, paternalistic officials often assumed that their subjects

⁷¹ R. Sartorius, 'Introduction' (1983), p. x.

⁷² D. VanDeVeer, Paternalistic Intervention (1986), p. 424.

did indeed consent to their interventions; this meant that they often did not take much trouble to find out what African residents' actual wishes were.

The reason for officials' blithe willingness to intervene in the lives of township residents was that they were acting with a patriarchal understanding of the urban order. The conception of themselves as 'city fathers' implied that they had the right - indeed, the obligation - to define and promote the welfare of their black charges. As we will see below, this obligation was extremely ambiguous; but it was powerful enough to justify controversial, and often coercive, forms of conduct.

It is important to note, however, that there is no necessary connection between 'acting in a patriarchal fashion' and 'acting paternalistically (as we have defined these terms).'⁷³ A patriarchal ethos does not always imply kindness. Patriarchy is a system of social relations whereby individuals are constituted as moral persons; whereas paternalism is a specific kind of action which is meaningful in terms of individual choice. Patriarchal structures may exist despite the general absence of paternalist actions. For example, a patriarch may undertake actions without the explicit intention of promoting the welfare of his family; such a patriarch may well be an unpopular one, but his status as patriarch would be secure, due to age, gender and family position.⁷⁴

In many cases, however, paternalism and patriarchalism tend to reinforce one another. The conception of another person as less than a full citizen is often a temptation to intervene in that

⁷³ D. VanDeVeer, Paternalistic Intervention (1986), p. 23.

⁷⁴ It is even logically possible that the paternalistic act may well take place in the opposite direction; the sons may, for example, conspire to intervene in the circumstances of the patriarch for his own good - usually, one would imagine, without his knowledge!

person's freedom, in order to maximise his or her welfare.

However, as we noted above, employing paternalistic methods may well be morally problematic. Several examples of such difficulties can be mentioned. First, paternalism is premised on the altruistic constraint on other people's freedom. In the case of urban administration, officials often expressed altruistic sentiments. However, it is legitimate to ask whether such sentiments were really credible, even if we accept political actors' bona fides. But this still leaves us with the question of the quality of their understanding. Did they take the trouble to investigate the validity of their intuitions regarding Africans' welfare? Could they empathise with Africans' problems? Related to this question was the possibility that officials' actions reflected 'impure' paternalism. The municipal beer monopoly in East London was partially justified on the grounds of Africans' own welfare, and partly on the grounds of the benefits to be gained by the entire city.

Second, paternalistic actions are often justified with reference to the putative superior expertise of paternalists. As the chapter on municipal beer production will show, officials' expertise was not uncontroversial. While Africans were willing to accept their expertise on technical matters, they often challenged officials' understanding of traditional cultural issues. This often caused much distress for officials, especially since most officials subscribed to some form of segregationism, and hence emphasised cultural differences.

Third, the choice between 'hard' and 'soft' paternalism was never resolved. Urban administrators tended to fluctuate between a concern for African residents' own wishes, and the disciplinary impulse to apply modern forms of order to township life, regardless of the preferences of Africans. It was not clear what the primary role of township administration was - was it primarily a coercive institution, or was it intended to represent Africans' expressed wishes? Could it be both?

Fourth, paternalism can take place without the knowledge of the subject, B. In the case of African administration, white officials were often prepared to make major decisions on Africans' behalf, without even mentioning the matter to them. As Chapter Seven will show, the planning of Mdantsane was virtually complete before East London officials consulted African leaders. Such a modus operandi was often problematic, for it elicited suspicion and anger from African residents.

F. Segregation and patriarchalism in urban African administration

Despite these confusions, all segregationists shared the assumption that patriarchalism justified a significant degree of paternalistic intervention in the lives of their black charges. Officials considered themselves responsible for Africans' moral development. Even the legacy of 'liberal' segregationism was compatible with a significant degree of paternalistic control. White officials invariably deemed themselves to be responsible for the training of suitable leadership figures in the art of wielding authority.

However, whereas the Stallardists wanted to develop 'tribal' authority systems for Africans, other segregationists recognised the permanence of Africans in the cities. White municipal officials invariably deemed themselves to be responsible for the training of suitable leadership figures in the art of wielding authority. The white city fathers never wanted to remove black authority structures completely. It was always felt that blacks had some right to their own system of authority. This, in turn, provided for a significant degree of white paternalism.

In this regard, the future of the Advisory Boards, which were instituted under the Natives (Urban Areas) Act of 1923 to represent 'native opinion', assumed great significance. They were regarded by the white city fathers as an instrument of moral and practical education in the locations:

'...these Boards serve a very useful purpose indeed. It certainly teaches the Native to think for himself and helps him to get confidence...I always try to impress upon them that they must learn to help themselves, instead of always just saying to the white man, 'Give me'...' ⁷⁵

White officials wanted the performance of Advisory Boards to improve. According to Mr. Mathewson of Benoni,

'The Bantu, in their natural aspirations to participate more fully in the organisation of their own affairs, have vigorously condemned the present system for years past and the time is rapidly approaching for serious consideration to be given to adjustments which their evolutionary development demands'. ⁷⁶

The real philosophical problem arose with defining what Advisory Boards should be. According to Mr. Mathewson, '...the problem would seem to be one of degree of responsibility for them which would be acceptable throughout the country'. Mr. Mathewson concluded, rather weakly, that '...Realising that advancement cannot be repressed, our endeavours should be aimed at slowly guiding and preparing the Bantu for which eventuality is selected, so that they will be in a position to finally attain their ambitions peacefully.' He did not explore what he thought their ambitions were, or which agency should select the appropriate path. His indecisiveness on the matter was shared by the prominent Dr. Language of Brakpan: 'Ek is nie op hierdie stadium bereid om te se watter van hierdie stelsels die beste sal wees nie'. ⁷⁷ Their hesitation is not surprising, as each option involved far-reaching social changes.

What, exactly, was the nature of black subordination to white authority? The notion of desirable patriarchal authority patterns between black residents, black leaders and white

⁷⁵ Mr. Boshoff from Salisbury, IANA Annual Conference Proceedings (1954), p. 133.

⁷⁶ IANA Annual Conference Proceedings (1953), p. 39.

⁷⁷ IANA Annual Conference Proceedings (1953), p. 46.

officials could be construed in many different ways. In their interactions with Advisory Boards, as well as their debates amongst themselves, the white city fathers endlessly worked through the various kinds of patriarchal possibilities.

c) Dual and equal patriarchy

One vision of the future of the urban black community entailed the development of African urban authorities, until these structures became final sources of authority in the locations. This option would therefore produce two separate and fully-fledged urban polities. We will refer to this system as 'dual and equal patriarchy'.

Using our analogy of the patriarchal family, the relationship between white city fathers and black urban authorities would ultimately resemble the relationship between two 'independent' families, who interacted with one another on an equal footing.⁷⁸ Each would have their own sphere of jurisdiction and moral authority; and each would represent a coherent, well-integrated, racially-defined moral community.

The vision of dual and equal patriarchy was advocated largely by Afrikaans officials and theorists. Prof. Coetzee advocated the provision of land and services to black people, on which they could build their own housing and the extension of freehold. According to Mr. Boshoff of Salisbury, '...It is a very excellent thing that these Natives should learn to think for themselves and how to rectify their little grievances, for certainly a time will come when they will take over, to rule their own affairs in their

⁷⁸. Such a scenario would resemble Afrikaner rural families of the previous century, where a remarkable degree of social equality was maintained between families of different levels of wealth (Cronje and Venter, Die Patriargale Familie (1973), p. 22).

own areas'.⁷⁹ This sentiment was echoed by Mr. Marais of Boksburg and Councillor Potgieter of Germiston.⁸⁰

Prof. Coetzee of Potchefstroom acknowledged that genuine autonomy for black authority structures would mean a real withdrawal of whites' control:

'Whether we like it or not, the Bantu is evolving a new kind of leader. He may be irresponsible, he may be assuming, but in any case, we have to recognize him as a Bantu leader, and it is up to us to see what use we can make of this, and how far we can turn him into what is, in our sense, a responsible leader ... But we will have to realise ... that we will not always be able to choose the Bantu's leaders for him; they must develop their own leaders, and it will largely depend on us whether we will be able to co-operate with them in a friendly, beneficial and responsible way'.⁸¹

A fundamental problem, however, arose in this process. Mr. Tredoux of Boksburg expressed it succinctly: 'Although we are looking for leaders to lead those people, how many developed natives are there today who have suitable leadership qualities? And how many developed natives are there who will follow those leaders?'⁸² Until such an ideal dual patriarchy was established in the cities, the position of ordinary black residents remained somewhat ambiguous. This had two implications. First, it emphasised the importance of white paternalism in training a suitable cadre of African leaders. Second, until this was achieved, African residents would be subject to a dual authority, viz. that of African leaders, as well as that of white officials. It can be argued that the position of black township residents was analogous to the position of married daughters in certain kinds of patriarchal family relationships. When a woman

⁷⁹ IANA Annual Conference Proceedings (1954), p. 133.

⁸⁰ IANA Annual Conference Proceedings, (1953), p. 49.

⁸¹ IANA Conference Proceedings (1957), pp. 121-2.

⁸² IANA Conference Proceedings (1957), p. 113.

marries into another patriarchal family, she becomes subject to a kind of dual authority structure.⁸³ She would remain loyal and respectful to her own family, even though her new family also imposed obligations on her. Analogously, the division of authority between white officials and black Advisory Boards posed the same problem of moral obligations and practical prudence for township residents - at least until African leaders achieved a position of full equality with the white authorities, at some undetermined point in the future.

b) Dual and unequal patriarchy

A second position postulated two interlocking systems of authority - the one white and the other African - with the latter permanently subservient to the former. We will term this '**dual and unequal patriarchy**'. In this scenario, urban black leaders could merely offer advice to white officials.

This form of patriarchy is analogous to the relationship between a patriarch and his adult son, who has established his own family. In this case, a high degree of mutual respect would exist alongside a permanent relationship of inequality.⁸⁴ The patriarch does not need to satisfy the expressed wishes of their sons, or even consult with him.

In such a situation, the members of the son's family face a permanent split-level authority structure. They owe obedience to the head of their own family, as well as to the elder patriarch.

According to this model of patriarchal authority, black township residents in South African cities would find themselves

⁸³ G. Cronje and J. D. Venter, Die Patriargale Familie (1983), p. 54.

⁸⁴ G. Cronje and J.D. Venter, Die Patriargale Familie (1973), p. 35.

immediately responsible to urban black leaders, but ultimately governed by urban white patriarchs. Mr. Mathewson, for example, did not consider a transfer of power as crucial for a successful Advisory Board. He believed that Board members simply wanted to be respected and consulted. They should be accorded some prestige and respectability. They should also accumulate specialist knowledge about local affairs. For Mr. Mathewson, Advisory Boards did not need power, because a decent white Council would look after black residents' interests, once the Board had articulated its opinion on such matters. In his view, it would not be an intrinsically conflictual relationship, even though it was unequal. He believed that the Boards would, reasonably, consent to this permanent unequal dual patriarchy. It was just a question of finding the right mechanism and attitude to make this relationship work.⁸⁵

In practice, however, 'dual but unequal patriarchy' gave little guidance on specific administrative questions. Such a dual but unequal patriarchy may exist anywhere along an extensive continuum of control and autonomy. On the one hand, the system may be construed as resembling the familial systems of China and ancient Rome, in which the father retained all kinds of economic and material controls over the adult son.⁸⁶ On the other hand, the relationship between patriarch and adult son may well be a relationship of great mutual respect, thus leaving significant scope for freedom to the son, as he conducts his affairs within his own 'mini-patriarchy'. Hence the system could justify either 'hard' or 'soft' paternalism, or a combination of both. It all dependend, in practice, what the white officials considered to be appropriate.

The attempts by the East London City Council to resolve its crime problem in the early 1960s illustrate the difficulties in

⁸⁵ J. Mathewson of Benoni, IANA Annual Conference Proceedings (1953), p. 40.

⁸⁶ G. Cronje and J.D. Venter, Die Patriargale Familie (1973), p. 38.

determining black leaders' appropriate sphere of authority. The Advisory Board's proposal to establish their own 'civil guards' as a crime-combatting measure encountered strong opposition from the Manager of Native Administration and from the South African Police.⁸⁷ In contrast, certain Councillors felt that, 'if bands of adults were to set up a controlling force, and provided they dealt with the matter properly and did not resort to extortion and other malpractices', they should be allowed to proceed.⁸⁸ In practice, it was simply not clear how unequal a dual patriarchal system should be, and the degree of paternalistic intervention that could be applied.

An even more perplexing philosophical conundrum can be described as the conflict between 'figurative' and 'literal' patriarchalism. On occasion, the figurative 'city fathers' came up against the demands of the African heads of families. In East London during the 1950s, the white city fathers attempted to prohibit African domestic beer brewing - thus causing many families to lose their livelihoods. Not surprisingly, their claims as paternalistic patriarchs encountered strong resistance from the African heads of households.⁸⁹

On the other hand, the logic of patriarchalism could also provide unexpected opportunities for combining the moral claims of both the figurative and the literal patriarchs. As Kathy Eales showed, many rural black leaders wanted to block the influx of young women into the cities. In this way, they hoped to bolster their parental authority. These sentiments dovetailed with white officials' desire to tighten up influx control.

⁸⁷ East London JAB minutes, 26 October 1964.

⁸⁸. JAB minutes, 14 July 1964.

⁸⁹ This phenomenon was well documented by Kathy Eales, in her study of night passes for African women during the 1920s. Passes for women would undermine the right of men to be sole masters of their households ('Patriarchs, passes and privilege' (1989), p. 119.

Dual and temporary patriarchy

Finally, it was suggested that blacks' subordination to whites was a temporary affair, and was only justified if it enabled black people to learn Western norms and standards. In this view, blacks could ultimately be integrated into the broader multi-racial urban community. We will call this position '**dual and temporary patriarchy**'.

In this case, black residents were portrayed as travelling on a road towards Westernisation and multi-racialism. This position can also be termed '**proto-liberalism**'. On this account, black people did not have equal rights at the time, but had the intellectual and moral capacities to be recognised as equal citizens in the future. According to this view, patriarchalism would eventually be transformed into a modern civil society, characterised by formally equal rights and obligations. It was a perspective which had strong roots in the writings of prominent liberals, who had, during the course of the 1920s, systematically lost their enthusiasm for segregationism and began arguing for equal political rights. Howard Pim became a supporter of common citizenship, under the banner of 'equal rights for all civilised men'; and W.M. Macmillan was coming to realise that the plight of poor whites was essentially the same as that of poor blacks.⁹⁰ In 1920, Chief Magistrate Welsh argued that 'the native people as a whole have advanced beyond the stage of absolute subordination to their chiefs and headmen'.⁹¹

In central governmental circles, the argument for proto-

⁹⁰ S. Dubow, Racial Segregation and the Origins of Apartheid (1989), p. 49.

⁹¹ S. Dubow, Racial Segregation and the Origins of Apartheid (1989), p. 116.

liberalism was strengthened by Dr. Smit, the Secretary of DNA during the early 1940s. By 1942, Smit declared segregation to be unworkable, and maintained that no solution to South Africa's 'racial problem' was to be found through repressive measures. He believed in co-operating with the 'educated natives', and drawing them into administration of native affairs, rather than alienating them.⁹² Smit's position on native policy was significantly liberal: once blacks reach the standard of civilisation of whites, he maintained, they could not be denied the rights of civilised men.⁹³ However, this would not be a rapid or radical transition: he did not see transition to common citizenship in his lifetime.⁹⁴

The same sentiment was reflected in the comments by Mr. Bourquin of Durban, who raised certain doubts about the legitimacy of paternalistic coercion:

'...Where Mr. Roux refers to legislation from which certain advantages accrue to Natives, and while I agree with much of what he has to say, I do wish to sound a note of warning against any smug and self-satisfied sense of complacency which might spring from the honest belief that this so-called "protective" legislation only brings advantages to the protected people...'

He recognised that 'some legislation is discriminatory and does hurt'.⁹⁵ In this statement, Mr. Bourquin came very close to a proto-liberal understanding of patriarchy. He recognised the fundamental similarity of white and black members of the urban community. The notion of 'hurtful discrimination' only makes sense if it is in some sense arbitrary, if (potentially) similar

⁹² M.M.S. Bell, 'The Politics of Administration' (1978), pp. 25-6.

⁹³ M.M.S. Bell, 'The Politics of Administration' (1978), p. 132.

⁹⁴ M.M.S. Bell, 'The Politics of Administration' (1978), p. 82.

⁹⁵ IANA Annual Conference Proceedings (1957), p. 45.

people are treated in dissimilar ways. Furthermore, he recognised that blacks were beginning to see themselves as equal to whites, and hence they resented differential treatment.

The proto-liberal position gained strength from the fact that, while many officials behaved paternalistically to their black subjects, it is also clear that they were aware of the limitations of patriarchalism. Unlike the black slaves of the American South, Africans' status was never simply that of 'children'. There were two reasons for this. First, the remnants of erstwhile independent black polities (or 'tribal governments') meant to white officials that blacks were not intrinsically childlike. The second reason resulted from the process of urbanisation. The 'liberal segregationist' debates contained an inclusive strand, which asserted that the values of civilisation would be preserved most effectively by the political incorporation of an educated African elite into its ranks. This view was supported by certain African leaders, who were strongly committed to the liberal Christian values associated with the Cape franchise.⁹⁶

To return to our analogy of the family: as black residents were introduced to Christianity, Westernisation and literacy, they were gradually 'growing up' to adulthood - that is, they were developing a conception of themselves as full citizens with appropriate rights and obligations. The existence of a well-educated, articulate Western sector in black townships posed numerous moral problems for township officials.

Certain local officials had a sense that proper relationships between the black community and the white authorities were breaking down. The white officials expected to be trusted by black residents, and that their motives be recognised as benign. This, however, was evidently not always the case any more:

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S. Dubow, Racial Segregation and the Origins of Apartheid (1989), p. 17.

... the urban Bantu harboured many grievances for a variety of reasons; a feeling of desperation, of no trust in the white man and of utter frustration was evident among the educated, and in some instances the Bantu demonstrated against the European and force had to be used to quell disturbances ...⁹⁷

With established authority structures breaking down, new patterns of leadership were emerging:

'...Leaders and champions of communism enjoyed absolute freedom of movement and action and abused this privilege by inciting the Bantu to agitate against the European, the law of the land and the Government; the Bantu agitated for the repeal of all so-called discrimination legislation and demanded equal rights with the European; location advisory boards ceased to perform the functions for which they were created, and in many instances these bodies encouraged agitation against the Europeans'.⁹⁸

Hence old-style paternalism did not always seem appropriate when dealing with educated black residents. This awareness can be termed 'proto-liberal'. It indicated an awareness on the part of white councillors and officials that (some) blacks had claims to rights and to treatment as formal equals. It was also the beginning of an appreciation for the notion of 'civil society', constituted by a polity of free individuals and equal citizens.

It also indicated a situation in flux, in which the rights of blacks were very unclear. In terms of the analogy of the family, the crucial question was therefore: If blacks were evolving towards full citizenship, what kind of citizens were they going to become? Would they be citizens, but still belong to a different cultural sphere? Would they join the universalistic civil society, where they would be recognised as adults with full individual rights? Would they be the equals of the white patriarchs? Or would they, like the grown-up children of

⁹⁷ Dr. Language, IANA Annual Conference Proceedings (1954), p. 180.

⁹⁸ Dr. Language, IANA Annual Conference Proceedings (1954), p. 180.

patriarchs, still remain subject to the moral authority of their parents? It was not clear to officials and Councillors in what direction the urban African community should develop, and whether they should gradually share the freedoms of the white community.

In our discussion of the moral bonds in a community such as East London, the themes of paternalism, patriarchalism and proto-liberalism will weave a complex pattern of rights, obligations, coercion, consent and resistance. The rest of this chapter will provide a brief overview of the moral concerns and conundrums faced by the white city fathers in their dealings with their problematic black charges.

G. Patriarchalism and paternalism in practice: The consequences of chronic ambiguity

The patriarchal vision of ethical life and the paternalistic notion of moral conduct serve to illustrate several of the normative dimensions of politics, which we outlined in earlier chapters.

First, the issue illustrates that the main principles of a debate about the ethical order may never be clearly spelt out. As far as the future of urban Africans were concerned, the white city fathers tended to address issues on the basis of an intuitive sense of what was appropriate. Hence people's opinions shifted from one kind of vision of patriarchalism to another, depending on the issue at stake.

The elements of paternalist welfare and control in East London's urban administration were never explicitly articulated as a coherent doctrine or discipline. Municipal administrators were usually busy and dedicated men; they were not philosophers. Paternalism and patriarchalism were basic assumptions that occasionally surfaced in discourse, enveloped by other practical preoccupations about administration, housing, or the eternal

worry about finance. For the local officials, paternalism was not an explicit doctrine to which all reality had to conform. It was not a doctrine that postulated specific end-states. It did not even offer clear criteria of success. It was a rather muddled guiding ethos, partly coercive, partly humane, often contradictory, which at least allowed its proponents some sense of moral decency while fighting a hopeless battle to improve the increasingly squalid township conditions. In this sense, the paternalist moral order in the cities reflected Stuart Hampshire's definition of moral systems, as a loose combination of 'absolute prohibitions, elementary decencies, the recognition of a plurality of prohibitions which do not all serve a single purpose'.⁹⁹

Second, the cities' experience of patriarchalism and paternalism shows that a specific notion of moral conduct can be justified in terms of very different underlying conceptions of the ethical order. In this case, paternalism was compatible with very different visions of a patriarchal moral order. This often had the effect of obscuring the very real philosophical disputes which lurked in local officials' debates on urban African administration. It also meant that officials could continue to administer black townships, even while caught up in profound philosophical muddles - for specific paternalistic acts could be justified by an entire array of different, and latently conflicting, beliefs about the future of the urban moral order.

Third, the phenomenon of patriarchalism in South African cities shows that a political actor's moral beliefs (or those of a group of actors) can be quite inconsistent. For example, Verwoerdian officials of the Department of Native Affairs (DNA) often seemed to take the 'dual and equal patriarchy' vision quite seriously. On such occasions, they maintained that the Africans' claims to financial and other assistance from the white community,

⁹⁹ S. Hampshire, 'Morality and Pessimism' (1978), p. 15.

indicated a psychological and moral disability, an abdication of responsibility and autonomy. It was the Verwoerdians' self-appointed task to restore the pride and moral integrity of 'the Bantu'. However, on other occasions, Departmental officials were content to retain a 'dual but unequal' patriarchy. For example, they maintained that there were limits to the extent of responsibility which should be conferred on Advisory Boards. According to Dr. Verwoerd, these councils always had to remain subordinate to white local authorities.¹⁰⁰ Municipal officials also often displayed similar contradictions in their beliefs.

Examples of such inconsistencies provide us, as historians, the means with which to evaluate moral conduct. They allow us, simultaneously, to empathise with political actors' fears and dilemmas; as well as criticise the shortcomings of their political perspectives.

Fourth, the never-ending moral confusions usually led to a confusion between means and ends. On some occasions, officials felt called upon to advocate the broader welfare of the African residents - whether the latter agreed with those conceptions or not. On other occasions, officials resorted to a meticulous application of rules, while losing sight of the broader philosophical issues. In the process, the rules often assumed an overriding symbolic importance in the minds of the white city fathers.

Fifth, the temptation to resort to 'hard paternalism' often entailed a temptation to employ 'dirty hands' methods. The urgency of social improvements was never lost from sight. Frequently, as a last resort, officials tended to employ unpalatable methods, such as coercion and deception. This was not always an easy way out. Such devices often tended to stir white consciences to life in one or other sector of the extensive municipal bureaucracy - which caused new debates and delays in

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IANA Annual Conference Proceedings, 1956, p. 21.

implementing policy.

Sixth, political conduct was often bedevilled by unintended consequences. The attempts by white local officials to coercively promote their conception of Africans' welfare often led, ironically, to a loss of effectiveness in their administrative system. This happened in two possible ways. On the one hand, if officials earnestly applied the convoluted system of rules which constituted urban native policy, this tended to have the paradoxical effect of leaving some space for black residents to go about their own lives. Township regulations were simply too numerous and contradictory to amount to an efficient system of control. As the need for social improvements intensified, officials often resorted to makeshift rules, regulations, prohibitions, permissions, permits and prosecutions.

On the other hand, officials' attempts to spell out a more systematic and long-term vision of African welfare also produced unexpected difficulties. In practice, it invariably took a great deal of officials' time to sort out their own rationales for policies, and then to implement them in a very complex environment. The evidence from East London will show that it invariably took a great deal of debate before any decision was taken, any money spent, or any facility established. By the time concrete action resulted, the parameters of the problem had changed, and hence actions had unintended (and often unwelcome) results.

Seventh, as we noted in Chapter Two, ethical systems entail the mutual normative constitution of individuals within a shared conception of ethical life. Ethical systems are not unilaterally imposed ideologies. They are shared conceptions of the appropriate allocation of rights and obligations. In the cities during the 1950s, many African community leaders shared the patriarchal vision of the white city fathers. On occasion, this had the paradoxical effect of empowering African leaders vis-a-vis white officials. Officials often became involved in tortuous

debates with African leaders about an appropriate definition of 'Africans' welfare'. The white city fathers were frequently left defenceless against African residents who well understood the dynamics of patriarchalism and paternalism, and often displayed better arguments and longer memories than the white officials. It was not very difficult to ensnare white officials and Councillors in the contradictions of their own paternalism, as our study of municipal beer production will demonstrate. As a result, township regulations became embedded in township residents' own implicit notions of appropriate moral conduct, and township officials felt obliged to recognise specific limits on their room to manoeuvre. The unsystematic nature of paternalistic administration in practice tended to legitimise the recognition of some form of rights of African residents.

The importance of this shared conception of ethical life became very evident during the 1970s, when the City Council increasingly abandoned its obligations to African residents, and the latter found themselves arguing strongly for the preservation of patriarchalism. Ultimately, they knew that the local officials were protectors as well as disciplinarians. During the harsh decade of the 1980s, local white leaders discovered the remnants of the patriarchal ethos, and this played a crucial role in the negotiations of 1986.

Conclusion

This chapter illustrated that the profound confusion between different visions of patriarchy had highly debilitating consequences in practice. At the heart of the problem was the fundamental lack of clarity about the destiny of the white and black populations in South Africa, and the political and moral relationships which should prevail between them. At least three conceptions of patriarchalism informed the actions of white local officials; and they gave rise to different interpretations of appropriate paternalistic moral conduct.

Because of these, it is not surprising that township administration in each town developed its own particular ethos and character. The local bureaucratic ethos was often a product of informally and intuitively held moral notions. The diffuse and ambiguous demands of paternalism and patriarchy were, in general, not conducive to universalist bureaucratic principles, dictated from a remote centre of government.¹⁰¹

Under the patriarchal ethos, the web of control in the cities was not nearly as systematic and confident as revisionist authors tend to claim. At best, it provided for loose and unsystematic instances of paternalistic conduct, which seldom postulated or achieved clear goals. Patriarchalism was an attempt to apply a modernising disciplinary spirit to a fundamentally ambiguous situation. The next chapter will explore this phenomenon more fully in the context of the East London City Council's attempts to introduce a municipal beer monopoly.

In the end, patriarchalism could only deal with some of the symptoms of modernisation. It is this inherent contradictoriness that differentiated patriarchal controls and its style of paternalism from the more totalitarian approach of the Verwoerdians, who were as yet, during the 1950s, only gathering their strength.

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In this way, South African towns were indeed characterised by the principles of locality and particularity which characterise the family, according to Hegel.

CHAPTER FIVE

ADVISORY BOARDS AND POLITICAL OPPOSITION IN PATRIARCHAL EAST LONDON, 1950-1960 DILEMMAS OF PATERNALISM

In this chapter, we will consider the unresolved and complex relationship between City Councils (and their officials) and 'Native Advisory Boards' during the 1950s. The purpose of this chapter is to explore in more detail the actual ambiguities of the functioning of Advisory Boards against the backdrop of widespread confusion about the exact content of patriarchal ethical life. Furthermore, Advisory Boards were introduced at a time when the central and local governments felt an increasingly powerful urge to impose some kind of modern 'discipline' on cities in flux.

After a brief introduction to Advisory Boards, three main themes will be pursued. First, it will be argued that Advisory Boards were a brave, but frail, attempt to impose disciplinary authority structures on African townships. Second, it will be argued that the patriarchal order produced a complex system of power and powerlessness. While it often drew African leaders uncomfortably close to the white city fathers, it also conferred significant informal and moral power on Advisory Boards.

Third, the application of paternalistic controls was always problematic. There was a basic ambiguity regarding the role of Advisory Boards as representatives of African interests. In this context, there was a constant confusion about the relative importance of Africans' needs and interests, as opposed to Africans' opinions and wishes. This matter became especially crucial when white officials had to decide how to deal with African politicisation.

These themes will be considered in the context of city governments in general, but will be illustrated by using material

from East London during the 1950s.

A. The shaping of black administration: The legislative framework between 1923 and 1955

The first attempt to introduce a systematic form of African administration was the Natives (Urban Areas) Act of 1923. As we have seen, this Act defined the nature of segregation very ambiguously. On the one hand, it was substantially influenced by the philosophy of Colonel C.F. Stallard. According to this doctrine, the towns were essentially the creation of whites, and blacks' presence there could only be justified in so far as they served the needs of whites. On the other hand, segregation could be taken to mean the partition of urban areas, and that Africans had permanent rights in their section of town.¹

In terms of this Act, 'Native Advisory Boards' were introduced in each township, to serve as a form of black representation in municipal affairs. In Chapter Four it was noted that the political future of the African locations was always uncertain. The Advisory Boards were an uncomfortable compromise between a belief in eternal subordination ('dual and unequal patriarchy'), on the one hand, and possible political equality on a segregated basis ('dual and equal patriarchy'), on the other. Some officials were even prepared to move beyond the notion of duality, to contemplate the eventual merging of the white and black communities (a 'proto-liberal' position, which entailed the beginnings of a modern civil society).

Even though these ambiguities had not yet been resolved, white officials strove for some form of inter-racial co-operation in the practicalities of municipal administration. The result was frequent disagreement about the proper role of the Board, and its relationships with the white city fathers. The next section will

¹ R. Davenport, 'African Townsmen? South African Natives (Urban Areas) Legislation through the Years' (African Affairs, Vol. 68, no. 271, 1969), p. 98.

highlight one source of confusion, viz. the attempt by white officials to develop Advisory Boards as a modern and disciplinary form of authority.

B. The functioning of the East London Advisory Board: The quest for institutional discipline in Duncan Village

The constitution of Advisory Boards occupied six pages in the East London Location Regulations. These regulations can be interpreted as an attempt to impose modern discipline on a very confused urban order. The detailed prescriptions were an attempt to structure the contacts between the local authority and the 'natives' in as predictable and systematic a way as possible. The government's desire to impose some kind of 'discipline' was reflected in attempts to formalise and regularise the Boards' structure and activities according to predesigned rules. In practice, all officials shared an assumption that their efforts were directed at promoting **progress** and advancement. Everyone agreed with the need and desirability for 'developing the natives'.

The Regulations provided for the demarcation of the location into wards, each to be represented by one Board member. Their period of office would be three years. Through the institution of 'ward committees' to assist Advisory Board members, the Board was intended to reach deeply into the location community to establish modern forms of grievance management. Detailed formal provisions also governed the activities of these committees.

The white local authorities retained overriding formal powers. If there were no nominations in a specific ward, the Council had the right to appoint a member of the Board. Furthermore, Advisory Board meetings were chaired by the Chairman of the Native Affairs Committee, or in his absence, by any available member of the Council. This meant that the chairman would always

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A. The shaping of black administration: The legislative framework between 1923 and 1955

The first attempt to introduce a systematic form of African administration was the Natives (Urban Areas) Act of 1923. As we have seen, this Act defined the nature of segregation very ambiguously. On the one hand, it was substantially influenced by the philosophy of Colonel C.F. Stallard. According to this doctrine, the towns were essentially the creation of whites, and blacks' presence there could only be justified in so far as they served the needs of whites. On the other hand, segregation could be taken to mean the partition of urban areas, and that Africans had permanent rights in their section of town.¹

In terms of this Act, 'Native Advisory Boards' were introduced in each township, to serve as a form of black representation in municipal affairs. In Chapter Four it was noted that the political future of the African locations was always uncertain. The Advisory Boards were an uncomfortable compromise between a belief in eternal subordination ('dual and unequal patriarchy'), on the one hand, and possible political equality on a segregated basis ('dual and equal patriarchy'), on the other. Some officials were even prepared to move beyond the notion of duality, to contemplate the eventual merging of the white and black communities (a 'proto-liberal' position, which entailed the beginnings of a modern civil society).

Even though these ambiguities had not yet been resolved, white officials strove for some form of inter-racial co-operation in the practicalities of municipal administration. The result was frequent disagreement about the proper role of the Board, and its relationships with the white city fathers. The next section will

¹ R. Davenport, 'African Townsmen? South African Natives (Urban Areas) Legislation through the Years' (African Affairs, Vol. 68, no. 271, 1969), p. 98.

highlight one source of confusion, viz. the attempt by white officials to develop Advisory Boards as a modern and disciplinary form of authority.

B. The functioning of the East London Advisory Board: The quest for institutional discipline in Duncan Village

The constitution of Advisory Boards occupied six pages in the East London Location Regulations. These regulations can be interpreted as an attempt to impose modern discipline on a very confused urban order. The detailed prescriptions were an attempt to structure the contacts between the local authority and the 'natives' in as predictable and systematic a way as possible. The government's desire to impose some kind of 'discipline' was reflected in attempts to formalise and regularise the Boards' structure and activities according to predesigned rules. In practice, all officials shared an assumption that their efforts were directed at promoting **progress** and advancement. Everyone agreed with the need and desirability for 'developing the natives'.

The Regulations provided for the demarcation of the location into wards, each to be represented by one Board member. Their period of office would be three years. Through the institution of 'ward committees' to assist Advisory Board members, the Board was intended to reach deeply into the location community to establish modern forms of grievance management. Detailed formal provisions also governed the activities of these committees.

The white local authorities retained overriding formal powers. If there were no nominations in a specific ward, the Council had the right to appoint a member of the Board. Furthermore, Advisory Board meetings were chaired by the Chairman of the Native Affairs Committee, or in his absence, by any available member of the Council. This meant that the chairman would always

be a white person.² Significantly, the meetings could be attended by an array of white office-holders, including any Councillor, the manager or his deputy, the magistrate of the district, the Native Commissioner, a superintendent, the senior police officer, or 'any other person whose presence the chairman considers to be desirable or necessary'. The black public was excluded.

The discourse of the regulations reveals the extraordinary minutiae of disciplinary order. Detailed provisions describe how the superintendent had to call a meeting to call for nominations; how the nominations, signed by at least ten registered voters, had to be submitted in writing "not later than the tenth day of September"; how a deposit of £5 would be payable by each candidate; and how the voting process should be carried out. Similarly, the procedures of the Advisory Board meetings were carefully spelled out. Motions had to be sent to the secretary at least seven days before a meeting; and no Board member could address the Board more than twice on any matter under discussion.

However, the whole matter of formal township regulations retained an air of unreality. Because of the social environment in which it was supposed to operate, there was a marked discrepancy between the formal rules and the actual experience of all the participants. The Advisory Board regulations seemed incongruous when applied to a community which was largely illiterate, poor, and un-Western; and whose experience of public institutions had largely been shaped by the traditional structures of chieftainship or by the coercive role of the police. Instead of an effective prescription for real-life activities, or a reflection of an existing communal ethos, the Regulations reflect the local authority's commendable attempts to impose modern legal-rational structures on a community in flux. The location regulations were artificial constraints that had limited roots

² Location Regulations, Chapter 2 (East London Public Health and Non-European Affairs Committee, Report and Minute Books, 1956).

in the spontaneous social patterns of the African community.

The Board members often did not live up to the expectations of white officials. Officials were often exasperated by their lack of technical sophistication. Basic points often had to be explained at length before any meaningful discussion could take place. Councillor Hurd of Johannesburg described his experience thus:

'The Boards no doubt deliberate with a great deal of wisdom..., and they study plans with a great deal of absorption. But I venture to suggest that in not one single case have any of the members of the Board any technical knowledge or experience or qualification whatsoever. It takes them a jolly long time to study these things...'³.

The East London Board members were often less than conscientious. On occasion, the East London Township Manager 'took the Board members to task for shirking their duties'. Most of the Board members had never even read the regulations.⁴ While overtly recognising the importance of proper procedure, the Board's activities were hampered by the apathy of several of its members. Part of the reason was that Board members received no monetary compensation for their duties, and they had to reconcile their Advisory Board functions with their busy personal and working lives. Punctuality was an ideal seldom achieved; motions were repeatedly introduced without the prescribed month's notice; and on occasion, it was necessary to terminate members' terms of office because of inattendance.⁵ East London's Township Manager constantly attempted to improve the Board's performance:

'The Board must get out of the habit of unnecessary talking and concentrate on the business before the meeting. There could only be a real agenda if members of the Board submitted Notices of Motion at least

³ IANA Annual Conference Proceedings (1954), p. 132.

⁴ JLAB minutes, 23 March 1959.

⁵ A particularly bad example was Mr. Qabaka who failed to attend any meetings for five months. See JLAB minutes, 26 November 1962.

seven or eight days, but preferably fourteen days, before the meeting ... He also asked members of the Board not to indulge in repetition of what a previous speaker had said'.⁶

Despite their mediocre performance, East London's Board members accepted that the procedures and values that white officials were attempting to inculcate into them, were, in principle, a good thing. Mr Gaqa, for example, said in response to the Manager's criticism, '...He felt ... it was time that the Board pulled up its socks. If the Board went wrong, it was its duty to apologise...'.⁷

East London's experience shows that both the Board and the Council valued the regulations, because it enhanced the Board's status to be seen as a modern, orderly, formal institution. On occasion, Board members used their position to very good effect, by getting the formal location regulations altered in ways that promoted their constituents' interests. For example, it successfully advocated that the definition of 'family of a permit holder' be broadened from the biological and wedlock definition, to include 'any other person who in the opinion of the Location Superintendent is a bona fide dependant of the holder. With the rapid influx of people from the countryside, this definition would mean greater leeway for people looking for residence.

Yet the quest for modernity was constantly bedevilled by the background ambiguous patriarchal community ties. In the next section, we will consider the complex system of rights and obligations, and of power and powerlessness, with which the various parties had to contend. The case of East London will be used to illustrate these dynamics.

⁶ JLAB minutes, 14 October 1963.

⁷ JLAB minutes, 23 March 1959.

C. Advisory Boards in practice: Power and powerlessness

The formal powers of the Boards were slim. They could advise the Council on all matters affecting the welfare of the residents; make recommendations on any related legislation; and had to serve as a channel of communication between residents and the Council. For the officials, Advisory Boards were important institutions. They assisted white officials in exercising their paternalist duty to improve township conditions: 'They bring to our notice frictions that we do not know of, and we and the Councillors usually consider these grievances in a sympathetic manner...'.⁸

According to the location regulations, Board members were obliged to 'report to the superintendent any untoward happening, the presence in the location of any unauthorised person, any breach of these regulations and any defects in the municipal services...'. This function recalls the need for information and surveillance which, according to Foucault, is typically part of modern discipline.

However, the Advisory Boards did not simply have to co-operate with white officials in exercising control. They were also tied in numerous and complex ways to the people they represented. Many of the Board members valued the authority which their Advisory Board posts conferred on them, and they saw themselves as legitimate spokesmen of the black community. Board members could significantly influence the fate of black residents by offering advice to white officials. For example, a significant function was to advise the Council on the removal from the location of any person on the grounds that his 'conduct is inimical to the preservation of law and order', or that 'his services are consistently in arrear'.

The importance of the Advisory Board's ties with the community was appreciated by many white officials. As the Township Manager

⁸ Councillor S. Boshoff from Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia; IANA Annual Conference Proceedings (1954), p. 133.

of Pretoria stated at an IANA meeting, the most important function of an Advisory Board is 'actively to assist in promoting decent human relations between the Bantu and other racial groups'.⁹ This meant that requests made by the Boards were often taken very seriously by white officials. The minutes of the Joint Locations Advisory Board in East London reveal numerous cases where the Board's requests were adhered to. These ranged from large new projects to small ways of making township life more comfortable. For example, its urgent plea for a Non-European hospital in East London was accepted by NAC¹⁰; additional ablution blocks were built¹¹; its request for a grand stand at the sports field was granted¹²; cricket fields were built¹³; and an additional ambulance was purchased.¹⁴ On each occasion, the Board duly expressed its appreciation and satisfaction, and the patriarchal order remained vibrant.

From time to time, the Board's requests brought the East London City Council into skirmishes with central government departments. For example, in July 1969 the Board recommended to the Council that facilities be made available for African entrepreneurs to establish restaurants in East London.¹⁵ The East London City

⁹ East London Township Superintendent's report of the Native Advisory Board Congress; NAC files, 16 March 1956.

¹⁰ JLAB minutes, 6 February 1956; NAC minutes 23 February 1956.

¹¹ JLAB minutes, 17 October 1960.

¹² JLAB minutes, 26 May 1969.

¹³ JLAB minutes, 18 January 1971.

¹⁴ Minutes, Health, Housing and Non-White Affairs Committee, 7 July 1971; JLAB minutes, 17 August 1971.

¹⁵ JLAB minutes, 21 July 1969, 28 October 1969, 17 November 1969, 21 September 1970, 18 January 1971; HHNWA minutes 3 February 1971, 6 August 1969, 8 November 1971 and 2 December 1971; Town Clerk's report, 11 November 1970, 5 April 1971 and 8 November 1971; HHNWA minutes 8 November 1971 and 2 December

Council agreed to make representations to the government to ask permission for a Bantu restaurant in the white area. After lengthy correspondence with the Department of Bantu Affairs, the request was turned down. A great deal of time and energy had been wasted, and the municipal officials shared the Board's disappointment. Incidents such as these had the effect of proving to the Board that the local authority cared about the welfare of black residents. A mutual loyalty was sustained, especially in the face of the Department's blank bureaucratic intransigence.

In some cases, however, the Boards failed to achieve their goals. In East London in 1954, almost all the Board's suggestions regarding the loosening of housing regulations were refused by the Native Affairs Committee.¹⁶ On certain matters, the Council did not feel too perturbed about denying the Board's wishes. For example, in 1962, its requests for tennis courts and sports facilities in West Bank Location were repeatedly turned down, on the grounds that it was unjustified to incur expenditure on a non-essential facility.¹⁷

The relationship between the Board and the white city fathers was not, however, defined by the formal township regulations alone. Certain procedures and practices were also valued because they had achieved the hallowed status of tradition, and were therefore considered by the African residents to be **rights**. Because patriarchalism postulated a shared ideal for rulers and ruled - the goal of advancing to a position of cultural 'development', however defined - the city fathers were prepared to recognise certain loosely-defined rights on the part of the subordinate group. These included the right to decent treatment, the right

1971.

¹⁶ Minutes of Special JLAB meeting, 23 April 1956; Minutes of Special meeting of the Public Health and Non-European Affairs Committee, 27 April 1956.

¹⁷ JLAB minutes, 25 June 1962, 27 August 1962, 1 October 1962; NAC minutes, 7 November 1962.

to live in the cities, the right to have some form of property or security, to accumulate wealth, and the right to be left alone as long as residents obeyed the panoply of laws that governed mobility and residence. Many white officials could identify with these basic human needs and wants. Westernised blacks were not citizens in the political sense, but they were legitimately part of the urban society. Their presence may have produced practical administrative problems, but they had a sort of a right to be there. This ethos allowed ambitious Africans the space to improve themselves (the many practical obstacles notwithstanding), through education, religion or social service. The patriarchal moral order produced a system of governance which was informal, intimate, and based on precedent, as opposed to formally designed regulations.

For African leaders, however, participation in Advisory Board activities produced a dynamic of its own, which was not always empowering. It was difficult to participate in the system without absorbing, willy-nilly, the ethos of the white officials. The case of Mr. Fazzie will be used to illustrate the powerful bonds of local patriarchalism in East London. Mr. Fazzie, a leading member of the African National Congress in East London, was elected to the Board in 1956.¹⁸ He was a very assertive member of the Board. However, he had to contend with the powerful paternalistic ethos which informed the activities of the Township Manager, the Chairman of the Council's Native Affairs Committee, the Native Commissioner, and certain of his Advisory Board colleagues.¹⁹ The dynamics of the Board were clearly revealed by its discussion, in January 1957, of the City Council's proposal for a 'Bantu Festival'.

When the issue of a Bantu Festival appeared on the Board's agenda, Mr. Fazzie aggressively criticised the Council for proceeding in its plans without consulting the Board.

¹⁸ Manager's report to NAC, January 1957.

¹⁹ JLAB minutes, 18 February 1957.

Furthermore, he demanded, what would happen to the proceeds of the festival?

A senior member of the Board, Mr. Godlo (who, ironically, was also a member of the ANC), was the first to respond. Mr. Godlo was prominent in the national Locations Advisory Board Congress. Due to his long experience in the Advisory Board, he knew a great deal about proper local authority procedures. He stated that, although he shared the same sentiments as Mr. Fazzie, he found Mr. Fazzie's attitude offensive. He made a point about Advisory Board procedure: in matters such as the Bantu Festival, the Council was not obliged to consult the Board. It was actually a gesture of courtesy on the part of the Council that they had referred the issue to the Board for information.

The Manager then took the floor, to defend the loyal Mr. Godlo. In stern and exasperated tones, he reproached Mr. Fazzie for his ill-considered opinions, especially as the latter did not know the true facts of the matter. In true paternalist spirit, he pointed out that all proceeds from the Festival would be paid into a Trust Account and 'utilised for various purposes which would benefit the residents of the location'. The Native Commissioner, Mr. Pike, also happened to attend this Board meeting. With the ponderous authority of a true patriarch, he proceeded to reproach the Board for its constant adverse criticism and reluctant co-operation.

The result was extraordinary. In the face of this array of authorities, Mr. Fazzie, whose radical political convictions were beyond doubt, 'thereupon apologised for his outburst, and together with other members of the Board, indicated that in the future they would assist to the fullest possible extent'.

How can we account for Mr. Fazzie's capitulation? On the one hand, it may be dismissed as a strategic retreat, in the hope of fighting other battles in future. On the other hand, however, it also indicates how difficult it was to withstand the sheer

moral and institutional authority of individuals steeped in a patriarchal ethical order. It was difficult to challenge paternalist officials' claims to superior knowledge and values in a patriarchal context. In practice, officials **did** have relatively good information at their disposal - or, at least, information which passed the test of modern, formalised knowledge. Furthermore, officials **did** make (relatively) convincing claims to represent universally admired values - such as commitment to duty, co-operation, courtesy and proper procedure.²⁰

Mr. Fazzie's ignominious capitulation was the result of very seductive patriarchal dynamics. Patriarchalism involves the moral education of subordinates; and if patriarchs appear confident in their knowledge and authority, they become very difficult to challenge. The fact that the members of Advisory Boards were often quite prepared to co-operate with the white city fathers does not mean that they were complacent lackeys of the Council. In general, Advisory Boards saw themselves as the responsible leaders of the townships, or in other words, as subordinate patriarchs. They were participants in a social and ethical order, without which urban life would have been a great deal less meaningful to them.

Like many social beings, Mr. Fazzie could not see the broader picture in which he found himself. He could not critique the paternalistic ethos where it was weakest - viz. the increasingly inappropriate application of patriarchalism to modern urban conditions. One measure of this inappropriateness was the increasing difficulty paternalists had in deciding whether to

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The city fathers used all kinds of means to inculcate desirable values into the Board members. On one occasion, the Township Manager encouraged the Board to attend a film show, entitled 'Freedom', at the Springbok bioscope. The film depicted 'freedom within the boundaries of law and moral order'. Clr. Rowland gave a short explanation of the film. He asked the Board to make a special effort to see that there was a packed house (JLAB minutes, 19 May 1958).

determine, unilaterally, what Africans' real needs were, or whether to give credence to Africans' articulated wishes. The next section considers this problem in more detail.

D. 'Representing the Community': Patriarchalism and the problem of needs and interests

It can be argued that the functions outlined above invariably promoted the interests of the white power-holders. On certain occasions, this was no doubt true. However, as we have seen, the relationship was not a one-sided one - white officials had moral obligations, as well as rights. The Board was very adept at promoting the interests of the township residents within this moral order. White officials wanted voluntary co-operation and even affection from the township residents, and this meant that they had to take the Board's suggestions fairly seriously. The East London experience shows that officials did not intend Boards simply to be their lackey; especially since the regulations provided that 'Every member of the advisory board shall ... strive at all times to become the real representative and the faithful voice of the aspirations and wishes of the community within his ward...'²¹ A representative body can only bear the weight of its responsibilities if it is intrinsically legitimate in the community. In East London, Councillors were undecided as to whether they should act on the never-ending stream of criticism and complaints emanating from the Advisory Boards. After all, the Board had no formal powers vis-a-vis the Council. Yet the Council wanted to believe that the Board was really doing its job, providing an accurate indication of the residents' wishes. The city fathers did not always feel equal to claiming that they understood the **real** interests of the 'natives', especially in the face of Advisory Board opposition. The white officials and Councillors preferred to maintain a shared moral order, based on the voluntary compliance of their subjects.

²¹ East London Location Regulations, Chapter 2, Par. 8.

The Boards' attempts at representing the views of the African residents exposed a deeper philosophical problem in patriarchalism. A patriarch ultimately has effective power to decide what is in the child's interests (as opposed to the child's wishes). However, nearly every parent also feels obliged to satisfy the child's wishes - up to a point, of course, but that point is usually unarticulated. A patriarchal order offers little guidance on what constitutes its wards' genuine **needs** and what are simply their **wishes**. The Council wanted the Advisory Board to play a representative role, but there were no procedural ways to determine which requests represented 'needs' and which did not. The underlying question was: Did the Advisory Boards, in their role as 'subordinate patriarchs', **really** know what was good for the ordinary residents? Did they know better than the white officials?

In the case of the Advisory Board, the quest to be 'the faithful voice' of the community was bound to create dilemmas for the Board members as well as the Councillors. The Boards were often caught between the wishes of their constituents and the imperatives of city management. Uncomfortable questions would arise; for example, was it the task of the Board ultimately to press the claims of their constituents, or to impose the demands of the white city fathers? Where were their primary loyalties supposed to lie? This dilemma was especially acute because the Advisory Boards of many towns, including East London, were constantly pressured by the grievances of residents that had to find an outlet. In certain towns, the Advisory Board consisted of ANC and SACP supporters, who saw their task explicitly as an oppositional one. In Germiston, for example, Board members stated that they never regarded themselves as employees of the municipality, and did not feel it was their duty to carry out every policy proposed by the authorities.²² Similarly, in several towns in the Orange Free State, Advisory Boards became

²² R. E. Pretorius, 'Banishment: Germiston's answer to opposition in Natalspruit Location, 1955-1957' (History Workshop, Wits University, 1987), p. 9.

radicalised during the early 1940s and associated with African trade unions and the Communist Party.²³

As more radical political pressure mounted during the 1950s and early 1960s, the officials felt an increasing need to believe that the East London Advisory Board was, in fact, representative of township opinion. Yet it was clear that the Board's existence was fragile. (It ceased to exist between February and November 1961). Even when it was functioning, it experienced a distressing level of popular apathy. It was difficult for officials to explain why, if the Board really reflected the wishes and needs of black residents, it experienced such low polls.²⁴ As Davenport noted, 'the system never really brought alive a responsible interest in local government among Africans'.²⁵

In East London, the ambiguities in the role of the Advisory Board were therefore felt by white officials and Board members alike. The Board simultaneously had to be a credible representative of township residents, as well as a partner in an often unpopular administration. There was only one way to reduce these ambiguities to a tolerable level; viz. to promote the patriarchal moral order. White officials were eager to develop Africans' leadership qualities even further, by encouraging Board members to take responsible decisions. Consequently, the matter of needs and wishes was left unresolved; different occasions

²³ P. Rich, 'Managing black leadership: The Joint Councils, urban trading and political conflict in the Orange Free State, 1925-1942', in P. Bonner et. al. (eds), Holding their Ground (1989), pp. 187, 192.

²⁴ In East London, for example, the 1956 elections showed a poll of 0,59%, since only one ward was contested. In 1957, only one ward in Duncan Village was contested, with a 13% poll (a total of 48 votes), four wards were uncontested, and in two wards, there were no nominations. In Cambridge, the poll reached 89% of voters, on a voters' roll of 125 (Manager's Report to NAC, January 1957).

²⁵ R. Davenport, 'African Townsmen?' (1969), p. 99.

produced an emphasis on one or the other. At times, black patriarchs were deemed to be competent spokesmen for black residents' needs; at other times, the white city fathers overrode the Board in order to promote their own view of black interests.

This, ironically, undermined the very attempt at imposing modern discipline of which Advisory Boards were a part. In theory, Advisory Boards were introduced as an attempt to impose modern, disciplinary, formal patterns of order and authority. In practice, as the East London experience indicates, the results were muddled compromises on the part of the white officials, alternating between stern prescription, pleas for co-operation, verbal support for the Board's leadership role, assertion of the Council's benevolent intentions, and the evasion by the Council of responsibility for unpleasant decisions. Due to this moral confusion, the East London city fathers' behaviour was guided merely by their patriarchal intuitions, which produced attitudes ranging from sympathy and indifference to anxiety and exasperation.

The exercise of true disciplinary order and rationality depends on a background of a coherent social philosophy - a philosophy which has such authority that disciplinarians and reformers have no qualms in imposing unpalatable measures. The patriarchal order provided no such coherence, for its definition of rights and obligations was fatefully unresolved. This problem became especially acute when Africans made political demands.

E. Patriarchalism versus politicisation: The political consciousness of the East London Joint Locations Advisory Board

Advisory Boards did not only express desires and grievances; they had a nascent political consciousness of their own. The Duncan Village Advisory Board was an enthusiastic participant in the shortlived Location Advisory Boards' Congress, which united

Advisory Boards throughout the country. This Congress, which had existed at least since the 1930s, took up urban Africans' practical grievances.²⁶ The East London Advisory Board was well represented amongst the Congress leadership, and Mr. Godlo repeatedly served as President. Another East London member, Mr. V.M. Kwinana (also the founder of East London's branch of the ANC) was elected Assistant Secretary in 1956.²⁷

The Advisory Boards' Congress also made political statements. In 1953, for example, it criticised the concept of labour bureaux, and it unanimously opposed the Native Services Levy Act on the grounds that it would place black employees' jobs in jeopardy. Employers would attempt to replace native labour with Coloured labour to evade the levy.²⁸ In the following year, the Congress demanded that Africans be employed in all Native Affairs Departments, and that influx control raids be reduced.

Mr. Godlo's Presidential address in 1956 showed how critical of government policy the Advisory Boards' Congress had become. Godlo referred to all the rights which had been denied the urban native under the present government: '(i) The right to participate in the local self-government granted to urban local authorities; (ii) The right to possess and own a home in the urban area; (iii) Freedom of movement; (iv) Freedom of contract; (v) The right to be and to feel safe in one's own home; and (vi) Freedom of speech and assembly'.²⁹

²⁶ P. Rich, 'Managing black leadership' (1989), pp. 182 and 186.

²⁷ On the ANC in East London, see T. Lodge, 'Political mobilisation during the 1950s: An East London case study', in S. Marks and S. Trapido, The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa (London: Longman, 1987), p. 321. On Mr. Kwinana, see Town Clerk's report to NAC, 4 October 1956.

²⁸ Delegates' Report, NAC files, January 1953.

²⁹ Town Clerk's report to NAC, 4 October 1956.

Significantly, the Congress also criticised national policy. For example, it urged the Government to repeal the Bantu Education Act.³⁰ The Advisory Boards' venture into national political questions, as opposed to matters pertaining only to their urban localities, caused real alarm amongst white officials. On this score, municipal and Departmental officials were in agreement: the Boards were overstepping their mark.

At stake was the unresolved definition of Africans' 'interests'. For the Advisory Boards, national issues affected the interests of their constituents, and hence should be discussed. However, many white officials, especially those with Verwoerdian inclinations, believed that white authorities were the appropriate agencies to determine what was in the nation-wide interests of black people. They believed that Advisory Boards were only competent to pronounce on blacks' local interests.

East London's Township Manager, who also attended the 1954 Congress meeting, criticised the performance of his Advisory Board in this regard. His view was crucially based on the distinction between national ('political') issues and local ('welfare') matters:

'The Secretary for Native Affairs outlined the Congress and ... outlined the policy which it is intended should lead to self-help, self-Government, improved living conditions and employment, etc. He invited questions and suggestions from Congress. He received [nothing but] political criticism'.³¹

The Township Manager believed that the Advisory Boards' Congress was irresponsible and prejudiced:

'I cannot describe the Congress proceedings better than by saying that they were absolutely negative. There was no constructive criticism or suggestions.

³⁰ Report by Superintendent of Locations, Mr. W. du Plessis, to NAC, 14 January 1954.

³¹ Manager's report to NAC, 22 January 1953.

Everything explained was turned down.³²

The hostility of the Department of Native Affairs to these events was even more stark. The Minister, Dr. Verwoerd, was unsympathetic and uncompromising. His view was based on the same distinction between local matters, and national/political matters. He claimed that the former represented the **real** interests of black people, while the latter was a distraction from the Boards' proper role. In a letter to the Advisory Board Congress, the Departmental Secretary stated that '... the function of the Congress is to deal with matters of urban Native Administration and ... discussions of national policy do not fall within its scope of activities'. After 1955, no DNA officials attended the 1956 Congress.³³ It also announced that, in future, municipalities would not be allowed to finance their Boards members' travel costs to the Congress venues.³⁴

East London's Town Clerk felt that the Department's attitude was fully justified, 'and it has now become abundantly clear that the Department's efforts to steer the Congress back to a course which would redound to the benefit of the **local interests** of the Natives concerned, have failed'.³⁵

However, since the Advisory Board subscribed to a different conception of 'interests', it refused to give up its right to discuss national issues. The Congress leadership wrote to all local authorities³⁶, defending the view that Advisory Boards were competent to judge the true interests of their constituents.

³² Manager's report to NAC, 22 January 1953.

³³ Letter from Secretary of DNA to Advisory Board Congress, forwarded to Town Clerk by DNA on 19 December 1955.

³⁴ Town Clerk's report to NAC, 4 October 1956, quoting DNA circular dated 6 September 1956.

³⁵ Town Clerk's report to NAC, 4 October 1956. Emphasis added.

³⁶ Undated letter to local authorities, recorded in Town Clerk's report to NAC, 4 July 1957.

They based their argument on the Native (Urban Areas) Act of 1945, which required the Boards to 'report upon any matter specially affecting the interests of Natives in the urban area, upon which the Board may consider it useful or desirable to report'. In terms of this provision, Congress considered certain legislation, such as the Bantu Education Act, to qualify. The Congress also felt that the resolutions taken on the issues of passes for women, revision of rentals, and housing, fell within its legitimate sphere.

Significantly, this position found some support amongst white officials. In 1957, a Pretoria official publicly sympathised with the aspirations of the Congress. He claimed that it was the sole and united voice of the Urban Bantu population, and was able to make representation to the authorities in a constitutional manner.³⁷ Mr. Ford, the Superintendent of Duncan Village, shared these sentiments:

'... I wish to differ from the contentions of my predecessors. Although the context of many of the discussions may be negative, it must be borne in mind that the Advisory Board is the only Government recognised mouthpiece the native has, and with a little guidance and assistance, may be moulded into a useful body insofar as Urban Native Administration is concerned ... I am sure that at Congresses and the like, good, constructive criticisms will be advanced and better understanding between black and white will exist'.³⁸

Mr. Ford's statement perceptively indicated a major source of the problem, viz. the lack of clarity regarding the appropriate mouthpiece for Africans' opinions. The steady growth of the African National Congress pushed this question to the fore.

³⁷ IANA Annual Conference Proceedings (1957), p. 82.

³⁸ Report to NAC by Superintendent of Locations, 16 March 1956.

F. The ambiguous character of African opposition during the 1950s: Relations between the ANC and the Advisory Boards

The Advisory Boards' Congress should be understood in the light of broader political trends amongst African people. Significantly, there were important points of agreement between 'radical' political organisations (such as the African National Congress) and Advisory Boards. The implication of this is that the cleavage between the Boards and popular organisations was not unbridgeable (in contrast to the situation of the Black Local Authorities during the 1980s). Both the Advisory Boards and popular organisations were informed by the background of patriarchal relations in the cities. To explain this state of affairs, we have to give some attention to the nature of the black township elite during the 1940s and 1950s.

Until the 1940s and even the 1950s, the educated African leadership were in a contradictory position. Class distinctions in the black community were largely based on the degree of Westernisation achieved by individuals, and the urge to adopt Western lifestyles was strong.³⁹ Values such as diligence, perseverance (especially in education), charity, abstemiousness, and a rejection of tribalism and ethnocentrism were cultivated by the African elite. Even the ANC Youth League operated almost entirely within the Christian, literate, school-going world, and its members derived self-esteem from material possessions, modern occupational skills, Western etiquette and leisure activities. Success depended on becoming 'like whites'.⁴⁰

Feit poignantly describes the frustrating position of the African

³⁹ E. Feit, African Opposition in South Africa (Hoover Institution, Stanford University, 1967), p. 22.

⁴⁰ G. M. Gerhart, Black Politics in South Africa (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978, p. 11) as discussed in C. Glaser, 'Students, tsotsis and the Congress Youth League: Youth Organisation on the Rand in the 1940s and 1950s' (History Workshop, Wits University, February 1987), p. 3.

bourgeoisie. On the one hand, they could not return to traditional society; on the other, the new technological society, which they now wished to enter and whose values they had begun to appreciate and desire, denied them a place. This 'denial of place' is an important part of the profound lack of clarity regarding the boundaries of communities in South Africa:

'In his own community, [the African] enjoys an exaggerated prestige because of his achievement and the resulting income he receives. But with respect to civil rights or personal liberty in the white world, he is reduced to the same level as the impoverished and illiterate African. The sense of deprivation is enhanced because the meanest White man can enjoy the rights of which the African intellectual is deprived'.⁴¹

As we noted earlier, patriarchal whites felt that racial equality would threaten the basis of that moral order. Consequently, they acted in a rather contradictory fashion: they encouraged Africans to appreciate Western values, but felt unable to include Africans in their own social circle.

Despite these difficulties, the African bourgeoisie retained a strong conservative streak during the 1950s, illustrated by their strong desire to make the movement 'respectable'. 'Whatever his sincerity or his capacity for leadership, [a leader] is separated from the African masses by the very achievements that give him elite status'.⁴² This produced a reluctance to think in anti-White terms. It also produced a commitment to non-violent political methods. Consequently, strong moral bonds were built between concerned white people and the emerging African elite. The patriarchal ethos promoted these bonds, and produced a bedrock of shared normative assumptions between the two parties.

The situation offered certain important compensations for the

⁴¹ E. Feit, African Opposition in South Africa (1967), pp. 27-8.

⁴² E. Feit, African Opposition in South Africa (1967), p. 26.

many kinds of discrimination and administrative regulations that irked the educated black minority. Compared to the Verwoerdian excesses that would follow, the relatively benign patriarchal structures of the 1950s allowed Westernised Africans (most notably, those with 'Section 10 rights' of permanent residence in the cities) some measure of liberty, dignity, protection, and social stability. A subordinated group can, for a long time, vacillate between anger at the power of their superiors, and trust that their own interests would be sympathetically considered by those superiors. Shared experiences in all kinds of social institutions produced vague feelings of affinity that obstructed the development of a militant consciousness. Africans resented the way in which they were deprived of certain values; they did not object to those values themselves.

These dilemmas faced the Advisory Boards and the leaders of the ANC alike. The former chose to promote their values and interests through government-created institutions; the latter chose an independent and more critical forum. However, both groups were products of patriarchalism, and hence their style of politics was often similar. In many communities, such as East London and Brakpan, African communists were responsible for a rejuvenation of Advisory Board politics during the 1940s.⁴³ The Communist Party won all six seats of the East London Advisory Board in 1942.⁴⁴ As late as 1959, the ANC's Anti-Pass Planning Council emphasised 'education' of whites about the 'evils of the pass laws'.⁴⁵ It was difficult to radically oppose an order which represented all the Western values which one admired.

⁴³ T. Lodge, 'Political mobilisation during the 1950s' (1987), p. 321.

⁴⁴ D. Everatt, 'The origins of multiracialism' (African Studies Institute, University of the Witwatersrand, 1990); p. 3.

⁴⁵ T. Lodge, 'Political mobilisation during the 1950s' (1987), p. 317.

Simultaneously, however, government policy forced the African elite to remain part of the black urban ghettos. There was a vast area of shared experience between middle-class political notables and their proletarian neighbours. Notwithstanding the growing class polarisation in the black townships, the African elite still felt responsible for improving the lot of the black community as a whole. This produced a radicalism, albeit of a rather tentative kind:

'The African bourgeois is by force of circumstances rather than through personal choice a radical. His entry into the political arena is perhaps less due to his own wish to participate in radical politics than to the feeling that, being forced to the same level as the masses by external constraints, he must break the system in order to establish his supremacy over them'.⁴⁶

Because the black educated elite was forced to live cheek by jowl with the black underclass, it inevitably felt that it had a significant competence in defining the **real interests** of fellow black urban residents. Yet the curious mixture of stern supervision and benign tolerance which characterised patriarchalism was difficult to challenge. The black elite had to contend with white officials, who, in the mood of benevolent paternalism, also claimed the right to define the real interests of black residents. The result was a low-key tug-of-war, in which moral argumentation, political pressure, and threats of coercion or resistance determined the definition of blacks' 'real interests', on an ad hoc, case by case basis.

The result was often frustrating, but seldom sufficiently threatening to challenge the fundamentals of patriarchal paternalism. There was always the chance to live to fight another day. The strange combination of tolerance, benevolence and coercion which constituted the delicate fabric of patriarchalism came to be truly appreciated only with the onset of the Verwoerdians' moral extremism and totalitarianism.

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E. Feit, African Opposition in South Africa (1967), p. 29.

Increasingly, the Afrikaner Nationalists

'... disturbed the perfect tranquillity of the African middle class, mingled them with the commonality; the old guard, the masters of consultations and concessions and compromises found themselves without a protector, commingled with the common dust; then out of expedience, rather than loyalty, they looked for recognition in that instrument of rebellion, the African National Congress'.⁴⁷

It was only during the 1950s that the ANC Youth League persuaded the organisation that the time for confrontation through passive resistance had arrived. The old liberal demands took on a more collectivist colour with the Freedom Charter of 1955. In other words, the claim by ANC leaders to comprehend the 'true interests' of black people became ever more compelling.

During the 1950s, African political opinion in East London also underwent a change. The ANC was split between a conservative, older, cautious wing ('Congress A'), and the ANC Youth League, which formed a branch in East London in 1949. The latter was led by three young men, C.J. Fazzie, A.S. Gwentshe and J. Lengisi. It was more militant, emphasising the values of racial dichotomy, cultural self-sufficiency and a heroic past. The Youth League frequently opposed participation in Advisory Board politics, to the annoyance of Congress A.⁴⁸

This period of militancy in East London was very intense, but did not last long. During the nation-wide Defiance Campaign of 1952, the militant youth in East London also planned protests against government legislation. These protests went badly wrong; in November 1952, a riot erupted in the shacklands of Duncan Village, and two white people were brutally killed. The ANC lost

⁴⁷ Bloke Modisane, Blame Me on History (London: Thames and Hudson, 1963, p. 46), quoted in E. Feit, African Opposition in South Africa (1967), p. 29. Emphasis added.

⁴⁸ T. Lodge, 'Political mobilisation in the 1950s' (1987), p. 322.

several key leaders through imprisonment or banishment.⁴⁹ Lengisi, Fazzie and Gwentshe were arrested and tried for incitement. Lengisi and Gwentshe were banished from the Eastern Cape and removed to a remote village in the Transvaal. In East London, the events of 1952 were a political disaster for the ANC, as many of its followers were alienated by the violence. According to Lodge, the residents of Duncan Village immediately associated the riot with the ANC, and were no longer willing to identify themselves publicly with it. The Defiance Campaign of 1952 marked simultaneously the peak and the demise of the Youth League in East London. For a few years after the riot of 1952, there was a political vacuum in Duncan Village.⁵⁰

In this situation, the Advisory Board regained some significance. Various factors increased the acceptability of Advisory Boards in township life. In the face of fear of the police, many Africans were not prepared to resort to more radical forms of political action.⁵¹ Furthermore, for many politicised people, 'non-violence' was a question of principle as much as tactics, and educated Africans were still deeply influenced by liberal values.⁵²

In 1955 in East London, the ANC once again contested the Advisory Board elections.⁵³ Politicised Advisory Board members saw themselves as a beleaguered group, under increasing pressure from the central government to refrain from holding critical political views. The ANC members of the Board soon became disillusioned

⁴⁹ Manager's report to NAC, 12 February 1954, referring to the sentences on Mr. Gwentshe and Mr. Lengisi passed on 26 March 1953.

⁵⁰ T. Lodge, 'Political mobilisation in the 1950s' (1987), p. 324.

⁵¹ E. Feit, African Political Opposition in South Africa (1967), p. 89.

⁵² T. Lodge, 'Political mobilisation during the 1950s' (1987), p. 317.

⁵³ Manager's report to NAC, January 1957.

with the sluggish implementation of township improvements, which gradually developed into strident criticism of administrative policies.

The role of the Advisory Board was strengthened by the distinctly localistic colour of African populism during the 1950s. During this period, the ANC's role as a community organisation responding to local sources of discontent was of greater significance to local people than its national programme of action. The energy of local and national [ANC] politicians was often absorbed by the effort to bring localised subsistence related popular movements within the ANC's orbit.⁵⁴ The ANC was organisationally unable to exert much effective control over its branches, so that local issues tended to prevail in the deliberations of the branches.⁵⁵ This had two important consequences: On the one hand, the emphasis on local grievances and goals suited the political style of the Advisory Board and strengthened its links with the ANC; on the other hand, this localism unintentionally sustained the ethos of patriarchalism in the cities.

G. Problems of paternalism: White officials and political opposition in the townships

This uneasy **status quo** in township political dynamics was not very comprehensible to white officials and councillors in South African towns. It was one thing to be confronted with requests for township improvements; it was quite another to deal with the demand for the **right** to have a say in all kinds of issues affecting black residents. Local white officials had very little knowledge of the various complex political strands in the black community. The problem of distinguishing between 'real' and subjective interests, or between needs and wishes, bedevilled

⁵⁴ T. Lodge, 'Political mobilisation during the 1950s' (1987), p. 314.

⁵⁵ E. Feit, African Opposition in South Africa (1967), p. 68.

every aspect of their treatment of these strands. To make matters even more complex, the policies of the central government became ever more strident and uncompromising, tugging the officials toward more coercive forms of paternalism.

One factor in accounting for the restiveness of the Advisory Boards was the perceived presence of 'agitators'. This notion was repeatedly discussed at IANA, without achieving much clarity on the matter. The unarticulated but real question of objective versus subjective interests was absolutely fundamental. As we saw earlier, Africans' opinions on day-to-day problems often carried some weight in the patriarchal order, and the frequently generous responses of the white city fathers helped to keep this order intact.

The question of political grievances was a different matter altogether. While the patriarchs could admit that the underclass had vague rights to decent treatment (generally at the discretion of the white city fathers), the question of political rights (such as rights of expression, assembly, and franchise) often seemed to threaten the existing ethical order. As whites perceived it, patriarchalism had hitherto been the most benign and viable kind of relationship - infinitely preferable to slavery, subjugation or overt hostility. The political currents in the locations led to the crucial question: in terms of the analogy of the family, should 'adolescents' have political rights? Should their judgement be trusted, or do their elders simply know better what is good for them?

The problem of differentiating subjective and objective interests is a tricky one at the best of times. Many doctrines, including fascism, socialism, communism and paternalism, tend to argue that people have 'real interests' of which they may be unaware. This has, on many occasions, led to the suppression of people's 'mere wants' in favour of postulated 'real interests'. (It is only liberalism that has stood strongly for the political recognition of subjectively defined interests, i.e. wishes). It is not

surprising, therefore, that white officials, when confronted with political opposition, and faced with the problem of creating and defining the urban community, almost ab initio, should be tempted to take a political short-cut, and define for themselves what the 'real interests' of the black residents were.

Against the background of patriarchalism, it was very difficult for white officials to conceive of black people as bearers of equal rights to those of whites. The notion of individual political rights is a very sophisticated philosophy, based on a highly developed notion of individualism. The moulding of modern subjectivity is the sine qua non of individualistic democratic rights. It also presupposes a very durable and solidly woven social fabric, based on what Foucault calls 'disciplinary' social institutions (schools, armies, factories, hospitals), which would reshape the pre-modern person into an orderly, predictable, self-restrained individual. Furthermore, this issue is related to the processes of modernisation and discipline outlined in Chapter Two. Modernity also implies a certain minimum of social coherence, and shared definitions about the limits and organisation of the community. In Europe, the development of social discipline accompanied the development of rights and democracy.

In South Africa during the 1950s, the quest for individual rights by the African disenfranchised was a normal part of the experience of growing individuation produced by a modernising society. However, the social context was unresolved. African political grievances were expressed within a turbulent and unstable urbanising society, with massive population shifts, and an unresolved definition of the urban community. The African 'locations' certainly did not display much individualism or modernity. Whatever control was exerted in these squalid areas was done through a combination of benign paternalism and crude, violent (often relatively ineffective) bureaucratic repression.

Municipal officials in all cities were alarmed at the growing social distress, crime, violence, and decline in moral standards which characterised the locations. The assertion of individual political rights would strike at the heart of both patriarchalism and coercion, without the background of social discipline to prevent the entire society from flying apart. The officials' vague fears of chaos and instability translated into a sense that political rights for Africans were simply inappropriate.

Their fears were not entirely without foundation. For example, Tom Lodge's study of East London refers to radical African politics in East London as 'fragile and socially inchoate' during the 1950s, due to the recent rural origins of many residents, the work-place horizons of the trade unions, and the impoverished living conditions in the township. Rurally derived culture remained influential, and adherents of 'Red' (traditional) ideology roughly equalled 'School' converts to Christianity.⁵⁶

The dramatic events of 1952 in East London illustrate the kind of disorder which haunted municipal officials' imagination. The events of that year are powerfully described in D.H. Reader's The Black Man's Portion. The Defiance Campaign began in East London in mid-1952. The ANC's argument that black people were entitled to rights in the land of their birth, found enthusiastic support amongst the residents. Under the leadership of the ANC, black residents challenged the laws concerning the curfew, service contracts, and permits to seek work. Hundreds of volunteers entered the streets at night, without night passes or service contracts. All were arrested. By the end of the campaign, about 1 500 persons had been convicted.⁵⁷

⁵⁶. T. Lodge, 'Political mobilisation during the 1950s' (1987), p. 320.

⁵⁷ The following account of the 1952 riots is largely based on D.H. Reader, The Black Man's Portion (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 26.

As the year drew on, the black residents of Duncan village became increasingly agitated. Disaffected youths, imbued with a pride derived from Africanism, yearned for action.⁵⁸ In November 1952, the government decided to prohibit all public meetings of black residents, in terms of the Riotous Assemblies Act, No. 22 of 1930. In spite of the ban on public meetings, a crowd gathered at the Bantu Square on the afternoon of 9 November 1952, ostensibly to hold a religious service. A detachment of armed police dispersed the crowd by force, and several demonstrators were killed and wounded. The police had just withdrawn to the police station, when news reached them of the murder of a Dominican medical sister, and an insurance salesman. The crowd had reached a pitch of frenzy, and the badly mutilated body of Dr. Elsie Quinlan had been partly cannibalised with a view to absorbing the victim's magical powers as a doctor. The crowd subsequently vented its pent-up rage by burning the Roman Catholic mission building, the teacher-training school, and the commonage ranger's house. Thousands of residents fled the township and sought refuge in rural homesteads.

The Defiance Campaign had been overtaken by unforeseen social realities. The riot had been touched off in the shack area. While the more respectable residents of the municipal housing area kept behind closed doors, the tsotsi youths went on the rampage. Reader commented on the social tragedy which constituted the tsotsi phenomenon:

'Offspring of temporary and shiftless liaisons, involuntary by-products of one of the few leisure-time activities available to the shack-dweller, they had come into the world unwelcomed and unloved, an additional burden on already overtaxed resources, born into disease, squalor and inadequate homes. Often, by a hideous process of natural selection, these gangs were the more alert, the more crafty, the more vicious of an unoriented and dispossessed class...Generations of regimentations and neglect had produced from the slums the fury which erupted through their offspring.

⁵⁸ A. Mager and G. Minkley, 'Reaping the whirlwind: the East London riots of 1952' (History Workshop, University of the Witwatersrand, 1990), p. 6-7.

The tsotsi's, unlike the majority of adults present at the time, were able to strike in an ecstasy of abandon, with no property, no future, no employment, nothing to lose save their seemingly worthless lives'.⁵⁹

Many African residents were horrified at this violence, and the Defiance Campaign in East London was quickly brought to a halt. The older and more respectable residents were appalled at the excesses of the younger element, especially at the murder of an innocent woman whom many of them had known.

However, the memory of those fateful events must have lingered in the consciousness of the East London city fathers. Two years later, the Duncan Village Township Manager presented his Council with apparent evidence of ANC attempts at subversion. A chain letter had been found, which advocated violent revolution:

'The black man is being prosecuted, jailed, fined, assaulted, murdered and denied education. God will help us if we try to help ourselves...Every non-european must burn the white man's property. You are ordered to set a light to the veld and also Post Offices and Dutch Churches in town. Use paraffin and dry wood ... Travel in motor cars to distant towns to burn European schools ... When travelling pull down telephone lines and road signs. Burn farmers tractors, cars, barns, veld, haystacks and stores, especially Nat. Afikaners enemies (sic). Post this to all friends black and white, or be cursed, unlucky and damned to hell for ever and ever - Amen'.⁶⁰

In the light of officials' impressionistic understanding of African politics, it is no wonder that African demands for individualistic political rights caused such unease on the part of white local officials and City Councillors in South African towns. It was one thing to respect the judgement of respectable African leaders; it was quite another to visualise shiftless tsotsi's having equal political rights. Officials' sense of social fragility was severe enough already; and they had neither

⁵⁹ D. H. Reader, The Black Man's Portion (1961), p. 28.

⁶⁰ Quoted in Manager's report to NAC, 12 February 1954.

the habits of mind, nor the social institutions, to understand or accommodate the emerging style of African politics.

However, officials' shared anxieties did not translate into shared ideas on how to deal with the problem of African political opposition. What should be done about the grievances of people who had never been accepted into the 'European' political community, most of whom were entering the cities for the first time, sharing few of the cultural traits of the 'advanced' white sectors of the cities? Should Africans be disciplined sternly, and forcefully kept within their subordinate role, or were they entitled to have an opinion of their own? Did they have rights or not? Did their expression of their wishes reflect their own 'real interests'? Did the 'agitators' propagate false conceptions of Africans' needs, or should their arguments be taken seriously?

Mr. Roux of Klerksdorp advocated taking a tough line on political 'agitation'. He emphasised the fact that the Natives (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act of 1945 provided for the 'leadership, guidance, control and restriction on meetings and gatherings of natives within the urban area'. Mr. Roux felt that existing legal provisions were inadequate:

'These days, there are many irresponsible Bantu who ... know that if they simply avoid trouble at the meetings which they address, they can continue to hold meetings and to whip up local residents and preach untruths to them. They usually exploit the opportunity to prepare residents for the agents which organize strikes, demonstrations, etc., behind the scene'.⁶¹

The rhetoric of 'irresponsibility', 'exploiting', 'untruths' and 'whipping up' did not signify much trust in blacks' ability to identify their own interests. Mr. Roux's perspective emphasised Africans' passivity and vulnerability to cunning agents of sedition. Not surprisingly, Mr. Roux's view would later dovetail

⁶¹ IANA Annual Conference Proceedings (1956), p. 40.

comfortably with the Verwoerdians' more utopian style of paternalism, in which firm action had to be taken against Africans' wayward political tendencies, evidently for their own good.

Similarly, Mr. Ballenden from Durban also subscribed to a stern patriarchy:

'The native has not arrived at a stage when, placed in large masses, he can exercise any sort of real responsibility over his neighbours, and ... your advisory boards get into the hands of the reactionary element who are not a bit interested in the real welfare of the people - the home welfare, which is the real thing'.⁶²

Other officials held a different view. Mr. Bourquin of Durban, for example, expressed his reservations about the prohibition of meetings:

How can (local authorities) become arbiters as to how a proposed meeting is going to affect the location residents? ...[E]ven if they were not abused deliberately, they could be misapplied and errors of judgment would occur ... It is far safer to allow people to express themselves and 'to blow off steam' than to muzzle them and to drive them underground. Unless there is actual incitement to break the law or to create violence and disorder, and there are laws in existence to deal with such a situation, people must be permitted to assemble and to express their view, even if such views are of a critical or even challenging nature'.⁶³

Mr. Bourquin' view showed an intuitive compromise between patriarchalism and liberal rights theory. He felt that Africans' political meetings were relatively harmless ('blowing off steam'), and possibly reflected the normal frustrations experienced by children against the authority of their parents. Yet he concluded his address to IANA by quoting Voltaire: 'I may violently disagree with what you say, but I shall defend to my

⁶² IANA Conference Proceedings (1957), p. 79.

⁶³ IANA Annual Conference Proceedings (1956), p. 46.

last breath your right to say it'. His patriarchalism and his liberalism were linked by a healthy awareness that patriarchs are not always right, and that they can, intentionally or unintentionally, abuse their powers. It was therefore in everybody's interests that their wards had the right to enunciate frustrations or grievances. This, of course, did not imply that the city fathers should satisfy all Africans' demands; it simply referred to Africans right to express their wishes. This reflected a relatively 'liberal' form of paternalism.

The East London City Council gave expression to a similar conception of 'liberal paternalism' when a mass demonstration was held in April 1951. Township residents protested against an increase in rentals. The demonstration was approved by the Police and the City Council, and was held in the city centre. Four thousand Africans marched in orderly procession, and sang 'Nkosi Sikeleli Afrika' outside the City Hall. Youth League marshalls 'walked on either side of the column, preventing it from straggling, bunching or spreading', and motorists courteously gave way. The Mayor met a delegation of the protesters, but their suggestions were turned down.⁶⁴

A year later, Duncan Village township erupted in violence, sparked by the increased rentals. Subsequently, some Councillors explicitly defended the residents' right to protest.⁶⁵ They wanted to meet with 'responsible native elements', including the African National Congress, on condition that 'the Natives in their turn would give assurance that they would bring the situation back to normal'. These Councillors clearly believed that some credence had to be given to black leadership, and that whites' interpretations of black residents' problems were not sufficient. Once again, it was a 'liberal' form of paternalism.

⁶⁴ This account is based on A. Mager and G. Minkley, 'Reaping the whirlwind' (1990). Their material was drawn from the Daily Dispatch, 16 April 1951.

⁶⁵ A. Mager and G. Minkley, 'Reaping the whirlwind' (1990); based on Daily Dispatch, 11 November 1952.

It can be generalised that, the stronger officials' belief in the need for an initiating, pioneering approach to 'native development', the more they adopted a messianic role, and the more coercive their paternalism became. Paternalism may be represented as a continuum. At one extreme were officials satisfied to allow urban blacks to 'progress' pragmatically with a loose combination of rights and controls. This view was often associated with a conception of patriarchalism in the cities as 'dual and temporary', with the ultimate goal of absorbing Africans into an inclusive liberal civil society. At the other extreme were more Nationalist-oriented officials who felt a need to reconstruct black urban community life on a traditional ethnic basis, and hence visualised a 'dual, permanent and equal' form of patriarchy in the cities. The former often took wishes into consideration; the latter tended to emphasise attributed ('ethnic') needs and interests.⁶⁶

This, in turn, had an important effect on the nature of the paternalistic acts which officials undertook. The more permissive paternalistic perspective was often associated with an attitude of moderation in moral judgement. As explained in Chapter Three, moderation involves a concern with means as well as ends. Regarding the problem of political opposition, the 'liberal paternalists' believed that the recognition of certain rights was an important method of achieving political stability. In contrast, the coercive paternalists emphasised the maintenance

⁶⁶ Another dynamic was also taking place, in a minor key. The more the local officials attempted to block local blacks' political aspirations, the more those officials had to rely on the material resources and the moral rationales offered by the central government. In effect, such municipal officials abdicated their local authorities' inherited right to deal with local conflict in a manner they thought fit. They were steadily becoming locked into a dependency relationship with the Department and other coercive central government agencies. This relationship can be characterised as a displaced patriarchalism: local officials looked to central government officials for paternalistic guidance. (I am indebted to Jeremy Evans for this suggestion).

of stability and the development of suitable ethnic identities as more important than the question of rights. In terms of this view, the end justified the means - even if the means were coercive and unpopular.

Ultimately the perspective of coercive patriarchy proved to be stronger than the proto-liberal discourse of officials like Mr. Bourquin. As we will elaborate in Chapter Seven, the chronic ambiguities of paternalism opened the way for totalitarian intervention by the Verwoerdians, with their clear vision of the kind of citizenship for which Africans should be prepared. For Dr. Eiselen, Secretary of the Department of Native Affairs, the goal of ethnically-defined politics was such an intrinsically reasonable one, that the government was justified in employing strict measures to bring it about:

'Can the Department of Native Affairs be accused of being frivolous and of drafting its laws in so unreasonable a manner that a well intentioned Native finds it difficult or unduly irksome to comply? I have no hesitation in denying this most emphatically ... There are Natives who consider that they have risen above and no longer belong to their community and therefore desire to be exempted ... Socially such relaxation would have the detrimental effect ... (of) encouraging such persons to turn their back on their own society'.⁶⁷

Dr. Eiselen's views would prove highly persuasive, because he articulated an anxiety shared by local officials, viz. the sense of impending chaos:

'We are dealing with a mixed Bantu population ... which lives cheek by jowl with the European community and is during the working day subject to all sorts of influences, completely divorced from Bantu custom and Bantu interests ... 'The urban Bantu population is exposed to the deliberate, near subversive propaganda of a number of selfseeking agencies' ...⁶⁸

The agitators threatened the entire legal system, Dr. Eiselen

⁶⁷ IANA Annual Conference Proceedings (1957), p. 15.

⁶⁸ IANA Annual Conference Proceedings (1957), p. 16.

continued:

'The Natives' laws are discriminatory, the Native is told; they are unjust, outrageous, vicious and so forth. Why then should he obey them? And if he is morally justified in evading or breaking some particular law, why not another, why not any law? ... What is remarkable is that the vast majority still remain law-abiding ...'

Faced with the spectre of total lawlessness amongst black urban residents, the Verwoerdian officials felt that their task was extremely urgent and important. Traditional communities had to be resuscitated precisely to retain and recreate a respect for the law. It was the only way to preserve any form of social organisation whatever, and almost any means could be employed to reach this goal. Whereas Mr. Bourquin's solution emphasised the recognition of **rights, wishes and subjective interests**, the Verwoerdiens' approach was based on the notion of **real interests**. For the Verwoerdiens, the notion of rights for blacks became superfluous, indeed an obstacle, since history had a teleology, which provided an answer to the problem of social turbulence.

The Verwoerdiens' remarkable sense of certainty influenced many local officials. In the words of Councillor Tredoux of Boksburg, 'We must be steadfast, we must choose a direction and that direction is now being indicated to us, not by ourselves, but by the authorities, and we should follow it'.⁶⁹ The next section examines the way in which East London officials also began to resort to coercive methods in dealing with black opposition.

H. Patriarchalism and political opposition in East London during the 1950s

As we have seen, however, patriarchalism did not offer clear guidance on the proper approach to political opposition. In East London, officials and Councillors held different opinions on the matter.

⁶⁹ IANA Annual Conference Proceedings (1957), p. 83.

A key question was the relationship between the ANC and the Advisory Board. Should a comfortable working relationship between the two organisations be tolerated, or not? The township officials, and most notably the Township Manager, directed their efforts at trying to drive a wedge between the ANC and the Advisory Board. The general political atmosphere may have shaped their perspective. 'Security' issues were prominent in the central government's priorities during the 1950s. In 1953, the government introduced the Public Safety Act, enabling it to declare a state of emergency in the country; the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1953 increased the maximum penalties for persons convicted of offences committed by way of protest against any law⁷⁰; and the Suppression of Communism Act was passed in 1950. The lengthy Treason Trial demonstrated the government's concern about attempts to 'overthrow' the state.

The Township Manager, Mr. Venter, blamed the ANC leaders, Mr. Lengisi and Mr. Gwentshe, for intimidating the entire black population. He claimed that headmen were attacked, municipal employees intimidated, and public meetings of the Advisory Boards obstructed by the ANC Youth League. On one occasion, the Manager reported that, on an inspection tour of the location, he and the Mayor 'were lucky to come out alive. We had to go back to my office via Amalinda'.⁷¹

There were two courses of action open to the Council, and Mr. Venter firmly pursued both. First, he felt that it had become necessary to refuse them the use of the municipal hall in the location. 'When they use it, it is picketed and collections made for the adverse activities of the movements'. The Township Manager believed that the 'responsible' black residents did not approve of the activities of the ANC. 'The position is so bad that residents at the risk of being arrested will leave their

⁷⁰ M. Horrell, Action, Reaction and Counteraction (Johannesburg: SAIRR, 1963), p. 12.

⁷¹ Township Manager's Report to Public Health and Non-European Affairs Committee, 12 February 1954.

homes in the vicinity of the (Peacock) Hall if there is a meeting of the ANC'.⁷² The Council therefore informed the ANC that it would not be allowed to use the Peacock Hall for any purpose whatever'.⁷³ However, the local ANC committee still managed to find ways to continue their activities, and an irate Township Manager reported in August that the National War Memorial Health Foundation's Community Hall had been used for an ANC meeting.⁷⁴

The other course of action was the deportation of leaders. Regulations regarding deportations were steadily becoming more severe. In September 1956, the Secretary of Native Affairs notified local authorities that, in terms of the Natives (Urban Areas) Amendment Act of 1956, municipalities could deal more effectively with any persons deemed 'detrimental to the maintenance of peace and order'. Any 'agitators', including those with Section 10 rights, could be ordered to leave the urban area. Departmental approval for such action was no longer necessary.⁷⁵ The Department advised local authorities that the purpose of deportations was that 'the Native concerned should be given every possible opportunity to mend his ways'.⁷⁶ It remained the task of the City Councils to determine whether an offender had indeed 'mended his ways'.

In April 1954, the Township Manager suggested that the Department of Native Affairs be asked to remove the ANC leaders, Mr. Lengisi and Mr. Gwentshe, from the location. The City Council approved

⁷² Manager's report to NAC, 27 April 1954.

⁷³ Minutes of NAC meeting, 21 May 1954.

⁷⁴ Manager's report to Town Clerk, 5 August 1954. It appears that the meeting had been a very sociable affair - a band and choir provided music, ANC emblems were sold, and collections were made.

⁷⁵ DNA circular to all local authorities, 15 September 1956.

⁷⁶ R.E. Pretorius, 'Banishment' (1987), p. 3.

this suggestion.⁷⁷

The Township Manager remained sceptical about the likelihood of them 'mending their ways'. In 1956, the Native Commissioner informed the Town Clerk that Mr. Gwentshe's had 'acknowledged the error of his former ways and that he is prepared to co-operate with the authorities in future'.⁷⁸ The Manager remained unconvinced. He maintained that Gwentshe had been in correspondence with the local ANC, and that he had been elected president in absentia. The Manager's attitude illustrated the power of coercive paternalism, especially when it is based on the intense familiarity of local contact:

'The return of Gwentshe to East London... leaves nothing to imagination. We in East London have known Gwentshe somewhat longer than the Department of Native Affairs and it will take something more than just a mere acknowledgement from Gwentshe to convince this office that he has seen the error of his ways. In fact, he has "seen the error of his ways" on many an occasion before today and whilst there is comparative calm in the location it is felt that Gwentshe's return should be very strongly opposed'.⁷⁹

A similar correspondence took place about the future of Joel Lengisi. In 1958, Lengisi appealed to the Secretary of Native Affairs for permission to return to East London. The pathos of his letter was unmistakable:

'Sir, you will recall that since I was banished from East London in July 1954 I have never earned a living ... I have suffered irreparable and untold harm ... During Sir, my period of banishment, I was very loyal to the authorities and I promise to do so even in future. Sir, I wish to inform you that my belongings and financial matters have been ruined in East London, and I earnestly appeal to you, Sir, to allow me to join my former employment. I am fully prepared, Sir,

⁷⁷ Manager's report to NAC, 27 April 1954.

⁷⁸ Letter from Native Commissioner to Town Clerk, 28 September 1956, quoted in Town Clerk's report to NAC, 6 November 1956.

⁷⁹ Quoted in Town Clerk's report to NAC, 6 November 1956.

to abide by any undertaking you give ... '.⁸⁰

Once again, the Manager remained sceptical. He claimed that Lengisi was still in contact with the ANC. The Township Manager was supported by the Native Commissioner, Mr. Pike: 'Personally, I am opposed to Lengisi returning to East London as his mere presence here will strengthen the African National Congress'.⁸¹ In the light of our analysis of paternalism in Chapter Three, this statement well illustrates the ease with which 'pure' paternalism (directed solely at the subject's own good) can slide into 'impure' paternalism (directed at the community's welfare).

It must be remembered that the officials' attitude towards political opposition was not shaped by the ANC's activities only. Patriarchalism was an automatic and spontaneous paradigm, reinforced by many other day-to-day events in the townships. For example, the East London leadership of the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU), had a comfortable patriarchal relationship with white officials. As the Secretary of the ICU wrote to the Township Manager,

'The late Mr. Clements Kadalie taught the members to fight for the rights of the members but at all times to respect and obey the laws of the country and the Government in power. We do not wish to go off from this clear path ... You are the local father of peace. We, as law-abiding citizens under you are, we think, entitled to your protection...'.⁸²

Compared with the respectful, imploring letters of the ICU, how could the ANC's approach not appear to be subversive and unreasonable? The Manager was concerned about the ordinary residents who might feel abused by the ANC:

⁸⁰ Letter from J. Lengisi to Secretary of DNA, 4 December 1957; quoted in Township Manager's report to NAC, April 1958.

⁸¹ Letter to Town Clerk, 7 March 1958; Quoted in Manager's report to NAC, April 1958.

⁸² Letter to Superintendent, 1 May 1957; quoted in Manager's report to NAC, March 1958.

'... For the first time in two years the residents have now come forward and have voiced their opinions and have opposed the African National Congress. Should the African National Congress be allowed to have the congress here it would be tantamount to siding with them, and that after the battle by the residents for a period of more than two years to gain some ground without the fear of prejudice'⁸³.

In evaluating the Manager's political and moral judgement, we should ask whether the Manager, in the light of the information at his disposal, had sufficient grounds for his interpretation of the situation - or did he yield to unreasonable prejudices, which caused him to bypass all contrary evidence? If we give Mr. Venter the benefit of the doubt, we would assume that he was in possession of ~~some~~ evidence which made him believe that the ANC was not universally supported in Duncan Village. In the light of this assumption, we can go some way towards evaluating the quality of his decisions.

Three implications follow from this assumption. First, at the level of **ethical life**, Mr. Venter believed that most black residents did not fundamentally challenge the white patriarchy. This would tempt him to give some forms of evidence much greater credence than others. For example, he would regard the Advisory Board as a more suitable representative of black opinion than the ANC. In terms of Mr. Venter's notions of the urban community, any challenge to patriarchalism was a challenge to his entire conception of citizenship and the social order. An entire system of social identity was at stake. For Mr. Venter, full and individualistic political rights for blacks were not compatible with a civilised urban polity. Mr. Venter's actions should be judged, then, against his conception of the ethical whole, and of the rights and obligations appropriate to its members.

However, a second implication of our assumption is that Mr. Venter's assumptions about ethical life cannot be allowed to

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Township Manager's report to Town Clerk, 17 May 1954.

totally excuse any errors in judgement. Individual actions cannot be reduced to social determinism. In this context, we should note that the emergence of the militant ANC, as well as the increasingly politicised Advisory Board, indicated that the educated black elite was developing a sense of individual rights. This, in turn, implied some kind of non-racial moral community, in which people's identity as individuals counted for more than their racial or traditional identities. Consequently, for at least some Duncan Village residents, Mr. Venter's coercive paternalism was not experienced as paternalism at all. It was experienced as hurtful and offensive, without any ultimate benefit to black residents. Some residents attempted to bring these new views to Mr. Venter's notice; but the latter showed little inclination to listen. Mr. Venter's unsympathetic treatment of deportees indicates a weak judgement about what was happening in Duncan Village. While we may assume that Mr. Venter attempted to act morally, he did not act as wisely as his situation demanded. A more tolerant approach to township activism may well have had beneficial results, such as better inter-racial understanding in East London.

A third implication of our claim regarding Mr. Venter's 'good faith' is that the use of a measure of coercion and ruthlessness may well seem reasonable to those engaged in political action. As Stuart Hampshire recognized, political seriousness concerns seriousness about the use of power and the successful implementation of policy. In politics, actors may legitimately consider the ends to justify the means, and a degree of Machiavellianism becomes appropriate. The exact degree, of course, is highly debatable, and would require extensive inquiry in each historical case. Mr. Venter may well have felt that the maintenance of the existing moral order in a situation of social dislocation was of such overriding importance that it justified coercion.

Such an argument would not be a priori unreasonable. It could be argued that the weak aspect in Mr. Venter's conduct was not

his willingness to use coercion, but that he misunderstood the trends of history - viz. that the patriarchal order was increasingly anachronistic in the cities, and that individual rights was a normal consequence of Westernisation and modernity. Hence the white authorities would have to use increasing doses of coercion to keep the shell of the patriarchal order intact, without it having much real resonance in the lives of African residents themselves. As far as Mr. Venter's actions indicate such a prospect, his actions indicated a political and moral miscalculation on a grand scale.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the latent ambiguities of the patriarchal ethical order were illustrated with reference to the position of 'Native Advisory Boards'. Despite white officials' attempts to introduce modern forms of governance in the townships, not much was achieved. Instead, Advisory Boards functioned within the essentially pre-modern patriarchal ethical order, which produced a complex, intuitive and informal system of reciprocal power and powerlessness between the white city fathers and African leaders.

Such a system may well have lasted indefinitely, were it not for the pressures of modernisation building up in urban townships. A growing African elite subscribed to a notion of equal political rights, which encouraged them to become politically articulate. This threw the patriarchal system into disarray, for many of the white city fathers were unable to accept this notion of Africans' subjectivity. A latent tension in patriarchalism, viz. the confusion between needs and wishes, became an overt and chronic moral problem. Some officials attempted to deal with this problem by employing 'liberal' or permissive forms of paternalism, while others preferred to resort to coercive paternalism.

In East London, the intensification of African politicisation caused key officials to choose the latter option. The chapter

argued that their conduct was indeed based on choice, and that they had sufficient evidence to consider alternative forms of conduct. In this way, we can evaluate the quality of individual officials' judgement, even while noting that they operated within a specific conception of ethical life. In the case of East London officials, their failure to make significant attempts to understand the rationale for African activism illustrates their weak political judgement.

In the next chapter, we will address these issues with even greater historical specificity, by considering the attempts by the East London City Council to introduce a municipal beer monopoly, against the wishes of African residents.

CHAPTER SIXPATRIARCHAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN THE 1950S
THE INTRODUCTION OF MUNICIPAL BEER TRADING

The introduction of beer trading by the East London municipality during the 1950s is a useful illustration of patriarchal relationships and the political morality of paternalism in an urban context.

In this chapter, the following themes will be addressed:

1. First, a brief overview of the historical background to the beer trading issue, as well as the approaches in the historical literature, will be provided;
2. Then three main themes which informed debates surrounding beer production will be explored, viz. (1) the introduction of beer trading as a response to problems of modernity and discipline; (2) the role of cultural difference, tradition and community boundaries as patriarchalist justifications for municipal beer trading; and (3) the question of morality, paternalism and the issue of profit-making;
3. Next, we will consider the ways in which these debates informed the East London City Council's attempts to introduce municipal beer trading in the 1950s. It was a long and bitter episode characterised by the white city fathers' paternalistic motives; the Advisory Board's simultaneous acceptance of patriarchal authority and rejection of paternalistic coercion; and the complex power relations which prevailed between the City Council and the Board.

4. Finally, we will consider the issue of Africans' consumption of 'European' liquor, to illustrate the ways in which a proto-liberal consciousness increasingly informed the actions of white officials.

A. The question of municipal beer production in the history of South African cities: Perspectives in the literature

The first steps to institute municipal beer trading were taken in Natal. In 1908, the Beer Act was passed in Pietermaritzburg and Durban, prohibiting the domestic brewing of 'Kaffir Beer'. The towns were granted the monopoly to manufacture and sell traditional beer in their jurisdictions.¹

The Natives (Urban Areas) Act of 1923 introduced three provisions regarding the production and consumption of beer: (1) Liquor other than 'kaffir beer' was not permitted in locations'; (2)

Domestic brewing could be authorised or refused by the local authority, but domestic brewing for sale was not allowed; and (3) If domestic brewing gave rise to problems, the local authority could obtain permission from the Minister to set up a monopoly for manufacture and sale.²

The dynamics surrounding the beer issue have been analysed in a highly uneven way in the historical literature. One common theme has been the local authorities' financial gain as the main factor in their desire to introduce municipal beer production. In terms of the Natives (Urban Areas) Act of 1923, municipalities were required to keep separate Native Revenue Accounts, into

¹. From Mayor's Minute, Durban, 1922; quoted by N.G. Meyer, 'The liquor laws affecting the Bantu', paper delivered at a Symposium entitled 'Drankverskaffing en die Bantoe' (SABRA, April 1957), p. 2.

² T.R.H. Davenport, 'The triumph of Colonel Stallard: The transformation of the Natives (Urban Areas) Act between 1923 and 1937' (South African Historical Journal, No. 2, November 1970), p. 79.

which revenue contributed by location residents would be paid. According to the principles of Stallardism, the subsidisation of the NRA by white ratepayers was discouraged. This system of financing was retrogressive, because it prevented the subsidisation of 'locations' by white ratepayers, thus locking the 'locations' into the straitjacket of existing black poverty. The result was that municipalities had to find adequate sources of revenue from within the black community itself. Hence local authorities were always looking for new sources of finance. In this regard, a precedent was set by the Durban Corporation, which had reaped huge profits from municipal beer trading since 1908.³

However, the logic of the municipalities' position has not been adequately explored in the literature. Historians have usually analysed it in terms of a crudely-defined notion of 'interests'. Iain Edwards, for example, blandly asserts that the Durban City Council, 'despite a critical housing shortage, was allocating large sums from Native Revenue to erect beerhalls'.⁴ No reasons are given for the Council's decision in this regard. In Julian Cohen's analysis of the municipal campaign against beer brewing in Benoni during the 1930s, the beer issue is linked to that of influx control. According to Cohen, the Council regarded unattached women as a source of crime and disease. The Council attempted to destroy beer-brewing, which was their main source of livelihood, in the hope that they would then be forced to

³ See, for example, R.J. Randall, 'Some reflections on the financial policy of certain municipalities towards the natives within their boundaries' (South African Journal of Economics, vol. 7, no. 2, 1939) p. 11; P. la Hausse, 'The message of the warriors: The ICU, the labouring poor and the making of a popular political culture in Durban, 1925-1930', in P. Bonner et al (eds), Holding their Ground (1989), p. 20.

⁴ I. Edwards, 'Swing the assegai peacefully? "New Africa", Mkhumbane, the co-operative movement and attempts to transform Durban society in the late 1940s', in P. Bonner et al. (eds), Holding Their Ground (1989), p. 71.

leave the location.⁵ Similarly, Eales refers to the Johannesburg municipal officials' concern with the crime and prostitution which always seemed to be associated with beer-brewing.⁶

A second theme in the historical literature draws on the 'history from below' approach, and looks at the sentiments of township dwellers regarding beer. For example, Julian Cohen's study of Benoni during the 1930s mentions that 'beer brewing became a source of revenue and [beer consumption] an avenue of escape'.⁷ Kathy Eales mentions that beer production and consumption played an integral part in many African customs and ceremonies in the cities.⁸ According to Paul la Hausse, 'For the majority of workers the brewing of beer was both traditional and "a national right" of which women, in particular, had been deprived'.⁹ African resistance to municipal brewing is a common theme in the literature.¹⁰ The role of the Advisory Boards, caught between the local authorities and black residents, has only been cursorily handled in the literature.

In general, historians' insights regarding beer brewing have remained unintegrated, and their connections relatively

⁵ J. Cohen, 'Twatwa: The working class of Benoni during the 1930s' (African Perspective, no. 20, 1982), p. 91. Cohen provides no references to back up his claim.

⁶ K. Eales, 'Patriarchs, passes and privilege' (1989), p. 111.

⁷ J. Cohen, 'Twatwa' (1982), p. 82.

⁸ K. Eales, 'Patriarchs, passes and privilege' (1989), pp. 109-111.

⁹ P. la Hausse, 'The message of the warriors: The ICU, the labouring poor and the making of a popular political culture in Durban, 1925-1930', in P. Bonner et. al. (eds.), Holding their Ground (1989); pp. 36, 43.

¹⁰ For example, P. la Hausse, 'The message of the warriors' (1989), pp. 35-8; I Edwards, 'Swing the assegai peacefully?' (1989), p. 71; and J. Cohen, 'Twatwa' (1982), p. 91.

unexplored. Most notably, the motivations of the City Councils are usually presented very one-dimensionally, thus losing sight of the intense debates and contradictory sentiments which characterised the positions of all the parties. This chapter will attempt to synthesise and elaborate on these insights, in order to highlight the issues of the development of modernity and 'discipline' in the cities, the ambiguities of the urban community (or 'ethical life') during the 1950s, and the nature of paternalistic moral action in perplexing situations.

It will be argued that the question of controlling beer production was broached by white Councillors in the hope that they could enforce some decency in township conditions, exert some control, and finance township improvements - in sum, motivations which we can characterise as an impulse to exert a modern form of 'discipline'. Such ideals were defined as being in the interests of the African residents themselves, and hence it was justifiable to white Councillors in terms of paternalistic intervention in the lives of African residents.

However, as we argued in earlier chapters, the parameters of the urban patriarchal ethical order were still unclear. African opposition to municipal beer production had available to it some moral leverage, and in the case of East London, the Advisory Board played its cards so well that it caused chronic disagreements in the ranks of the white city fathers. In consequence, the white officials' ultimate victory did not only take a whole decade to achieve, but when it eventually materialised, it was highly circumscribed.

B. Municipal beer production as a contribution to social discipline

A very common view amongst local officials was that domestic beer brewing contributed to social distress. For example, the Native Affairs Manager of Johannesburg concluded, after a lengthy study tour through several South African cities, that home-brewing

contributed to social problems. It promoted an influx of visitors into the locations at weekends, with the effect that crime increased and the 'peace and quiet of residents were seriously impaired'. Since homeowners were officially allowed to produce a certain amount of beer per resident, home-brewing encouraged householders to take in sub-tenants in order to increase the quota of beer for the household; and this led to overcrowding of houses. Furthermore, 'domestic brewing does not remove the incentive to illegal brewing, but acts as a cloak to it', and produced a 'deterioration in health, morals and crime'.¹¹ Furthermore, according to a prominent advocate of municipal beer production, Dr. Bang, the 'illicit sale of this beverage, with its adulterations' was often accompanied by prostitution, and the use of children as touts for customers. 'What an education for a child!', he exclaimed during his IANA address in 1956.¹²

Mr. Buitendag of Germiston provided a detailed critique of domestic production: (a) Control over quantity, quality or alcoholic content was impossible; (b) The alcoholic content of 'kaffir beer' and 'other concoctions' was usually several times higher than that of beer brewed by urban local authorities; (c) Beer was brewed under unhygienic conditions¹³; (d) The presence

¹¹ Report by Mr. L. J. Venables to Johannesburg City Council (1948), quoted by S.F. Kingsley, 'Drankverskaffing deur Munisipaliteite', in SABRA, Drankverskaffing (1957), pp. 20-1.

¹² Paper read at IANA Annual Conference Proceedings (1956).

¹³ Dr. Buitendag had reason to be concerned. A study by an East London surgeon, Dr. R.J.W. Burrell, publicised a paper entitled "Oesophical cancer in the Bantu", in which he correlated cancer to consumption of illicit liquor. Shebeen queens wanted to produce a narcotic draught which would produce a quietening semi-anaesthesia in the consumer, but also pass off sufficiently quickly to induce him to drink more. The shebeen queens used 44-gallon drums, previously used by the oil refineries to distribute cut-down petroleum asphalt. The drums were used to brew a mixture of domestic beer, baker's yeast, crude carbide, liquid metal polish and damaged or mouldy fruit. This combination contained a high level of carcinogens.

of large numbers of males living under single conditions encouraged the commercialisation of kaffir beer, and if supplied by liquor queens, the price was several times that charged by local authorities; (e) 'Natives congregate[d] at liquor dens, and fights, assaults, disturbances and immorality usually [took] place at such drinking parties'; (f) 'Very often Natives land[ed] up in hospital at the expense of the European taxpayer after drinking some of the homemade kaffir beer or concoctions'; and (g) 'The S.A. Police [had] on numerous occasions expressed themselves against home brewing'.

In contrast to prohibitionist controls on 'European liquor', municipal officials did not advocate prohibitions on beer **consumption**, but on alcohol **production**. The proposal to institute municipal brewing was part of a reformist and disciplinary impulse. The 1941 Commission of Enquiry, for example, advocated 'The increase of sympathetic and efficient control of the urban Natives by the employment of competent and experienced municipal officials'¹⁴. The Commission's report also stated that 'while there is an expressed preference by Natives for the system of domestic brewing, such a system cannot meet the requirements of all Natives in the Municipal area'. Dr. Bang of Pietermaritzburg was convinced that a municipal monopoly in beer production would remedy these evils. He maintained that Durban's municipal brewing system 'has resulted in a very marked decrease in crime; and shebeening - once the greatest trouble confronting the Police - has, in towns, practically ceased'.¹⁵ He quoted the 1942 Commission report to the effect that the cultivation of a 'healthy, congenial and peaceful conditions' in beer halls 'would sustain the interests of the Natives during their leisure hours'. The beer halls would also provide 'a hygienic and pure beverage'.

¹⁴ Quoted by Dr. Bang, IANA Annual Conference Proceedings (1956), p.66.

¹⁵ Dr. Bang, IANA Annual Conference Proceedings (1956), quoting the Mayor's Minute, Durban City Council, 1922.

These arguments for enhancing the welfare of Africans inevitably provided for the extension of state powers into civil society and private life. However, it would be wrong to dismiss officials' arguments simply as convenient fabrications to enable them to extend their power. To any observer, the evidence of social decay in the townships was undeniable. The officials interpreted the problem in ways that made the most intuitive sense. They were struck by the fact that black residents were apparently exploited by ruthless shebeen owners, leading to extensive suffering and moral decay. A responsible local government was morally obliged to intervene.

This view was reinforced by the evidence of sophisticated research on the topic. At the 1956 IANA conference, a Dr. Schwartz spoke at length about the research conducted in modern ways of producing traditional beer.¹⁶ He expressed his appreciation for IANA's support of research of 'kaffircorn malting and kaffir brewing' at the Council for Social and Industrial Research, where a 'Kaffir Beer Fellowship' had been established. Research was being conducted on various topics, such as the quality of kaffircorn malt, the nutritional value of kaffir beer, the development of dispensing meters, and appropriate tankers for the transport of beer. In 1955, a 'Technical Committee for Kaffir Beer Research' had been established, consisting of representatives of local authorities, Chambers of Commerce, and the Departments of Native Affairs and Agriculture. It operated under the patronage of IANA.¹⁷

Due to these efforts, significant results were obtained. New stainless steel drums speeded up the brewing period. Using this

¹⁶ Paper entitled "Current research on Kaffir Beer at the South African Council for Scientific and Industrial Research", IANA Annual Conference Proceedings (1956), pp. 70-78.

¹⁷ I.P. Ferreira, Township Manager of Vereeniging, 'Die brou en verskaffing van kafferbier, met spesiale verwysing na moderne tendense', in SABRA, Drankverskaffing (1957), p. 12.

technology, local authorities could double their production and reduce costs. Lectures on all aspects of the industry were given to municipal staff by CSIR experts, and an examination board tested the capabilities of municipal brewers.

This display of scientific rigour made a great impression on the municipal officials at the 1956 IANA Conference, eccentric as some of it may appear to us today. It also points to a more fundamental characteristic of modernising societies, viz. the overriding importance accorded scientific knowledge. The officials drew moral succour from the fact that highly qualified experts in responsible research institutes were producing a high-quality, nutritious beer. Compared to officials' visions of modern, gleaming, hygienic brewing plants, producing a steady flow of high-quality beverage, the shebeen queens' grubby gallon drums represented a nightmare of primitiveness and squalor. For officials groping towards modernity, the issue did not seem as petty or absurd as it may seem to contemporary historians. It was part of a modernising spirit that was sweeping the country - a spirit which, even now, dominates our lives.

The emphasis on centrally guided research and expertise also eliminated another policy alternative, viz. the establishment of formal beer halls by black entrepreneurs. According to Mr. Buitendag, it was extremely doubtful whether township residents would have sufficient financial resources to establish and equip a brewery and beer hall: '[G]eneral experience has taught us that the usual Native business man is scarcely competent to run any type of business let alone a specialised business such as the manufacture and sale of kaffir beer'.¹⁸ Hence the inequality of access to scientific knowledge reinforced paternalism as a form of moral reasoning, for the employment of useful knowledge justified interventions, prescriptions and prohibitions in the lives of less qualified individuals.

¹⁸

Memorandum by Mr. Buitendag, in East London Township Manager's report to NAC, 6 November 1956.

This left two main policy options, each with a different configuration of control and rights, viz. (1) a municipal monopoly; and (2) a dual system of beer production, permitting both municipal and domestic brewing. The latter option could exist with or without a permit system for domestic producers.

These two different policy alternatives involved different kinds of intervention in people's lives. The former lent itself to a more coercive form of paternalism, while the latter allowed greater scope for individual liberty. The choice was not an easy one. Even Dr. Bang, who had researched the topic in detail, felt ambivalent about it. On the one hand,

'A municipal monopoly would do away with a great deal of unpleasantness and would create better relationships between the residents and the Police. Domestic brewing cannot be left uncontrolled, and it is a constant source of annoyance to the residents to be visited by the Police ... This friction would be avoided if there were no domestic brewing but a municipal off-sales supply ...'¹⁹.

On the other hand, Dr. Bang was also prepared to concede the advantages of a more permissive system, in which the beer hall system could run concurrently with domestic brewing. He claimed that the introduction of municipal beer halls would benefit certain special categories of residents, most notably the 'unattached Native, and the busy or lazy householders', who would be able to get beer easily and legally.

Each option represented an attempt to impose some kind of systematic control on a situation which appeared to be getting out of hand. However, the postulated controls tended to be self-defeating, since they were very difficult to implement effectively. Whatever system was implemented, some form of domestic activity was still outlawed, requiring local officials to inspect and police households' behaviour. On the one hand, the licensed domestic production of beer entailed numerous

¹⁹ IANA Annual Conference Proceedings (1956), p. 69.

administrative difficulties: it would be virtually impossible to withdraw licenses once issued; adulteration of beer could not be prevented; and it would be unlikely that income from township revenue would cover the expense of effective control measures. On the other hand, a municipal monopoly would present other problems. Control of domestic beer production involved control of the supply of the necessary ingredients²⁰, and local authorities would have to control black residents' access to sprouted grain. The stipulation of new misdemeanours led to a proliferation of new ones.

Furthermore, municipal distribution of beer was not an easy matter. IANA delegates raised the possibility of 'congestion' at beer halls. According to Mr. Meyer of Kimberley,

'Here we are faced with the question of congestion and the large concentration of many people at one spot where they are all to be served at the Beerhall. This makes control very difficult'.²¹

For IANA officials, however, the persistent problems of control in a municipal monopoly system were small in comparison to the benefits of the system, especially when combined with all the scientific resources provided by Westernisation and modernity.

C. Beer production and the patriarchal order: Arguments pertaining to cultural differences

Significantly, no-one advocated total prohibition of beer consumption. This was due to officials' awareness of the important place of traditional beer under African 'tribal custom', and the topic readily lent itself to exercises in amateur anthropology amongst white officials. For example, Dr. Bang maintained that, 'among primitive people, custom was the binding force necessary for the well-being and solidarity of a

²⁰ Dr. Bang, IANA Annual Conference Proceedings (1956), p. 67.

²¹ IANA Annual Conference Proceedings (1956), p. 76.

tribe'. The use of proper rituals in the manufacture of beer was of religious significance.²² Mr. Meyer of Kimberley referred extensively to the various Zulu social rituals where beer played a large role, while Mr. Buitendag of Germiston stated that 'one cannot help but be impressed with the significance this beverage played in their tribal tradition'.²³

The argument for the importance of traditional customs entailed, in effect, that blacks, qua traditional natives, had a right to consume beer. According to Mr. Buitendag, 'The beliefs and customs which centre around [beer] have had and continue to have a remarkable influence and significance even today and it is extremely doubtful whether they could ever be weaned from this tradition or whether any substitute could ever take its place in Native life and custom'.²⁴ (As we will elaborate below, the recognition of this right would have two important implications: first, it was avidly defended by officials who wanted to reap beer profits for their Native Revenue Accounts; and second, it gave the Advisory Boards some common ground with the Council which they used quite successfully to confound the Council's arguments).

Since all parties accepted the notion of Africans' customary right to drink beer, the debate then centered around who should supply it in a way most suited to that custom.

On the one hand, Dr. Bang argued that municipalities should have a monopoly on beer provision, since the traditional constraints on beer production and consumption were no longer effective. In the traditional order, 'Tribal sanctions and training prevented over-indulgence ... Now that these sanctions have fallen away,

²² Dr. Bang, IANA Annual Conference Proceedings (1956), pp. 61-3.

²³ Memorandum, included in East London Township Manager's report to NAC, 6 November 1956.

²⁴ Memorandum by Mr. Buitendag, in Township Manager's report to NAC, 6 November 1956.

some deterrent is essential - hence the very irksome but necessary statutory control measures of today'.²⁵

The argument from 'tribal custom' could, however, be used to argue against municipal monopolies. According to Mr. Taljaard of Alberton, certain religious rituals which involved the consumption of beer would only be practiced if beer was produced at home.²⁶ To incline people to do this illegally would expose them to the risk of prosecution, and this might provoke rebellion and unrest in urban areas. In fact, Mr. Taljaard came close to rejecting municipal beer production altogether. His frustration consisted in that IANA members constantly made questionable assumptions about 'native customs', without inquiring further what these customs really meant in modern townships. Research into such spiritual issues should receive priority, he claimed. His argument was a strongly moral one: 'If [IANA] could subsidize research into the best methods of beer brewing, the best types of meters, the best kinds of beermugs, how much more important are the human and spiritual dimensions of the issue!'. His suggestion was not heeded.

Mr. Taljaard's views illustrated a crucial tension in the arguments of advocates of municipal beer production. On the one hand, the consumption of beer by black residents was justified on the grounds of traditional custom; on the other, officials were proposing to supply this beer in a modern, controlled way that conflicted with such customs. It was clear that many officials earnestly subscribed to both propositions, in order to reconcile Africans' right to consume with the municipalities' right to produce. In the process, they found themselves resorting to all kinds of mental gymnastics.

The fundamental problem was that officials, relying on habitual

²⁵ Address, IANA Annual Conference Proceedings (1956), pp. 61-3.

²⁶ IANA Annual Conference Proceedings (1956), pp. 78-9.

forms of argument, visualised Africans' right to consume beer within the framework of African customary rights, instead of modern individual rights.²⁷ The imbroglio over beer production illustrates the extent to which officials were still trapped in pre-modern notions of authority and social structure. It was their intuitive view that Africans were still 'tribal' in some undefined way. The central question was about Africans' place in the modern urban community. It was always unclear which 'tribal' practices should be prohibited and which should be permitted. If they were still 'tribal' in a very real sense, should their traditions be allowed to override the officials' conception of their material welfare? Was tradition or modern conceptions of welfare paramount? If they conflicted, which one should be abandoned? (And significantly, if traditions were abandoned, what would it imply for official rationales for urban segregation in general?)

The local officials had not explored the significance of the fact that the 'natives' were becoming rather like the Europeans. Something had to be done about the 'social evils' which afflicted urban Africans, but the ambiguities of the patriarchal order offered little guidance on the appropriate remedies. In retrospect, we can interpret the increasing need to superimpose municipal controls on the rapidly crumbling traditional ones as a forlorn attempt to combat the painful symptoms of social transition, without understanding the ways in which the nature of the urban community was changing.

²⁷

This was ironic, for it would have been fairly easy to justify municipal production of beer on the grounds of modern governmental practice. It could be argued that no modern society can allow private citizens to distill potent forms of liquor on their residential premises - especially if it is produced for sale! Such restrictions on production would have been quite compatible with individuals' rights to consume what they liked.

D. To profit or not to profit?: Paternalistic moral conduct versus financial need

It is remarkable how important it was to municipal officials and Councillors that the entire issue of beer production be addressed from a moral perspective. For example, at the 1955 IANA conference, Dr. Bourquin from Durban claimed that 'A local authority's responsibility does not begin and end with its legal responsibility; it is under a moral responsibility in regard to all needs and grievances which arise within its area'.²⁸ Similarly, Dr. Bang began his 1956 IANA paper by posing the question: 'What is the right thing from an ethical point of view?'.²⁹

Dr. Bang maintained that 'apart from the material benefits accruing to natives through the Municipal supply of kaffir beer, there were the indirect benefits', such as the following: (a) It would ensure a standard quality, and latest developments in 'kaffir beer research' would be applied; (b) Since profit would not be the first consideration, the consumer would get the beverage at a price well within his means; (c) Control over supply and consumption would prevent 'excessive over-indulgence with the resultant benefit to the peace of the community'; (d) Beer halls would provide places where Natives could eat and drink according to their social customs; and (e) It would strengthen family life by reducing the attractions of shebeens.

In sum, the entire question of finding an appropriate way of imposing a modern disciplinary order on the seemingly chaotic circumstances of the locations involved questions of moral actions on the part of officials. There was general agreement amongst IANA municipal officials that municipal beer production was a positive measure, since controls would benefit the African

²⁸ 'Report of Judicial Commission on Native Affairs in Durban' (1947); Quoted by Mr. Bourquin, IANA Annual Conference Proceedings (1954), p. 91.

²⁹ IANA Annual Conference Proceedings (1956), p. 61.

urban community. Once again, however, this produced intractable moral dilemmas. Justifying a municipal beer monopoly in the face of 'native custom' was difficult enough. But this still left the uncomfortable moral issue of profitability.

In practice, the Native Revenue Account of most townships usually faced a deficit. There were four main ways of responding to the need for desperately needed facilities in the African townships, viz. (1) by raising rentals, (2) by drawing on local authorities' General Rates Accounts, (3) by ignoring the problem, or (4) by introducing municipal beer sales. The first and third options would exacerbate the problem of black poverty³⁰; large-scale subsidisation via whites' General Accounts was politically unthinkable; this left the municipal beer hall option.

According to Section 19 of the Natives (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act of 1945, all monies received by an urban local authority from the sale of beer had to be credited to a sub-account of the Native Revenue Account, called the 'Kaffir Beer Account'. The profits could be used for social and recreational facilities, on social welfare, on subsidising losses on sub-economic housing schemes, or on providing for capital works.³¹

It is significant, however, that the moral question was always

³⁰ Dr. Bang posed the question, 'Where would the funds come from for such amenities as social centres, sports grounds, clinics, health services, old age homes, grants-in-aid to charitable organisations?'. Furthermore, he said, 'It would be a terrific hardship on the great majority of Natives were they required to pay a fully economic rent on the existing type of housing in many locations'. IANA Annual Conference Proceedings (1956), p. 68.

³¹ S.F. Kingsley, 'Drankverskaffing deur Munisipaliteite', in SABRA, Drankverskaffing (1957), p.22. According to Mr. Kingsley, Pretoria Municipality had spent money on creches, furnishings for a community centre, new sportsfields, youth education, and leisure activities.

at the forefront, indicating a deeply-felt anxiety about the morally decent course of action. It was a question concerning the moral responsibility of the white community towards their black neighbourhoods. In what way were whites financially responsible for the material welfare of blacks? If **controls** could be justified on the grounds of paternalistic benevolence, was this not then implicitly an argument for paternalistic **subsidies**? Mr. Meyer of Kimberley came the closest to this problem when he asked,

'...If profits on the sale of kaffir beer vanish completely, where must the revenue be derived from to balance the budget, to off-set losses on housing, losses in the reduction of rentals, and expenditure on works or services connected with a location, native village or hostel? Must it be borne by the ratepayers, or the residents of the locations, well knowing their economic position?'.³²

What made the beer issue so difficult was that municipal beer sales would not be **an addition to**, but a **substitute for**, a local authority subsidy on expenditure in the townships. All the arguments that beer is nutritious, or is a normal part of black custom, or that a municipal monopoly would have the side-effect of removing social evils, could not obviate the fact that revenue for ameliorating appalling location conditions would have to come from the pockets of desperately poor communities themselves. The thought of financing urgently needed facilities from the hard-earned income of desperately poor people, spending their limited free time at rowdy communal beer halls, was a prospect many municipal officials balked at. Again, the latent question was - Are 'natives' part of our community? If so, are we simply responsible for maintaining law and order, or are we responsible for improving their condition? And if so, does this morally require sacrifices on the part of the white community?³³

³² IANA minutes, Annual Conference Proceedings (1956), pp. 77-8.

³³ A Letter to the Editor in the Daily Dispatch (11 May 1961) summed up this moral dilemma perfectly: 'East London locations are a disgrace to the city ... If we

We will argue that this anxiety existed, because of a constant tension between different perspectives of the proper form of ethical life that should prevail. The financial question invoked, not only two different notions of patriarchy, but also the beginnings of a modern, individualist moral consciousness.

Let us first consider the patriarchal heritage. If the urban African community was seen as a traditional enclave within a white city, whose traditions should be maintained as a bulwark against the hazards of modern city life, then the city fathers had important obligations towards Africans. It was the moral code of the stronger towards the weaker, of the protector towards the frail, the patriarch towards the child. This issue has remained unexplored in the revisionist and neo-revisionist literature on urban studies. While many historians have recognised the possibilities for exploitation which lurked within traditionalist paternalism, there was another logic which was felt equally powerfully - the moral logic of protection. In terms of this logic, the white community should go out of its way to make life easier for the African community; by implication, therefore, it should assist and subsidise township development. Many officials intuitively shared these sentiments, and spent long hours and much effort in pursuit of this cause.

However, the specific nature of these obligations was unclear.

Officials' inability to really determine their moral obligations arose from an inherited baggage of unexamined policy principles concerning financial relations in the cities. Since 1923, the principle of financial separation between whites and Africans in the cities had been justified by a Stallardist version of patriarchy. According to Stallardism, Africans' presence in the

are not prepared to direct the profits from kafir beer sales in the locations ... to a good cause, that is to say, the provision of amenities for the Natives, then we are left with the moral duty of either financing, permanently, the running of soup kitchens and milk bars in each of the three East London locations, or of instructing the Municipality to institute these amenities - and of paying higher rates'.

towns could be justified only in so far as they served white people's needs. This notion of patriarchalism, as we saw in Chapter Four, emphasised the rural destiny of blacks in South Africa. Whites had very little responsibility whatever for the welfare of Africans in the cities. (Whites' paternalistic responsibilities should, instead, be exercised in the 'tribal' areas). Dr. Bang expressed this view of patriarchy, when he maintained that 'I doubt whether any local authority would be prepared to contribute to such amenities from its general rates'.

By the 1950's, this version of patriarchalism did not make much sense any more. Social and economic conditions had changed. For one thing, the permanence of blacks in the cities became ever more likely; for another, the Native Revenue Accounts were chronically in deficit. However, by the 1950's, municipal officials had become so accustomed to the idea of financial separation between town and township³⁴ that it would have required an entire revolution in morality to justify its opposite. In towns such as East London, the NRA was being subsidised annually by the white community on an ad hoc basis. Such stop-gap measures were technically against government policy, which was still based on financial separatism.

The municipal officials were caught in a contradiction bequeathed to them by history. On the one hand, conditions in locations were deteriorating rapidly, and township managers were daily confronted by black misery. Yet on the other hand, the obvious solution, viz. subsidisation by the white community, involved too radical a challenge to their intuitively held notions of community boundaries and moral relations between whites and Africans. Whereas the subsidisation of the poor was an accepted principle **within the white community**, the subsidisation of black locations had no explicit political or moral appeal. In fact,

³⁴ The only officially-recognized form of subsidisation was the Native Services Levy payable by white employers, but this could only be used for infrastructure in the establishment of new townships.

it would take another thirty years before such justifications were developed.³⁵

A genuinely moral discourse of modernity, of individual rights and obligations, under a government responsible to all individuals equally, had not developed in the consciousness of officials. Hence a curious equivocal paternalism informed their moral conduct. Officials were locked into an ambiguous patriarchalism, that sufficiently emphasised racial inequalities to justify paternalistic social **controls**, but not enough to justify paternalistic **financial assistance**.

The only way out of the dilemma seemed to look for new forms of finance from within the locations. Since black residents could not afford increased rentals or service charges, the only solution seemed to take over a commodity on which they were already spending a proportion of their income. It had to be a commodity supplied in the townships, as other products would entail competition with white firms, and private sector competition would then force prices down to a level where profits might dwindle to nothing.

The only viable solution was municipal beer production. Paternalistic controls would deliver revenue for social development and simultaneously a prohibition on competing household production would reduce some social evils. This muddled solution, which involved depriving a poverty-stricken community of its revenue in order that its poverty could be addressed, was the only one which accommodated the concurrent demands of social improvements and financial separation. Some of the officials, relieved to have any solution at all, passionately and publicly defended this logic. But there were other officials, who were troubled by a lurking but undefined

³⁵ The Regional Services Councils and the National Security Management System, both introduced in the early 1980s, were the first institutions to overtly channel revenue from white to African communities.

doubt ...

During the 1950s, the Department of Native Affairs itself had moral qualms about municipal beer production. For example, the Department opposed the financing of school buildings from beer profits, since it was felt that this usage would encourage Natives to consume more beer to increase profits, so that more schools could be provided, and so justify 'what actually is an evil':

'It is the policy of the Department to restrict kaffir beer profits to a minimum or to see that profits vanish completely. The only reason for allowing local authorities to sell kaffir beer is to combat the evils incidental to uncontrolled brewing and not to make a profit'.³⁶

Evidently, the public good of providing social amenities was not always so desirable as to legitimise extensive profit-making on alcohol consumption. For the DNA, municipal control of beer production would be justifiable primarily to curb the social evils of drinking. According to this view, any profits would strictly be a side-issue.

Certain municipal officials, however, had no such qualms. Dr. Bang and Mr. Buitendag argued that profit-making per se was legitimate, and important in its own right, because of the beneficial consequences of social spending. According to Mr. Buitendag, 'The municipal monopoly system can be an economic proposition and it is our contention that there is absolutely nothing morally wrong in making a profit, more especially when account is taken of the use to which such profits may be put and the fact that expenditure of such profits is under the control of the Minister'.³⁷

³⁶ Quoted in Dr. Bang's address, IANA Annual Conference Proceedings (1956), p. 68.

³⁷ Memorandum to East London City Council, contained in NAC minutes, 6 November 1956.

However, the moral defence of municipal beer brewing did not spring from patriarchal considerations alone. It also involved, in a convoluted way, the beginnings of a non-traditionalist, non-patriarchal, modern view of ethical life. This view was 'modern', in two senses: (1) It emphasised uniform individual rights and obligations; and (2) it envisaged governmental action as non-discriminatory and formally egalitarian.

Consider, for example, the arguments of Mr. Bourquin of Durban, a vocal advocate of municipal beer production:

'It is ... common knowledge that in present times one gets nothing for nothing. In some way or other we must pay for what we receive, and in the normal course of things someone makes a profit in the process'.³⁸

For Mr. Bourquin, it was just and fair that all individuals 'must pay for what they receive'. This claim is a modernist one, in that no special allowances should be made for ascriptive characteristics, such as race or cultural background.

Furthermore, Mr. Bourquin said,

'[K]affir beer .. is sold at a profit. [T]his point becomes objectionable apparently only for the reason that this profit is made by local authorities. If kaffir beer were a commercial commodity and the profits were made by commerce and industry in the normal course of their business, it is possible that no one would say anything about it....'³⁹

According to this line of reasoning, beer was a commodity like any other. For Mr. Bourquin, the principles of capitalistic profit-taking should apply to any producer. This argument, however, lost sight of the fact that under patriarchalism, the city fathers had previously assumed a special moral responsibility towards their charges - a responsibility which

³⁸ IANA Annual Conference Proceedings (1956), p. 79.

³⁹ IANA Conference Proceedings (1956), p. 79. For good measure, he added, 'If Nasser can nationalize the Suez Canal what reasons is [sic] there why our Government should not nationalize the liquor trade?'

transcended the selfish materialistic motives of profit-taking. Mr. Bourquin's argument becomes an ethic of crude materialism, a total departure from the patriarchal discourse of ethical life - although this did not stop Mr. Bourquin, on other occasions, from defending patriarchal controls on social evils!

Mr. Bourquin's reasoning shifted from one unexamined proposition to another:

'Why then is it immoral, unethical or unreligious [sic] to make a profit on kaffir beer, especially if that profit is used for the benefit of the community? The answer is that natives are so poor that they cannot even pay in full for their housing and social services. Why then is it not immoral and unethical that liquor should be available to those Europeans who also belong to the poorer classes and would find difficulty in housing and feeding themselves? Yet while European liquor has no food value at all, kaffir beer has such value. Why is it not immoral that there should be profits on the sale of such essential foods as bread, meat and milk especially if such profits remain in private hands?'

Why indeed! This statement contains several very different claims: (1) Since poor whites enjoyed the right to liquor, the same right should be recognised for poor blacks (a modern liberal claim); (2) profits on beer were as justifiable as profits on other nutritious commodities (a modern capitalistic claim); and (3) local authorities could justifiably control the market for blacks' own good (a paternalistic claim, based on patriarchal assumptions).

Mr. Bourquin's reasoning demonstrates the underlying confusion regarding the form of ethical life which governed the urban community. He hovered between a patriarchal ethic and an individualist modern ethic. He could not figure out whether African urban residents should be treated according to the norms of modernity applicable to whites, or whether special rights and obligations should prevail in their case.

The debate endlessly circled around a concealed moral question,

which no-one clearly articulated. If blacks were indeed 'different' because they were not fully 'civilised', then it seemed proper that they should be treated with 'special paternalistic concern. In terms of this argument, profit-making seemed morally offensive, as it constituted the economic exploitation of a weak and disadvantaged cultural group. On the other hand, if blacks were regarded as modern individuals, who should experience both the freedoms and the lack of protection of a system of individual rights, then profit-taking was surely legitimate. Ultimately, the many 'contradictions of community' were the real issues at stake. What were the proper boundaries of the urban community: Were the 'natives' part of the modern capitalistic urban community, or were they lesser citizens under the city fathers' patriarchal care?

E. The municipal beer hall debate in East London

The question of beer production and consumption in East London had always been a controversial affair. The City Council had banned domestic beer production in the location in 1937.⁴⁰ It was considered that the system of home brewing would give rise to very serious problems in industrial areas where a large proportion of the African working population consisted of unattached males.⁴¹ In the place of private beer production, the municipality attempted to take over the supply of beer.

The municipal beer hall was an unhappy experience for the Council, however, because it lacked the appropriate technology to produce beer on a large scale, and production remained uneconomical.⁴² The Town Clerk recalled that the beerhall was very unpopular amongst African residents. In 1947, the

⁴⁰. Town Clerk's report, 6 November 1956.

⁴¹. Ibid.

⁴² I.P. Ferreira, 'Die brou en verskaffing van kafferbier, met spesiale verwysing na moderne tendense', in SABRA, Drankverskaffing en die Bantoe (1957), p. 9.

municipality abandoned its brewery. Township residents were again permitted to brew their own beer, and permits were issued to householders for the brewing of four gallons at a time.⁴³

By 1956, the Native Revenue Account (NRA) was operating at an increasing loss. The stage was set for a highly controversial policy move. The municipal officials returned from the 1956 IANA conference, inspired by a new enthusiasm for municipal beer-brewing. The rest of this chapter will consider the Council's experience in attempting to implement this policy.

a) The Council's initial arguments: Beer profits and social improvements

The first step towards municipal beer production was taken by the Nationalist mayor, Clr. Robbie de Lange, who maintained that beer halls would provide additional revenue, and reduce illicit trading in liquor.⁴⁴ Both the Town Clerk and the Township Manager responded enthusiastically. According to the Town Clerk, new facilities were much needed in Duncan Village. A beer hall could remedy this problem:

'...There is no doubt that although the primary consideration of a municipal monopoly system is not the profit which can be made, a profit is made because of the highly scientific methods of brewing kaffir beer which have enabled local authorities to reduce costs to an absolute minimum'.⁴⁵

He emphasised that municipal beer sales would 'not be run as a profitmaking undertaking, but merely as an amenity and to ameliorate certain evils'.⁴⁶ Revenue would be 'used in a humanitarian way being returned to the native community itself, by way of meeting losses on Native housing and by the provision

⁴³ Town Clerk's report to NAC, 6 November 1956.

⁴⁴ NAC minutes, 6 November 1956.

⁴⁵ Town Clerk's report, 6 November 1956.

⁴⁶ Township Manager's report to NAC, 6 November 1956.

of social and recreational amenities'.

Faced with such enthusiasm, the Council's Native Affairs Committee (NAC) agreed that a beer hall monopoly would be in the best interests of the local black residents. Only Councillor Evans recorded his dissent.⁴⁷

b) The Board's response

In terms of the Natives (Urban Areas) Act of 1945, Council had to consult the Advisory Board. The following proposals were put to the JLAB: (1) that the Council would undertake all the brewing in the location and would run the beer halls themselves; (2) they would insist on a monopoly for the Council's beer; and (3) no sprouted grain could be sold within the Municipality.

The Board's response was a polite but firm rejection. The members used very effective paternalist reasoning to make several telling points.⁴⁸ First, the tendency of natives to disturb law and order was neatly turned against the proposal of a municipal beer hall itself. Mr. Dyani maintained that the previous beer hall had been a source of crime and low morals. Mr. Hoho believed that the beerhall would lead to 'riotous behaviour at the instigation of the drunks'. Playing on white anxieties about unrest and resistance, he added that police searches for illicit beer could lead to rioting. Reverend Mashologu added the weight of religion to this argument. When the beerhall existed, it had often been difficult to conduct church services nearby.

Second, the Board members used the essentially patriarchal notion of traditional cultural differences to argue against municipal beer halls. Mr. Dyani said that such beer halls were contrary to native custom, since different age groups would drink together. Rev. Mashologu added,

⁴⁷ NAC minutes, 4 June 1957.

⁴⁸ JLAB minutes, 24 June 1957.

'We know ourselves, and we know what is not good for us' ... As the African people had not yet come to the stage where they knew how far they could go with drinking ... the proposal to establish a beer hall, should be abandoned'.

In these claims are embedded crucial notions of community, rights and appropriate political behaviour. A tussle was emerging between the Board and the Council, since each side was claiming to define the essence of 'native customs'. By accepting the premise of essential cultural difference, the Board turned it into a weapon. In fact, the Board went one step further. If the cultures are so different, they maintained, then surely it is up to themselves to define what would be to their benefit.

Third, the Board indicated that the promotion of the welfare of the African community would entail the recognition of at least two important rights:

- (1) The right of Africans to trade amongst themselves; and since this principle had explicitly been adopted by the Government, any beer halls in the locations should be operated by Africans.
- (2) The right to domestic brewing; Mr. Qongqo, for example, stated that many persons preferred to drink beer in their own homes, instead of in a beer hall.

Finally, the Board felt intuitive discomfort at the idea that profits would be derived from a municipal beer hall. Rev. Mashologu maintained that the Council should rather spend its money on providing urgently needed facilities, instead of erecting a beer hall which was not wanted by the people. In this way, the Board touched on an issue which, as we saw earlier, had given rise to such qualms amongst some municipal officials:

'It is patently clear ... that the main motive ... is to make profits so as to enable the Administration to cater for some of those essential social amenities

which are not available at present, since it is the accepted policy of the country generally that Africans must pay for whatever services are made available to them'.

The Board took a unanimous resolution, stating that the contemplated beer hall was not in the best interests of the African residents, since (1) it was against African custom and tradition; (2) beer halls could never serve as centres for social recreation, and in fact were nurseries of crime; and (3) the residents would lose their right to brew at their own homes.

c) Dissension on the Council, and the argument for 'liberal paternalism'

The Board's implacable hostility to municipal beer halls caused disarray on the Council.⁴⁹ Certain Councillors remembered that the previous beer hall in East London had been a failure and that the establishment of native beer halls had not prevented dangerous concoctions from being produced.

Other arguments concerned those issues which we have termed 'ethical life' and 'moral conduct'. For example, it was argued that African customs should be respected. A municipal monopoly was an 'unwarranted interference in the life and custom of the native population, which would create friction between the two major race groups'.

Other arguments emphasised the need to maintain existing freedoms, and represented a proto-liberal perspective. It was stated that the complete prohibition on domestic brewing was 'unfair to those persons who wished to maintain this privilege'; that a plebiscite should be held; and that a monopoly 'could be construed by the natives as being an oppressive measure - particularly in view of the fact that raids to combat illicit liquor brewing would be likely to be intensified'. Furthermore, it was seen as significant that the Advisory Board had

⁴⁹ NAC minutes, 7 October 1957.

unanimously rejected the proposal. This form of patriarchalism led to a liberal form of paternalism: It was deemed 'morally incorrect to enforce upon the native population measures which were not absolutely necessary in their own interests'. For the first time, the point was made that the African beer producers would be deprived of their income.

These arguments inclined the municipal officials to defend their proposal for a municipal monopoly vigorously. The Town Clerk reminded Councillors that enormous advances had been made in the brewing of beer, and that it was now done on a scientific basis. He also emphasised the paternalistic obligations of the city fathers. He had inspected the locations, he said, and 'had been most distressed to observe the pathetic lack of social and recreational amenities for the natives', due to the deficit on the Native Revenue Account. The Township Manager and the City Treasurer stressed that the huge deficit on the NRA was growing year by year, and having a 'very important effect on the City's finances as a whole'. It was clear that a new cleavage was opening up, between certain City Councillors and the municipal officials.

This debate inspired Councillor King to write a memorandum on the subject, aimed directly at persuading the Board to accede to municipal brewing. His text is a remarkable piece of patriarchal and paternalistic discourse, and deserves close attention.

Clr. King maintained that the main priority was the 'smashing of the vast, profitable illicit liquor racket in this country. This is a matter first and foremost of law and order and sound government'.⁵⁰ As regards 'sound government', Councillor King emphasised the solidarity of interests between the Councillors and the Board: '...We, as persons charged with the responsibility for many thousands of inhabitants of East London, must take a responsible view of this whole problem...' This

⁵⁰ JLAB minutes, October 1957.

approach represented a vision of dual and equal patriarchalism, in which two separate authorities co-operated for the common good.

Furthermore, Clr. King advocated a 'liberal paternalistic' approach. He reminded the Board that the Council had the power to enforce a solution to the problem, but was reluctant to do so. Somehow, the approval of the Board mattered:

'We do not want to use force. We would rather have a solution in which you agree with our recommendations ... The sound solution of a social problem is one which has the backing of the majority of reasonable people...'

But, he reminded the Board, the Council's scruples in using force would have social costs. This placed a moral obligation on the Board to adopt a morally just solution:

'I assure you that the Council is not going to ram a monopoly down your throats, even though by enforcing a monopoly for the purpose the Council would probably be able to spend many thousands of pounds a year from the profits made on the sale of kaffir beer in the provision of all manner of social amenities in Duncan Village'.

Councillor King's seductive and serpentine logic invoked many of the strands of patriarchalism. He postulated an organic unity between the Councillors/patriarchs and natives/children, yet reminded his audience of the element of latent coercion; he recognised Africans' rights, but, by using emotional blackmail, played on the Board members' guilt if they forfeited amenities for their community.

To crown it all, he referred to three categories of persons whose need for beer would be met by the Council:

a 'It is for the busy housewife, the lazy housewife and the unmarried male members of the population that the need for a relatively safe form of liquor exists'.

This argument was significant for three reasons. First, Clr.

King presented the Council as the defender of certain underprivileged sectors of the black community. Second, this argument would become a constant red herring in debates, as Board members had to keep on pointing out that these people had perfectly adequate existing arrangements. Third, and most crucially, it was an admission that certain categories of township residents did not live in accordance with custom. Single men, women working outside the home, and women who had simply found better things to do than fulfilling customary duties, did not fit into the pure patriarchal world of maintaining tribal identities, and it offered yet another challenge to the remaining elements of the paternalist ethos. Ironically, this argument undermined the officials' claims about the importance of cultural traditions and customs in Duncan Village.

Councillor King's speech then took an unexpected turn. Without the foreknowledge of the municipal officials, he offered the Board a system of parallel municipal and domestic brewing. 'We will make it possible for many decent people to choose whether they would prefer to drink kaffir beer or poison, which at present may be the only alternative available to them'.

Clr. King's proposal for a dual brewing system was an extraordinary synthesis of patriarchalism and proto-liberalism. On the one hand, being steeped in a patriarchal ethos, Councillor King cast his proposal in the terms of cultural pluralism: 'Here in East London our population is predominantly Xhosa. You are a self-respecting and proud people. You do not like to be unnecessarily interfered with'. On the other, it was a recognition of the individual right to choose.

His proposal had the effect of intensifying the dissention on the Council between those who supported a dual system and those who favoured a municipal monopoly. The strongest opposition to Clr.

King came from the Town Clerk and the Township Manager.⁵¹

d) The Board's response

The Board's response was a perfectly pitched manoeuvre which drew much strength from the patriarchal ethos. To begin with, the Board placated the Council by using several rhetorical flourishes. Mr. Dyani said that he appreciated the fact that the profits would be used for the benefit of the community. The Council's unwillingness to resort to coercion was also noted with appreciation. Cmr. King's compromise suggestion that a dual brewing system be introduced meant 'that the Council takes note of the views of the people - a commendable approach indeed'. The Board also agreed that

'... dangerous concoctions sold on the black market cannot be countenanced ... The maintenance of law and order in any community is a requirement with which all present [are] in entire agreement'.

Having given due recognition to the framework of patriarchy in which both the Council and the Board functioned, the Board proceeded to advance several powerful arguments that struck at the heart of the Council's position. First, the Board challenged the Councillors' facile assumption that all homemade beer was poison. 'This, we humbly submit, is an exaggeration ...' Councillor King's remarks, they alleged, were 'no more than a piece of good salesmanship'.

Second, the Board attributed the problem of social evils to a more fundamental cause than merely the activities of immoral shebeen-owners:

'Social conditions of a people with limited employment, housing and other facilities are a breeding ground for the brewing and consumption of illicit concoctions. The absence of self-pride and self-respect and lack of incentive to a better way of life could have no other effect on a frustrated

⁵¹ NAC minutes, 11 May 1959.

people'.

This was, implicitly, a radical criticism of the material deprivation suffered by township residents.

Third, in the light of this criticism, the principle of providing social amenities by means of beer profits seemed utterly immoral:

'The Council thus legalises open drunkenness and all the evils that accrue from it just because the next day the community may benefit in one sphere or another. In other words, rob and kill Tom today in order to cater for Dick's needs tomorrow. We are asked to condone destruction today because there may be construction or rehabilitation tomorrow'.

Fourth, the Board rejected the argument that certain categories of township residents, such as 'busy housewives, lazy housewives and unmarried men', needed to have their beer supplied by the municipality. Board members insisted that such people had, in fact, made satisfactory arrangements for their drinking habits. In this way, the Board rejected the proto-liberal argument based on individual choice. Instead, the Board protected Africans' right to choose by producing the results of a survey of the views of inmates of hostels. The survey concluded that municipal beer production 'was turned down without any intimidation whatsoever, [since] the evils of past experience [had] left an unclean record in the minds of the people'.⁵²

Finally, the suggestion of parallel brewing was also unacceptable, because there would be competition between

'home brewers who have no legal powers in the field of their operation, and ... the City Council which has overriding powers which they can employ either directly or indirectly to whittle away or even eliminate competition. Thus, there is no question of fair dealing and fair competition'.

The Board concluded by unanimously rejecting any form of municipal beer brewing.

⁵² JLAB minutes, 27 October 1958.

Subsequently, the Board effectively played a game of procrastination. After a lengthy research tour to other centres (which the Council paid for), Board members returned to East London with their views little altered. Procrastination was the Board's only weapon, a weapon made effective by the confused moral and practical paternalist concerns of the Councillors, and by the Board's ability to counter those concerns by means of better arguments. In September 1958, almost two years after the Council initiated the issue, nothing had yet been achieved. Predictably, the Board offered to write another report on the issue. The matter was duly postponed once again, despite increasing Council anxieties about financial shortages and the need to provide housing.⁵³

The beer debate clearly showed that patriarchal relations can provide the subordinate party with moral power. A patriarch feels morally obliged to promote the welfare of the child; but a child does have certain rights. A stubborn, precocious or earnestly well-meaning child can cause such doubt, confusion or even exhaustion in a parent that the latter may be tempted simply to abandon the issue.

e) Arguments for coercive paternalism

Another possible parental response is anger. By November 1958, Councillor Sobey had had enough. In a strongly worded memorandum to the NAC, he maintained that the Board's opposition was based on 'very weak and specious reasons'. He maintained that the Board was being subjected to 'heavy pressure by the well organised shebeen queens and their gangs'. The Board was using delaying tactics, he said.

Councillor Sobey advocated simply overruling the Board's objections:

⁵³ Town Clerk's report to NAC, 11 September 1958.

'Considerable opposition to municipal brewing is normal. It is usually accompanied by boycotting. But when the residents realise that good quality beer can be bought... opposition soon falls away. And when they see the amenities and facilities which are provided from beer profits they gladly agree that they were in error in opposing the establishment of the system'.

This was a classic example of coercive paternalism. Coercion was justifiable in the light of the subject's long-term interests, in the belief that the subject would eventually appreciate the beneficial consequences.

Since Councillor Sobey was the chairman of the Advisory Board, and hence the only Councillor who regularly attended Board meetings, he was a powerful gatekeeper in the relationship between the Board, the NAC and the Council. He had the power to recount and interpret events that took place on the Board, and could thereby effectively discount many of their arguments. NAC was very impressed with his memorandum, and recommended to Council to apply to the Minister for the exclusive right to manufacture, sell and supply beer in East London.⁵⁴ It was only the Council's anxieties about violent African resistance that halted this initiative.

f) The limits of coercion: The effect of the national political climate

In his enthusiasm for a municipal beer monopoly, Councillor Sobey had written to the Durban Town Clerk for advice, since Durban's success in beer production was renowned throughout South Africa. The response contained some practical political advice: 'If you have a homebrew system, you should at least defer to a more opportune time (if there is one) the proposal to establish a municipal beer hall'.⁵⁵ The Durban Town Clerk's words should be considered within the context of an increasingly sensitive

⁵⁴ NAC minutes, 6 November 1958.

⁵⁵ NAC minutes, 11 May 1959.

national political climate. As we noted in Chapter Five, there was a surge in Africanist political opposition during the late 1950s, and a growing militancy amongst ANC supporters. In September 1959, the ANC called a Union-wide boycott of beer halls, and demanded home-brewing of beer.⁵⁶ African political opposition was evidently a factor to take into account. During 1959, Durban's beer halls served as the focus for popular protest⁵⁷, and the Daily Dispatch carried reports of political agitation in Duncan Village.

Because of this political climate, the Advisory Board gained renewed strength. It insisted that the beer question had been broached at a very awkward time. In November, the Board returned to the Council, armed with a unanimous motion taken at a public meeting, that Duncan Village residents opposed municipal brewing.⁵⁸ Several township residents articulated their grievances in the pages of the Daily Dispatch. An effective stalemate had been reached. Numerous factors militated against the Council's plan: the political climate was delicate; township feeling had been mobilised by the Board; Board members no longer bothered to answer the specific arguments of the Councillors; and the Councillors were divided amongst themselves. The city patriarchs had been worn down by their African charges.

The Advisory Board's resistance also found support within the white community. An intense debate raged in the Daily Dispatch, reflecting an awareness amongst white readers that the wishes of the Duncan Village Advisory Board could not easily be dismissed. As one writer expressed it, 'Why antagonise [Africans] as their pleasures and leisures are meagre enough already!'.⁵⁹ Readers were especially offended by the idea of subsidising township

⁵⁶ Daily Dispatch, 8 September 1959.

⁵⁷ For example, Daily Dispatch, 27 July 1959.

⁵⁸ JAB minutes, 21 November 1960.

⁵⁹ Daily Dispatch, 14 April 1959.

development by beer profits. Several writers criticised the paternalistic arrogance of Councillors who believed they knew what was in Africans' interests.⁶⁰

A subsequent meeting of East London ratepayers deleted a beer brewery from the Council's proposed loan schedule. In the face of this pressure, the East London City Council decided to defer the beer issue for six months. The Durban disturbances figured explicitly in the Council's decision.⁶¹

g) From beer to liquor: 'Discipline' and universalist moral philosophy on the beer debate

The beer issue was finally resolved, not by means of clarity on the specific moral arguments involved, but by a complete redefinition of the issue itself. A combination of circumstances had the effect of linking the beer issue to the more abstract notion of individual rights. By the late 1950s, there were widespread debates about Africans' right to consume 'European' liquor. Some interest groups revealed the beginnings of an important universalistic strand of thought, in terms of which all individuals should enjoy rights and obligations. This universalistic perspective was not intrinsically liberal in character, but helped to prepare the way for liberal assumptions.⁶²

Certain sectors of opinion always opposed the sale of any forms of liquor to Africans on the grounds of opposition to the consumption of alcohol in general. For various people, images

⁶⁰ For example, Daily Dispatch, 11 November 1959; 16 April 1959; 30 April 1959 (Editorial); 13 May 1959; 27 May 1959; 29 May 1959; 30 June 1959; 15 July 1959.

⁶¹ Daily Dispatch, 29 July 1959.

⁶² It may be noted that universalism need not only give rise to liberalism; technicism, for example, treats individuals in abstractly similar ways, without much regard to individual rights.

of crime, delinquency, prostitution and disorder accompanied the thought of African liquor consumption.⁶³ By the 1950s, the existing system of European liquor control in South Africa was particularistic, eccentric and chaotic. The general principle that no Africans should obtain liquor, was in practice qualified by numerous special provisions. In the Cape Province, for example, ‘

‘No Native, Kafir, Fingo, Basuto, Hottentot, Bushman or the like, who holds a certificate from the Educational Department as an elementary teacher, or ... who has reached the fourth standard of instruction ..., or who is an undergraduate of the University of the Cape of Good Hope, or who is a Minister of the Gospel duly admitted as such into any Christian Church...’ would be subject to laws of prohibition (Act 39, 1887, Cape of Good Hope).

As Mr. Meyer concluded his address to the SABRA Symposium on Liquor Provision, ‘One is struck by the lack of uniformity throughout the provinces, which must militate against the

⁶³ At a symposium, the South African Temperance Union expressed its concern about the ‘fighting, brawling, bodily injuries, murder’ which were prevalent before liquor controls were instituted on the Witwatersrand. A Dutch Reformed Church clergyman recalled the conditions in Fordsburg: ‘[O]p Sondae kon blanke vroue en kinders nie waag om op straat te kom nie want dit was vol dronk naturelle wat stapelgek was van die drank’. An S.A.P. officer referred to the difficulties in policing caused by alcohol abuse: ‘Die naturel is, wanneer hy besope is as gevolg van besoedelde drank of brouels, ‘n verwoede besetene en dit lei tot aanvalle en moorde op die polisie’.

Many local officials shared these anxieties. A Pretoria municipal official placed the matter in the context of rapid industrialisation, unprecedented influx of black people into the cities, unhygienic housing conditions, unemployment, insecure families, and the disintegration of social ties. In such a context of instability, liquor abuse had tragic human consequences: ‘Geen prys is te hoog vir al die ellende, verdriet, verwaarloosde wesens and al die wrange ontregte wat drankmisbruik oplewer nie’ (Papers presented at SABRA Symposium, Drankverskaffing (1957)).

successful enforcement of the law by the administrators and those administered'.⁶⁴ In effect, it was a plea for modern forms of control in a modern society - or, in the discourse of Michel Foucault, a search for appropriate forms of disciplinary order, which would be compatible with consistent and modern forms of identity and subjectivity.

At the heart of the debate was the question regarding the contemporary status of the subjectivity of 'native': Were Africans ready for modern forms of liberties and controls? Were they in the process of becoming ready? Were some Africans more ready for the identities of modernity than others? Or were Africans as a general category still to be controlled with the heavy-handed methods of absolute prohibition? Once again, the essence of the problem was the proper boundaries of communities in South Africa.

Three important varieties of opinion on the matter can be distinguished. At one extreme, the South African Temperance Alliance advocated total prohibition of traditional beer as well as 'European liquor' as far as black people were concerned. The Alliance rejected the argument that 'good class and well educated Bantu' should have the right to consume European liquors, for such privileges would lead to a growing demand for liquor on the part of more and more Africans. This would lead to the 'destruction of a race', similar to the fate of the Maoris in New Zealand.⁶⁵

According to this view, the problem of domestic beer production was part of a bigger issue, viz. the general collapse in social morals due to alcohol consumption. This view had the important consequence that the drinking habits of Africans were not treated as a special social question. In this regard, the Temperance

⁶⁴ N.G. Meyer, 'The liquor laws' (1957), p. 7-8.

⁶⁵ Rev. S.P. Freeland, 'Views of the South African Temperance Alliance', in SABRA, Drankverskaffing (1957), pp. 13-19.

Association's approach had an important levelling effect: all people, they believed, faced the temptation to deal with the problems of social pressure by means of a dependence on alcohol. The fact that they did not differentiate between the problems of Africans and those of whites tended to undermine the philosophical and moral foundations of patriarchalism.

This universalistic defence of liquor controls was shared by some clergymen. The United East London Ministers' Fraternal maintained that there were no adequate grounds for racial discrimination on the matter of liquor control: 'what right have we to say that what is wrong for the non-European is right for the European...'⁶⁶. Similarly, Ds. De Beer of the Dutch Reformed Church's Synodal Commission for Public Morals advocated stronger controls on all people, regardless of 'class and race'.⁶⁷

Such universalistic sentiments were compatible with coercive paternalism. Advocates of such views strongly opposed the lifting of liquor prohibitions on Africans, and advocated stricter control over whites' consumption. For the Temperance Association and the Dutch Reformed Church, black people required special protection from the demands of civilised life:

'In the interests of the whole community it is imperative that we realise that the Bantu people of this land, in common with other races recently emerged from a primitive way of life, are our responsibility as bearers of Christian civilisation. In this sense we are our brother's keeper'⁶⁸.

A second perspective can be termed universalistic and proto-liberal. According to this view, Africans and whites should have

⁶⁶ Minutes, General Purposes Committee, East London City Council, 18 January 1951.

⁶⁷ Ds de Beer, 'Gesigspunte', in SABRA, Drankverskaffing (1957), p. 58.

⁶⁸ Rev. S.P. Freeland, 'Views of the South African Temperance Alliance', in SABRA, Drankverskaffing (1957), p. 45. Emphasis added.

equal rights to consume alcohol. By the 1960s, the argument for liberalising the supply of alcohol to Africans began to be heard in governmental circles. Various constituencies advocated the lifting of prohibitions altogether, in order to undercut the extensive illegal liquor trafficking networks. This position was generally advocated by government officials who had to deal with the practical difficulties of liquor control. Mr. Meyer of Kimberley maintained that 'history has shown that prohibition has always been a failure regarding liquor'.⁶⁹ A member of the SAP also argued against prohibition, on the grounds that it was expensive, and ultimately futile, to implement, and simply had the effect of creating a sense of hostility against the police.⁷⁰ This position was usually associated with claims that the African population had already advanced some way towards European civilisation. According to Mr. Kingsley of Pretoria, the level of development of South African Africans was higher than those in the rest of Africa; hence total prohibition was not appropriate.⁷¹

Ranged between these two versions of universalism were numerous intermediary positions. Most township officials and City Councillors fell in this middle category. Many of them still wished to control the supply of 'European liquor' to Africans very strictly. This position was bolstered by a Government Commission appointed to study the supply of liquor to Africans.⁷² It recommended that natural wines and 'European' beer be supplied

⁶⁹ N.G. Meyer, 'The liquor laws' in SABRA, Drankverskaffing (1957), p. 8.

⁷⁰ Brig. H.J. du Plooy, 'Gesigspunte van die Polisie', in SABRA, Drankverskaffing (1957), p. 71-4.

⁷¹ S.F. Kingsley, 'Drankverskaffing deur Munisipaliteite', in SABRA, Drankverskaffing (1957), p. 24.

⁷² 'Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the General Distribution and Selling Prices of Intoxicating Liquor in its Application to the Supply of Liquor to Africans', as quoted in the East London Town Clerk's report to NAC, 2 February 1961.

more extensively to Africans on premises, and that more permits for off-consumption be issued. The Commission's report is a fascinating blend of proto-liberal and patriarchal elements. As such, it represents a transition phase from pre-modern forms of social control to modern discipline.

The Commission defined the problem under review as one of lawlessness and social degeneration. Alcoholism amongst Africans was seen as the consequence of archaic and inappropriate liquor laws. The illegal possession of liquor was being punished more heavily than drunkenness, and this, the Report maintained, should be rectified. It had also caused a bootlegging problem of such dimensions that the police were powerless to cope with it.

Furthermore, the Commission maintained, the problem had political repercussions, since prohibition 'has led to an almost country-wide rebellious reaction on the part of the Natives'.⁷³ The existing legislation was inappropriate because African society was becoming modern:

'Where the Native lives in close contact with the White man, as is the case in all White areas, he is involuntarily assimilating much of the everyday aspects of Western civilisation as his own... It is wishful thinking therefore, to believe that he can be protected from the evils of civilisation, such as the abuse of liquor. A much better approach for the White would be to develop a better drinking pattern for himself ... which the Native will accept as his own, just as he has accepted our manner of dress...'

To put the problem in Foucaultian terms, a modernising society made inherited moral categories and old forms of social control inadequate. A modern form of social organisation was needed, which would entail modern forms of discipline. This, in turn, involved new kinds of social categories, that were more universalistic and less ascriptive in character. Such a perspective would substantially contradict the spirit of

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'Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the General Distribution and Selling Prices of Intoxicating Liquor ...' (1961), Paragraph 50.

patriarchalism. The question of consumption of 'white man's liquor' was now detached from the notion of 'native custom'. It was a recognition of the applicability of the liberal right to choose one's own lifestyle; in this respect, therefore, it was a liberal position.

Yet the Commission evidently found it difficult to contemplate the complete application of liberal principles to the African population. The Report remained an uneasy compromise between patriarchalism and modernity as governing principles of ethical life. Hence certain important qualifications were introduced. For example, only the consumption of 'harmless' beverages, such as light wines and beer, should be allowed for Africans.⁷⁴ As such, it was a patriarchal provision, in that Africans were deemed to be a less mature sector of the community; it was also a paternalistic provision, since it legitimised coercive intervention in Africans' lives for their own benefit.

A second qualification, which had some political significance for East London, was that the revenue from liquor sales should be ploughed back 'for the improvement of general conditions for Non-Whites'.⁷⁵ This indicates that the Commission still felt morally uneasy about allowing Africans to consume liquor. Any possible abuse of liquor which occurred should be offset by the moral obligation to use profits for virtuous purposes. Interestingly, such a provision did not apply to the white population, despite evidence that many whites also had difficulty in dealing with the harsh dimensions of modernity.

A third qualification contained in the Commission's report, was that such beverages should only be supplied to Africans for

⁷⁴ 'Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the General Distribution and Selling Prices of Intoxicating Liquor ...' (1961), Paragraph 60.

⁷⁵ 'Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the General Distribution and Selling prices of Intoxicating Liquor ...' (1961), paragraph 64.

consumption on public premises. Ultimately, the report stated, Africans should be encouraged to build hotels, for which they could then get a licence to supply wine and beer.⁷⁶ In the meantime, beer halls had to be built, and therefore all local authorities should consider introducing municipal brewing.⁷⁷ At such venues, disciplined conduct could be ensured:

'Meetings at Native beer halls should not be allowed and riotous behaviour should be severely suppressed ... Weapons of any description should be prohibited where liquor is consumed...'⁷⁸.

In addition to these measures, the Commission attempted to outlaw the uncontrolled domestic brewing of all forms of 'concoctions'. A modern society is one characterised by principles of hygiene, order, uniformity and predictability - and such characteristics left little scope for the haphazard primitiveness of domestic

⁷⁶ 'Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the General Distribution and Selling Prices of Intoxicating Liquor ...' (1961), paragraph 62.

⁷⁷ According to the Commission, liquor should be supplied to Africans for purposes of home-consumption in accordance with a permit system. The earlier criterion for African liquor consumption, viz. that an 'applicant's stage of development and his general manner of living are such as to entitle him to be regarded as having attained a standard of life equivalent to that of European civilisation', was replaced by a new criterion. The Commission advocated that any 'adult male Native' who had committed no liquor offence or serious crime in the preceding year, who had a permanent residential address and had who fixed employment, would be entitled to a permit to purchase a certain amount of liquor for home consumption. The permit should be renewed periodically. The more 'civilised or educated or professional Native' should be entitled to greater quantities'. Once again, we witness the Foucaultian impulse to solve social problems by categorizing and ordering society. The significance of the Commission's categories was that they partially equalised the treatment of different categories of Africans, as well as Africans and whites, compared to the categories that existed previously.

⁷⁸ Paragraph 68.

brewing.⁷⁹ This, effectively, legitimised municipal beer monopolies from a perspective of order and modernity.

For the officials of the East London Municipality, the Commission's report was an unexpected boost. The Commission's universalist assumptions promoted the principle of African liquor consumption; while its patriarchal assumptions justified municipal beer monopolies and the use of beer profits as revenue for township administration. The East London City Council decided to investigate and select suitable sites for the sale of liquor in Duncan Village.⁸⁰ Soon after, the Council resolved to apply to the Minister of Justice for authority to sell wines.⁸¹

F. The introduction of beer brewing in East London

These proposals rekindled the East London City Council's enthusiasm for establishing a brewery. Despite the continuing public protests during mid-1961, the Native Affairs Committee garnered its strength for a final attempt to introduce municipal brewing. Its efforts were strengthened by the officials' claim to expert knowledge. While the Board had procrastinated, the officials had not remained idle. Councillor Sobey and the Township Manager, Mr. Venter, had visited the Germiston Municipal Brewery, where they were shown around by a long-standing champion of municipal brewing, Mr. Buitendag. Mr. Buitendag produced a specialist report for the East London Council strongly recommending a municipal monopoly.⁸² In March 1961, the Town Council sent two officials to the Transvaal to visit the plants of Jabula Foods (Pty) Ltd, to inspect their method of producing beer. They visited the CSIR's Kaffir Beer Section ('One could

⁷⁹ Paragraph 76.

⁸⁰ NAC minutes, 4 October 1961.

⁸¹ Council minutes, 20 October 1962.

⁸² Council minutes, 29 September 1960.

not help but be most impressed by the sincerity and enthusiasm of these gentlemen'), and found that African beer consumers in Springs and Odendaalsrus 'were unanimous in their praise of Jabula beer'.⁸³ While the Councillors had to deal with the growing political opposition, the municipal officials were quietly preparing the ground for action. In the long term, these measures proved more effective than coercion.

Yet the Council's programme of action did not survive popular opposition unscathed. Instead of a municipal monopoly, the Council decided to settle for a dual brewing system.⁸⁴ This was announced to the Advisory Board on 4 January 1962. Since the original Advisory Board had resigned en masse the previous year, and the new Board consisted solely of Council appointees (see Chapter Ten), the Board not surprisingly unanimously commended the Council's decision.

The production of beer began on 5 March 1962, almost six years after the idea was first considered by the Council. Councillor Addleson officiated at the opening of the beer hall, and Jabula Foods distributed a hundred gallons of beer gratis to all residents who attended the opening. Despite an initial boycott, municipal beer was soon selling well.⁸⁵ Liquor sales increased steadily until the 1970s.⁸⁶

In 1963, the Council announced that liquor profits would be used for the Mayor's School Feeding Scheme, a project against kwashiorkor, and the construction of sports fields.⁸⁷ The Council's ambiguous paternalist moral impulse had borne fruit.

⁸³ Officials' report to NAC, April 1961.

⁸⁴ Daily Dispatch, 12 April 1961.

⁸⁵ JAB minutes, 26 March 1962.

⁸⁶ See, for example, Mayor's Minute for 1971; p. 37.

⁸⁷ JLAB minutes, 4 February 1963.

Conclusion

The infrastructural improvements in Duncan Village which were financed from beer revenue, poignantly illustrate the moral dilemmas involved in patriarchalism. The beer question was not simply a conflict of interests, even though the various protagonists certainly had interests which they wanted to promote. It was also a product of the white city fathers' sense of impending social disintegration in the cities. All the political actors shared an anxiety about material stability and welfare.

However, different moral paradigms posed the problem of social order in fundamentally different ways. Different interests only made sense within moral frameworks of meaning. From each participant's perspective, certain moral claims made intuitive sense.

Our analysis has served to illustrate two further themes. The first is a point about the nature of moral argument in concrete social contexts - about the nature of 'political morality', as we defined it in Chapter Two. Political morality is a matter of individual deliberation, choice and responsibility. It also indicates that there are seldom tidy boundaries between different visions of right and wrong. Questions of morality are ultimately deeply personal, and different individuals (or groups of individuals) can constitute their moral outlooks in a myriad of subtly differing ways.

As a consequence, political actors sometimes found themselves unexpectedly sharing the same platforms. On some occasions, people with fundamentally different moral assumptions advocated the same practical policies; on other occasions, people who largely shared the same moral paradigm found themselves bickering fervently about practical details. Individuals can also change their views over time, especially when they are confronted by new moral and practical arguments. Political morality is the

dimension of social life which fundamentally concerns the individual as meaningfully free agent. The beer issue illustrates the importance of individuals' choice of moral principles, and the effect such principles have on people's conduct.

The second major theme is that, during the 1950s, cities such as East London were experiencing the birth-pains of the modern ethical order. This involved the transition from pre-modern systems of social control and ethical life (viz. patriarchalism) to a more modern moral and disciplinary order. The beer issue provides us with a snapshot of a society in transition, in which people were groping towards new principles to order social life.

In the process of change, the ambiguities within patriarchalism increasingly bedevilled coherent social reform. Patriarchalism was compatible with many different kinds of paternalism. There was no single ready alternative to the patriarchal order; ultimately, political leaders had to make sense of the travails of modernity in numerous different ways. The process of modernisation was, with increasing intensity, posing the question: 'What form of ethical life and political morality would be most suitable for a modern society in South Africa?' However, paternalism in its various forms would survive the demise of patriarchalism, and would inform moral perspectives right until the 1980s.

We now turn to the 1960s, a decisive decade in the history of the cities, when the question posed by modernisation was answered by the Verwoerdians with a confident and bombastic flourish. As patriarchalism disintegrated, the notion of African tribal identities re-emerged, Phoenix-like, in Verwoerdian social engineering. This time, however, the definition of ethical life would be accompanied by a much more coercive paternalism than patriarchalism ever embodied. Verwoerd's utopians were poised to play their card.

PART THREE

**VERWOERDIANISM AND THE DECLINE OF
LOCAL GOVERNMENT, c. 1955 - 1980**

CHAPTER SEVENVERWOERDIANISM, UTOPIA AND THE CITIES

As we saw in Chapter Four, the question of political morality is meaningful on two levels. On the one hand, the notion of 'ethical life' concerns the way in which persons constitute a community, and this, in turn, depends on the way in which they recognise each other as citizens, with rights, obligations and appropriate identity. On the other hand, the notion of moral action refers to specific questions of conduct, which involve individual choice and responsibility according to more or less clearly articulated principles of conduct.

In Chapter Five, we considered patriarchalism as a form of ethical life, which informed political relations in South African cities, roughly until the 1950s. We found that patriarchalism was associated with a specific form of moral action, viz. paternalism. Both the ethical system of patriarchalism and the moral system of paternalism were deeply ambiguous, containing several elements that were either in some tension or totally incompatible with one another. Furthermore, patriarchalism appeared incapable of accommodating the growing pressures of modernisation, urbanisation and social change, for it lacked a clear vision of modern urban social arrangements to be striven for. Patriarchalism created a sense of 'unfinished business', and posed the overarching project of finding a system of social meaning which could alleviate the problem of urban chaos. Hence it formed an insistent question mark which prompted political thinkers and political entrepreneurs to search for more definitive solutions to the social problems of modernity.

During the next three decades, various different visions of the city emerged. Drawing on different dimensions of the heritage of patriarchalism and paternalism, they postulated competing notions of urban ethical life, and entailed different conceptions of appropriate moral conduct. Patriarchalism and paternalism had lingering influences which informed these visions. The ambiguous imagery of the family (patriarchalism) and the notion of coercive

intervention for the good of the subject (paternalism) were rich reservoirs of moral meaning which entered into subsequent paradigms in different guises and manifestations. In East London, for example, the heritage of patriarchalism and paternalism would be felt right until the end of the period under consideration in this chapter, and even informed the far-reaching negotiations of 1986.

In this chapter, we will consider the normative dynamics of Verwoerdianism. We will claim that Verwoerdianism, drawing on a powerful Puritan spirit, had specific meaning at the level of ethical life, and that it involved an essentially romantic, utopian vision of organic and harmonious communities (the so-called volkere of Afrikaner nationalist thought). It is worth mentioning that the precise character of the Verwoerdian vision is very difficult to capture. Hence we prefer to avoid the term apartheid (which is often used loosely to refer to political principles as well as their crude political and administrative manifestations).

At the level of moral conduct, Verwoerdianism continued to advocate paternalist arguments. However, we will consider Verwoerdian paternalism to be of an essentially **extremist** sort, in the sense that it was often considered legitimate to justify means with reference to ultimate moral ends. Hence it was also inclined to be a remarkably coercive form of paternalism.

In this chapter, we will first consider some general aspects of utopianism. We will then use the term to explain the response of Afrikaner nationalists, and most notably Dr. Verwoerd, to the ravages of modernisation in South Africa during the mid-20th century. We will then examine the homelands policy as an expression of Verwoerdian utopianism, together with its consequences for the cities and for the system of local government. Finally, we will argue that Verwoerdianism was deeply paradoxical: while it postulated romantic tribal utopias as an answer to the problems of modernity, it had to engage in

far-reaching social engineering of a modern disciplinary kind in order to achieve its visions. Ultimately, the means and the ends were incompatible. These analyses will serve as theoretical and historical background to the next four chapters, in which the impact of the various dimensions of Verwoerdianism on East London will be discussed. Verwoerdianism achieved neither the creation of genuine utopias nor of genuine modern discipline; instead, Verwoerdianism ironically resulted in a 'dystopia' - a negative utopia - of Kafkaesque bureaucratic empires. Once again, South African history was characterised by the pathos of ethical systems and moral impulses that had unintentionally gone wrong.

A. Modernity and Utopia: The philosophical background

Modernity is often associated with enlightenment and progress. However, the benign dimensions of modernisation are usually matched by extreme social distress. Socio-economic dislocation caused by new mechanised methods of capitalist production, political turmoil, and the decline of traditional sources of legitimacy and authority invariably cause existential anxiety for different groups in society.¹

One fairly typical response to the dislocation produced by modernisation, is a profound longing for a well-integrated, harmonious, community - in short, a utopia:

'The kinds of dissatisfaction which lead some social groups to adopt a utopian response to their existing situation ... have tended to derive from an acute sense of oppression and alienation, and the awareness of being threatened by the pressure of socio-economic upheaval, and by the forces and activities stemming from the beliefs and activities of other, opposing, groups'.²

¹ B. Goodwin and K. Taylor, The Politics of Utopia (London: Hutchinson, 1982), p. 125.

² B. Goodwin and K. Taylor, The Politics of Utopia (1982), p. 138. Utopianism is not the only response; disaffected groups can either decline into pessimistic despair, or resort to salvation in an existence beyond

An important point is that utopianism should not be regarded as an unusually eccentric response to modernisation. Modern utopians have drawn on philosophical roots that reached back to Plato's Republic. Plato set precedents for future utopias by defining society as being for the mutual satisfaction of needs, pointing to the close connection between virtue in the individual and in society as a whole. Plato and Aristotle produced the notion of the organic nature of society which pervades later utopianism.³ The term 'utopia' (meaning 'nowhere') was coined by Thomas More in 1516. In More's fantastical community of Utopia, all the citizens lived communally. Every detail of life was minutely regulated, thanks to the wisdom of the benevolent founder-designer, Utopus. The result was material abundance, perfect happiness, and self-regulating harmony.⁴

In modern political philosophy, the utopian impulse can be traced back at least to Jean-Jacques Rousseau. In response to the vices born of vanity in a corrupt environment, Rousseau postulated the establishment of small, simple and self-sufficient republics⁵, which would allow for the emergence of a 'general will', which aimed at establishing the common good. Rousseau's notion of the small community was, perhaps, the first example of utopianism as a response to the alienation and inequalities of modern society.

The same impulse to establish ideal moral communities flourished in the 19th century in France and England. Various forms of utopian socialism emerged, as a response to the loss of

death, or adopt a limited and realistic programme of political or social change.

³ B. Goodwin and K. Taylor, The Politics of Utopia (1982), p. 41.

⁴ B. Goodwin and K. Taylor, The Politics of Utopia (1982), p. 42.

⁵ J. Plamenatz, Man and Society (Volume 1) (Essex: Longman, 1963), pp. 369, 416.

traditional, pre-capitalist and certain pre-industrial values.⁶ The utopias of Saint-Simon, Fourier and Owen were more practical than the fantasy-journeys of Thomas More and other earlier utopians, and contained distinct political programmes and proposals, attracting thousands of adherents.⁷ While certain 19th Century utopians accepted the inevitability of industrialisation, their proposals generally represented a yearning for some important pre-industrial values. Hence they were at least partially romantic attempts to deal with the dislocation caused by industrialisation, mechanisation and large-scale urbanisation.

8. The characteristics of utopia

The concept of 'utopia' is an ethical idea, in terms of our Hegelian understanding of the term. 'Ethical life' refers to the normative relations of recognition, rights and obligations which constitute persons in society; or, put differently, the patterns of relationships which make social conduct appropriate and meaningful. In this sense, utopian visions are ethical constructs. They devote great attention to the normal and proper relations between people.

The spirit of utopianism is difficult to capture by means of dry analytical descriptions. Goodwin and Taylor describe the utopian mentality as a manifestation of perfectionism, rather than simply a maximising of specific interests or expectations.⁸ A utopia is a wholistic vision. As such, it proceeds beyond normal moral idealism, which postulates certain distinct and limited normative principles worth striving for at the level of individual choice. Instead, utopianism involves an imaginary perfect community, an entire 'ethical life', in which numerous ideals are harmoniously

⁶ B. Goodwin and K. Taylor, Utopia (1982), p. 123-4.

⁷ B. Goodwin and K. Taylor, Utopia (1982), pp. 150-156.

⁸ B. Goodwin and K. Taylor, The Politics of Utopia (1982), p. 208.

realised⁹:

'[T]he truly constructive utopia transcends criticism and mere negation and proclaims its own institutions to be ideal in every respect, a harmonious whole, and does not merely invent piecemeal "better" institutions to show up the deficiencies of those which exist. Such a perfect society, with its interlocking parts, is clearly the product of an overall design and an innovatory world-view, and thus constitutes a complete reconstruction of society'¹⁰.

The utopian spirit is often captured in literature, poetry, religion, or other forms of creative expression. Hence our attempt to separate out the various characteristics of utopian thought does some injustice to the subject matter, for it may well make utopianism seem eccentric or unreasonable. This caution should be kept in mind throughout our discussion of utopianism in general and Verwoerdianism in particular.

a) Utopia as social transcendence

'A state of mind is utopian when it is incongruous with the state of reality within which it occurs', wrote one of the definitive analysts of utopianism, Karl Mannheim.¹¹ However, he added, not every state of mind which is incongruous with its surroundings can be regarded as utopian. Following Mannheim, we will reserve the term 'utopia' to 'those orientations transcending reality ... which, when they pass over into conduct, tend to shatter, either partially or wholly, the order of things prevailing at the time'. Utopia has a transformative potential. Not until certain social groups embody their wish-images into their actual conduct, and

⁹ B. Goodwin and K. Taylor, The Politics of Utopia (1982), pp. 16, 22.

¹⁰ B. Goodwin and K. Taylor, The Politics of Utopia (1982), p. 31.

¹¹ K. Mannheim, Ideology and Utopia (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1954), p. 173.

try to realise them, do ideologies become utopian.¹² For Mannheim, utopianism should be equated with voluntarism, the expression of pure will. It is based on the hope that abstract ideals could be incarnated in society by deliberate human action.¹³

b) Utopianism and human nature

Utopian ideals are governed by a specific understanding of virtue. Utopians do not advocate compelling people to behave in ways they would not naturally do. Utopian political theories, as philosophies of life, are based on the notion of innate human nature and desires. Hence, if the environment allows human nature to flourish, the problem of virtue would automatically be taken care of through the achievement of human happiness.¹⁴

The notion of human nature in utopian thought comes in various guises. At its most simplistic, it is reflected in fixed, static, ahistorical snapshots of society, in which the principles of society are predetermined by the utopian according to what he perceives as truths about human nature.¹⁵ More sophisticated utopias rest on historical theories and aim towards 'higher' stages of civilisation, based on a changing or increasingly

¹² K. Mannheim, Ideology and Utopia (1954), p. 174.

¹³ B. Goodwin and K. Taylor, The Politics of Utopia, (1982); pp. 79, 85.

¹⁴ This notion of human nature is perhaps not as fanciful as it may sound to the modern ear. As Goodwin and Taylor note, the modern reluctance in political philosophy to postulate abstract absolute conceptions of human nature or 'human essence', in favour of a view of human reality as relative and everchanging, tends to be somewhat misguided, for it has yet to be shown that a normative theory 'can be erected without such props, since ideals must have some human reference point' (B. Goodwin and K. Taylor, The Politics of Utopia (1982), pp. 68, 209-210).

¹⁵ B. Goodwin and K. Taylor, The Politics of Utopia (1982), p. 35.

perfect human nature.¹⁶ The common theme is the notion of an inexorable social logic, innate in human nature itself.¹⁷

The emphasis on human nature is also associated with claims about 'true interests'. Utopians tend to claim that the interests of all people are essentially uniform - a claim which liberal democrats find hard to accept. Furthermore, utopians contend that men can be mistaken about their ultimate interests through ignorance, delusion or corruption.¹⁸ Hence the claim to absolute, real and ultimately compatible interests provides a strong justification for social engineering and coercive paternalism. Since existing social institutions are deemed to have debased people and distorted their needs, the remedy is the creation of utopian institutions which will allow them to be 'natural' or which will eventually perfect human nature.¹⁹

c) Society and individual in utopia

Utopias are intrinsically social fantasies, for utopians conceive of happiness as possible only when people live amongst others. There are no Robinson-Crusoe utopias, for utopians have a

¹⁶ B. Goodwin and K. Taylor, The Politics of Utopia (1982), p. 65.

¹⁷ B. Goodwin and K. Taylor, The Politics of Utopia (1982), p. 217.

¹⁸ Goodwin and Taylor, Utopia (1982), p. 100-1.

¹⁹ As Goodwin and Taylor recognise, such reasoning is not necessarily bizarre: 'Either way, the utopian is at odds with liberal democrats, who tend to equate the **desired** with the **desirable** - a piece of moral algebra as philosophically vulnerable as any utopian's conjuring with real interests' (B. Goodwin and K. Taylor, The Politics of Utopia (1982), p. 102). Even liberals advocate, on occasion, that people can be wrong about their own interests. Once again, we cannot simply dismiss utopianism as weird or silly; there are often persuasive philosophical considerations which tempt people into utopian forms of argument.

specific conception of human nature: 'A surprising number, if not all, are optimistic that man will be a sociable, peaceful, co-operative creature in the absence of provocations such as poverty, oppression and hard labour'.²⁰ Sociability is seen as built into human nature itself, and leads to a specific conception of virtue: '[M]en owe the Good Life to their fellows individually and collectively, and are owed it likewise; they ought therefore willingly to sacrifice a measure of personal freedom and convenience to realize that utopia'.²¹

Utopias usually underplay individualism and existentialism, in favour of more organic visions of society. This is very significant, in the light of our interpretation of utopianism as a response to the strains of modernisation. Utopias offer existential security, by defining individuals' identities in terms of clearly demarcated communal boundaries. The notion of community in the writings of the 19th century utopians grew out of ordinary people's experiences of communal life and work. In the cities of Europe, community identities tend to survive for a surprisingly long time, even in conditions of rapid industrialisation and urbanisation.²² As these identities came under threat, utopians advocated a physical migration of communities to new locations. 'Hence the mania for experimental communities and deliberate environmental planning associated with many utopian socialists and their followers throughout the nineteenth century'.²³

It may be noted that, from an individualistic perspective, such forms of community life can have an ominous dimension. Strong

²⁰ B. Goodwin and K. Taylor, The Politics of Utopia (1982), p. 69.

²¹ B. Goodwin and K. Taylor, The Politics of Utopia (1982), p. 225.

²² B. Goodwin and K. Taylor, The Politics of Utopia (1982), p. 127.

²³ B. Goodwin and K. Taylor, The Politics of Utopia (1982), p. 127.

community bonds provide effective social order by means of traditional forms of mutual control. Utopian societies tend to recognise every member's right to intervene in the conduct of others, in order to prevent disobedience or anti-social activity.²⁴

d) Utopia as benevolent and virtuous order

A Utopia is a vision of the Good Life. The principles of harmony, association, community and co-operation represent a rejection of selfishness and egoism, and express a concern for humanity and the common good. Such values traditionally have a strong religious dimension, and historically often draw on Christian roots.²⁵ Of course, the benefits of utopia need not be distributed equally, since utopias need not be egalitarian in structure.²⁶

Another form of virtue frequently associated with utopianism is its rejection of acquisitiveness. According to Goodwin and Taylor, 'The failure of capitalism to fulfil our deepest needs, simultaneously caused idealists to search for utopias of greater simplicity and asceticism'.²⁷ The early pre-capitalist utopias prescribed 'a modest sufficiency of material satisfaction combined with extensive intellectual and spiritual satisfaction in the form of publicly provided culture', and emphasised the pleasures of co-operative work.²⁸

²⁴ B. Goodwin and K. Taylor, The Politics of Utopia (1982), p. 63.

²⁵ B. Goodwin and K. Taylor, The Politics of Utopia (1982), p. 133.

²⁶ B. Goodwin and K. Taylor, The Politics of Utopia (1982), p. 18.

²⁷ B. Goodwin and K. Taylor, The Politics of Utopia (1982), p. 48.

²⁸ B. Goodwin and K. Taylor, The Politics of Utopia (1982), p. 68.

e) The epistemology of utopianism

Utopians have a strong intellectual confidence that human truths can be discovered by human reason, and then incarnated in political institutions.²⁹ A strong Platonic influence pervades utopianism, since Platonism is based on an epistemological theory which claims that absolute, transcendental knowledge about human life is possible, and must guide the politics of the Good.³⁰ Utopians are systematic thinkers, for their vision encompass every detail of social life. They also tend to be dogmatic. Utopian thought is exclusivist in character, and rival explanations of reality or proposals for reform are not easily tolerated.³¹

One consequence of the claim to epistemological absolutism is that utopians see themselves as entitled to create (or to rule) perfect societies. Again, this claim has respectable precedents. From Plato's Guardians to Marxists' Vanguard Parties and B.F. Skinner's behavioural experts, the claim to elite knowledge has been a recurring theme in social philosophy. Modern forms of technocracy also have roots in this epistemological tradition. All such elitism rests on the axiom that knowledge is good and hence the rule of experts is not inherently risky. Furthermore,

²⁹ B. Goodwin and K. Taylor, The Politics of Utopia (1982), p. 35.

³⁰ B. Goodwin and K. Taylor, The Politics of Utopia (1982), p. 41.

³¹ The claim to final and exclusive truth concerning the optimum form of social organisation conflicts with the open-mindedness of empiricist procedure and relativist epistemologies, which usually inform proper academic inquiry. Yet Goodwin and Taylor note that the theoretical principles of utopianism are not completely absurd: 'Utopian theory cannot entirely be written off as fantasy on account of its non-empirical nature, since it usually rests on a basis of observed human needs and desires' (p. 82). Utopian thought is not divorced from reality, for it finds its origin in a specific perception of social ills and cleavages.

as Goodwin and Taylor note, if such elites contribute their leadership skills to society without taking an extra share of social and material goods in return, the principle ceases to be incompatible with material egalitarianism. As such, the notion of elite leadership becomes less offensive than it may at first appear.³²

f) Utopianism and political practice

The exclusiveness of utopianism's truths imply a challenge to liberal-democratic forms of political practice, on several grounds. It rejects the notion that political truth can best be approximately established by the regular counting of individual preferences by democratic means. Hence it also challenges the supposed need for tolerance of all shades of opinion, even the erroneous. Finally, it rejects the claim that a heterogeneous, pluralist society, which fosters a variety of ideas, is an indicator of social good health. Utopianism is always epistemologically totalist, and aims at constructing one ideal alternative paradigm or social form.³³

This raises the important question of the relationship between democracy and utopia. Regarding this issue, the evidence is mixed. Utopian thought often contains a democratic aspect. Fourier and Owen advocated individual and group self-determination, which allowed a significant degree of experimentation and differentiation. Their utopias allowed significant scope for democratic participation, a feature which grew out of their adherents' practical experience in workers' associations, clubs, and friendly societies. In practice, successful utopias are sustained by voluntary and enthusiastic

³² B. Goodwin and K. Taylor, The Politics of Utopia (1982), p. 67.

³³ B. Goodwin and K. Taylor, The Politics of Utopia (1982), p. 99.

commitment.³⁴ Furthermore, the vast majority of utopians have chosen non-coercive means to establish their utopias, relying on the practical example of successful experimental communities, on enlightened lawgivers or constitutional governments, on education, or simply on the persuasive force of the utopian's revelations. According to Goodwin and Taylor, therefore, the utopian genre is authoritative by nature, but not necessarily authoritarian.³⁵

However, critics of utopianism, such as Karl Popper, have accused utopian doctrines of being antithetical to the 'open society' characterised by liberty and tolerance. Popper has condemned utopians for playing God, reconstructing society on the basis of absolute claims to truth. This would, he claimed, inevitably lead to a totalitarian nightmare.³⁶

Once it is claimed that political truth is absolute and revealed, it is but a short step to the radical denigration of the political process. Utopias seem to exclude politics because there is simply nothing left to argue about.³⁷ For utopians, government is reduced to the just administration of ideal laws. Of course, the absence of politics may well co-exist with the growth of government, since the Good Life may require extensive social planning. Saint-Simon, for example, entrusted government to specialist administrators; Lenin hoped that the withering away of the state would translate into 'soviets plus electrification'; and even modern corporatist governments exalt

³⁴ B. Goodwin and K. Taylor, The Politics of Utopia (1982), p. 121.

³⁵ B. Goodwin and K. Taylor, The Politics of Utopia (1982), pp. 103-6.

³⁶ B. Goodwin and K. Taylor, The Politics of Utopia (1982), p. 93.

³⁷ Of course, this implies a specific conception of politics, viz. the expression of differences of opinion and interest, argument, competition and power struggles.

bureaucracies above the tedious trivialities of Parliaments. Once we consider Utopia in this light, it does not appear so very different from the welfare state and other exercises in social planning; and hence we can have some understanding for the lure of utopianism for social reformers.

Other factors, however, undermine the democratic spirit of utopianism. In addition to its predilection for specialist knowledge, charismatic leadership has been important in many utopian movements.³⁸ Furthermore, many utopians have not merely relied on charisma and magnetism to secure support. According to Goodwin and Taylor, most utopias have some kind of propaganda machine to reinforce 'natural morality'. Plato's foundation myth can be regarded as the origin of political propaganda, and later utopias devoted much of their elaborate education programmes to the inculcation of respect for the laws, morality towards fellow citizens, and self-control.³⁹ Indoctrination of the young is usually highly on the agenda.

This still leaves the problem of residual deviance and organised opposition. At their most optimistic, utopians have claimed, in the spirit of human perfectibility, that the ideally constituted society will eradicate crime and deviance altogether.⁴⁰ Yet pockets of the old order may still exist. What should be done about reluctant minorities? According to utopian logic, a privileged section of the population in existing society surely cannot be granted the right to veto the achievement of utopia for others in perpetuity, just because their vested interests would be threatened.⁴¹ Such arguments often lead to policies of

³⁸ B. Goodwin and K. Taylor, The Politics of Utopia (1982), p. 136.

³⁹ B. Goodwin and K. Taylor, The Politics of Utopia (1982), p. 62.

⁴⁰ B. Goodwin and K. Taylor, The Politics of Utopia (1982), p. 62.

⁴¹ B. Goodwin and K. Taylor, The Politics of Utopia (1982), p. 216.

coercive paternalism, in order to force recalcitrants into the Good Society.

g) Utopia and extremism in moral conduct

This raises the perennial problem of means and ends. Liberals fear that utopians will be so enamoured of their final goals that they will justify the use of illiberal, undemocratic or inhumane means. In the achievement of utopia, some people would be made worse off than they are at present. Some people would inevitably lose power, rights, status, prestige or material benefits. A utopian reformer may well feel justified in using more Machiavellian techniques to overcome such opposition. Certain utopians, such as Babeuf and certain Marxists, have certainly accepted the need for violence.

Since such coercion is then justified on the grounds that people's 'true interests' are in fact being promoted, they may well deny that their actions constitute violence or coercion in the strict sense.⁴² It is this twilight zone of moral justification that often contributes to the inability of certain utopians to recognise the hurt they cause to the people they are trying to 'improve' - a phenomenon which has been all too frequent in the South African context.

C. Utopianism in South Africa: Towards the application of the concept

In the South African context, the growing phenomenon of white poverty in the early part of the 20th century created extraordinary existential anxieties for Afrikaner intellectuals. As Kenney noted, African poverty had always been a typical feature of the South African way of life, but white indigence was a different proposition altogether. Thousands of unskilled Afrikaners lost their foothold in agriculture and streamed to the

⁴² B. Goodwin and K. Taylor, The Politics of Utopia (1982), p. 104.

cities in mostly futile attempts to better themselves. This produced, as far as Afrikaner thinkers were concerned, the prospect of an unacceptable social levelling between blacks and whites in the cities.⁴³

In their response to modernity, Afrikaner thinkers sought inspiration in important preconceptions which had become established in Afrikaner culture, most notably that of civil religion. In terms of this doctrine, God imbued all history with ultimate meaning. As Moodie noted, the Lord of Afrikanerdom was sovereign and intensely active, busy at every turning point in the affairs of nations and men. One of God's priorities was the selection and direction of specific nations for specific historical tasks:

'Our history is the greatest masterpiece of the centuries. We hold this nationhood as our due for it was given us by the Architect of the universe ... Indeed, the history of the Afrikaner reveals a will and a determination which makes one feel that Afrikanerdom is not the work of men but the creation of God'.⁴⁴

Such a view of history was strengthened by a constant sense of collective threat by British imperialism, capitalism, liberal individualism and communism. The themes of sacrifice, suffering and martyrdom paradoxically strengthened Afrikaner nationalism, since the Christian tradition postulates that a caring God tests his innocent servants, and righteous suffering may be taken as assurance of God's favour.⁴⁵

These powerful theological notions had important secular and political consequences. For example, Afrikaner nationalists'

⁴³ H. Kenney, Architect of Apartheid (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 1980), p. 25.

⁴⁴ T. Dunbar Moodie, The Rise of Afrikanerdom (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1974), pp. 1, 11.

⁴⁵ T. D. Moodie, The Rise of Afrikanerdom (1974), pp. 12, 15.

politics was premised on the ethical primacy of cultural and linguistic factors, and most notably, of Afrikaner communal loyalties. 'Their whole approach ... was to emphasise the evident differences which existed between the white language groups and, when possible, to exacerbate them'.⁴⁶ Cultural separatism became a sacred duty, and anything threatening Afrikaner separateness was regarded as demonic. Republicanism was the logical outcome of such sentiments. Afrikaans thinkers interpreted the sufferings of their people as merely a prelude to republican resurrection.⁴⁷

A key figure in the history of Afrikaner nationalism was Dr. H. F. Verwoerd. In the words of the historian Henry Kenney,

'The Afrikaners have had their fair share of strong leaders, dedicated, frequently humourless, invariably God-fearing, but none with quite as intense a sense of mission as this immigrant from the Netherlands'.⁴⁸

The question of Verwoerd's missionary zeal to achieve certain goals has recently produced some disagreement in academic analyses. In contrast to Kenney's interpretation, John Lazar has portrayed Verwoerd as a sophisticated political realist.⁴⁹ Verwoerd was indeed a highly talented politician, with an intuitive grasp of the cut and thrust of political life. He appreciated power, and enjoyed wielding it. In fact, we can even claim (with some irony) that Verwoerd approximated Hannah Arendt's ideal of the politically-involved person, fully and passionately engaged in public life. In the case of Verwoerd, his sense of duty, to the entire South African society as well

⁴⁶ H. Kenney, The Architect of Apartheid (1980), p. 44.

⁴⁷ T. D. Moodie, The Rise of Afrikanerdom (1974), p. 13-4.

⁴⁸ The Architect of Apartheid (1980), p. 20.

⁴⁹ J. Lazar, 'Verwoerd versus the "Visionaries": The South African Bureau of Racial Affairs (Sabra) and Apartheid, 1948-1961' (Balliol College, Oxford University, n.d.).

as Afrikaners, was unsurpassed.⁵⁰

In this chapter, we will attempt to reconcile Kenney and Lazar's interpretations of Verwoerd. On the one hand, Verwoerd did have utopian visions of the Good Life; on the other, he employed pragmatic forms of political conduct, which were often characterised by extremism ('the ends justifying the means') and by coercive paternalism.

Verwoerdianism can be regarded as an understandable response to the problems of modernity.⁵¹ Verwoerd, as a young intellectual, was appalled at the existing state of race relations:

'Europeans and non-Europeans scattered and mixed up about the whole of South Africa; Europeans and non-Europeans travelling mixed up in the trams and the trains; Europeans and non-Europeans are already mixing in hotels and places where meals are served; engaged more and more in taking possession of the theatres and the streets; engaged in devastating the reserves; engaged in seeking learning which they do not use in the service of their own people, but which they use in order to cross the borderline of European life, to become traitors to their own people'.⁵²

Verwoerd did not have to construct such a notion of ethical life from scratch. The Verwoerdian style of politics drew sustenance

⁵⁰ F. Barnard, 13 Years with Dr. H.F. Verwoerd (Johannesburg: Voortrekkerpers, 1967), p. 13.

⁵¹ The term 'Verwoerdianism' is used here to denote a group of fairly self-conscious supporters of Verwoerd. Their set of beliefs was significantly different from older variants of Afrikaner nationalism (such as Hertzogism, which advocated an eventual reconciliation with English South Africans), and D.F. Malan (whose more fervent nationalism stopped short of republicanism). For the purposes of this thesis, the 'Verwoerdians' will refer to Afrikaans officials in the Department of Native Affairs, who worked enthusiastically towards realising the apartheid and homeland ideal.

⁵² H. Kenney, Architect of Apartheid (1980), pp. 78-9; quoting Senate Debates (1948), col. 249.

from the rich mythology and mystery which surrounded Afrikaner civic history. In turn, it produced an idiosyncratic approach to public life, characterised by a sense of mission and overriding importance. It also provided a justification of political action in terms of universal divine beneficence, as opposed to blatant material and secular interests. This combination of qualities evolved into a powerful form of political practice, and one which we will characterise as **political utopianism**.

Verwoerdianism as a utopian doctrine of social progress shares company with numerous optimistic Enlightenment and Marxist theories which depicted existing society as an inferior state and aspired to greater social perfection. The notion of utopia is a **telescoped version of such doctrines of social progress**. Utopianism offers a precise account of an imaginary future susceptible of realisation in the foreseeable future. This involves an immanent break, or rupture, with history. 'Utopianism thus offers a specific programme and immediate hope for improvement and thereby discourages quiescence or fatalism'.⁵³

Several of the characteristics of utopia outlined earlier can be applied to Verwoerdianism. Verwoerd was a voluntarist who wanted to transform society in important ways. He was never content to restrict himself to academic contemplation. For him, active participation in public life was the only way in which he could give positive expression to his ideals for the Afrikaner people.⁵⁴

Unlike his predecessors, Malan and Strijdom, who remained content to extend established forms of segregation, Dr. Verwoerd's primary vision was an Afrikaner republic. The tradition of

⁵³ B. Goodwin and K. Taylor, The Politics of Utopia (1982), p. 26.

⁵⁴ H. Kenny, Architect of Apartheid (1980), p. 27.

republicanism to which Verwoerd appealed stretched back to the republics of Natalia, the Orange Free State, and the Transvaal during the 19th Century. According to this tradition, a republic represented a fairly homogenous general will, actualised in a unicameral Volksraad. As T.R.H. Davenport commented, 'the myth of the white nation with an exclusive claim to rights survived remarkably in the Free State, where at any given moment the black population was at least double the white in size'.⁵⁵

The Afrikaner Nationalist republican response to the turmoil of the present was fundamentally pre-modern and romantic. Saul Dubow has perceptively described these qualities. He argues that the notions of 'race' and 'volk' were deeply ambiguous:

'Conceived of both in biological and cultural terms, these concepts were shrouded in a quasi-mystical language and reinforced by the influence of a brand of Romanticism which openly distrusted rational thought and the universalistic ideas associated with the Enlightenment. The portrayal of the voortrekkers as the embodiment of Afrikaner virtues was deeply influenced by such ideas. Their heroic pre-industrial past, their connection with the soil, and their wisdom born of experience, were all essential elements in this construct. Experience, instinct and tradition were key validating principles'.⁵⁶

Verwoerdians had a specific conception of human nature. Dr. Verwoerd explicitly claimed that republicanism was 'rooted in the nature of the Afrikaans people'.⁵⁷ Similarly, the writer D.F. Malherbe argued the case for mother-tongue education on such grounds:

'Thus mother-tongue education is the only way to a healthy development, that is a development which

⁵⁵ T. R. H. Davenport, South Africa: A Modern History (London: Macmillan, 1987), p. 84.

⁵⁶ S. Dubow, 'Afrikaner Nationalism, Apartheid, and the Conceptualisation of Race' (Seminar, African Studies Institute, 1991), p. 29.

⁵⁷ H. Kenney, Architect of Apartheid (1980), p. 56; quoting The Transvaler, 23 January 1942.

answers to the God-given law of the life of the soul. Whoever meddles with this law, whether parent, or teacher, or state, transgresses against the holiness of human nature and thereby against the ordinance of God'.⁵⁸

For the Verwoerdians, people's God-given human nature could only be actualised within a communal context. J. Keyter, a Christian Nationalist theorist, referred to 'the inner soul-force of the ethnic community'.⁵⁹ The Afrikaner community was portrayed as an organic whole, whose interlocking parts formed an indivisible ethical entity.

This organic view of society was strengthened by the Kuyperian theological notion of 'sovereignty in a particular sphere'. It was postulated by theorists such as Dr. G. Cronje and Dr. A.P. Treurnicht that society consisted of various organic social realms, such as the Church, the individual, the family, and business, each with 'positive and God-given rights'. These rights would then be protected and promoted by the nation in the sense of mutual duties to society.⁶⁰

Dr. Verwoerd translated this totalist vision into practical reality when he maintained that

'Apartheid comprises a whole multiplicity of phenomena. It comprises the political sphere; it is necessary in the social sphere; it is aimed at in Church matters; it is relevant to every sphere of life.'⁶¹

These Verwoerdian ideas about communal ethical life were strengthened by the sociological functionalism of his colleague,

⁵⁸ Quoted in T. D. Moodie, The Rise of Afrikanerdom (1974), p. 239.

⁵⁹ Quoted in T. D. Moodie, The Rise of Afrikanerdom (1974), p. 241.

⁶⁰ W.A. de Klerk, The Puritans in Africa (London: Bok Books, 1975), p. 215.

⁶¹ T.R. H. Davenport South Africa (1987), p. 375.

Dr. Werner Eiselen, who became the Secretary of Native Affairs when Dr. Verwoerd held the office of Minister. According to functionalist principles, societies were organic wholes, consisting of functionally interdependent parts. Furthermore, functionalism was associated in Eiselen's mind with cultural relativism, in terms of which each society had its own distinct character and values. It was thus futile to attempt to impose one's own way of life on people who had grown up with a completely different set of values.

The Verwoeradians' strong sense of communal bonds implied a desire for Afrikaner separatism and self-sufficiency. Their sense of group identity would be fostered and reinforced by membership of wholly Afrikaans bodies, and membership in non-Afrikaner institutions reduced.⁶² In such an intimate social setting, a 'closed' sense of morality, as defined as a set of special obligations to one's own community, tended to develop.

Correspondingly, the negative side of individualism was often emphasised. Kenney has pointed to the relative absence, in Afrikaner Nationalist thought, of Western political notions about the supremacy of the individual whose rights were guaranteed by the state.⁶³ Kenney probably overstates his case, since there was significant room for pragmatic individualism within the democracy of the Afrikaner volk; however, there was indeed little appreciation of individualism in the formal tenets of Afrikaner nationalism. For Afrikaner nationalists, the individual or man as a single entity was an abstraction which did not exist.⁶⁴ As we outlined above, utopians tend to under-emphasise individual choice as a means to virtue; instead, the achievement of happiness becomes the overriding goal. Such happiness could be created by social engineering: In Verwoerd's words, 'The policy of separate development is designed for happiness, security and the stability provided by their home

⁶² H. Kenney, Architect of Apartheid (1980), p. 46.

⁶³ H. Kenney, Architect of Apartheid (1980), p. 36.

⁶⁴ W.A. De Klerk The Puritans in Africa (1975), p. 205.

language and administration for the Bantu as well as the Whites'.⁶⁵

Verwoerd also had some reservations about capitalism. His view may have been inspired by the Afrikaner nationalists of the 1930s, who stressed the plight of the 'small man', advocated co-operative structures, and who strongly criticised 'parasitical, exploitative foreign-capitalist interests'.⁶⁶ The Ekonomiese Volkskongres of 1939 proposed a variety of utopian co-operative schemes, which also illustrated a suspicion of the naked profit principle.⁶⁷

The utopian dimension of Verwoerdianism was also reflected in its epistemological predilections. Kenney notes that Verwoerd had a passion for system. 'It was a pedantic approach to race relations; once the framework had been found it was hardly necessary to think: everything followed automatically from the simplicities imposed upon a complex world'.⁶⁸ Verwoerd was informed by a doctrinaire need for ideological consistency, irrespective of the human cost and no matter how absurd it made him appear. He paid equal attention to the critical and the superficial in public life. All details had to be pursued in equal measure. According to Kenney, 'Verwoerd ... was a born ideologue, and he had all the ideologue's impatience with whatever did not find room within his blueprint'.⁶⁹ As Verwoerd responded to his critics in Parliament,

⁶⁵ 'Message to the People of South Africa', SABC Broadcast, 3 September 1958; quoted in W.A. de Klerk, The Puritans of Africa (1975), p. 241.

⁶⁶ D.F. Malan, House of Assembly Debates (1942); quoted in J. Lazar, 'The Afrikaner Nationalist Alliance and Capitalism, 1948-1961' (Oxford University, n.d.), p. 2.

⁶⁷ J. Lazar, 'The Afrikaner Nationalist Alliance and capitalism', p. 3.

⁶⁸ H. Kenney, Architect of Apartheid (1980), p. 116.

⁶⁹ H. Kenney, Architect of Apartheid (1980), p. 142.

'I do not know why when one tries to organize anything carefully and well so that that object one envisages can be achieved, the hon. member should regard it as wrongly inflicting a system upon people. Do we not all try to be systematic in our everyday activities?'

⁷⁰

This approach to systematic thought lent itself to an urge to regulate. To some extent, this urge originated from the Puritan spirit: 'They were going to construct a moral world in which everything would become malleable, capable of being shaped and combined at will'.⁷¹ Verwoerd had little trust in the 'hidden hand' of free markets, and he never lost his faith in state controls.⁷² This demonstrated a fatal lack of understanding of economic forces, which would ultimately be a major reason for the failure of Verwoerdian homeland utopias.

As regards democratic practice, Verwoerdianism was an extraordinary blend of authoritarianism and democracy. Verwoerd's admirers tend to deny that he was an autocrat at all. There was indeed room for democracy in Verwoerd's envisaged republic. This political style was derived from the Voortrekker republics of the 19th century. The President would be chosen by all white citizens, and the Volksraad would remain the central feature of government. This elective principle is an important distinguishing factor between Afrikaner nationalism and Nazism or fascism, with which it is often compared.⁷³ 'The Afrikaner political tradition, Verwoerd never tired of saying, was a democratic one and so it would remain under the republic'.⁷⁴ As we shall see below, Verwoerd also intended the African homeland polities to be democratic (although not necessarily in a Western

⁷⁰ Quoted in W.A. de Klerk, The Puritans in Africans (1975), p. 246.

⁷¹ W.A. de Klerk, The Puritans of Africa (1975), p. 233.

⁷² H. Kenney, Architect of Apartheid (1980), p. 30-1.

⁷³ H. Kenney, Architect of Apartheid (1980), p. 58.

⁷⁴ H. Kenney, Architect of Apartheid (1980), p. 62.

sense).

Many Afrikaners did not have to be coerced into the new republic. The sense of a shared heroic past in the form of the Voortrekker republics offered an important form of emotional commitment. In the words of Verwoerd,

'The Afrikaner has his own political approach, born of a history of suffering and oppression. This is his Christian republican nationalism. This political faith encompasses the whole broad circle of the radical desires for reform with which he desires to rebuild his country. In this most nationally conscious Afrikaners agree ... This is so not just because of the content of a programme, but owing to deep-rooted inner conviction'.⁷⁵

The emotional appeal of the Afrikaner republic was no doubt strengthened by Verwoerd's personality. Those who came under his influence found him irresistible⁷⁶, and his private secretary noted that Verwoerd 'always made me feel that I was working with him towards a common goal'.⁷⁷ Davenport describes Verwoerd in the following terms:

'A man of benign appearance, he both mesmerised and dominated his political followers to an extent not achieved by any of his Nationalist predecessors. Intellectually, he stood head and shoulders above most of his contemporaries in Parliament, while his self-assurance and his didactic manner led many to believe that he really could conjure into being the political objectives of his fertile imagination'.⁷⁸

However, this conception of democracy was not incompatible with powerful leadership, which formed part of the political ethos of Afrikaner nationalism. As Dr. P.J. Meyer stated, 'The future

⁷⁵ H. Kenney, Architect of Apartheid (1980), pp. 56-7; quoting The Transvaler, 8 August 1941.

⁷⁶ H. Kenney, Architect of Apartheid (1980), p. 35.

⁷⁷ F. Barnard, 13 Years with Dr. H.F. Verwoerd (1967), p. 17.

⁷⁸ T.R.H. Davenport, South Africa (1987), p. 389).

Afrikaner national state will be a leadership state, an authoritative state, and a corporative state'.⁷⁹

The sense of standing alone against a hostile world plays an important role in strengthening utopians' claims to leadership. Verwoerd's sense of personal mission must have been strengthened by the constant opposition he encountered, from within his party, as well as without. Verwoerd has been recorded as saying, in reference to a letter from a hostile newspaper editor: 'My enemies' attacks, no matter how virulent, do not cause me the slightest uneasiness...'.⁸⁰ Verwoerd regarded criticism as proof of the rectitude of his Herculean mission.

While Verwoerd postulated a democratic republic for Afrikaners, his treatment of political opponents was harsh and uncompromising. A draft constitution for a future South African republic, which was published under Verwoerd's auspices, maintained that 'The propagation of any state policy and the existence of any political organisation which is in strife with the fulfilment of [the] Christian National vocation of the life of the people is forbidden'.⁸¹ Verwoerd never indicated that his strong-arm methods ever caused him much distress or soul-

⁷⁹ P. J. Meyer, Demokrasie of Volkstaat (1942), p. 29; Quoted in W.A. de Klerk The Puritans in Africa (1975), p. 215.

⁸⁰ F. Barnard, 13 Years with Dr. H.F. Verwoerd, (1967), pp. 31-32.

⁸¹ H. Kenney, Architect of Apartheid (1980), p. 58; quoting Die Transvaler, 23 January 1942.

searching, and was frequently willing sacrifice civil liberties.⁸² His sense of being under threat from all kinds of enemies also led him to conceal crucial issues from public audiences.⁸³ W.A. de Klerk has linked this phenomenon to the Puritan heritage:

'[I]mpaired vision itself is the inevitable result of fixing one's gaze on Utopia. It shines so brightly on the distant horizon that the eyes - especially the inner eye - is affected ... In its limpid purity all perspectives will, in the end, be restored. Everything done, however hard or inhuman, will be discovered to have been fully justified ... For all radicals of Puritan lineage, ... matters of morality are decided by the knowledge that God himself has approved'.⁸⁴

A certain moral extremism is characteristic of utopianism. Verwoerd's total commitment to the cause of apartheid has frequently been noted. 'For him the supreme moral imperative was loyalty to and identification with the Afrikaner people. This is the ultimate logic of nationalism, that the claims of the nation override all other claims, even those of humanity'.⁸⁵

Such a sense of duty engendered a strong form of paternalistic conduct. Verwoerd regarded himself explicitly as 'a father of his children'. For Verwoerd, the African was in reality still a child who would take a long time to grow to political maturity. In the meantime, Africans needed white trusteeship, which would as far as possible prevent the decay of tribal solidarity and authority.⁸⁶ Helpful officials would assist, supervise and

⁸² H. Kenney, Architect of Apartheid (1980), p. 31.

⁸³ F. Barnard, 13 Years with Dr. H.F. Verwoerd (1967), p. 44.

⁸⁴ W.A de Klerk, The Puritans in Africa (1975), p. 262.

⁸⁵ H. Kenney, Architect of Apartheid (1980), p. 65.

⁸⁶ H. Kenney, Architect of Apartheid (1980), p. 71.

advise homeland development. African democracy would, for the foreseeable future, be a guided democracy.⁸⁷ Homeland residents would be protected against the onslaughts of white capital, to safeguard their path of economic self-development.⁸⁸ Appropriate forms of education were also important. Tribal authorities would only acquire greater rights and responsibilities as they showed themselves able to govern.⁸⁹

D. Mature Verwoerdianism: The homelands policy

Verwoerd did not originally envisage African political rights in South Africa. During the earlier parts of his career, his sense of urgency in establishing a white Republic did not translate into an urgency in developing adequate political outlets for Africans.⁹⁰ Verwoerd's utopianism was mainly conceived for the benefit of Afrikaners. This was not surprising. The tradition of Afrikaner civil theology tended to portray the African as 'a ferocious barbarian who resisted the intruding Christian civilisation and caused the Afrikaner's blood to flow in streams'.⁹¹ In Biblical imagery, the African was regarded as a Canaanite, a son of Ham, a hewer of wood and a drawer of water. In the heritage of Afrikaner nationalism, the predicament of urban Afrikaners was usually conceived as a second Blood River. As far as politics was concerned, these notions translated directly into the legitimacy of white rule and racial separation.⁹² As such, the racial doctrines of Afrikaner civil theology were part of a pre-modern social consciousness - a

⁸⁷ H. Kenney, Architect of Apartheid (1980), p. 95.

⁸⁸ H. Kenney, Architect of Apartheid (1980), p. 110.

⁸⁹ H. Kenney, Architect of Apartheid (1980), p. 130.

⁹⁰ H. Kenney, Architect of Apartheid (1980), p. 76.

⁹¹ D.F. Malan, quoted in T.D. Moodie, The Rise of Afrikanerdom (1974), p. 248.

⁹² T.D. Moodie, The Rise of Afrikanerdom (1974), pp. 245-8.

consciousness which would simultaneously enhance with Verwoerdian utopianism and paradoxically place obstacles to its practical implementation in the modern world.

Consequently, the 1942 draft republican constitution, in which Verwoerd's hand can easily be seen, had almost nothing to say about Africans. The draft constitution emphatically provided for segregation between the races, but said very little about the political future of Africans. In Kenney's words, 'they were part of the scenery but not actors in their own right'.⁹³ Verwoerd's initial statements regarding race relations did not differ much from conventional segregationism and trusteeship:

'This segregation policy, which also means protection of and care for the Native in the land of the Afrikaner, but decisively rejects any attempts at equality, gives the Native an opportunity to develop what is his own, so that he can have pride and self-respect as a Native, instead of being continually humiliated as a failed and imitation white'.⁹⁴

It was only in the late 1950s, when the tide of independence was sweeping Africa, that it became apparent to Verwoerd that South Africa would need a political bulwark against African claims to full political rights. It was then that Verwoerd came under the influence of more purist Afrikaner nationalist thinkers, most notably those affiliated to the South African Bureau of Racial Affairs (SABRA). As early as 1951, leading figures in SABRA argued for the provision of geographical areas to serve as the 'national and political homes for the different native communities'. Such proposals were strongly motivated on moral grounds, for they would provide outlets for Africans' economic development and political aspirations. Consequently, SABRA members argued for the rapid provision of sufficient land as well as political rights for Africans, and strong action had to be

⁹³ H. Kenney, Architects of Apartheid (1980), p. 58.

⁹⁴ H. Kenney, Architect of Apartheid (1980), p. 70; quoting Die Transvaler, September 1943.

taken to halt further racial integration in the cities.⁹⁵

The SABRA intellectuals were willing, in true utopian fashion, to make sacrifices for their ideals. They recognised that whites could not expect to be provided with a cheap supply of African labour indefinitely.⁹⁶ According to a SABRA spokesman,

'Total apartheid will mean enormous sacrifices. It will mean sweat and effort to the utmost and we cannot draw the veil over that fact. It can also not happen within five or ten years, but I would like to say this: we do not have generations or centuries at our disposal'.⁹⁷

Verwoerd did not immediately show interest in SABRA's far-reaching goals. He appeared to believe that the immediate application of full territorial segregation was impractical.⁹⁸ In 1952, he publicly dismissed territorial apartheid as 'SABRA idealism'. The Department of Native Affairs remained content with the principle that the reserves should continue to supply manpower for industrial development. The Department also showed little interest in consolidating the reserves by buying land - at least partly because the Government was concerned about the response of Afrikaner farmers to consolidation. While certain SABRA leaders pegged the maximum time period for the achievement of total apartheid at somewhere between 20 and 50 years, Verwoerd still maintained in 1955 that total apartheid could take 300 years to accomplish.⁹⁹

Verwoerd's caution was also a product of his sensitivity to some of the economic needs of cities and farms, especially where these

⁹⁵ J. Lazar, 'Verwoerd versus the "Visionaries"', pp. 6-8.

⁹⁶ J. Lazar, 'Verwoerd versus the "Visionaries"', p. 10.

⁹⁷ J. Lazar, 'Verwoerd versus the "Visionaries"', p. 19; quoting Willem Landman of SABRA, 1956.

⁹⁸ H. Kenney, Architect of Apartheid (1980), p. 76.

⁹⁹ J. Lazar, 'Verwoerd versus the "Visionaries"', p. 18.

needs were articulated by powerful economic constituencies. The Department even experienced difficulty in selling the notion of 'border industries' to the nationalist rank-and-file.¹⁰⁰ Verwoerd publicly admitted that the government never intended, 'within an appreciable period', to remove Africans from white areas, 'away from the farms, and the homes, and the industries'.¹⁰¹ In addition, his lukewarm economic policies in the homelands saved a great deal of taxpayer's money.

However, one reason for Dr. Verwoerd's gradualism needs to be emphasised. He had to keep an eye on his own Afrikaner constituency, which had some difficulty in envisaging African political rights. For a society accustomed to seeing Africans as less than full citizens, the notion of autonomous African polities would have seemed unusual at best, and threatening at worst. In practice, therefore, his gradualism meant that blacks could be deprived of rights in 'white South Africa' before their tribal democracies had fully blossomed.¹⁰²

However, it was only a matter of time before his Afrikaner republicanism developed an appreciation of the importance of autonomous African political structures. He had always ascribed South Africa's problems to the fact that separate nation-states did not exist for the various ethnic groups:

'Niemand sal ontken dat vir die naturel sowel as vir

¹⁰⁰ J. Lazar, 'Verwoerd versus the "Visionaries"', p. 28.

¹⁰¹ J. Lazar, 'Verwoerd versus the "Visionaries"', p. 17; quoting House of Assembly Debates (1955).

¹⁰² Kenney, Architect (1980), p. 76. Even SABRA made the moral claim that, until the 'Bantu states' were able to make provision for the needs of urban Africans, it was morally incumbent on the government to scrap or soften the regulations controlling urban blacks. Verwoerd's faction eventually moved against the visionaries in SABRA by signing up advocates of mainstream nationalist policy as members. In 1961, when the new executive was elected, the visionaries were outvoted (J. Lazar, 'Verwoerd versus the "isionaries"', pp. 37-9).

die blanke volkome skeiding die ideaal sou gewees het as dit so in die geskiedenis gekom het nie. As hier 'n blanke Suid-Afrika was, soos daar 'n blanke Engeland en 'n blanke Nederland of 'n blanke Frankryk is, en as daar erens vir die naturelle 'n naturellestaat was, en as hierdie blanke staat ekonomies en andersins selfgenoegsaam kom ontwikkel het soos daardie Europese state op hul eie ontwikkel het, dan sou ons die wrywing en die moeilikhede wat ons vandag het, nie gehad het nie'.¹⁰³

By the late 1950s, the pressure of Africans' political claims in the rest of Africa prompted Dr. Verwoerd to accept the political dimension of modernity, viz. the notion of formal political equality. Dr. Verwoerd correctly recognised that the United Party had no coherent vision at all. While the UP wanted to extend African political rights, they certainly did not contemplate full equality. The UP still envisaged that whites would remain in power on some kinds of grounds, whether inherent superiority or higher cultural sophistication.¹⁰⁴ The SABRA idealists offered a coherent way out of the impasse in which white politics had fallen, and Dr. Verwoerd borrowed liberally from SABRA's visions.¹⁰⁵ If the Afrikaners wanted to remain ethnically exclusive and politically independent, he reasoned, then surely the same desire must animate Africans as well. In the light of his utopian visions for the Afrikaner volk, it is not surprising that he began to interpret the future of other ethnic minorities in South Africa in much the same way.¹⁰⁶ Once

¹⁰³ Address to the Senate, 3 September 1948; Quoted in A.N. Pelzer (ed), Verwoerd aan die Woord (Afkrikaanse Pers-Boekhandel, 1966), p. 1.

¹⁰⁴ Address to Natives Representative Council, 5 December 1950; Quoted in Pelzer, Verwoerd aan die Woord (1966), p. 21.

¹⁰⁵ J. Lazar, 'Verwoerd and the "Visionaries"', p. 45.

¹⁰⁶ Verwoerd, however, did not show the same emotional zeal in regards to black 'tribal' homelands as that with which he pursued Afrikaner republicanism. For Verwoerd, being an Afrikaner, the achievement of other people's utopias was more a matter of intellectual consistency than emotional commitment.

again, he could draw on concepts developed by Afrikaner nationalist thinkers, such as Dr. G. Cronje:

'[T]he Boer people have themselves gone through the crucible of imperialist and capitalist domination and exploitation ... Their national life and culture have been disrupted ... The Boer nation can therefore fully understand the sufferings of the Bantu. It is that same imperialism and capitalism, having them believe that the foreign is better than what is their own, which seeks to destroy their tribal life...'¹⁰⁷

Verwoerd's social beliefs provided fertile soil for the culminating political vision of homeland development in South Africa. Verwoerd always believed that a people had institutions peculiarly suited to itself, not readily transferable to others.¹⁰⁸ By 1943, Verwoerd articulated a vision of economic development along ethnic lines: 'To each of them, from the tribal chief to the ordinary Native, the chance is being given to accomplish a fair and reasonable development within his own national group'.¹⁰⁹ Gradually, Verwoerd developed a full-blown conception of political separatism.

By 1959, he believed that separate development would produce abundance and harmony for all:

'My belief is that the development of South Africa ...will create so much friendship, so much gratitude, so many mutual interests in the propulsive development that there will be no danger of hostile Bantu states, but that there will arise what I call a commonwealth, ... linked together by common interests in this southern part of Africa...'.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Dr. G. Cronje, 'n Tuiste vir die Nageslag (1945); Quoted in W.A. de Klerk The Puritans in Africa (1975), p. 214.

¹⁰⁸ H. Kenney, Architect of Apartheid (1980), p. 71.

¹⁰⁹ Kenney, Architect of Apartheid (1980), p. 77; quoting Senate Debates (1948), col. 242.

¹¹⁰ Quoted in T.R.H. Davenport, South Africa (1987), p. 391.

In 1959, the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act was passed, which allowed for traditional authorities in the homelands to be recognised. By now, Verwoerd explicitly referred to the possibility of full independence for these areas.

This vision had important implications for the cities and towns located outside the homelands. African residents would only be 'visitors', without political or equal social rights with the whites. For Verwoerd and his Secretary of Native Affairs, Dr. Eiselen, urbanisation was dangerous. Continued exposure to an alien way of life threatened the stability of the tribal system, the organic whole which had traditionally given meaning to the life of the African.¹¹¹ An African person who had lost his or her tribal identity was a person without a community, a rootless individual who would contribute to social alienation and unrest.¹¹² In terms of Verwoerdian social ontology, such rootless individuals still belonged in some ultimate sense to a tribal community, to which they had to be returned for their own good. Such notions regarding people's essential nature inevitably led to claims regarding their 'real interests'.¹¹³

These anthropological machinations account for Dr. Verwoerd's almost total lack of concern for the distress caused to black urban residents, who had to live under strict influx, employment and housing controls. For the Government, Africans in town were of no more significance than labour units. In this way, it attempted to evade a problem by defining it in such a way that it could hardly exist.¹¹⁴ Africans were in the city, but not of the city. Their essential identity was constituted by other

¹¹¹ H. Kenney, Architect of Apartheid (1980), p. 88.

¹¹² H. Kenney, Architect of Apartheid (1980), p. 127.

¹¹³ According to Dr. Verwoerd, the Natives Representative Council was a good example of **not** representing the real interests of Africans (Address to N.R.C., 5 December 1950; Quoted in A.N. Pelzer (ed), Verwoerd aan die Woord (1966), p. 17).

¹¹⁴ H. Kenney, Architect of Apartheid (1980), p. 133.

forms of social relationships.

Eiselen's functionalism also reinforced Verwoerd's tendency to think in terms of grand designs. In 1952, he tried to show the Senate 'how the various Acts, Bills, and also public statements which I have made, all fit into a pattern and together form a single constructive plan'.¹¹⁵ At the heart of the pattern was the principle that Africans differed from whites; and that Africans differed from one another according to their ethnic identity. Full-blown Verwoerdianism was an attempt to reconstruct community boundaries on rational and coherent principles.¹¹⁶

In the process, Verwoerd underplayed the significance of economic systems or industrial imperatives. Once he accepted the vision of homeland political development, it was as though he managed to simply look through practical obstacles as if they were not there. His eyes were fixed on a different realm of social meaning altogether. This realm was an ethical one; for Verwoerd, the ultimate problem was that of the social relations between people.

This kind of ethical life was in many ways utopian, according to the characteristics of utopia that we outlined above. First, it was based on a utopian notion of freedom through organic collective social development:

'...[D]ie sleutel tot die werklike vooruitgang van die Bantoe-gemeenskap as geheel ... [is] gelee in die erkenning van die stamstelsel as die afspringplek waarvandaan die Bantoe op natuurlike wyse deur die dinamiese elemente daarvan in te span, op 'n aardeie fondament na 'n hoer peil van kultuur en selfbestuur al meer en meer kan opstyg'.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ H. Kenney, Architect of Apartheid (1980), p. 116; quoting Senate Debates (1952), col. 3588.

¹¹⁶ H. Kenney, Architect of Apartheid (1980), p. 88.

¹¹⁷ Address to the Senate, 30 May 1952; Quoted in A.N. Pelzer (ed), Verwoerd aan die Woord (1966), p. 35.

Second, Verwoerd did not regard his system as anti-democratic. Indeed, he intended to restore 'the natural Native democracy'.¹¹⁸ Democracy would be restored in the form of a three-tier hierarchical system of authority, including local tribal authorities (chief or headmen and their councillors), regional authorities, and territorial authorities for the entire ethnic group. However, for Dr. Verwoerd, African freedom and justice were perceived as quite compatible with the absence of Western democratic principles; hence African tribal democracy would dispense with Western-type processes such as ballot-boxes.¹¹⁹

Third, Verwoerd's scheme also entailed strong leadership by enterprising Africans themselves, who should serve their people and educate them to their real economic salvation¹²⁰:

'Vir die huidige leier van die Bantoebevolking is samewerking om die apartheidsbeleid ... uit te voer een van die grootste dienste aan sy volk wat hy kan lewer. Insteede van vae hersenskimme na te jaag en te probeer om die blanke se gelyk te wees in 'n deurmekaar gemeenskap met verwarde ideale en onvermydelike botsing, kan hy 'n volksman wees wat sy eie mense help lei op die pad van vrede en voorspoed'.¹²¹

Fourth, Dr. Verwoerd portrayed homeland life as self-contained and self-regulating:

'Namate egter 'n florerende gemeenskap in sulke gebiede ontstaan, sal die behoefte ontwikkel aan die eie onderwysers, die eie handelaars, die eie kerke, die eie vakmanne, die eie landboudeskundiges, die eie leiers van plaaslike en algemene bestuursliggame. Met ander woorde, die hele superstruktuur van administratiewe en professionele beroepsmense wat in

¹¹⁸ H. Kenney, Architect of Apartheid (1980), p. 94; quoting House of Assembly Debates (1951), col. 9807.

¹¹⁹ H. Kenney, Architect of Apartheid (1980), p. 96.

¹²⁰ Address to N.R.C., 5 December 1950; Quoted in A.N. Pelzer (ed), Verwoerd aan die Woord (1966), p. 19.

¹²¹ Address to NRC, 5 December 1960; Quoted in A.N. Pelzer (ed), Verwoerd aan die Woord (1966), p. 24-5.

elke voorspoedige gemeenskap ontstaan, sal dan nodig wees'.¹²²

‡

A fifth typically utopian feature, the emphasis on harmony, is very evident in Dr. Verwoerd's speeches. As he told the Senate in 1948, 'Die hoofdoel is oral verwydering van wrywing'.¹²³ The spectre of conflict between African and white was a very real anxiety for Verwoerd. His descriptions of contemporary social conditions were replete with alarmed references to social discord, 'tension', 'clashes', 'resistance', 'grievances', 'unhappiness' and 'misery'.¹²⁴

A sixth utopian characteristic of the Verwoerdian spirit was its emphasis on benevolence, beneficence and generosity. For him, apartheid was not a policy of repression, but a policy that aimed at justice for all: 'Ons ... is bereid dat die nie-blankes in Suid-Afrika ook vir hulself ontwikkelingskanse moet kry. Ons gun hulle 'n deel van die land'.¹²⁵ This notion of justice was strengthened by the insistence by the Dutch Reformed Church that the 'native question' be resolved in an ethical way, and justified on Christian grounds - a notion which was expressed in the term 'trusteeship' ('voogdyskap').¹²⁶

A seventh utopian hallmark was Verwoerd's belief that the achievement of the Good Society would involve some sacrifices. As far as Africans were concerned, this translated into an unwillingness to 'spoon-feed' Africans through high levels of

¹²² Address to NRC, 5 December 1950; Quoted in A.N. Pelzer (ed), Verwoerd aan die Woord (1966), p. 23.

¹²³ Quoted in A.N. Pelzer (ed), Verwoerd aan die Woord (1966), p. 14.

¹²⁴ See his address to the N.R.C., 5 December 1950; Quoted in A.N. Pelzer (ed), Verwoerd aan die Woord (1966), p. 20.

¹²⁵ Address to Senate, 3 September 1948; Quoted in A.N. Pelzer (ed), Verwoerd aan die Woord (1966), p. 16.

¹²⁶ N. Rhodie and H. Venter, Die Apartheidsgedagte (Cape Town: Haum, 1959), p. 188.

state expenditure. He argued that blacks should themselves be largely responsible for financing their own development and education.¹²⁷ This argument probably found strength in the Afrikaners' own experience of upliftment through their own efforts. Since he intuitively believed in a 'national character' and a national strength of will, the expectation that poverty-stricken 'tribal' communities should uplift themselves could not have seemed unreasonable.

Verwoerd's personal experiences strengthened his intellectual convictions. As Minister of Native Affairs, he travelled extensively throughout the country on visits to African chiefdoms and homesteads. There he was received with traditional pageantry. As Kenney observed, Verwoerd as the wise and sympathetic father listen attentively to the chiefs and headmen, for he regarded them as the true representatives of the 'Bantu'.¹²⁸ In contrast to these vistas of pastoral bliss, the prevailing conditions in the cities appeared ever more unacceptable:

'Binne en om die stad heers daar vandag 'n onmoontlike toestand. Hierin word ook gese dat alle oortollige naturelle in die stede teruggestuur moet word na die platteland of naturellereserwes waarvandaan hulle gekom het. Hulle moet weg van die ellende van daardie kaïas, weg van daardie sakdorpe, weg van die hongersnood, van klonkies wat rondloop en vergaan en versleg, terug na plekke waar weer vir hulle kan gesorg word en vir hulle moet gesorg word'.¹²⁹

As we noted above, the postulated utopian ethical life also entailed a specific style of political morality, which we can characterise as **paternalism** - a paternalism that was justified on the grounds of superior knowledge and vision. In the words of Dr. Verwoerd, 'Totdat ons die betere beplanning van ons land

¹²⁷ H. Kenney, Architect of Apartheid (1980), p. 120.

¹²⁸ H. Kenney, Architect of Apartheid (1980), p. 90.

¹²⁹ Address to the Senate, 3 September 1948; Quoted in A.N. Pelzer (ed), Verwoerd aan die Woord (1966), p. 9.

kry en die naturelle nog by die stede is ... moet ek, solank dit die geval is, die planne maak'.¹³⁰

Such paternalist intervention in Africans' lives, on the grounds that it was for their own good, ranged from training for self-government, to more extremist methods. The 'extremist' epithet is justified, in the sense that the ends were often considered to justify the means. For example, at least 34 chiefs who did not co-operate with Departmental policy were removed between 1955 and 1958.¹³¹ The urge to regulate and control public life is evident from the crop of legislation of the early 1950s, including the Bantu Authorities Act (1951), the Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act (1951), the Native Building Workers Act (1951), the Native Services Levy Act (1952), the Native Laws Amendment Act (1952), which tightened influx control, the Natives (Abolition of Passes and Coordination of Documents) Act (1952), and the Bantu Education Act (1953).¹³²

E. Verwoerdianism, utopia and modernity: Irony, pathos and tragedy in the pursuit of Afrikaner Nationalist ideals

We have argued that Verwoerd's 'brave new world' was a response to the very real moral and political problems of modernity. The forces of individualism and formal equality were inexorably influencing Africans' political outlook, and Verwoerdianism was an attempt to re-direct such demands to rational and coherent solutions.

Despite its apparent elegance, the Verwoerdian solution was deeply contradictory. In order to deal with the impact of modernity, Verwoerd retreated further into utopianism, by extending his republican dream to African ethnic groups. To the

¹³⁰ Address to the Senate, 30 May 1952; Quoted in A.N. Pelzer (ed), Verwoerd aan die Woord (1966), p. 37.

¹³¹ H. Kenney, Architect of Apartheid (1980), p. 96.

¹³² T.R.H. Davenport, South Africa (1987), p. 374.

extent that homeland utopias were conceived along the same lines as the romantic, quasi-mystical Afrikaner volk, they were also profoundly pre-modern. Such conceptions of utopia were not based on crude racism, as Saul Dubow recognised:

'[T]he idealist conception of nation, volk and culture functioned as a useful substitute for a biological view of race. it was therefore possible to speak about the "national character" or "soul" as if such qualities were capable of being transmitted from generation to generation'.¹³³

This solution was anachronistic, and was doomed from the start.

The contradictory logic did not end there. To achieve utopia in a modernising society, Verwoerd had to use the methods of modern social engineering. The means at his disposal were bureaucratic ones, and they simply intensified the drive to modernity itself. Verwoerdian measures were a rational, modernist response to the chaotic conditions which the patriarchal urban order had created. The only way to establish communal utopias was by means of the coercive machinery of the central white state.

The resort to modern legal-rational methods was not fortuitous. As we saw above, if utopias are not fully based on spontaneous enthusiasm, coercion becomes necessary. Despite Dr. Verwoerd's utopian purposes, Verwoerdianism produced vast bureaucratic structures, such as Administration Boards, that completely contradicted the communal, utopian spirit which always characterised Verwoerd's vision of republicanism. Ironically, the 'tyranny of apartheid' had not been caused by malevolence; indeed, as W.A. de Klerk recognised, it derived its power from 'a most rational, most passionate, most radical will to restructure the world according to a vision of justice; all with a view to lasting peace, progress and prosperity'.¹³⁴

¹³³ S. Dubow, 'Afrikaner nationalism' (1991), p. 29.

¹³⁴ W.A. de Klerk, The Puritans in Africa (1975), p. 241.

The result of Verwoerd's inability to recognise the true nature of modernity was that neither genuine utopia nor genuine discipline was established. Just as patriarchalism never rose above its ambiguities, so Verwoerdianism never had any capacity to resolve the tension between utopian ends and modern disciplinary means. The Verwoerdian bureaucratic monstrosities failed to produce the forms of individual subjectivity and social discipline which are the preconditions of modernity. The result was coercion and repression.

Ironically, bureaucratic coercion was not even successful in its own right. It was only in the 1960s that the Departmental machinery was sufficiently geared up to begin Verwoerdian homeland development in earnest. By then, the imposition of influx control through bureaucratic measures and the solution to the housing problem through formally-planned townships were doomed to failure. The Verwoerdians proved unable to reverse the tide of urbanisation and African politicisation.

The Verwoerdian contradiction between utopianism and modernity had far-reaching effects on the cities. As far as the white local authorities were concerned, the benign chaos that characterised patriarchal city administration in some cities was replaced in 1971 by ruthlessly streamlined regional Administration Boards. Such bureaucracies were ultimately difficult to dismantle for they produced an entire generation of white officials for whom Verwoerdianism was the only possible raison d'être. As far as the functionaries of Verwoerdian institutions were concerned, the disciplinary ethos took root and grew - but it would always remain a discipline manque, a lop-sided pseudo-discipline, since neither the white officials nor their African subjects had experienced modern discipline as a meaningful form of subjectivity. Furthermore, while Verwoerdian bureaucratic practices generally failed to shape South Africans' identity as a genuinely disciplinary order should, it reinforced the authoritarian dimensions of South African political culture.

The development of powerful and coercive bureaucratic institutions led to the nadir of the East London City Council's moral consciousness during the 1970s. Verwoerdianism left little scope for municipal autonomy. Local authorities were only important to the extent that they could carry out various aspects of social engineering, such as residential segregation and influx control. By the mid-1960s, Dr. Verwoerd was at the height of his power, and 'there was no sign of slackening in the drive towards the idea of a radical, rationally reconstructed society, or the faith in the ultimate validity of the apartheidsgedagte'.¹³⁵ Most South African whites had grown accustomed to the minutiae of apartheid, including the petty cruelties that afflicted non-whites in almost every sphere of their life. In this moral climate, the East London City Council's inauspicious abdication from their moral responsibilities towards the residents of Duncan Village hardly seems surprising, as will be discussed in Chapters Ten and Eleven.

In addition, a spate of ill-advised policies, which affected African housing, education, transport and other aspects of social life, played havoc with African social structures, and produced at least two generations of alienated and badly-socialised township residents. The full extent of the problem, in terms of urban crime and violence, is only becoming evident in the 1990s.

The following four chapters will attempt to illustrate the various dimensions of Verwoerdianism as they manifested themselves in East London. Chapter Eight will consider the planning of Mdantsane - the key urban area of the envisaged tribal utopia of the Ciskei - during the 1950s and 1960s.

Chapter Nine will concentrate on influx control in East London itself, and will consider the anomaly of achieving utopian goals by means of modern disciplinary techniques. Chapters Ten and Eleven will examine the rule of Administration Boards. As we

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W.A. de Klerk (1975), p. 275.

will show, such bureaucratic environments had little room either for genuinely utopian enthusiasm, or for the patriarchal moral order which had humanised municipal practices during the 1950s. In the face of such inscrutable and uncompromising bureaucratic rule, the East London City Council's patriarchal sense of shared ethical life and their sense of moral responsibility to their community withered away to almost nothing. It was from such tenuous moral roots that the negotiations of 1986 had their brief flowering.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE QUEST FOR UTOPIA: THE PLANNING OF MDANTSANE

In this chapter, we will consider the way in which Verwoerdian principles of local government and town planning differed from the intuitive notions held by the patriarchal segregationists. We will argue, first, that the Verwoerdians ascribed no intrinsic importance to local government, other than through its contribution to realising the ultimate social utopia. Second, Verwoerdian town planning involved the fundamental dismemberment of the city according to very specific utopian prescriptions. Such town planning differed substantially from the form of town planning which the municipal officials of the more patriarchally-inclined local authorities had in mind. Third, we will consider the application of Group Areas in East London, and the growing powerlessness of the City Council. Fourth, we will turn to the planning of Mdantsane, and analyse the way in which the Department's regional planning completely transformed the political culture and the physical structure of East London itself.

A. Verwoerdianism and local government: Orchestrating the state

Verwoerdian utopianism had implications for the nature of the state itself. The principle of municipal control of the locations was retained when the Natives (Urban Areas) Act of 1923 was passed.¹ Local authorities had enjoyed a significant degree

¹ S. Bekker and R. Humphries, From Control to Confusion: The Changing role of Administration Boards in South Africa, 1971-1983 (Grahamstown: Shuter and Shooter/ISER, 1983), p. 1.

of informal autonomy.² The Department of Native Affairs simply monitored municipal administration, approved municipal proposals for housing schemes, and regulated the financial arrangements affecting the Native Revenue Accounts. As Bekker and Humphries commented, 'One of the hallmarks of policy and administration during this period was the extent to which the municipalities had discretionary powers in administering the locations, albeit subject to broad policy guidelines from the Department established in legislation and stipulated in circulars'.³

Dr. Verwoerd, who became Minister of Native Affairs in 1950, had little sympathy for either local autonomy or local muddle. In terms of his all-encompassing vision, local authorities were only significant to the extent that they harnessed urban society and directed it towards utopian collective life. Hence local authorities could not be policy-making bodies:

'Al die stede het alleen te doen met uitvoerende werksaamhede. Die stadsowerhede se taak is om die beleid van die land uit te voer, nie om basiese beleid vir hulle self of vir die land te skep nie'.⁴

This, in turn, implied national uniformity on policy matters:

'Dit kan eenvoudig net nie gebeur nie dat in een stad die naturel op 'n sekere grondslag beheer word en dat hy in 'n ander stad op 'n ander grondslag gehanteer

² Such autonomy existed in practice despite legal constraints, which included the ultra vires doctrine. This principle specifies that local authorities may perform a statute only if it is specifically authorised by a higher tier of government. Municipalities are created by provincial ordinances, which also define the scope of their legal jurisdiction and supervise their activities (R. Cameron, 'The institutional parameters of local government restructuring in South Africa', in C. Heymans and G. Totemeyer, Government by the People?, Cape Town: Juta Press, 1988; p. 50.).

³ S. Bekker and R. Humphries, From Control to Confusion (1985), p. 2.

⁴ Address to IANA, 17 September 1956; Quoted in A.N. Pelzer (ed), Verwoerd aan die Woord (1966), p. 117.

word; of dat broksgewyse beleid uitgevoer word, omdat daar verskeidenheid van metodes van optrede ontstaan'.⁵

Verwoerd's prescriptions were an attempt at implementing Foucaultian modern discipline. The Verwoerdian regime entailed more than crude authoritarianism, for it involved a thorough programme which aimed at restructuring the fundamentals of society:

[State policy is] not just casual ideas touching an odd point here and there, but is a programme extending its fingers deeply and affecting the circumstances in the lives of people. [If] it is to be accepted that the various directives are not just random ideas but part of a comprehensive all-embracing programme, then you will understand why deviations cause confusion irrespective of whether the deviations are caused by expecting concessions from me or by Local Authorities wishing to pursue their own direction ... The Government is not prepared to allow this'.⁶

This disciplinary form of authority could not, according to Dr. Verwoerd, be carried out simply through coercion, but through a positive identification with the epistemology, moral system and social identities of Verwoerdianism:

'Ek vra u samewerking, nie omdat ... die Regering die reg het om ook aan u voor te skryf nie. Ek vra u samewerking net om een rede en dit is omdat wat van u verlang word die natuurlike en logiese regte ding is om te doen in die vervulling van u dagtaak'.⁷

In the process, Verwoerd envisaged a close and mutually nourishing relationship between the Department and the local authorities. As Dr. Verwoerd told an IANA congress,

'Ons wil nie net verneem wat in 'n kongres soos hier,

⁵ Address to IANA, 17 September 1956; Quoted in A. N. Pelzer (ed), Verwoerd aan die Woord (1966), p. 117.

⁶ IANA Proceedings (1956); quoted in Bekker and Humphries, From Control to Confusion (1985), p. 6.

⁷ Address to IANA, 17 September 1956; quoted in A.N. Pelzer (ed), Verwoerd aan die Woord (1966), p. 134-5.

geuit word nie, maar wat u in u private ervaring uitdink. Ek doen dus 'n beroep op u om, wanneer u gedagtes of voorstelle het wat u dink u administrasie sal bevorder indien ons help, die vrymoedigheid te he om met my Departement aanraking te seek'.⁸

If a local authority did not fulfil its duty regarding the implementation of state policy, strong action would be taken:

'If there is a local authority which tries to obstruct that policy, the government is not exercising dictatorship when it makes the national policy compulsory, applicable even in that city ... Therefore when it may become necessary to compel a City Council which is not prepared to implement the policy of apartheid to do so, I shall do so ...'.⁹

Such comments illustrate Dr. Verwoerd's willingness to justify unpalatable means in terms of ultimate ends - showing a singular disregard for established procedures or for the preferences of other institutions. In the spirit of coercive paternalism, Verwoerd maintained that local authorities' resistance to government measures should be overridden, for they either stemmed from ignorance, complacency or fear of change or criticism. The appropriate response, according to Dr. Verwoerd, was concerted action: 'Daarom vra ek dat die munisipale administrateurs bondgenote moet wees in die stryd teen onkunde en in die stryd teen gemaksug of vrees'.¹⁰ In addition, he argued, such measures would ultimately be appreciated and welcomed, once their beneficial results become evident.¹¹

⁸ Address to IANA, 17 September 1956; Quoted in A.N. Pelzer (ed), Verwoerd aan die Woord (1966), p. 137.

⁹ Hansard (1954), col. 4111; Quoted in S. Bekker and R. Humphries, From Control to Confusion (1985), p. 4.

¹⁰ Address to IANA, 17 September 1956; Quoted in A.N. Pelzer (ed), Verwoerd aan die Woord (1966), p. 134.

¹¹ '[B]aie van die sukses wat oral in die land op naturellebehuisings-gebied bereik is, die gevolg was van stelsels wat aan die begin met venynige haat bejeen is hoewel hulle op die ou end aanvaar is as werklik die moeite werd'. Dr. Verwoerd referred especially to the Native Services Levy Act and site-and-service housing schemes (Address to IANA, 17

Yet Dr. Verwoerd did not secure the support of all the local authorities. Disagreement and conflict between United Party-controlled municipalities and the Department became more marked over a wide array of issues, such as housing policy, influx control, financial matters and, ultimately, the extent to which municipal officials ought to exercise discretion in the administration of policy'.¹² One of the most important conflicts of the 1950s was that between the Johannesburg City Council and the Department, caused by the latter's proposals to resettle the residents of Sophiatown, Martindale, Newclare and Pageview to the new township of Soweto. The Department only managed to overcome the Johannesburg City Council's resistance by creating a new statutory authority, the Resettlement Board, to implement the removals.

In the face of Verwoerd's approach to local government, municipalities became increasingly divided amongst themselves. National Party-inclined local authorities strongly supported apartheid measures, and criticised their more reluctant United-Party controlled counterparts. This elicited strong reaction from the latter. The Durban delegate at the South African Institute of Administrators of Non-European Affairs (IANA), clearly expressed his resentment:

'We [IANA] might as well become an "Institute of Rubber Stamps". What differentiates an Administrator from a junior clerk, the fact that he has discretion, the fact that he has to think for himself, the fact that he has to direct, manage and administrate. If you remove these points then you may as well staff your departments with automats, grade three clerks ... who will just go ahead and comply with state policy as laid down in the book. Now that is not my idea of administration. It is a right which we must jealously

September 1956; Quoted in A.N. Pelzer (ed), Verwoerd aan die Woord (1966), p. 133.

¹² S. Bekker and R. Humphries, From Control to Confusion (1985) p. 3.

guard ... which we must keep at all costs'.¹³

As we shall see, such sentiments were also held in East London during the 1950s and 1960s, and offered a curiously muddled, yet partially effective, resistance to Verwoerdian policies. At the heart of the matter, we will argue, was that East Londoners intuitively felt uncomfortable with the Verwoerdian style of moral reasoning and political practice.

B. The nature of urban planning: Patriarchal origins, Verwoerdian applications and planners' ambitions

To understand the significance of the Verwoerdian approach, it is useful to compare it with local government practices before 1950. It has almost become the received wisdom amongst historians that significant continuities in urban racial segregation can be detected over this period. They point to the fact that local authorities were not averse to racial differentiation long before the National Party took power. East London, for example, has a history of residential segregation that reaches back until the last century. In Durban, the local authority seems to have been ahead of the central government in its segregationist thinking during the 1940s, and enthusiastically supported the Group Areas principle right from its inception.¹⁴

Alan Mabin has pushed the argument for continuity of policy even further, by analysing the ways in which town and regional planners before 1950 had already paved the way for urban segregation. He noted that 'ethnic engineering' acquired legitimacy as a concern of urban planning from its early days in

¹³ Speech by Mr. S. Bourquin, IANA (1958); quoted in S. Bekker and R. Humphries, From Control to Confusion (1985), p. 5.

¹⁴ P. Maylam, 'The local evolution of urban Apartheid: Influx control and segregation in Durban, c. 1900-1951 (History Workshop, University of the Witwatersrand, 1990), p. 14.

South Africa.¹⁵ By the 1940s, British approaches to planning were being adopted by South Africans, especially the notion of creating coherent communities separated by green belts. According to Mabin, these manoeuvres translated easily into the idea of planning racially distinct zones.¹⁶ In this way, he claims, the groundwork for apartheid racial planning measures, such as the Group Areas Act, were laid. The main difference, for Mabin, between pre-1950 and post-1950 forms of town planning is that the former was ad hoc and lacked sufficient powers to become fully effective. It is tempting to conclude, as Mabin has done, that the post-1950 period 'opened a new era of spatial planning, clearly a child of the previous era, but removed from its parents and raised under the tutelage of the National Party government and its civil servants'.¹⁷

We will argue that one should not over-emphasise the continuity between apartheid planning and the kinds of segregationist planning which had gone before. Simply because both kinds of planning contained racial dimensions does not necessarily mean that they were the same kind of phenomenon. We will argue that the two kinds of planning were fundamentally different responses to the problems of modernity. Before 1950, urban planning was largely an outgrowth of the patriarchal order, and animated by notions of a shared (but unequal) community, cultural differentiation, and paternalistic obligations on the part of local white officials. Furthermore, the patriarchal local order was intrinsically localistic; it depended on the intimacy of local relations between the white city fathers and the African residents. It is for this reason that it made sense for local authorities to retain a significant degree of autonomy in

¹⁵ A. Mabin, ' "Doom at one stroke of the pen": Planning and Group Areas, c. 1935-1955' (History Workshop, University of the Witwatersrand, 1990).

¹⁶ A. Mabin, 'Doom at one stroke of the pen' (1990), p. 18.

¹⁷ A. Mabin, 'Doom at one stroke of the pen' (1990), p. 26.

planning their suburbs.

However, patriarchalism as a moral order was coming up against the strains of modernity. As Mabin noted, decades of rapid urban growth, industrialisation, small public housing schemes, property speculation and general social change left vast numbers of people without adequate shelter, resulting in overcrowding, inadequate services, and numerous social pathologies. By 1946, all the cities had majority black populations, which were increasing much more rapidly than the white minorities. It is not surprising that pressure for proper urban planning was building up. The growing cities urgently needed space for expansion, which the existing planning machinery seemed unable to provide. Ad hoc segregation did not work any more. Consequently, even liberal planners welcomed the NP's assertive approach to urban planning.¹⁸

Yet the significance of urban planning after 1948 was completely different from muddled efforts of the patriarchal order in response to the pressures of modernity. The Verwoerdians' policies were directed at an ultimately utopian pre-modern destiny, consisting of a set of organic collectivities, each putatively animated by a divinely ordained cultural spirit. Whereas the segregationist planners before 1950 were eager to utilise the insights of modern planning to come to terms with the symptoms of modernity, the Verwoerdians wanted to **use modern methods (such as discipline) to counteract modernity altogether**. The patriarchal and utopian ethical systems were most dissimilar, even if their practical policies seemed similar. Ironically, the Verwoerdians' cohesive vision of the future Good Society promoted modern forms of planning. Verwoerdianism encouraged planners to apply up-to-date disciplinary techniques with far greater sophistication and consistency than was ever possible within the confused patriarchal paradigm. Paradoxically, the Verwoerdians' utopian visions provided the political and moral framework within

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A. Mabin, 'Doom at one stroke of the pen' (1990), p. 21-2.

which the practitioners of modern discipline could get on with their job.

We can briefly summarise the main principles of what we can term 'patriarchal forms of urban planning'. Our outline is based on two papers delivered at various public forums by officials of the Johannesburg and Durban municipalities¹⁹:

- a) A concern with the social ills of rapid urbanisation, such as overcrowding, instability, lack of sanitation, inadequate transport, and social pathologies;
- b) A key role for local authorities in the process of planning, on the grounds that they had intimate knowledge of local conditions;
- c) A desire to implement a pragmatic form of racial segregation, on the grounds that 'difficulties arise from the profound difference in outlook and behaviour as between the European and the Native'.²⁰ (Hence Segregation was not an end in itself; it was merely a means to an end, viz. the avoidance of inter-racial irritation²¹, without any lofty metaphysical overtones);
- d) Promoting regional planning and the development of consolidated African townships to serve several white towns simultaneously. (White towns could share

¹⁹ W. Carr, 'The practical implementation of regional planning with particular reference to the natives in urban areas', IANA Annual Conference Proceedings (1953), pp. 84-91; E.A.E. Havemann, 'Planning for residential segregation', SABRA Conference on Group Areas and Residential Separation (1952).

²⁰ W. Carr, 'The Practical Implementation of Regional Planning' (1953).

²¹ E. Havemann, 'Planning for residential segregation' (1952).

housing expenses; a good system of rail access could be built; and 'More extensive arrangements may be made for Native communal life with libraries, high schools, hospitals etc'²²);

- e) An awareness of the transport problem caused by distant townships, which led to hardships, fatigue and financial pressure on Africans; consequently, non-European areas should be situated close to places of employment and the heart of the city²³;
- f) A belief that African and other black areas should be regarded as permanent parts of the city;
- g) Existing infrastructure should be utilised as far as possible, instead of developing distant vacant land, which would impose unnecessary burdens on taxpayers²⁴;
- h) Racial segregation would take a long time, and would not mean 'uprooting individuals from their homes'²⁵;
- j) A concern, in a modern disciplinary spirit, for controls on undesirable social conduct. For example, Carr argued for a curfew limiting African presence in white areas.

Under Dr. Verwoerd, the Department of Native Affairs retained some of these principles, such as residential segregation, racial zoning, and buffer zones. However, as we will see in the case

²² W. Carr, 'The practical implementation of regional planning' (1953).

²³ W. Carr, 'The practical implementation of regional planning' (1953).

²⁴ E. Havemann, 'Planning for residential segregation' (1952).

²⁵ E. Havemann, 'Planning for residential segregation' (1952).

of East London, certain crucial elements of pre-Verwoerdian planning were discarded, ignored or amended beyond recognition by the Department. Most significantly, the feeling that whites and blacks share a common city, and that they have certain moral obligations towards one another **within the bounds of an urban moral community** completely disappeared. The DNA, whose ethnic metaphysics emphasised the development of 'homelands', did not have much concern for the city as a coherent, integral moral collectivity. Group Areas were not instituted for the sake of the city so that it could develop or flourish; in fact, the 'city' as social concept did not figure in its project at all.

The most dramatic exposition of the philosophy of regional planning and residential segregation was, not surprisingly, provided by Dr. Verwoerd himself. His statements bring a dimension of moral righteousness to what had been essentially a pragmatic or technicist debate. For Dr. Verwoerd, planning was part of a profound moral mission:

'The policy of separate development is a beneficent one ('genadige') one, one that seeks after justice. It is a wise policy, because it eliminates undesirable conditions, which are usually detrimental to both white and non-white ...'.²⁶

The National Party gave the **idea** of compulsory segregation a cohesion and comprehensiveness which it had not enjoyed under the United Party. Nationalist (and especially Verwoerdian) purposes were utopian through and through. Afrikaner Nationalists imagined that their vision would be sufficient to propel society in a desirable direction. Their vision was a powerful one.

However, the visionaries still needed to find the instruments by which their policy could be implemented. A crucial deficiency in Nationalist planning principles was that the theoretical works of prominent ideologues never specified the **means** by which this

²⁶ Opening address, IANA Annual Conference Proceedings, (1956), p. 16.

segregation would be achieved.²⁷ Partly due to the Verwoerdians' Puritan heritage of order and control, the methods they adopted were bureaucratic and in some ways, 'disciplinary'.

As they began to translate their ideas into practice, the Verwoerdian visionaries needed to find skilled planners. For this purpose, they retained the planning agencies set up by the Smuts government, most notably, the Land Tenure Advisory Board (LTAB) established in 1946, and the Natural Resources Development Council (NRDC) established in 1947. Under the Smuts government, their powers were quite limited, but after 1948, these bodies would become the cutting edge of racial urban planning. The energies of the planners, which had for so long lacked an outlet, were now channelled by the Verwoerdian ethos. In Mabin's words, 'Master plans for racial group areas ... would be relentlessly pursued by the LTAB and its associated bodies'.²⁸ The Department's logic began to be systematically implemented in the sphere of urban housing. Dr. Eiselen announced in 1953 that a housing section had been established in his Department. The entire paraphernalia of a modern disciplinary order settled into place:

'In order to undertake its mammoth task, the LTAB moved from Pietermaritzburg to large new premises on Beatrix Street in Pretoria ... [I]t sent out circulars to local authorities and other government bodies issuing instruction that they should undertake racial surveys of occupation and ownership, and map the results according to a prescribed colour code: circles on every site for ownership, with dots within them to indicate occupation ... [A]ll could be learnt from a booklet published by the Department of the Interior for 9d'.²⁹

Such procedures represented modern discipline: they were

²⁷ A. Mabin, 'Doom at one stroke of the pen' (1990), p. 23.

²⁸ A. Mabin, 'Doom at one stroke of the pen', p. 27.

²⁹ A. Mabin, 'Doom at one stroke of the pen' (1990), p. 28.

systematic, uniform, predictable, based on scientific reasoning and deeply intrusive into private life. Disciplinary institutions invariably engage in diagnosing society's ills and then systematically working out uniform solutions. Furthermore, the recipients of discipline are typically individuated, checked, documented, recorded, and categorised. In sum, the Verwoerdian visionaries were increasingly introducing the minutiae of disciplinary mechanisms of control.

As a form of social discipline, town planning offers a meaningful role for planning experts. For example, after 1948, the Land Tenure Advisory Board was chaired by D.S. van der Merwe, a career civil servant with great energy and initiative, who set about his task with the enthusiasm of a missionary. He was also a stickler for complex legality. Because he chaired various committees and held multiple offices³⁰, he sat at the centre of a network of government agencies concerned with property rights and racial matters.

In this way, the anomalous phenomenon of pre-modern utopian ideas implemented by highly modern career bureaucrats gradually emerged. Ironically, the Verwoerdian visions were only too welcome for urban planners - at last the South African political order was given a coherence within which disciplinary controls could flourish.

For the rest of the chapter, we will consider the East London City Council's predominantly patriarchal approach to planning after 1950, as well as the Verwoerdian pressures to implement more far-reaching, utopian social visions.

C. The administrative heritage of East London

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Such as Registrar of Mining Titles, Rand Townships Registrar, and member of the Mining Leases Board, and the Transvaal Townships Board (see A. Mabin, 'Doom at one stroke of the pen', p. 24).

This section will outline the history of segregation in East London, as background to an analysis of the significance of the planning of Mdantsane. Several of the characteristics of 'patriarchal' town planning were evident in East London. Residential segregation was regarded as normal and desirable; a tradition of local autonomy was strongly entrenched; and a tradition of paternalistic controls justified measures such as curfews.³¹

Before 1950, the city fathers did not take much interest in the welfare of African residents. In this case, patriarchalism did not translate into significant deeds of paternalistic benevolence. Until the mid-20th Century, many whites regarded Africans as temporary residents. This produced the utmost parsimony in expenditure for Bantu needs. An 'out of sight, out of mind' mentality prevailed, which permitted the municipality to minimise its responsibilities to the African community.³² It resulted in the principle that the administration of the locations should be self-financing - a principle which was formalised in the 'Stallard Doctrine', which informed central government policy after 1923. One consequence of this approach was a never-ending squatter problem.

An extraordinary fact, noted by Reader, was that older African residents (interviewed in the early 1960s) shared the notion of temporary residence. Most Africans, they said, came into the town to work but not to remain. They returned to their homes in the country as soon as they had enough money for their immediate purposes.³³ This clearly illustrates the argument that there was

³¹ E. Nel 'The spatial planning of racial residential segregation in East London, 1948-1973' (M.A. Thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 1990), p. 37.

³² E. Nel, 'The spatial planning of racial segregation in East London' (1990), p. 46.

³³ D. H. Reader, The Black Man's Portion (1961), p. 13. See also G. Minkley, 'The fighting port: Capital accumulation, working class struggle and the making of apartheid, 1946-1963' (History Workshop, University of

a lack of clarity, a shared ambiguity, about the nature and limits of the urban community.

Due to the uncertain status of the African population in East London, the municipality's African administration was marked by a chronic indecisiveness, procrastination and negligence. This was partly a problem of financial paucity. Unlike the Natal municipalities, local authorities in the Cape Province were not allowed to operate beer monopolies until 1937³⁴, and even when East London did introduce a municipal beer hall, it was unsuccessful and unprofitable.

Until 1950, therefore, the City Council had little incentive to address the desperate housing needs of the local black population. This tradition of ad hoc improvements had, by the 1950s, produced a housing crisis of frightening proportions. Conditions rapidly deteriorated. In 1916, there were only 11 stand-pipes supplying water to about 9 500 residents, and a high death-rate was reported by the Medical Officer of Health. Municipal memoranda repeatedly referred to worsening location conditions for want of adequate water, maintenance of road surfaces, lighting, and control of plot densities.³⁵

It also produced the distressed urban conditions which tempted the Verwoerdian planners to intervene; and this, in turn, significantly altered the views of East Londoners. In their opposition to Departmental prescriptions, the white city fathers discovered a hitherto unfelt loyalty to African residents of the city. During the 1950s, many Councillors began arguing for the permanence of Duncan Village - although this sentiment only lasted until the mid-1960s. For their part, the African

the Witwatersrand, 1990); and P. Mayer, Townsmen or Tribesmen (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1961).

³⁴ E. Nel, 'The spatial planning of racial residential segregation in East London' (1990), pp. 46-7.

³⁵ D.H. Reader, The Black Man's Portion (1961), p. 14.

residents also began to assert their permanence in East London, and their conviction never wavered. The rest of this chapter will examine the Council's initial encounters with the Verwoerdians during the 1950s.

D. East London in the 1950s: The roots of municipal assertiveness

By 1947, conditions were so bad in the locations that various public bodies (such as the National Council of Women and the Medical Association) asked the mayor for an immediate investigation. The Government appointed the Welsh Commission to investigate the problem. The Commission's report criticised the East London Council, since 'the present repellent state of the locations is the result of over half a century of apathy on the part of the European ratepayers'.³⁶ On the Commission's advice, a new and vigorous township manager was appointed. This was a Mr. Venter, who spearheaded Municipal township administration throughout the 1950s and 1960s.³⁷ In 1952, severe rioting took place in Duncan Village, which amply highlighted the plight of the townships. The Council realised that social improvements were urgently required.

The Welsh Commission made two main suggestions. First, the existing township should be retained, because suitable land was becoming ever more difficult to obtain. Second, the Duncan Village housing scheme needed to be extended. It was imperative to draw off at least part of the population, and the Commission suggested a satellite township where the wealthier Africans could build houses for themselves. Significantly, the Commission never considered the possibility of removing the entire Duncan Village

³⁶ East London Municipality, Location Enquiry - Welsh Commission (File 50/665/17, 1950) Welsh Commission Report, 1950, p. 4; Quoted in E. Nel, 'The spatial planning of racial residential segregation in East London' (1990), p. 51.

³⁷ D.H. Reader, The Black Man's Portion (1961), p. 23.

to this satellite township.³⁸ The Commission's report was a pragmatic compromise between the need to retain the existing locations as well as the need to find a new site for a location.

A strong element on the City Council supported the extension of the existing locations. Their reasons combined white self-interest with concern about the welfare of African residents. For example, many Councillors felt that much was already invested by Africans in these areas; an entirely new location would be very expensive to construct; it would be too costly to compensate all the African home-owners for the loss of their property; a distant location would create a crushing transport burden for Africans; and the Council felt that white businesses would prefer to have their labour force close at hand.³⁹

Intuitively, the Council's notion of town planning tended to coincide with that of Mr. Havemann from Durban - a vision that recognised Africans as part of the community, despite the prevalence of severe economic inequality and extensive residential segregation. In terms of the patriarchal order, the white city fathers not only had moral obligations towards black residents, but showed some sensitivity to the preferences of the latter.

By the early 1950s, this approach increasingly encountered pressure from Departmental prescriptions. East London officials clearly did not fully understand what was at stake, or what the Department had in mind. Local officials would prove helpless against increasingly utopian Departmental scenarios of regional planning - partly out of ignorance of Departmental thinking, but also partly because the Department kept moving the goalposts. As we outlined in the previous chapter, the Department only reached clarity on the destiny of homeland development by the late 1950s. Furthermore, they showed no compunction in

³⁸ D.H. Reader, The Black Man's Portion (1961), p. 23.

³⁹ D.H. Reader, The Black Man's Portion (1961), p. 30.

neglecting to inform local authorities of the progress of their thought. For local authorities, this contributed to a highly unstable policy environment.

This mounting tension between the East London City Council and the Department was worsened by the growing political assertiveness of Nationalist Afrikaners in East London. The National Party's decision to hold its annual congress in East London in 1956 caused a public stir - and raised the local ethnic consciousness to a considerable extent. Despite being the only Nationalist on the East London City Council, the Mayor, Clr de Lange, maintained a prominent political profile. His welcoming statement to the congress illustrated his fervent support of the NP: 'We want to say how happy we are to see the coastal region being taken over by people who are our own'.⁴⁰ The Daily Dispatch, which unambiguously supported the United Party, soon went on the offensive and criticised the NP congress for its ethnocentric Afrikaner prejudices: 'This constant emphasis on the exclusiveness of the "volk" idea shows a lack of appreciation that the South African volk or nation really does comprise both Afrikaans- and English-speaking sections'.⁴¹

The East London City Council's resistance to the NP's urban policy can be illustrated with reference to two issues: First, its dissatisfaction with Group Areas; and second, its discomfiture with the homelands policy, and most notably, the development of Mdantsane in the Ciskei.

E. The City Council and the politics of Group Areas

In 1953, the Land Tenure Advisory Board submitted a plan to establish Group Areas in East London. This plan created much anxiety on the part of residents and business owners who could be affected. The Council opposed the plan, on the grounds that

⁴⁰ Daily Dispatch, 29 October 1956.

⁴¹ Daily Dispatch, 28 October 1956.

'there is sound inter-racial co-operation in East London'. In fact, it saw racial segregation as one of the reasons for the 1952 riots. By the late 1950s, East London was one of the few major centres in the country where Group Areas planning was not at an advanced stage, a situation which served to encourage insecurity amongst affected residents. Public organisations, such as the Black Sash, the National Council of Women and the Child Welfare Society sent petitions to the government, protesting the application of Group Areas in East London.⁴² The City Council appealed for a humanitarian approach to the issue, since the 'Group Areas Act dealt with flesh and blood, lives and ways of life - and not only with maps, plans, streets and houses'.⁴³ By 1961, the Council had still not accepted the principle of Group Areas.

However, despite its opposition to the formal principle, the Council increasingly found itself being forced to comply lest they lose their influence on future decisions. In 1958, the City and Water Engineer pointed out that the government was acquiring the right to override any town planning scheme, and thereby oblige local authorities to comply with Group Areas proposals.⁴⁴ By 1960, the Group Areas Board had decided to proceed with its own independent investigation of the situation in East London. 'This heralded an era of direct government manipulation of the urban and social space of East London'⁴⁵, and the Council rapidly lost the initiative in replanning the city.⁴⁶

⁴² E. Nel, 'The spatial planning of racial residential segregation in East London' (1990), p. 66-72.

⁴³ Quoted in E. Nel, 'The spatial planning of racial residential segregation in East London' (1990), p. 74.

⁴⁴ E. Nel, 'The spatial planning of racial residential segregation in East London' (1990), pp. 74-77.

⁴⁵ E. Nel, 'The spatial planning of racial residential segregation in East London' (1990), p. 106.

⁴⁶ E. Nel, 'The spatial planning of racial residential segregation in East London' (1990), p. 81.

The application of the Group Areas principle to East London is noteworthy for at least five reasons. First, it entailed the systematic loss of autonomy by the Council, vis-a-vis Government departments. By 1961, the dire need for 'coloured' housing eventually obliged the Council to co-operate with the Government in planning the city along racial dimensions.⁴⁷ By 1965, the Department of Community Development had decided to take over complete control and ownership of North End in East London, which bore the brunt of Group Areas redevelopment⁴⁸, and by 1966, the Council's co-operation in carrying out Group Areas was fully secured.

Second, the Government's enthusiasm for Group Areas was accompanied by an equally fervent desire to eliminate slum conditions and social ills in East London's North End. In this way, the application of Group Areas in East London was part of a disciplinary impulse to create order in society - a theme explored in more detail in Chapter Nine. The opposition of the City Council carried little weight. As a typical phenomenon of social discipline, the central planners of East London gave the Council little option but to comply.⁴⁹

Third, the Council's attempts to protect the interests of 'coloureds' and Indians would later play a major role in its attitude to Duncan Village. The groups threatened by Group Areas removals constantly appealed to the Council for assistance. Despite its earlier moral qualms, the Council progressively detached itself from its moral obligations to the African community, and instead became a protector of the 'coloured' and Indian communities, as will be elaborated more fully in Chapter Eleven. The Council's changing sense of moral obligations

⁴⁷ E. Nel, 'The spatial planning of racial residential segregation in East London' (1990), p. 84.

⁴⁸ E. Nel, 'The spatial planning of racial residential planning in East London' (1990), p. 106.

⁴⁹ E. Nel, 'The spatial planning of residential racial segregation in East London' (1990), pp. 103, 106, 114.

produced a new conception of the community, and the relevant 'insiders' and 'outsiders'. The East London community, as a form of **ethical life**, was being transformed. Initially, this produced increased tension between 'coloureds' and Africans⁵⁰, but towards the late 1970s, these groups became united against the Council's divisive schemes.

Fourth, the Government's methods illustrated a willingness to resort to coercion, dishonesty and other Machiavellian forms of politics. For example, a senior official of the Department of Community Development overcame the Council's opposition by threatening that 'his department would definitely move in and clear the area of slum conditions whether the council approved of such actions or otherwise'.⁵¹ Furthermore, Government assurances that families would not be displaced until alternative accommodation was provided, were not adhered to.⁵² The imposition of buffer zones took place despite the fact that existing shacks, occupying more than a thousand people, had to be demolished.⁵³ The buffer zones imposed by the Department undermined the Council's proposal for an Infectious Diseases Hospital; and it caused the envisaged Duncan Village recreation ground to be abandoned.

Finally, the planning of the new location, Mdantsane, became an integral part of the process of unscrambling East London's racially mixed areas. The process of **regional planning** therefore, had fundamental implications for the structure of community life in East London. It is to this matter that we now

⁵⁰ E. Nel, 'The spatial planning of racial residential segregation in East London' (1990), p. 123.

⁵¹ Quoted in E. Nel, 'The spatial planning of racial residential areas in East London' (1990), p. 109.

⁵² E. Nel, 'The spatial planning of racial residential segregation in East London' (1990), p. 119.

⁵³ Letter from Secretary for Native Affairs (W.W.M. Fischer) to East London's Town Clerk, 18 September 1952.

turn.

F. The planning of Mdantsane: The Department's original requirements, and its vision of the apartheid city

During the early 1950s, the Department agreed to a limited extension to Duncan Village, while an immediate search would be made for a site elsewhere 'which would absorb any further increase of the African population'.⁵⁴ This gave the impression that the Department did not have the wholesale removal of Duncan Village in mind. In 1952, the Department instructed the Council to proceed with the investigation of a site. At this stage, Dr. Eiselen appeared to hold the same approach as that of Mr. Havemann's, viz. the retention of suitably located residential areas. It was a standpoint with which the East London City Council could easily identify.

However, the Department's standpoint would shift in due course. It soon became evident that the DNA had definite priorities of its own, leaving little room for local influence in determining the nature of new locations. The Department insisted that every proposal for the development of a new white town had to be referred to the DNA 'for consideration in the light of the Department's requirements'.⁵⁵ A key factor was that native locations had to be established for the service of all the townships and industries in an area.

It is worth pondering the peculiarities of the Verwoerdian conception of cities. For the DNA, Africans who worked in the city were not considered to 'belong' to any city at all. For the DNA officials, it was an urbanisation process which did not

⁵⁴ Letter from Secretary for Native Affairs (W.W.M. Fischer) to East London Town Clerk, 18 September 1952.

⁵⁵ Minutes, Meeting of Sub-Committee of Consultative Planning Committee, held in East London, 11 May 1955.

involve cities as such: Africans were in the city (for employment), but they were not of the city. Consequently, for the DNA, the term 'location' simply meant a 'convenient place', which could refer to either urban or rural areas. A 'location' had no intrinsic connection to a nearby city.

Without being aware of it, these officials were encroaching on what could be considered a pre-existing sphere of municipal civic autonomy. For them, the notion of 'civic autonomy' was not very meaningful. Unexpectedly, the East London city fathers began to develop a sense of proprietorship towards the African residents of the city. This increasingly brought it into conflict with the Department. One contentious issue was the desire of the local planners to have a thorough sociological and economic survey of the black population, even before deciding on a site.⁵⁶ They felt unwilling to proceed with the new township before they had an accurate estimation of the needs of the African population.

The Department's officials maintained that this was not necessary, and hence refused to contribute towards the cost of the survey.⁵⁷ They maintained that the 'location needs of any area were easily calculated, and the Department's formula was one location plot for each plot in a residential township and three acres in the location for every one acre used in industry. In a location, six plots would go to the acre'. This was the only guideline for the establishment of an entirely new town with an envisaged population of over 50 000 poverty-stricken people. It seems that this formula was never openly challenged by the City Council, which was increasingly intimidated by the fervour of the Departmental officials.

⁵⁶ Joint Report of Heads of Departments, East London Municipality, 27 February 1958.

⁵⁷ Minutes of a meeting of the Sub-Committee of the Consultative Planning Committee, held in East London, 11 May 1955.

The East London municipal officials soon found themselves thoroughly perplexed. It was quite impossible to make an accurate assessment of township housing needs, for three main reasons. First, it was impossible to attempt to estimate the amount of industrial development which would take place in the area within the foreseeable future, since the land available for industry had not been developed at all. Second, in the absence of a proper survey, the Divisional Council report concluded that it could 'give no reasonable estimate of the number of natives at present residing in the area'. Third, the report warned that, in terms of DNA policy, it would be necessary to make allowance for a buffer zone of between 200 and 500 yards to completely encircle the location. 'The establishment of buffer zones will, therefore, necessitate the sterilization of very large tracts of land, probably equal in area to the area required by the actual Location'.⁵⁸

The Council was deeply traumatised at the prospect of committing itself to a site which would be at least as large as East London itself. It felt it needed as much information as possible before making a decision, and urged the Department to appoint a special Commission of Enquiry to investigate the matter. However, the Department insisted that the Council proceed with finding a site.

The Council eventually expressed a preference for a site south-west of East London, along the coast.⁵⁹ The Council felt that the terrain was suitable; it was within easy reach of the West Bank industries; it was large enough; and 'the natives could have access to the beach front'. When this site was rejected by the Department (on the grounds that it was in a white farming area and hence 'contrary to policy'), the Council selected a site north-west of the city.

The Department was not interested in this site either. The DNA

⁵⁸ Minutes of the Consultative Committee, 27 July 1955.

⁵⁹ Minutes, Non-European Affairs Committee, 5 April 1956.

preferred 'Site C', an area north-west of East London. The City Engineer was not very impressed with it. He believed that it would be less than adequate in size, and maintained that the 'displaced excess population of Duncan Village cannot be arbitrarily placed in a remote position'.⁶⁰ Workers on the West Bank would have to travel through the white suburbs of East London to reach their places of employment; and the site drained towards the Buffalo River, which was East London's main water supply. To accommodate this problem, a full sewage works would be required.

In October 1956, Mr. Smuts of the DNA visited the City Council 'in an endeavour to resolve the location difficulty'. Mr. Smuts made it plain that the Council's choice was unacceptable. All locations should, if possible, be adjacent to an existing 'native reserve', so that the African population could be housed 'in self-contained villages in their own areas'. Mr. Smuts sketched the Department's utopian vision. The Department, he maintained,

'wished to give the native his right place in the sun. The native wished to enjoy the benefits of civilisation to the same extent as the Europeans did, and therefore, the Department's opinion was that he be given every opportunity to develop to the fullest extent in those areas of South Africa which had from time immemorial been his homelands ... If the native residential area was placed adjacent to such a reserve, the residents were immediately in contact with their **own people** in their **own reserve**. There they had an outlet for all their ambitions - they could establish themselves in the native reserves and also still retain employment in the City'.⁶¹

For these reasons, Mr. Smuts said, his Department had formulated its policy 'which had been adopted by nearly every local

⁶⁰ Report of the City and Water Engineer, 6 July 1951; Quoted in E. Nel, 'The spatial planning of racial residential segregation in East London' (1990), p. 139.

⁶¹ Minutes, Native Affairs Committee, 10 April 1956. Emphasis in original.

authority throughout the Union'.

In October 1956, Dr. Verwoerd visited East London. He emphasised his determination to proceed with 'Site C'.⁶² Clearly, the choice of a suitable site for the new location was virtually a **fait accompli** for Dr. Verwoerd, even though the Council had not come to any formal decision on the matter. In a remarkably cavalier statement, Dr. Verwoerd maintained that '[T]he question of financing the layout of a new location was of secondary importance'. Given the housing shortage, 'whether or not the City could afford to embark on such a scheme, it had no alternative but to do so'. By the end of his meeting with the Council, the Mayor (Clr. de Lange) assured the Minister that 'in view of the fact that the Native Affairs Dept was offering all possible guidance to the City Council in solving its problem, co-operation would be forthcoming and the City would indeed do its share'. Given the heightened ethnic sensitivities associated with the NP's congress being held in East London at the time, these sentiments were not shared by all the Councillors, and their dissatisfaction would soon come to the fore again.

Thus far, the negotiations on Mdantsane had been disastrous for local political autonomy. The Council had been steamrollered by the Department. At the meeting with the Minister, he had taken as given that the Council would submit to his will.

The Councillors' anxieties did not readily disappear. At the next meeting of the Native Affairs Committee, several matters of concern were noted. What would be the total cost of the project? When would funds be available from the Native Services Levy? Would loans be available for fifty years to acquire land and install services? The NAC felt that it needed certain assurances from government **before** embarking on such a scheme. The Council therefore did not immediately apply for formal

⁶² Minutes of an informal meeting between ELCC and the Minister of Native Affairs, Dr. Verwoerd, 24 October 1956.

approval of Site C.⁶³ The Council's anxieties were understandable, since the proposed scheme was the biggest civic project undertaken by the East London Municipality.

Spurred on by its own officials, the Council's concerns became ever more apparent.⁶⁴ The Acting City and Water Engineer insisted that more detailed plans of the site were needed. The cheapest method would be by aerial survey and by preliminary planning. The Council felt that the Department should foot the bill, and that written confirmation should be received of this. Furthermore, the Council needed assurance that the Government would finance the piping of sewage from the new location, in order to protect the Buffalo River, which was the city's main water supply - especially after the Department refused to make available to the Council its reports on water resources in the region.⁶⁵

At this stage the Council was undecided about its course of action. Should the Council first accept the Area C proposal and then do a survey, or should it do the survey first? The Council eventually decided to proceed cautiously.⁶⁶ It would accept the scheme, ('in the absence, according to the Honourable the Minister of Native Affairs, of any other alternative'), but only **on condition** that the government provides a grant from NSL funds for the diversion of sewage and for the aerial survey. The scheme could then be abandoned if it was found that city could not stand the financial strain of establishing the location. The Council also reserved the right to re-open the question of the site should the aerial survey reveal that Area C was

⁶³ NAC minutes, 7 January 1967.

⁶⁴ NAC minutes, 25 April 1957.

⁶⁵ Report of the City and Water Engineer to NAC, May 1957.

⁶⁶ Council minutes, 27 June 1957.

unsuitable.⁶⁷

G. The changing fate of Duncan Village

As we noted above, relations between the United Party-inclined city authorities and the central government steadily deteriorated during the 1950s. This was associated with increased tension between NP-backed Afrikaans interest groups, and the predominantly English, UP-oriented City Council. A key issue was the expansion of Duncan Village. White suburbs in the Greenfields vicinity opposed this development, as it would reduce the value of their property. These residents urged that the Council comply with the wishes to develop a new location.⁶⁸ They were supported by Clr. de Lange, the first and only NP member of the City Council, who was also an ardent supporter of the new location.⁶⁹ These heightened political and ethnic sentiments may well have contributed to Dr. Verwoerd's willingness to intervene in East London's system of African administration.⁷⁰

The Assistant Secretary of the Department, Mr. Smuts, visited the city in October 1956. Mr. Smuts' speech to the Council revealed the extent to which Departmental priorities had shifted. He maintained that the Minister had never favoured the extension of Duncan Village. The planning of Mdantsane was clearly becoming the main thrust of Departmental policy. For the municipal officials, this was a great blow. A great deal of planning had already been done on the proposed Duncan Village extension. However, the Council still remained committed to extending Duncan Village as originally envisaged.

⁶⁷ Memorandum, Joint Heads of Departments, 27 February 1958.

⁶⁸ Letter by Ward I Councillors to the Town Clerk, 23 November 1953.

⁶⁹ NAC minutes, 4 October 1956.

⁷⁰ Notes of the proceedings of an informal meeting between the City Council and Dr. Verwoerd, in East London, 24 October 1956.

For the next three months, local politics around the issue intensified, with white officials using all their influence against the position of the Greenfields-Woodbrook Residents Association. Eventually, a compromise was hammered out.⁷¹ The Duncan Village extension would be smaller than originally intended, and hence the Greenfields residents would be protected from the 'squeal and squall arising from the location'. In this way, the local officials and the white ratepayers found common cause. As Etienne Nel has commented, 'The fact that the Council was, at last, acknowledging its responsibilities to its African residents is noteworthy, as were their serious efforts to facilitate the construction of the Duncan Village extension despite white ratepayers' opposition'.⁷²

However, the Council's agreement with the ratepayers did not take the vicissitudes of the Department into account. A meeting between the Council and Dr. Verwoerd on 14 December 1957 showed the full might and fervour of the Department. As the Town Clerk's minutes gloomily recorded, the deputation 'can hardly be considered to have been a success ... The Minister did not appear to be interested in any arguments which we put forward'.⁷³

In contrast to the local agreement on the extension of Duncan Village, Dr. Verwoerd stated that he was more than ever convinced that **no extension whatsoever** of Duncan Village would be allowed. He was not to be influenced by the fact that the Greenfields residents had changed their minds. For Dr. Verwoerd, there was no possibility of compromise, since his action was based not on the preferences of the Greenfields residents, **but on the general principle of the unacceptability of an extension to Duncan Village at all.**

⁷¹ NAC meeting, 8 January 1957.

⁷² E. Nel, 'The spatial planning of racial residential segregation in East London' (1990), p. 138.

⁷³ Interview with the Minister of Native Affairs, 14 November 1957, in Town Clerk's Report to NAC, 3 December 1957.

Dr. Verwoerd's position had far-reaching consequences. According to the Minister, the existing Duncan Village location occupied valuable industrial and residential land. 'In fact, it was his considered opinion that the only possibility of a further development of East London was in the direction of the Duncan Village location". His department therefore definitely favoured **the complete ultimate removal of the location'** to a new township.

For Dr. Verwoerd, urban planning would be done by the central government, on uniform principles throughout the country:

'The Government's policy in regard to the siting and development of locations was now being established on a Union wide basis. East London's problem must be seen as part of that development. There could not be exceptions based on local factors. Throughout the country ... one municipality after another was coming into line...'

The Minister considered the Council's insistence on a detailed survey of the proposed site to be unreasonable. He pointed out that he had sent to East London a team of experts who were 'experienced in the selection of location sites throughout the country', and they had approved of Site C. According to Dr. Verwoerd, it would be presumptuous on the part of the Council to consider that a detailed examination of the site might reveal that it was either not suitable for the purpose, or less suitable than his advisors had indicated. He had even inspected the site in person. He accused the Council of employing delaying tactics.

Dr. Verwoerd must have viewed the little men from East London with exasperation. Reading between the lines, one can sense his annoyance with their lack of understanding of the broader vision. The minutes record a blistering lecture delivered by the Minister. He 'proceeded to outline to the Council's deputation for approximately one hour his own and his Department's policy in regard to location development throughout the country ... In this he was strongly supported by Mr. Smuts'.

The East Londoners were stunned by the news. Not only was this

an extraordinarily far-reaching proposal, but the way in which the news was broken to them, unpleasantly emphasised their powerlessness. They had not been consulted on the matter; no special meetings had been called; no correspondence had hinted of this explosive news. The news had burst upon them amidst a harsh and insulting lecture. It was clear that East London would have no say in the matter.

The Minister's standpoint struck the delegation as very inconsistent. They had been under the impression that the debate about the Duncan Village extension had mainly concerned the interests of the Greenfields residents. They had no idea that Dr. Verwoerd had supported the ratepayers with a completely different agenda in mind. Groping about in this Kafkaesque administrative nightmare, the Council had yet to realise that Verwoerd's priorities left no room for city autonomy, and that a much grander social metaphysics was at stake - of which the Council would be informed at the Department's leisure. The city fathers were losing control over their own destiny.

The Council delegation helplessly listened as a fantastical regional vision was being sketched out for them. The new location site would be connected with the Native Reserve (the Ciskei) immediately to the north, thus relocating the centre of gravity of the city. Furthermore, warned the Minister, 'East London would be well advised to proceed immediately with the development for industrial purposes of the Wilsonia farm area which would be adjacent to the proposed new location'. (This meant that the existing industrial centre of gravity of East London had to shift from the West Bank to a new, and undeveloped, inland site). Dr. Verwoerd cajoled: this arrangement would give East London 'a tremendous industrial development advantage over nearly all cities in the Union because the policy of the government was to encourage the development of industry only in those cities which are adjacent to Native Reserves'. Dr. Verwoerd also threatened: 'The East London City Council must wake up ... [otherwise] he would see to it that the city lost its

place in the queue for loans through the Native Housing Committee'.⁷⁴

For the City Council, the consequences of the Department's policy of urban segregation gradually became evident. Since all three East London townships were now scheduled for removal to the new location (to be called 'Mdantsane'), it became very difficult to justify expenditure, either to ratepayers or to the Department, on infrastructure in the existing locations. Hence Duncan Village was doomed to decay, long before Mdantsane's first house was built.

H. The Council reflects

The situation forced the City Councillors to inspect their own social and moral assumptions much more closely than usual. The municipal officials had significant cause for alarm. The Council had been pressured into a vast scheme, affecting thousands of African residents and having major financial implications for the Council - without any proper research or projections having been done.

The City Council was of course influenced by its United Party links. In the Parliamentary debate on the Bantu Self-Government Bill in 1959, the Minister of Bantu Administration and Development had defended his policy on the grounds that 'Apartheid is a God-given task and ideal which must systematically be brought to realisation'. The pragmatic foundations of United Party policies increasingly contrasted with the quasi-religious flavour of Nationalist Party arguments. United Party leaders had no sympathy for 'the sort of mystic foundation' with which government Ministers justified the development of homelands.⁷⁵ The United Party M.P. for East

⁷⁴ Daily Dispatch, 7 December 1957; quoted in E. Nel, 'The spatial planning of racial residential segregation in East London' (1990), p. 146.

⁷⁵ Daily Dispatch, 19 May 1959.

London North, Mr. Clive van Ryneveld, criticised the proposed homelands policy for its impracticality, especially because of the difficulties in consolidating the reserves.⁷⁶

United Party MPs also opposed the political development of the homelands. When the Bantu Self-Government Bill was introduced in 1959, the UP MP for East London City, Dr. D.L. Smit, denounced the Bill as 'the biggest raw deal that could ever be inflicted on a dependent people'. His stance clearly articulated the patriarchal dimension of moral obligation:

'MP's are being called on by the Government to deprive nine and a half million of our under-privileged subjects ... to whom we stand in the position of guardians, of their meagre representation in Parliament ... Our guardianship of the non-Europeans involves deep responsibilities to those over whom it is exercised in leading them forward along the paths of civilisation and peace'.⁷⁷

The United Party spotlighted the interests of urban Africans. In the words of Sir De Villiers Graaff,

'They were the best educated and the best organised Bantu - the Bantu who spent the most money and who had the longest experience and close contact with what was called Western civilisation ... They were the people who were really demanding a better form of political expression, but they were getting nothing while their less developed brothers in the reserves were getting new concessions'.⁷⁸

These concerns coloured the East London City Council's interpretation of the situation. Many Councillors objected to the envisaged total relocation of Duncan Village.⁷⁹

The municipal officials were doubtful about the feasibility of

⁷⁶ Daily Dispatch, 28 May 1959.

⁷⁷ Daily Dispatch, 19 May 1959.

⁷⁸ Daily Dispatch, 19 May 1959.

⁷⁹ NAC minutes, 4 December 1957.

a township at Site C. According to a Joint Report compiled by the various Heads of Departments,

'Its detachment from the focal centre by some 12 to 15 miles entails a new approach to civic development in East London. Normally, the most economical method of expansion is from the perimeter outwards, since existing services and facilities are merely extended and enlarged if necessary. The siting of the new township many miles away from the centre of civic activity nullifies this usual advantage, and in consequence is bound to result in costly development and the duplication of certain basic facilities and amenities ... The fact that the township is to be outside the boundaries of the City also involves the acquisition of an extensive area of land.⁸⁰

Some worrying financial considerations emerged. The Joint Report indicated that the financial impact of such a vast scheme confronted them 'with many imponderables'. The trend of interest rates, costs, redemption periods, progress of settlement in the new township and many other factors 'render it extremely difficult to project into the future with any degree of certainty and exactitude'. Even if development took place in stages, there would be insufficient Native Services Levy funds for the provision of infrastructure, and hence the Council faced taking out extensive loans. In addition, the Council would have direct financial commitments arising from the acquisition of land and the provision of amenities.

The main source of income would be site and house rentals. This introduced a whole new array of problems. The future residents could not afford high rentals and transport costs. The municipal officials concluded that it was inevitable that the new township would require substantial subsidisation unless 'there is a radical improvement in the economic standards and earning capacity of the Native population'. In addition, the East London's General Rate Account would have to continue subsidising

⁸⁰ Joint Report of Heads of Departments, submitted to City Council on 27 February 1958. Emphasis in original.

Duncan Village for many years, until it was removed. For the municipal officials, this was a frightening prospect. Instead of alleviating the deficit on the Native Revenue Account, the new location would worsen the municipality's financial position considerably.

The financial circumstances of Mdantsane residents would deteriorate in other ways. The City Council's concern for African welfare was much more pronounced than that of the Department. In Duncan Village, the residents could supplement their normal meagre earnings by taking in lodgers and by putting family members out to work. At Mdantsane, lodger earnings would fall away, and family income would be more difficult to maintain. As the officials remarked, '[W]hile the natives will be housed under greatly improved conditions, their economic circumstances will, in fact, probably be worse than now and they will be forced to economise on such essentials as food, clothing, fuel, etc.'

Prophetically, the officials anticipated that extensive coercion would have to be used to relocate Duncan Village residents to Mdantsane:

'If they cannot really afford to [reside in Mdantsane] then the practical problem will arise of inducing the natives to continue to stay in the new location as there will undoubtedly be a tendency for them to drift back to areas in closer proximity to the city where, while their living conditions will be less desirable, they will be able to exist at a much lower cost'.

Some Councillors also feared that the Minister's policy would stifle all future progress and development in Duncan Village.

The moral obligations of the patriarchal moral order were explicitly articulated. The City Council was progressively shifting from its pre-1948 disinterest in African administration to a much clearer expression of concern and involvement. Ironically, the City Council's moral obligation towards Duncan Village only became truly felt just as it was losing control over

the fate of the African residents of East London.

Despite the intensity of Councillors' concern it did not translate into focused or concerted action. This situation illustrated the weak foundations of the patriarchal moral order. All the inherent philosophical tensions of the patriarchal order began to surface. The question of 'community' had not been adequately addressed. Were 'the natives' really part of the city? Who should decide their fate? Did the Department and especially Dr. Verwoerd, who seemed so sure of himself, not perhaps have a suitable solution at last? The city patriarchs were partially coerced into compliance; but their own philosophical uncertainties contributed significantly to the dismemberment of their city.

The Councillors argued amongst themselves about several aspects of the problem.⁸¹ Several Councillors preferred Mdantsane to be a supplementary development to an upgraded Duncan Village.⁸² Some emphasised the interests of whites, while others were more concerned about the welfare of Africans.

Councillor Goddard articulated one school of thought. He felt that the Minister's position was legitimate. The Council had done little to improve African housing since 1952, and he could see some justification for the Minister's contention that in view of the circumstances, a complete resettlement was opportune.

A contrasting perspective was that of Councillor Sobey, who was 'ruthlessly opposed to the immediate scrapping of Duncan Native Village'.

⁸¹ Special NAC meeting, 27 February 1958.

⁸² For example, local traders were concerned about losing custom if their clients lived twelve miles away. Also, the removal of the Village would impose financial burdens on the ratepayers, because of the need to pay compensation for black home-owners.

A third position represented pure pragmatism. Clr. King approved of a new location, but did not favour the wholesale removal of Duncan Village. White interests were central in his argument, since Duncan Village was a vital labour reservoir and a valuable permanent market for the City's goods and services. Furthermore, he had his reservations about Site C:

The Council had never asked for a location to be established there, a complete removal of natives to the area would upset the economic stability of the City, and further, the question of the native being subsidised by the ratepayers of the City to any greater extent than at present, could not be seriously considered. If Duncan Village were totally removed, the new location would be almost a rival city to East London'.

The Council was at odds as to how it should proceed in its dealings with the Department. Whereas Clr. King was quite pugnacious, arguing that the City Council should have no part in the Department's scheme, other Councillors felt that discretion was the better part of valour. They were disinclined to oppose the Minister directly. Since it would take many years to satisfy the existing housing needs, they argued, there was no need to cross the Minister right away. 'There was a possibility that the Minister's policy might change with the passage of time, and that future events might render the complete removal of Duncan Native Village desirable to the Council'. Ironically, this passivity did indeed prove effective, since the complete removal of Duncan Village was never achieved. However, the costs, in terms of urban neglect, insecurity of tenure and damage to race relations in East London would prove to be greater than anyone expected.

For their part, Clrs. Addleson and Lazarus wanted to pour oil on troubled waters. They believed that the Council would probably have the full co-operation of the Department if it were made quite clear that the Council was not opposed to Site C. They believed that the City Council should demonstrate to the Department that it wished to proceed with its development in good faith, although with the vague proviso that 'the interests of the natives and ratepayers of the City [be] protected'.

Eventually, the Councillors managed to achieve some consensus. Council agreed to the Mdantsane project, on the following conditions:

- (a) That acceptance of this project to develop a new location in Area C will not prejudice the Council in its efforts to effect improvements and provide amenities in Duncan Village;
- (b) That the Council required to be furnished with more complete information on the cost of transport and to be satisfied that this will be within the means of the inhabitants;
- (c) That they were satisfied that satisfactory financing would take place through NSL Funds, Government Housing Loans, External Loans, and if necessary, through extraordinary assistance from the Government, on conditions that would ensure that, particularly during the preliminary stages, 'the burden of cost to the natives and possibly, the ratepayers, will not be greater than **the community as a whole** could reasonably be expected to assume'.⁸³

These resolutions proved to have no more weight than a feather in a gale. On 4 March 1958, the Town Clerk received a letter from Mr. Smuts, stating emphatically that a 'resolution in this form would **not** be acceptable to the Honourable Minister of Native Administration, and consequently, that if the Council insisted upon such a resolution, no progress would be possible with the planning and design of the location'.

A special Council meeting⁸⁴ was convened to consider this

⁸³ NAC minutes, 27 February 1958. Emphasis added, indicating the Councillors' inclusive understanding of the East London community.

⁸⁴ Minutes, 14 March 1958.

alarming situation. At this meeting, the Mayor (Clr. de Lange) pleaded for co-operation with the Department. The Department had given the assurance, he maintained, that the City would not be placed in economic stress as a result of its decision to accept Area C as the only area suitable for a native location.

Other Councillors were coming round to the Mayor's point of view. It was pointed out that Duncan Village would remain for a minimum of 30 years, in order to pay off its housing loans. Hence, they reasoned, there was no need for a confrontation with the Department; the matter could be postponed for at least three decades. On this timid and lukewarm note, the Council decided to adopt Area C as the site for the future native location, and that it would proceed with the establishment of Mdantsane immediately.

Initially, the decision seemed wise. In 1962, the government absolved the Council of any financial responsibilities regarding the new location, a move which understandably occasioned the municipality much relief.⁸⁵ In future, the City Council would merely act as agent for the Department, in the matter of the planning and development of Mdantsane.⁸⁶ The border industries policy held important economic benefits for East London. The Council was prepared to indulge in the planning of new industrial areas. Certain Councillors were rather pleased at being absolved of having to cater for the African populace.⁸⁷

As time drew on, however, the Council realised that the experiment was much less benign than originally envisaged. The central government had acquired a far more direct and decisive say in local affairs. 'It had ... attained the right to

⁸⁵ E. Nel, 'The spatial planning of racial residential segregation in East London' (1990), p. 161.

⁸⁶ Council minutes, 26 June 1962.

⁸⁷ E. Nel, 'The spatial planning of racial residential segregation in East London' (1990), p. 167.

determine the fate of a large proportion of the city's populace and space through the impending total relocation of the city's African populace to the adjacent Ciskei Homeland. Future control of the city passed increasingly from the hands of the council into those of the planners from Pretoria'.⁸⁸ The ultimate division between East London and Mdantsane took place in 1966, when Mdantsane was formally excised from the Cape Province and proclaimed as a homeland township. East London steadily became drawn into the Department's utopian visions. By the 1980s, the scheme proved totally impractical, due to the pressures of urbanisation and the constant growth of Duncan Village, but the Department continued in its dogmatic insistence on the total removal of Duncan Village, which obstructed all solutions to East London's political crisis. It was only in 1985 that the Department changed its policy, after widespread violence and extreme polarisation had taken their toll in the city.

Conclusion

In retrospect, the entire project appears to be a tragic misapplication of the regional planning principles advocated by Mr. Havemann, on several counts:

- a) The crucial criterion that the poorer sections of the community should be housed near their places of employment, was abandoned. In Dr. Verwoerd's scheme, the wealthier white community would inhabit the area near the Central Business District. In 1957, the proposed Wilsonia industrial area was still pure veld. In the meantime, desperately poor Africans would have to travel twelve miles to work.
- b) Mr. Havemann's recommendation that regional planning should be a gradual and gentle process, was unceremoniously abandoned. The DNA was forcing the

⁸⁸ E. Nel, 'The spatial planning of racial residential segregation in East London' (1990), p. 162.

pace of residential segregation, even though the relocation of industry would take decades.

- c) In contrast to Mr. Havemann's insistence that existing infrastructure be fully utilised, the DNA was prepared to destroy existing housing in favour of an entirely new township.
- d) The desire of Messrs. Havemann and Carr to reduce the poverty and stress of the African community, found no echo in Dr. Verwoerd's approach. The Verwoerdian planning process was an entirely celebratory one, moving counters around on a map, with no realistic estimate of costs, distances, and human realities.
- e) Mr. Havemann's belief that black residential areas should still be regarded as part of a shared urban community was rejected by Dr. Verwoerd, in favour of a notional homeland citizenship. He maintained that white interests were paramount in the future of the cities: '...Native townships must remain sub-ordinate to the adjacent European Local Authority. The Locations are European areas, the European Local Authority is the guardian and owner of the land and the creator and maintainer of that township ... The interests of the European town dweller must be paramount to the interests of the Native dweller. This is not unfair, because in the Native Reserves the converse must apply...'⁸⁹. For Dr. Verwoerd, the urban community had no integrity which should be recognised.

The replanning of East London had several important consequences for the city. First, it changed its physical shape and caused the urban community to be redefined. Second, it involved a

⁸⁹. Opening Address, IANA Annual Conference Proceedings, 1956, p. 106.

substantial loss of local autonomy in favour of central government power.

Third, the period saw the City Council's first forceful articulation of its patriarchal moral obligations towards the African community. Ironically, however, it ended in the subjection of the city's future to the utopian visions of the Department, as the City Council gradually came to accept the excision of the African community from the public and ethical life of the city. As we will see in Chapter Eleven, the decline of patriarchalism in East London did not produce an enthusiasm for Verwoerdian utopianism; instead, the Council steadily retreated into a moral abdication of its responsibilities as far as the African population was concerned.

One important reason for this abdication was that Dr. Verwoerd's insistence on strict financial separation between town and township removed any lingering sense of financial responsibility from white local authorities. According to Verwoerdian planning, financing for new townships would be acquired from three sources, viz. the central government, local white employers of black labour, and the black community itself. Because of these principles, it was tempting for local authorities to simply let go of black housing, which had become a major problem over the decades. At the same time, however, local authorities lost any control over the process.

Finally, the Department increasingly resorted to a 'disciplinary' style of governance, in its attempts to remove the social ills of the city, by means of the formal categorisation of the city's population. We will explore this disciplinary impulse further in the next chapter - most notably the extent to which disciplinary means and utopian ends were inherently incompatible, thus producing a set of misdirected bureaucratic empires.

CHAPTER NINE

INFLUX CONTROL IN EAST LONDON

A FAILED EXERCISE IN IMPOSING MODERN DISCIPLINE

A. Introduction

Throughout the thesis thus far, we have emphasised the problems associated with modernity, industrialisation and urbanisation which faced government officials. Both patriarchalism and Verwoerdianism had to come to terms with modernity. This chapter will illustrate and contrast their ways of doing so, by analysing influx control as an attempt to impose modern controls on chaotic urban conditions. In this way, we will demonstrate the fatal weakness of each paradigm: Whereas patriarchalism was afflicted by chronic ambiguities regarding the nature of the urban community, Verwoerdianism faced the fatal paradox of using modern (or disciplinary) means to achieve a pre-modern utopian order.

The chapter will be arranged as follows. After considering the historical background to influx control in the cities, we will analyse the failure of the patriarchal order to institute a thorough system of influx control. It had three weaknesses, viz. the lukewarm support by the white community (especially employers) for the system of influx control; the opposition of Africans themselves; and the administrative weaknesses of the municipality.

Furthermore, at the level of moral conduct, we will compare the more permissive form of paternalism employed by the patriarchalists with the more coercive paternalism of the Verwoerdians. The 'city fathers' often found themselves debilitated by uncomfortable moral dilemmas, as patriarchal moral imperatives collided with disciplinary prescriptions. In contrast, the Departmental officials showed little concern for any of the human costs of influx control. In this chapter, these

issues of moral conduct will be elaborated in connection with the Labour Bureaux and the extension of passes to women. Such reforms severely reduced the autonomy of the City Council, and brought pressure on the patriarchal relationship between the Council and the Advisory Board. By 1970, little remained of the collective urban identity which had supported patriarchalism.

B. Historical background

The first systematic measure to regularise the position of urban Africans was the Natives (Urban Areas) Act of 1923. According to the Stallard doctrine, black persons were temporary sojourners who remained in urban areas solely to sell their labour.¹ The local authorities could also expel black people who were habitually unemployed, those who had no honest livelihood, and those who were 'idle, dissolute or disorderly'.²

The question of influx control was a matter of distinguishing between permanent African residents and those who had gained access in the recent past to take up contract employment. This, in turn, necessitated some way of distinguishing between these two groups. According to Section 12 of the Act, a local authority could insist that every black male entering a proclaimed area had to register on arrival, and proof of registration could be demanded. After 1937, all black men in towns were required to carry passes, which specified their housing and employment status. Africans were required to produce their passes on demand, and were deemed offenders unless and until they could prove otherwise.³

¹ S. Bekker and R. Humphries, From Control to Confusion (1985) p. 49.

² R. Davenport, 'African townsmen? South African Natives (Urban Areas) legislation through the years' (African Affairs, vol. 68, no. 271, 1969), p. 99-100.

³ S. Bekker and R. Humphries, From Control to Confusion (1985), p. 49.

Since the 1920s, most municipalities had been in favour of influx control. They feared the financial responsibility of providing housing for a huge immigrant population. The dilemma of the local authorities can be understood. Because of low African wages, municipalities could not charge economic rentals for housing, and this increased their financial burden. Local authorities were resentful, because they felt that they were being unfairly asked to subsidise the employers' responsibility to pay a living wage. Most of them tried to balance the Native Revenue Account by restricting expenditure on townships, or by increasing revenue by municipal beer sales. Hence the three problems, viz. finance, housing and influx control, were intimately related. Influx control was the key, as it would lessen the need for housing, and hence ease the financial burden on the local authorities.⁴

However, influx control could never be applied to its fullest extent. As in the case of municipal beer-brewing and town planning before 1948, influx control depended more on local initiative than on central government prescription. Municipalities had significant discretionary powers in administering their locations, subject only to broad guidelines from the Department of Native Affairs.⁵ Hence the application of influx control was patchy and unsystematic.

Before 1948, the system of influx control remained rudimentary. Influx control remained limited to African men. Also, the Government lacked the ruthlessness which would have been necessary for its proper implementation. Increasingly, the Government had to recognise that certain workers had become permanently urbanised. During the Second World War, industries' thirst for labour led to an increased influx of Africans to the

⁴ R.G. Humphries, 'The origins and subsequent development of Administration Boards' (M.A. Thesis, Rhodes University, 1983), p. 22.

⁵ S. Bekker and R. Humphries, From Control to Confusion (1985), p.2.

cities.⁶

The system was also contradictory, in two respects. First, the legislation recognised the right of blacks born or living permanently in the urban area to remain there. This meant that the removal of any 'undesirable', idle or unemployed natives who enjoyed permanent residence rights, would not be an easy matter. Second, the creation of this group of established urban black workers logically implied that they should have the right to live with their families. Hence municipalities continued to face the issue of access of women and children to urban areas, together with the concomitant responsibility of providing family accommodation.⁷

The confusion about where blacks really 'belonged', whether they were an integral part of the city, or simply temporary visitors, was intrinsic to the patriarchal order. Despite severe political and economic inequalities, certain Africans were perceived to enjoy certain rights. Different people intuitively drew different boundaries in the community, defining some Africans as insiders and others as outsiders. In 1935, a Departmental investigation into African urbanisation found that most local authorities rejected the idea that municipal locations should be regarded purely as a reservoir of native labour from which the worn-out labourer was required to depart when he could no longer work. Most local authorities displayed a 'combination of Draconian theory and kindly practice', and conceded that certain Africans were permanent dwellers in the towns.⁸

⁶ R. Davenport, 'African townsmen?' (1969), pp. 102-3.

⁷ S. Bekker and R. Humphries, From Control to Confusion (1985), pp. 49-50.

⁸ Report of the Departmental Committee appointed to enquire into and report upon the Question of Residence of Natives in Urban Areas and certain proposed Amendments of the Natives Urban Areas Act No. 21 of 1923; Quoted in T.R.H. Davenport, 'The triumph of Colonel Stallard: The transformation of the Natives (Urban Areas) Act between 1923 and 1937', South

Significantly, the MP for East London City, Dr. D.L. Smit, was a long-time advocate of African permanent residence in the cities. He recommended the abolition of the pass laws, because they were expensive to maintain, and because they fuelled black grievances.⁹

The case of East London confirms that most local officials did not subscribe to a consistent and well-conceived philosophy. Instead, they functioned by the lights of an intuitive understanding of patriarchal rights and obligations, and of paternalistic moral conduct. On some occasions, considerations of expediency were paramount, and moral conduct lapsed into 'dirty hands' methods; on others, local officials showed more moral sensitivity. The unsystematic administrative order allowed great scope for individual choice on the part of officials.

C. The spectre of chaos: Influx control and the problems of modernity

In South African historiography, the phenomenon of influx control has typically been analysed from a materialist theoretical perspective, and hence as a measure to ensure that the reserve army of African labour was removed from the cities and confined to bantustans. In this way, it has been argued, capital and the state were released from maintaining the surplus population, and thereby made cheap labour power available to the capitalist economy.¹⁰ This explanatory approach was later refined by Doug Hindson, who regarded influx control as a means to maintain a differentiated labour market.¹¹

African Historical Journal, No. 2, November 1970; p. 85.

⁹ R. Humphries 'The origins and subsequent development of Administration Boards' (1983), p. 10; Daily Dispatch, 4 December 1956.

¹⁰ D. Hindson, Pass Controls and the Urban African Proletariat (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1987); p. 7.

¹¹ D. Hindson, Pass Controls (1987), p. 10-12.

In this chapter, we maintain that influx control was motivated by more than questions of profitability. It was a deliberate attempt by the authorities to impose a disciplinary order on a society in the throes of chaotic transition from traditional patterns of authority towards modernity, and as such, it was a response to profound social anxiety. This explanatory approach does not necessarily negate the materialist explanation, for the imposition of measures appropriate to capitalism can be regarded as one dimension of the achievement of modernity. However, problems of achieving modernity and discipline cannot be reduced to questions of profitability. Disciplinary power involves the reconstruction of people's subjectivity and identity according to formal categories.

Such a disciplinary order invariably required a sense of appropriate social categories and boundaries. Individuals have to be classified (whether as residents, schoolchildren, the mentally ill, the workforce, or whatever), before disciplinary methods can meaningfully be applied. In the absence of a clear and shared understanding of the boundaries of the urban community, the system of influx control was, before 1948, a makeshift and ramshackle substitute for genuine social discipline.

By the 1940s, African society in East London was poised between traditional and modern forms of social organisation. Urbanisation is a lengthy and complex process, and the migrant labour system contributed to the maintenance of traditional links. Philip Mayer has usefully distinguished between 'Red' Xhosa, who adhered to a traditionalist way of life, including the pagan Xhosa religion; and the 'School' Xhosa, who were products of the mission and the school, holding up Christianity, literacy and other Western ways as ideals.¹² 'School' Xhosa were much more prepared to make the transition towards permanent

¹²

P. Mayer, Townsmen or Tribesmen (1961), p. 4.

urbanisation than were their 'Red' counterparts.

For 'Red' migrants, 'disciplinary' forms of modern conduct were very shallowly developed. For them, wage labour was simply an attempt to get enough to get back to the land. Company managers were constantly frustrated by the vacillating loyalties of workers to the processes of industrial production:

'Ninety percent of the natives are worse than useless ... Their attachments in the Kaffir Territories, their concern with their fields ... and ploughing holidays, as well as the irregular and constant movement to and fro makes them the worst workers I've ever come across'.¹³

Absenteeism, pre-industrial work habits, traditional gender roles, and traditional belief-systems indicated the confused transitory nature of Duncan Village society.¹⁴ Some workers clung desperately to the rural areas, as a comforting link with the ancestors; and they resented the mechanised, repetitive, highly controlled industrial environment.¹⁵

The distinction between permanent and temporary African residents was much easier to maintain in earlier times, when the cities were smaller and rural African societies were more resilient. As the cities grew, the pressure of urbanisation became more intense, and more formal methods were required to distinguish between members of the shared urban moral order, and those who remained excluded. The system of influx control was an attempt to impose this conceptual boundary, and thereby define and create a modern community. In the process, the constraints of modernity could be forced upon on a reluctant populace, as influx control would force African residents to adhere to official housing and

¹³ Quoted in G. Minkley, 'The fighting port' (1990), p. 9.

¹⁴ See G. Minkley (1990) for an excellent discussion of the traditional dimensions of cultural life in Duncan Village.

¹⁵ G. Minkley, 'The fighting port' (1990), p. 12.

employment requirements. In this way, officials hoped, the problems of vagrancy, squatting and crime could be curtailed.

As far as residence was concerned, applicants had to fulfill strenuous criteria. The official had to be satisfied that the applicant was a 'fit and proper person' to reside in the location, and that the applicant enjoyed Section 10 rights.¹⁶ Residential and site permits could be cancelled by the superintendent, under the following conditions: (i) if the holder became unemployed; (ii) if he were employed for more than one month outside the urban area; (iii) if he failed to pay his rent; (iv) if he left his dwelling for a period of more than seven days without the written permission of the superintendent; (v) if he ceased, in the opinion of the Council, to be a fit and proper person to reside in the location; or (vi) if he was convicted of an offence and sentenced without the option of a fine.

For residential permits, all the persons entitled to reside in that dwelling had to be specified. For site permits (which were issued to people wishing to erect a dwelling), the applicant had to be able to erect a dwelling of the official standard.¹⁷ Lodgers' permits had to be renewed monthly, and the superintendent kept a record of persons whose written application for site, residential or lodger's permits had been refused.¹⁸ Visitors' permits were required for any African to 'enter, be or remain temporarily' in the location. Also, the driver of any vehicle desiring to enter the location had to apply for

¹⁶ Location regulations, p. 15. Section 10 rights were achieved in four different ways, viz. (1) 15 years' continuous residence in the urban area; (2) 10 years' continuous employment by the same employer; (3) birth in the urban area, and (4) the wives and unmarried children of African men who were qualified residents.

¹⁷ Location Regulations, p. 15-6.

¹⁸ Location Regulations, pp. 35-6.

permission to enter.¹⁹

Township officials had remarkable faith in such permit systems. In fact, one might conclude that permits offered them a kind of symbolic security against impending social chaos. Disciplinary practices had already shaped officials' identities, regardless of the actual efficacy of such practices. It was important for officials to believe that these regulations were morally justified. Four examples of justifications for permits can be given. First, regarding the control of visitors, the Manager maintained that permits protected the interests of African householders, who resented the presence of noisy friends and of illegal entrants who 'lived on others'.²⁰ Here the permit served to protect respectable site-holders from the excesses of their lodgers. Second, according to township officials, lodgers' permits also protected permanently urbanised workers against competition for employment.²¹

Another justification for permits was that they satisfied the information needs of the Location Office, so that voters' rolls for Advisory Board elections could be maintained. Now the permit represented a contribution to democracy. A fourth justification for permits was that they prevented site owners from living elsewhere as lodgers, to make more money from renting out their own rooms at a profit. Here the permit served to prevent people from making money in underhand ways, especially by exploiting

¹⁹ Location Regulations, p. 36.

²⁰ Manager's memorandum to NAC, October 1957.

²¹ This view was very common amongst United Party-oriented officials, as demonstrated by the Fagan Commission of 1948, and supported by officials such as Mr. W.J.P. Carr (Johannesburg), Mr. Bourquin (Durban), Mr. Mathewson (Benoni), and Mr. van der Vyver (Springs) (IANA Annual Conference Proceedings (1953), p. 38, 41, 45, 50); Also see Humphries, The origins and subsequent development of Administration Boards (1983), p. 76).

numerous lodgers in overcrowded conditions.²²

D. The inadequacies of influx control as a control mechanism under the patriarchal order

Under the patriarchal urban order, four main problems characterised the application of influx control: (a) It enjoyed very patchy support on the part of the white community; (b) The administrative capacity of the East London City Council was unequal to the task, especially in conditions of rapid urbanisation; (c) It was resisted, to varying degrees, by the African population; and (d) This caused severe moral dilemmas for municipal white officials. Each problem will be considered in turn.

a) Attitudes of local whites

The imposition of influx control was complicated by the varied and inconsistent attitudes of white East Londoners. The growing African population inevitably affected the white population's understanding of the boundaries of the urban community. Many East Londoners believed that 'the flow of surplus people - particularly women - into the urban area of East London has to be controlled, or the area will be swamped, and the position would get completely out of hand'.²³ It is possible that this fear was exacerbated by the fact that the new-comers were the least Westernised of all 'natives' - they were culturally different, spoke an indigenous language, and were very poor.

²² JAB minutes, 21 October 1957.

²³ Councillor Sobey's memorandum to NAC, 5 August 1958. In the same vein, a letter to the Daily Dispatch pleaded for 'Rigorous action to keep the races pure even if it means going to the extent of legislation to the effect that domestic help should have to go to their homes at night' (13 May 1961).

Yet employers often did not adhere to influx control restrictions. Gary Minkley's excellent study of business practices in East London illustrates the different attitudes of employers to the issue. The larger and more mechanised industries articulated a capitalist ideology. Such firms tended to argue for a complete break with migrant labour, in favour of a settled industrial society. In contrast, small firms argued for cheap black labour to do the dirty and hard manual work, especially because white labour was relatively expensive. For such firms, migrant labour remained the most suitable system of labour administration. They claimed that migrancy enabled greater control, lower wages, a 'clean and trouble-free city', and 'a more humble and obedient servant'.²⁴

In addition to these differences in opinion regarding the principle of influx control, ordinary business practices tended to simply disregard influx control procedures. Instead of limiting themselves to employing Duncan Village residents with Section 10 rights, employers recruited labour from anywhere, including the homelands, the rural areas, or simply anyone appearing at the gates of the factory.²⁵

b) Municipal administrative capacity

The second difficulty in implementing influx control was its sheer administrative impracticality. The problem with influx control was that it criminalised normal kinds of social activities. For example, finding residence, building a house, looking for a job, or entertaining visitors at home cannot be considered criminal activities under normal circumstances. Yet influx control required that African residents get special permission for such humdrum aspects of life. In effect, normal social activities were officially categorised, and then individuals required express government approval before they

²⁴ G. Minkley, 'The fighting port' (1990), pp. 7-8.

²⁵ G. Minkley, 'The fighting port' (1990), p. 16.

could engage in such activities.

The result was an all-pervasive 'permit mentality' on the part of white officials. The 'permit mentality' displaced the locus of authority: instead of the private individual deciding on his/her activities, it entailed formal bureaucratic approval of certain social activities. This involved the establishment of multiple levels of bureaucratic offices, ranging from township superintendents, township managers, Advisory Board members, and private employers. In fact, Africans were liable for up to 25 passes which they had to carry on their persons at all times:

'Service contract; Permit to seek work; Pass to be out after curfew; Overland travelling pass; Livestock driving pass; Poll tax receipt; Poll tax exemption certificate; Exemption from pass laws certificate; Std 4 certificate to obtain liquor; Permit under Liquor Act for off-premises consumption; Permit to introduce liquor into the urban location; Location site rent receipt; Permit to reside in location; Lodger's permit; Location temporary permit; Location visitor's permit; Permit to gather wood on the commonage; Permit to keep cattle in an urban location; Minister's sacramental wine permit; Travelling pass into Transkei; 'Togt' permit; Certificate declaring a native to be a non-native (sic) and not liable for tax'.²⁶

The permit system never functioned smoothly. For one thing, the actual requirements were often unclear to African residents themselves. Illiterate and semi-literate people often had little understanding of technical details and procedures.²⁷ The regulations were so complex that they were confusing even to the white employers and the officials themselves.²⁸

²⁶ A. Mager and G. Minkley, 'Reaping the whirlwind: The East London riots of 1952' (History Workshop, University of the Witwatersrand, 1990), p. 19.

²⁷ P. Mayer, Townsmen or Tribesmen (1961), p. 61.

²⁸ For example, the registration of domestics in East London in 1959 was bedevilled by misunderstandings between the municipality's Native Administration Department (NAD) and the City Councillors. According to the City Council, the employer of a domestic

The sheer demographic pressure on East London was an additional reason for the difficulties of influx control. Situated between the Transkei and Ciskei, it was surrounded by an African population of more than 2 000 000 people.²⁹ The Township Manager estimated that over a thousand visiting permits were issued per month during 1958. During 1957 alone, 5 700 black women were sent back to the rural areas.³⁰ In 1959, the SAP estimated that 7 000 African women lived illegally in the East London locations³¹, and in 1961, the Daily Dispatch reported that the number of Africans unsuccessfully seeking work in East London had increased by roughly 50% during only one month.³²

East London's Native Administration Department had an enormous workload. The three superintendents at Duncan Village interviewed on average 2 300 persons per month. About 500 people per month were contacted for rental arrears, and of these, about 125 per month simply disregarded the Superintendents' letters. The Township Manager reported that

'Instead of handing the matter over to Council's attorneys, involving these people in convictions, expense and possible eviction from their houses, the Department deems it necessary, in the interests of the community and from a humanitarian point of view, to send for these people, discuss the matters with them and try to persuade them not to involve themselves in court proceedings... If the Department were to act in a high-handed manner it would be an easy matter to take legal proceedings and cause considerable harm to the people involved...'³³.

servant was only required to sign her pass book on the date of employment and the date of discharge; according to NAD officials, however, the book had to be signed monthly, in case 'she absconded from her job' (Daily Dispatch, 11 March 1959, 18 May 1959).

²⁹ Memorandum to NAC, Councillor Sobey, 5 August 1958.

³⁰ Manager's report to NAC, June 1958.

³¹ Daily Dispatch, 11 March 1959.

³² Daily Dispatch, 6 May 1961.

³³. Report to NAC, November 1957.

The local authority employed only ten policemen in 1956, for a population of 60 000 residents.³⁴ Some African clerks and constables were open to bribery.³⁵ Inspection practices were outdated and inefficient. In 1955, the Manager reported that the Inspectors wasted a great deal of time catching buses to distant parts of the town to inspect the registration of workers. On arrival, 'It is either the employee who cannot be found, or the employer has left for another area'. He recommended the acquisition of scooters for the use of Inspectors.³⁶ In 1957, the harrassed Manager complained, 'Substantial amounts in revenue [in lodgers' fees] are lost, apart from the fact that illegal accommodation is rife, that illegal entrants have the free run of things, so to speak, live off others, and generally cause a lot of trouble in backyards. The inspections now carried out are almost of no consequence'.³⁷

Because of the Superintendents' heavy interviewing schedule, on site inspections were limited to an afternoon per week. Office work was attended to after normal office hours, usually by taking work home.³⁸ The superintendents were under constant psychological pressure:

'The responsibilities attaching to the incumbent of this statutory position are enormous and the effects of his rulings and decision of far-reaching consequences to the whole of the community and the Bantu people in prticular. The stresses and strains to which he is subjected in an ordinary day's work cannot be measured in output but ... they leave deep scars...'³⁹

³⁴ Manager's memorandum to NAC, 19 January 1956.

³⁵ P. Mayer, Townsmen or Tribesmen (1961), p. 61.

³⁶ Manager's memorandum to NAC, 14 March 1955.

³⁷ Memorandum to NAC, October 1957.

³⁸ Manager's report to NAC, November 1957.

³⁹ Report by Mr. Buitendag of Germiston on Native Administration in East London (1960), par. 43.

Given the cumbersome permit system, the staff shortage, the dire need for housing which elicited all the resourcefulness of black people, and demographic pressures, the local officials constantly found themselves in practical difficulties.

c) Opposition by African residents

These difficulties were exacerbated by the opposition of Africans themselves. Many Africans lived in a 'margin of tolerated illegality'. Foucault's description of 18th century France could well be applied to cities such as East London in the 1950s:

'The least-favoured strata of the population did not have, in principle, any privileges: but they benefited, within the margins of what was imposed on them by law and custom, from a space of tolerance, gained by force or obstinacy; and this space was for them so indispensable a condition of existence that they were often ready to rise up to defend it; the attempts that were made periodically to reduce it, by reviving old laws or by improving methods of apprehending, provoked popular disturbances...'⁴⁰

Similarly, in the case of East London, the illegal 'spaces of tolerance' were crucially important to many Africans, for it enabled them to survive in the city. It also inspired them to resist influx control regulations in a myriad innovative ways. Influx control was a constant frustration, especially during a period of looking for work. If discovered, the offender was taken to a charge office, fined, and told to leave the area. As he or she usually had no intention whatever of complying, the fine served as a kind of rent paid for staying in the urban area. This process continued from conviction to conviction until people succeeded in justifying their presence officially, by producing a service contract of work.⁴¹

⁴⁰ M. Foucault, Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison (New York, Vintage Books, 1979), p. 82.

⁴¹ D.H. Reader, The Black Man's Portion (1961), p. 74.

Africans' attitudes to influx control revealed a combination of resentment, concealed resistance, acceptance and compliance. They resented the onerous obligations that had to be fulfilled before they achieved permanent residence rights. Section 10 was seen as the law that 'marries us to our employers'. Africans were liable to be chased out of town if they lost their employment, so they were locked into underpaid and unpleasant jobs. The pass system was seen as a 'white device to keep the amaXhosa down'.⁴² People suffered daily harrassment, inconvenience and indignities at the hands of pass officers.

While very few Africans supported the system of influx control⁴³, the system was often pragmatically accepted as an unpleasant fact of urban life. If one examines the East London Advisory Board's position more closely, it appears that Board members did accept the need for some form of population control.⁴⁴ Some Board members also accepted the distinction between 'insiders' (permanent residents in East London) and 'outsiders' from the rural areas. The Board members did not object to the maintenance of social order as such for they were only too aware of the problems caused by crime and vagrancy.

Some of the East London Advisory Board's complaints illustrate the combination of a resentment at the indignities of influx control and an acceptance of the need for social regulation. For example, Mr. Gocina described how the Bantu police kicked houses' doors down, shouting, "Open, I am a police!", thus

⁴² G. Minkley, 'The fighting port' (1990), p. 17.

⁴³ P. Mayer, Townsmen or Tribesmen (1961), p. 59-60. It was considered a point of honour to give warning when the pass raids were seen approaching (p. 60).

⁴⁴ Well-established African residents in urban areas were often aware of their higher status. In her study of the African elite in Johannesburg during the 1920s, Kathy Eales has shown that Africans of higher social status in the cities were eager to restrict the entry of 'tribal' Africans ('Patriarchs, passes and privilege' (1989)).

wakening everyone in nearby buildings. He recommended, instead, that lodgers' permits be demanded in a civilised fashion from the landlords of the tenants, 'as they know better about their tenants'.⁴⁵ It is clear that Mr. Gocina did not envisage the abolition of lodgers' permits; he simply wanted the regulations applied in such a way that they respected the privacy and rights of law-abiding people. Similarly, Mr. Gaga complained on occasion that 'It was not right for outsiders to come into East London, but what worried residents was the way in which permit checking was conducted'. For example, the police were conducting raids for 'illegals' as early as 3.30 am, instead of the officially determined time of 6.30 am.⁴⁶

Yet we should not underestimate the Advisory Board's opposition to influx control practices. Africans resented the fact that influx control often intruded on normal, respectable activities. It was the violation of personal privacy and dignity which caused anger amongst the 'respectable' Africans. A member of the Board once physically threatened a constable in the NAD office, causing the Chairman to be 'deeply shocked' at the Board member's behaviour.⁴⁷

d) Influx control as a moral problem

Local authorities found themselves in an intractable dilemma: On the one hand, they could not allow influx to continue unchecked, because of the housing crisis, and because of the social evils perceived to flow therefrom. On the other hand, the existence of regulations required coercive policing, and this brought the officials into constant conflict with township residents, and especially the Advisory Boards. The 'city fathers' were in uncomfortably close proximity to the distress caused by the application of regulations. Africans' resentment

⁴⁵ JAB minutes, 22 July 1957.

⁴⁶ JAB minutes, 21 March 1955.

⁴⁷ JAB minutes, 5 March 1956.

tended to cause much moral discomfort on the part of the officials. Township officials from several cities recognised this problem. According to Dr. Language of Brakpan, 'The pass laws did not enable the authorities to establish the identity of Natives with certainty and friction and confusion was often created'⁴⁸, and an official from Springs maintained that 'It is no use trying to stem the influx by laws. You will not do that as long as you have employment in the towns and starvation in the territories'.⁴⁹

This issue once again produced dilemmas of paternalistic moral conduct. As we noted in Chapter Four, paternalists always have to choose whether they should override the express desires of those whose 'real' interests they want to promote. In East London, the anger of the Board members at influx control measures often made this choice a difficult one. The white municipal officials in East London were ambivalent about the grievances of the Advisory Board members, since they never knew if the Board members were exaggerating or not. On some occasions, City Councillors duly requested the South African Police to refrain from excesses in conducting pass raids. On other occasions, Councillors showed little sympathy to the complaints of the Board, and urged the Board to 'instruct residents not to accommodate people illegally as this would help to curtail raids'.⁵⁰

Since permits usually required employers or municipal officials to provide written permission for certain activities, the permit system only worked with a semblance of effectiveness in cases where activities were predictable and planned well in advance. In emergencies or unusual circumstances, the permit system

⁴⁸ Address, Dr. Language, IANA Annual Conference Proceedings (1954), p. 185.

⁴⁹ Mr. Jurgens, IANA Annual Conference Proceedings (1954) p. 34.

⁵⁰ JAB minutes, 6 February 1962.

became extremely problematic. Since employers or officials were not always available when needed, especially after office hours, there was every possibility that rules would be broken by normally law-abiding people. On such occasions, the Advisory Board was spurred to pin its colours to the mast, and engage in lengthy moral arguments with white officials. The Advisory Board found much moral ammunition in listing, for the benefit of white officials, the kinds of ordinary circumstances which could get law-abiding people into trouble.

For example, a person found visiting another house in the same location, was liable for arrest. People visiting sick persons in other houses could not obtain visitors' permits after hours. People who lived in town and attended religious meetings in the location, often had passes from their employers to be out late, but on arrival in Duncan Village they were already too late to obtain permits as the Location Office was closed.⁵¹ Wives visiting their husbands in the hostels also got in trouble for not having permits.⁵²

In such cases, the Manager was in the uncomfortable position of having to uphold the duty of the police to arrest people found sleeping at other people's houses, and yet offer some sympathetic solution to the unfortunate offenders, who were usually, officials realised, law-abiding people. To remedy the matter (without abolishing the regulations and the permit system) inevitably involved the location administration in even more complicated administrative manoeuvres. This invariably imposed additional burdens on over-worked officials. For example, grievances could be reported to the township Superintendents, (thus involving them in more time-consuming interviews), who might decline to prosecute offenders.

The Advisory Board appreciated such gestures, but reminded the

⁵¹ JAB minutes, 27 October 1958.

⁵² JAB minutes, 21 October 1957.

township officials that people often lost their jobs as a result of these arrests. This placed yet another moral obligation on the shoulders of the Manager. He not only had to devise a system to protect residents from unfair prosecution, but also from unfair dismissal from their jobs. Hence he encouraged the Superintendents to act as go-betweens for employees and employers. In effect, NAD had to protect people from the very regulations which it had to enforce.⁵³

The list of potential unusual or emergency cases was almost endless. For example, when a person lost his job, he or she had to be endorsed back to his own district. But, Mr. Guzana inquired, what if such a person was out of work because his employer's firm had closed down, or because of medical advice? He received the assurance from the Superintendent that such cases would be treated on their merits, and people would not be automatically endorsed out⁵⁴ - but this necessarily involved the beleaguered Superintendent in even more paperwork.

It was generally morally disconcerting to be draconian towards a population living in close proximity. Officials inevitably got to know individuals personally. For example, one Gerald Joe Bobotya, 'mattress maker, lodger and T.B. patient', continually nagged the Superintendent for a site licence (for which he did not qualify). In response, the Manager informed NAC that 'his mentality is rather low, but not being dangerous, he is not interfered with ... It has been decided to grant him the "freedom of Duncan Village". The police were notified and nobody interfered with Gerald'.⁵⁵

In conclusion, the paternalism of the white city fathers, which simultaneously required discipline and sympathy, made the application of influx control and housing regulations a very

⁵³ JAB minutes, 22 February 1960.

⁵⁴ JAB minutes, 19 November 1956.

⁵⁵ Manager's report to NAC, June 1958.

difficult business. Whose interests should prevail? 'One is at a loss to find a solution to the problem', wrote the Manager:

'This type of checking is not liked by anybody, on the other hand, the influx of these persons into the location cannot be allowed to go on. The admirable custom of the Native peoples, whereby a ready bed is available for the stranger, is perhaps one of the troubles. Coupled with this, is, of course, the exploitation of the stranger in the form of high rents...'⁵⁶

Inevitably, the Council officials felt that they were unfairly expected to face the burden of carrying out morally distasteful tasks on their own. They criticised the selfishness of employers, who accepted the services of any black people, without considering the implications for the town in generally, such as the lack of housing.⁵⁷ The Councillors were aware of the quandary of their officials. They did not like raids at all, but in the absence of any real policy alternative, they lamely concluded that the checking of permits had to be done 'in a reasonable way with as little suffering as possible to women and children'.⁵⁸

The result was a ramshackle legal order in the city, ostensibly based on the clinical prescriptions of the 'Township Regulations', but actually a loose amalgam of overlapping, confusing and often totally impractical regulations. In the process, normal social activities were criminalised; and officials spent so much of their time pursuing offenders, that few resources remained to counteract genuinely anti-social behaviour. In brief, influx control can be regarded as a brave but misguided attempt to impose disciplinary controls on a chaotic urban setting.

The problem, under patriarchalism, was that the boundaries of the

⁵⁶ Manager's report to NAC, June 1958.

⁵⁷ JAB minutes, 24 November 1958.

⁵⁸ JAB minutes, 28 April 1958.

community were very unclear. Classical disciplinary institutions, such as the workshop, the prison, the school, and the hospital, as described by Foucault, all had clear boundaries. Similarly, the modern form of 'discipline' on a national scale (registration of births and deaths; identity documents; compulsory education, vaccination, military service, etc) depend on a clear definition of the national community, defined as 'citizenship'.

As we have repeatedly noted, the problem in South African cities has always been precisely the lack of clarity about who belongs, who is an outsider, and how outsiders should relate to insiders. The notion of 'community', by definition, stipulates a finite set of people with a definite set of reciprocal moral rights and obligations. The cities of the 1950s offered little communal coherence. How is an urban community to be defined when a seemingly endless stream of migrants, lacking many of the shared experiences, assumptions and even the actual language of the established residents, want to come and live in the city? Clear and effective demarcations between insiders and outsiders did not exist - for example, was a traditional wife, visiting her husband, part of the community? Was a 'won't-work', who had been born in Duncan Village, but who had led a dissolute life with a rowdy street gang, part of the community by birthright, or should he be expelled? If a person did not work, through no fault of his own (e.g. medical reasons, or retrenchment), did he belong to the urban community because he lived there and identified with it? And if Mr. Gaga or Mr. Gocina of the Advisory Board were found at a friend's house after dark, minus a permit, and suffered the indignities of arrest, were they transgressors, or victims? Neither the African residents nor white officials were clear on these questions. The Verwoerdian disciplinary approach to influx control failed precisely because it posed inappropriate answers to these dilemmas.

E. The transition from patriarchal influx control to Verwoerdian 'discipline': The Buitendag report

In 1960, Mr. F.W.C. Buitendag, the Manager of Non-European Affairs of the Germiston City Council, was asked by the East London Council to investigate the functioning of East London's Native Administration Department. Mr. Buitendag's report is a useful historical record depicting the transition from the patriarchal to the Verwoerdian conceptions of city administration, for it combined elements of both. The spirit of Mr. Buitendag's report was not Verwoerdian in its full-blown sense. It lacked the ruthlessness and imperiousness which characterised later correspondence and circulars from the Department. Mr. Buitendag was a proponent of legal-rational efficiency, which he combined with remnants of patriarchalism.

The report offered persuasive arguments aimed at transforming the City's chaotic system of influx control into more rigorous disciplinary practices. Since Buitendag had not only discussed East London's influx control problems with local Councillors and officials, but also with several central and regional officials of the Department of Native Affairs⁵⁹, we can assume that his conclusions approximated state-of-the-art official thinking.

In Mr. Buitendag's report, the paternalistic tradition of concern for subordinate members of society merged with new disciplinary notions of benevolent intervention. As we noted in Chapter

⁵⁹. This included C. Heald (Under-Secretary, European Areas), L. Smuts (Assistant Under-Secretary), P. Hattingh (Chief Urban Areas Commissioner), G. White (Urban Areas Commissioner), Dr. van Rensburg (Acting Director of Native Labour), all posted in Pretoria. In King William's Town, he interviewed J. van Heerden (Chief Commissioner), F. Brownlee (Regional Urban Areas Commissioner), and B. Keaton (Regional Employment Officer) were consulted. The District Bantu Affairs Commissioner in East London (T. Young) and his staff were interviewed, as well as officials from the Office of the Chief Magistrate in East London, and the Office of the District Commandant.

Seven, the disciplinary ethic contains a strong 'humanitarian' dimension. The patriarchal and disciplinary traditions were reconciled in Mr. Buitendag's emphasis on the affection, concern and shared bonds of community which tie the officials to the black population. 'I have always felt and preached that a Superintendent, if he has any hope or desire of getting to know the community entrusted to his care, should spend at least a third of his time as a field officer moving about in his area'.⁶⁰ And, regarding the position of superintendents:

'A Superintendent's position is one of trust. He is the guardian of many children, the representative on the spot of white authority. He should be the guide, philosopher and friend of people who have nowhere else to turn. He is judge and welfare officer, not prosecutor or rent collector. Punishment there must be and so must rents be paid, but not to the exclusion of all the many fine things that a Superintendent's job could be. Most Superintendents are underpaid and I will ever campaign against this'.⁶¹

Officials such as Mr. Buitendag realised that the pace of urbanisation was challenging the resources and order of the cities. Several of his recommendations reflect an urge to impose social discipline, in Michel Foucault's terms. Influx control was a doctrine of distribution of population. All that was expected of 'natives' was to be at the right place at the right time - to be working during working hours, to be at their approved sites during curfew hours, not to harbour individuals without permission. It was intended to be a very reasonable system with reasonable goals, which would enable township administration to proceed smoothly, and thereby serve the interests of all.

Social discipline implies 'an uninterrupted, constant coercion, supervising the processes of the activity rather than its result, and it is exercised according to a codification that partitions

⁶⁰ Buitendag Report (1960), par. 69.

⁶¹ Buitendag Report, par. 98.

as closely as possible time, space, movement'.⁶² By using modern scientific and administrative practices, disciplinary social reformers can transform social chaos into ordered, uniform and predictable regularity. This is done, not by a dramatic or flamboyant exercise of power; instead, it is done by self-effacing, dedicated bureaucrats and clerks, engaged in never-ending and constant processes of checking, verifying, stamping, approving and issuing permits. By means of influx control, the masses of the urban African underclass had to be separated out into individual entities. Influx control attempted to individuate the population, to differentiate all kinds of categories of persons, and give them rights and obligations accordingly.

In our analysis of influx control, we should not be antagonistic towards the principle of discipline itself. According to Foucault, discipline pervades all modern institutions:

'The meticulousness of the regulations, the fussiness of the inspections, the supervision of the smallest fragment of life and of the body will soon provide, in the context of the school, the barracks, the hospital or the workshop, ... an economic or technical rationality for this mystical calculus of the infinitesimal and the infinite'.⁶³

The transition from traditional to disciplinary forms of authority inevitably involves coercion. What made influx control one of the most inhuman policies ever devised in South Africa was not its coercive character **as such**. The problem with influx control was that it was fundamentally ill-conceived: it was intended to counter all the social trends towards modernisation and instead bring about a highly impracticable, pre-modern, utopian ideal.

Nevertheless, several of the main characteristics of disciplinary power were evident in the Verwoerdian approach to influx control. Six characteristics will be discussed in turn.

⁶² M. Foucault, Discipline and Punish (1979), p. 137.

⁶³ M. Foucault, Discipline and Punish (1979), p. 140.

a) Partitioning

A disciplinary order allocates each individual his or her place in formal institutions and physical settings. In this regard, Mr. Buitendag strongly criticised the failure of East London's influx control office to keep track of the whereabouts of lodgers and visitors in Duncan Village. His analysis included a thorough critique of current NAD operations. Since each lodger's permit had to be renewed monthly, the NAD staff had to conduct at least 5 000 interviews per month. If the number of visitors was included, this figure probably exceeded 10 000 per month - 'Really a staggering volume of work, which is hardly justified by the results obtained'. From the available records it was virtually impossible to determine the number of Lodger's Permits currently issued. And yet, Mr. Buitendag continued, 'It is considered necessary and essential in the interests of all concerned for the Department to have absolute control over this aspect of its duties and functions'.⁶⁴

For Mr. Buitendag, the key issue was not so much the total number of permits issued, but rather, (a) where would the holder be accommodated; (b) could the premises accommodate more people; and (c) whether the accommodation offered was suitable for human habitation. In Foucault's terms, he had to individuate the mass, deal with individuals separately, and determine exactly where everyone lived.

To achieve this, he had designed a fool-proof system, consisting of the following elements:

- i) In future, Lodger's Permits should give full details of the holder's identity, marital status, names and ages of family, etc. The document would specify that it was valid for residence on the site indicated, and nowhere else.

⁶⁴ Buitendag Report, par. 79-82.

ii) Made out in duplicate, an office copy would be in the form of an 'Authority to Reside' card to facilitate filing. Each card would be numbered, and this would, in future, become the Lodger's Identity Number.

iii) A similar card, called a 'Hutsite Card', would be prepared for every site in the township, and filed in hutsite number order. On the back of each card, graph grid lines would delineate a simple ground plan layout of the buildings and rooms on the site, to be sketched in by either the Superintendent or by the Medical Officer of Health, in the course of their inspections. The card would specify, 'Premises suitable to house x persons or y families, etc', as the case might be.

iv) The Lodger's Identity Numbers would be written on the Hutsite Card, and the Hutsite number would be added on the Authority to Reside Card.

In sum, Mr. Buitendag concluded, 'the system is simplicity itself'.⁶⁵ In practice, it would function as follows: When a person arrived at the location office to apply for a Lodger's Permit, the Superintendent would simply check the hutsite card to see if accommodation was available. If, according to his card, the site was full, the application would be refused. If the applicant claimed that a previous lodger had in fact left, he would have to identify that lodger, and that would then be recorded on both the Authority to Reside card and the Hutsite card. The lodger deleted from the hutsite card would then be illegally in the township until he was entered on another hutsite card and his identity document altered accordingly. In terms of this system, the old wasteful practice of monthly renewals would fall away completely, and yet the residential status and whereabouts of each individual could be immediately accessed. Furthermore, the same system could be used for Visiting Permits,

⁶⁵ Buitendag Report, par. 85-9.

thus keeping an up-to-date record of everyone who spent one or more nights in the location.⁶⁶

According to Mr. Buitendag, 'The advantages attaching to the proposals are apparent. In a very short time an excellent record system of the movements of Lodgers will be available, while landlords, too, will become subject to control and administrative pressure where necessary'.⁶⁷ Whereas previously officials were often perplexed and reduced to impotence by the faceless and indeterminate mass of legals and illegals, Mr. Buitendag's system would place each resident in a clear one-to-one relationship with the authorities. In Foucault's terms, each individual's status becomes visible at a glance: 'Each individual, in his place, is securely confined to a cell from which he is seen ... by the supervisor;...He is seen, but he does not see; he is the object of information, never a subject in communication'.⁶⁸

b) Functional sites

To institute a disciplinary order, particular places are required where supervision can be exercised, dangerous communications broken up, and productivity enhanced.⁶⁹ The same spirit informed Mr. Buitendag's report on influx control in East London. The nerve centre of influx control was the Registration Section, where workseekers' permits were issued, people placed in employment, service contracts registered, and unemployed people endorsed out of the town. In his investigation of East London's archaic practices, Mr. Buitendag found the control of the records system to be too dispersed, inefficient, and open to abuse.

Mr. Buitendag therefore suggested a new architectural design for

⁶⁶ Buitendag Report, par. 89-90.

⁶⁷ Buitendag Report, par. 91.

⁶⁸ M. Foucault, Discipline and Punish (1979), p. 200.

⁶⁹ M. Foucault, Discipline and Punish (1979), p. 143.

the Registration Section, which would facilitate access to information, and thereby render control and supervision more effective. Mr. Buitendag's report deserves to be quoted at length:

'(i) That the records room be not built on the same floor level as the Registration Office, but be raised 6 feet and be projected into the Registration office plane for about three feet in a half moon shaped counter ...

'(ii) That the dividing wall be fitted with a steel anchor bar to take the strain of a series of steel cables leading from counter level to selected points all along the existing Registration Office counter..., for the purpose of taking a shooting clip system on lines similar to that often encountered in the older grocery establishments for the purposes of tying various counters to a single central cashier's office.

'(iii) That the present filing cabinet be abandoned and be replaced by a single electro-selector FILER... This machine is electrically operated and one operator would conveniently handle the 500-600 daily card drawings and filings...

'(vi) In practice what would happen is this:-

The filer would be operated by a Junior Female Records Clerk (European). The Records Office counter would be staffed by another. Any person, anywhere on the operating counter below or adjoining offices, if he requires a card, would clip the relevant Reference Book on the holder next to his hand and shoot it to Records. This is a request for a card. No shouting, no writing, no walking about is required. The card is placed in the book and released to the point of call. As simple as all that'.⁷⁰

As in a Panopticon, a supervisor (the Manager, a Superintendent, or the Registering Officer) could, by positioning himself at the Records Office, not only have visual command over the activities of the entire Section and the African clients who came to transact business; he would also have an immediate grasp of each individual's case, merely by glancing at the Reference Book shot up to the Records Office, and the record card retrieved from the filing cabinet. Such silent efficiency would resemble that of

⁷⁰

Buitendag Report, par. 131-3.

the training of school-children in the 18th century: 'Few words, no explanation, a total silence interrupted only by signals - bells, clapping of hands, gestures, a mere glance from the teacher...'⁷¹

c) Rank

In a disciplinary system, each individual is ranked, and given a place in a classification system. In Foucault's words, the individual is 'the point at which a line and a column intersect'.⁷² This implies constant evaluation of individuals, to determine their place in specific categories.

An important aspect of influx control in South African native administration was the placing of workers in suitable places in industry and commerce. In the words of Mr. Buitendag,

'The Council's Employment Officer is entrusted with the almost herculean task of filling vacancies advised by employers from workseekers registered with him. [The Registering Officer] is not an industrialist, may never have been inside a factory, in fact, yet on him rests the responsibility of placing square pegs in square holes...'⁷³

He suggested that influx control officers organise a 'classified register of such persons filed under the various categories of jobs'. In the words of Foucault, such a register would compare, differentiate, hierarchize, homogenize, exclude - in short, it would 'normalize'.⁷⁴

⁷¹ M. Foucault, Discipline and Punish (1979), p. 166.

⁷² M. Foucault, Discipline and Punish (1979), p. 145.

⁷³ Buitendag Report, par. 140.

⁷⁴ M. Foucault, Discipline and Punish (1979), p. 183.

d) Documentation

For Foucault, 'The examination that places individuals in a field of surveillance also situates them in a network of writing; it engages them in a whole mass of documents that capture and fix ythem'.⁷⁵ This spirit of 'intense registration and documentary accumulation' characterised the administration of urban Africans. It was necessary to keep a history of each resident, their employment position, payment of rentals, their residence and their families. As we saw above, an elaborate accountancy of population management was designed.

For Mr. Buitendag, this issue was of great importance:

'Very few interviews, discussions (or telephone calls) on a matter are so unimportant that it is not necessary to make a note, however brief, on the relevant file ... Superintendents come and Superintendents go, and all too often, when they leave they take with them all the knowledge and background information they have acquired through years of close association with a particular communityIf I had my way a law would be passed compelling every Superintendent to keep on his table a personal confidential record of everything he knows about every standholder admitted to his care'.⁷⁶

e) The Interview

In East London's native administration, 'The Interview' was the equivalent of what Foucault termed 'The Examination'. According to Foucault,

'The examination combines the techniques of an observing hierarchy and those of a normalizing judgement. It is a normalizing gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify and to punish. ... That is why, in all the mechanisms of discipline, the examination is highly ritualized. In it are combined the ceremony of power and the form of the experiment, the deployment of force and the

⁷⁵ M. Foucault, Discipline and Punish (1990), p. 189.

⁷⁶ Buitendag Report, par. 96-7. Emphasis in original.

establishment of truth.⁷⁷

Compare the proposals of Mr. Buitendag. He paid close attention to the logistics and rituals of interviews conducted in the location office:

'The maxim that 'Justice must be seen to be done' is equally applicable to both Superintendent's Offices and Courts. An open door and three or four seats inside the office where waiting clients can sit-in and listen to a matter being dealt with by the Superintendent is, in itself, a valuable form of education, and will do much to dispel misunderstandings and wrong conceptions about the Superintendent's functions and motives which are inevitably under suspicion when performed behind closed doors...'⁷⁸

The interview would also display the knowledge of the official:

'Superintendents should remember always to open an interview with a quick glance through the relevant file. It gives background information and saves time while it assists in impressing the client with your knowledge of his particular circumstances. He will leave you better satisfied even if you cannot assist him'.⁷⁹

In sum, these features of 'discipline' would combine to form a mechanism of power, operating as smoothly as clockwork. In comparison with the patriarchal administrative processes in Duncan Village, with its haphazard checks and crude police raids, its cruel excesses and its inefficient loopholes, the new set of procedures would constitute a new form of social power. In Foucault's words, it would be

'distributed in homogeneous circuits capable of operating everywhere, in a continuous way, down to the finest grain of the social body...(A) rearrangement of the power to punish, according to modalities that

⁷⁷ M. Foucault, Discipline and Punish (1990), p. 184.

⁷⁸ Buitendag Report, par. 94.

⁷⁹ Buitendag Report, par. 96.

render it more regular, more effective, more constant and more detailed in its effects...'.⁸⁰

f) Mr. Buitendag's lingering patriarchalism

The disciplinary features of Mr. Buitendag's report indicate a new approach to urban African administration. However, he retained an important element of the patriarchal ethic. The urban community, according to Mr. Buitendag, was an inclusive one. Regarding the problem of supplying medical services to all the rural 'natives' who visited East London, he said:

'The fact remains, however, that the City of East London is mother to a vast hinterland with many thousands of Bantu children looking to her, ... in their hour of need when all other efforts to regain their health have failed, and this is as it should be. The question is - can the ratepayers continue to foot the bill?'

Instead of arguing that only urban 'insiders' should be allowed medical services, Mr. Buitendag urged the Council to compile statistics on the matter, and use them to substantiate a plea for an outright grant from the Union Health Department.⁸¹ As East London would discover, however, the Department of Native Affairs had little sympathy with such patriarchal sentiments.

F. 'Discipline', labour bureaux, and the centralisation of power

In addition to the developments taking place in East London's system of population management, the central government was developing a set of priorities of its own. The DNA also had to respond to the rapid rate of urbanisation, and the unclear legal status of the thousands of new African residents in the towns. During the 1950s, this twilight of illegality increasingly offended the new Verwoerdian bureaucrats who had begun to take

⁸⁰ M. Foucault, Discipline and Punish (1979), p. 80.

⁸¹ Buitendag Report, par. 166-7.

charge of the DNA. Not only did it have unpleasant social consequences, such as crime, squatting, vagrancy, squalor, and an incessant demand for housing, but it indicated a society that was becoming ungovernable. According to Dr. Eiselen, '

...The present atmosphere leaves very much to be desired: the social life is vitiated by loose morals, the incidence of illegitimacy is very high, parental control is ineffective, juvenile delinquency is prevalent, drunkenness is on the increase, and life is made insecure by the unsavoury and dangerous activities of rival gangs'.⁸²

He continued, 'My diagnosis of the problem is that we are dealing with a social disease brought about by the rapid and relatively uncontrolled influx over a number of years of large numbers of rural Bantu into urban areas not ready to receive them ...' In true disciplinary spirit, Dr. Eiselen had analysed and diagnosed the social body, and the DNA set about its self-appointed task of healing it.

This involved two dimensions of control. First, a growing number of instructions emanated from the Department, curtailing the local authority's established freedoms in the matter of influx control. This did not always meet with the city fathers' approval. For example, the DNA's prescription that work-seekers would henceforth only have 14 days to find work caused the Township Manager to comment that 'It would appear that the proposed amendment gives the Municipality and its officials very little scope to use their discretion'.⁸³ And when the DNA declared that Africans visiting East London for medical reasons could only stay for 72 hours, Councillor Rowland commented that this was unacceptable.⁸⁴

⁸² Address, Dr. WWM Eiselen, IANA Annual Conference Proceedings (1957), p. 14.

⁸³ Manager's report to NAC, 16 February 1954.

⁸⁴ Memorandum by Councillor Rowland, November 1960.
Predictably, the 3-day rule produced complaints by the JLAB, and NAC had to approach the Commissioner to extend the period to seven days. A permit system

There was a second form of control, which was much more difficult to resist, because it seemed to make intuitive administrative sense. This was the principle of greater co-ordination of social and governmental institutions. In a modernising society, the spirit of 'discipline' cannot remain localised in specific institutions. Foucault quotes Servan, an 18th Century theorist of administration, who 'dreamt of a military machine that would cover the whole territory of the nation and in which each individual would be occupied'.⁸⁵ In the same way, Dr. Eiselen asserted,

'I cannot stress too strongly the necessity of close co-operation between the Native Affairs Department, the local administrations and the police. By acting in unison and in accordance with a carefully planned programme much could, I think, be achieved to gain the confidence of the Bantu community'.⁸⁶

East London became an integral part of a network of control, with important costs to East London's civic autonomy. The influential Mr. Buitendag 'kindly offered' to act as liaison officer for the Council in its dealings with Government Departments, and he encouraged East London to overcome its geographical isolation by sending Councillors and officials to visit other centres, 'to see how they managed their native administration affairs'.⁸⁷ The East London City Council sent its deputy Township Manager to Germiston, to 'get firsthand knowledge under the supervision of Mr. Buitendag, of various administrative procedures and techniques'.⁸⁸

was introduced, whereby extensions to the seven day period could be granted, but only on presentation of a doctor's certificate. Yet another administrative complication had been introduced.

⁸⁵ M. Foucault, Discipline and Punish (1979), p. 165.

⁸⁶ IANA Annual Conference Proceedings (1957), p. 17.

⁸⁷ Minutes, NAC meeting, 18 February 1960.

⁸⁸ NAC minutes, 10 May 1960.

In the same spirit of co-ordinated administration, the DNA introduced a system of labour bureaux. In true disciplinary fashion, the system aimed at combatting disorderliness and confusion in population movements. According to Mr. Billingham, the DNA's Regional Employment Officer for the Eastern Cape, the purpose of establishing these Bureaux was to prevent Africans from 'roaming around aimlessly seeking employment', since they eventually resorted to petty thieving. When they were released after a term of imprisonment, they simply reverted to their old criminal way of life.⁸⁹

In future, each district would have its own labour bureau; a Regional Labour Bureau would be established in the office of every Chief Native Commissioner; and the DNA would have a central bureau in the office of the Secretary in Pretoria.⁹⁰ All homeland Africans were compelled to register for work at the nearest labour bureau in the homelands, and had to stay there until recruited. Workers would be classified in one of 17 categories of employment. To obtain employment, the would-be worker had to be requisitioned for labour by prospective employers, who had contacted an urban labour bureau, and which in turn, had notified the homeland bureau.⁹¹

If an urban African resident was found to be idle, evidence could be produced in Court that he or she had no desire to work. The Department could then use Section 29 of the Native (Urban Areas) Act to remove him or her from the urban area. As an added encouragement, Mr. Billingham referred to Germiston, where the system had reduced the time taken by Africans to find work from

⁸⁹ Minutes of the Public Health and Non-European Affairs Committee, November 1952.

⁹⁰ Minutes, Public Health and Non-European Affairs Committee, November 1952.

⁹¹ H. Giliomee and L. Schlemmer, "Introduction", in Giliomee and Schlemmer (ed), Up against the Fences: Poverty, passes and privilege in South Africa (David Philip, 1985), p. 4.

15 days to one day, and the unemployment figure had been reduced from 2 000 to 200 per month.⁹² In sum, Mr. Billingham argued, the system was simple, comprehensive, and would be financed by those who would benefit from it (i.e. white employers).

What Mr. Billingham did not say was that the introduction of labour bureaux would have drastic consequences for native administration in East London. The Labour Bureaux altered the way in which officials perceived themselves and their relationship with society. Implicitly, the system of Labour Bureaux was a claim that an official agency was required to look after the interests of both employers and employees, as well as harmonise different interests for the over-arching social good. Society would not be left to its own devices; it would be regulated and protected by stern officials who understood social needs. It was a system that contained within itself a strong claim to coercive paternalism. The Labour Bureaux placed themselves as a constant intermediary between employer and employee, a position from which both the distribution of workers and the behaviour of employers could be kept under surveillance and control. A two-way relationship became a triadic one. After 1957, it was an offence to employ an African person unless the responsible labour officer had given permission for this. Holders of 'Section 10' rights had to be given preference when employing workers; if none were available, Africans living near the city would be considered; and only after these sources had been tapped, were employers entitled to 'import' homeland labour.⁹³

The East London City Council was initially blithely willing to co-operate with the Department. This disciplinary ethos seemed quite credible to local Councillors and officials, because it contained a strong paternalistic element. Furthermore, the

⁹² Minutes, Public Health and Non-European Affairs Committee, November 1952.

⁹³ Minutes, Public Health and Non-European Affairs Committee, November 1952,

Council felt that, if they refused to have a Labour Bureau in East London, the Minister would in all probability apply the regulations to East London anyway. On this issue, the Council saw no reason to oppose the Government, and submitted to a stronger power with good grace.⁹⁴

The Council proceeded to implement the system, but at greater administrative cost than ever envisaged. The local Labour Bureau was soon overworked. The procedures were frequently transgressed both by employers and by African migrants who out of desperation bypassed the labour bureaux.⁹⁵ Since the East London Municipality did not have the resources to implement the system effectively, it increasingly became necessary for the DNA to neutralise these loopholes. Furthermore, with the gradual implementation of rigorous influx control, the East London City Council found itself caught between the grievances of the African residents and the prescriptions of the Department. This will be illustrated in the next section by examining the introduction of women's passes.

G. Popular resistance to 'discipline': The case of women's passes

In 1958, reference books were issued to black women. Initially, all went well. The Chairman of the Advisory Board, Councillor Sobey, referred to the 'pleasant way in which the issue of Reference Books to African women was going. Those issued with books stating that they have a right to stay and work in East London, have no fear of being deported'.⁹⁶ By September 1958, over 12 000 reference books had been issued to black women. The Township Manager offered his congratulations to the Board for

⁹⁴ Minutes, Public Health and Non-European Affairs Committee, November 1952.

⁹⁵ Letter from Chief Commissioner, King William's Town, 25 January 1955.

⁹⁶ JAB minutes, 25 August 1958.

their co-operation⁹⁷, and Councillor Sobey said that '...the people of East London had been very sensible. As it was law that Reference Books be carried by native females, it was no use fighting against it'.⁹⁸ Only a small hint was given in the minutes as to the reason for the remarkable co-operation: Councillor Rowland pointed out that the 'overwhelming success of the issuing of reference books was the lenient way in which the Native Administration Department had accepted residency from native women'.⁹⁹

Before long, the Council encountered unexpected difficulties, for many women who did not qualify for urban residence, found themselves trapped, jobless, in the city. They could not apply for Identity Books without revealing their illegal status in the city; and no woman could look for employment unless she had an endorsement in her Book. In November 1958, the Manager reported that about 3 400 unemployed women, who gave their occupations as housewives, were illegally in the area. ('These are the concubines', he commented). The Manager concluded that action would have to be taken to clear the urban area of the illegal entrants once the issuing of Reference Books had been completed.¹⁰⁰ NAC's response was a rather pathetic attempt to soften an intensifying disciplinary system with a modicum of paternalist concern. It requested the Manager to deal 'in a most sympathetic and humane way as possible with those native women found to be illegally in the urban area'.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Minutes, JAB meeting, 22 September 1958.

⁹⁸. JAB minutes, 27 October 1958.

⁹⁹ Ibid. The East London City Council was typically generous with issuing permits. Contrary to accepted national policy, lodgers were issued permits and left to their own devices to find accommodation (E. Nel, 'The spatial planning of racial residential segregation in East London' (1990), p. 149).

¹⁰⁰ Manager's Report to NAC, November 1958.

¹⁰¹ NAC minutes, 6 November 1958.

But the Council's troubles had only just begun. Two months later, Mr. Gaga complained of administrative irregularities. Certain women had been refused permits to the Location, whereas they were in employment. In reply, the DNA's Native Affairs Commissioner, Mr. Pike, asserted blandly that the Board 'should not stress so much those women who were refused, as they represented a very small percentage of the thousands who were permitted in the area'. Even the Chairman of the Advisory Board, Clr. Sobey, expected the Board to sacrifice the interests of those hapless women, and he asked the Board to view this matter in the light of 'the most good for the greatest number of people'.¹⁰²

The complaints kept coming in. Mr. Guzana reported that women who had 'left the area to give birth outside' were refused permission to return to the city. Large numbers of people were being endorsed out. Advisory Board members began to feel that they had been misled. Mr. Siyo complained that, when women were issued with Reference Books, 'the Bantu had been given the impression that those in the area would be permitted to qualify'. Now women were being asked to bring documents to prove that they had been in the area for a certain period; this caused difficulties if their employers had left the area. Once again, officials had to go out of their way to blunt the harsh edges of the policy, and the Superintendents offered to write letters, often 'as many as thirty letters in one day', providing proof which these women could produce at the Registration Office.¹⁰³

Mr. Siyo complained that great difficulty was being experienced by men when they divorced their wives and wanted to introduce a second wife into the area.¹⁰⁴ A circular had been received from the Chief Commissioner to the effect that 'a Bantu living in an urban area could only introduce his wife into the area if she

¹⁰² JAB minutes, 26 January 1959.

¹⁰³ JAB minutes, 17 February 1964.

¹⁰⁴ JLAB minutes, 21 October 1968.

comes from another prescribed area'. Mr. Siyo said bitterly that 'it appeared that they were now not even free to choose their own wives'.¹⁰⁵ The Manager's reply evidenced both sympathy and resignation: There was nothing to be done, as his Department had to comply with the laws of the country. He could only reassure the Advisory Board that IANA was considering making representations to the Minister to allow people to introduce their wives into urban areas.

The pathos of the situation was highlighted when Mr. Makatala appealed to the Manager not to enforce the provisions of the Act, 'As it was causing undue hardships to the Bantu people,... and that they were being forced to live apart from their families'. In the presence of the Native Affairs Commissioner, who attended the meeting, the Manager had no choice but to reply that he would be failing in his duties if he acceded to Mr. Makatala's request.¹⁰⁶

The solution offered by the Assistant Manager a few months later, was little short of Kafkaesque. The Native Affairs Commissioner would allow, in cases where a permanent resident in Duncan Village was married to a woman outside the city, that such a person could bring his wife to Mdantsane as soon as he himself was transferred there (as part of the normal process of relocating the township). However, Duncan Village residents had to wait their turn 'in the normal way' for relocation to Mdantsane¹⁰⁷ - a process which might take years. For a man who wanted to be reunited with his family, residence rights in Duncan Village now became a prison - he had to wait helplessly until the ponderous relocation machinery was ready to deal with his case and he could be reunited with his family at Mdantsane.

In the meantime, the local officials had to deal with the

¹⁰⁵ JLAB minutes, 28 October 1969.

¹⁰⁶ JLAB minutes, 17 November 1969.

¹⁰⁷ JLAB minutes, 15 June 1970.

Advisory Board's grievances. In such circumstances, the officials could but make vague promises that each case would be 'thoroughly investigated and treated on its merits'.¹⁰⁸ It was difficult to be draconian when the Board constantly examined administrative practices according to patriarchal standards of justice and consistency. In this way, the Board exercised a measure of moral power, based solely on the officials' desire to be considered as decent men by their charges.

At the same time, however, the officials had to contend with the demographic realities of urbanisation, forcing them to implement influx control ever more strictly. The city faced a growing influx of black women, exacerbated by the new policy that 'no bantu females may be introduced into the Western Cape and Witwatersrand areas'. The Council felt that immediate measures were needed to restrict influx, to prevent chaos in labour conditions and an aggravation of over-crowding in Duncan Village. It therefore accepted a proposal by the Acting Bantu Chief Commissioner prohibiting the introduction of further black women, except those from the rural hinterland of East London itself.¹⁰⁹

In February 1962, the Manager reported that, whilst employment remained static, the population of Duncan Village would double in twenty years.¹¹⁰ The illegal entry by unauthorised persons was assuming alarming proportions. In desperation, Council resorted to a modern equivalent of the medieval moat and drawbridge. It authorized the erection of four road barriers at the entrances of the 'locations', to be staffed by Bantu Police, 'for the purpose of advising would-be entrants of Duncan Village and enabling them to deal with those who deliberately flout the legal requirements relating to entry into the locations'.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ JAB minutes, 20 April 1964.

¹⁰⁹ NAC minutes, 5 April 1961.

¹¹⁰ Manager's report to NAC, 6 February 1962.

¹¹¹ Council minutes, September 1962.

The position of women in Duncan Village was becoming ever more precarious. By mid-1971, the Department informed the City Council that township houses could not be let to women, and hence widows had to return to the homelands. Superintendent Hart added that while the Council's Bantu Administration Department (as NAD was now called) was very sympathetic to the widows' plight, every avenue had been explored without success.¹¹² Centralised bureaucratic regimentation had become too impenetrable for paternalistic officials' attempts at amelioration.

H. The Council versus the Department of Bantu Administration and Development (DBAD)

The Council's unimpressive responses to the Advisory Board's grievances do not imply that they submitted willingly to Departmental prescriptions. Local officials became increasingly concerned about the excessively coercive nature of disciplinary paternalism. Patriarchal obligations were conflicting with utopian visions. However, lacking any coherent social philosophy, the officials found themselves constantly having to choose: either they tried, with little chance of success, to oppose the growing coerciveness of the DNA in order to retain some freedoms for African residents, or they gradually backed down in the face of a determined centralised power.

For a while, as the system's demands became more stark, the municipal officials resorted to a stubborn, insolent resistance. In 1963, the Council faced its first real confrontation with the DBAD (as the DNA was now known), in the person of the Regional Employment Commissioner, Mr. van Zyl. This official informed the Council that its influx control administration was inadequate.¹¹³ He referred to the 'impossible position which had been allowed

¹¹² JLAB minutes, 19 July 1971.

¹¹³ Letter from Regional Employment Commissioner to the Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner, 1 November 1963; included in NAC minutes, 4 April 1962. Emphasis in original.

to develop in East London and to the ~~explosive~~ conditions caused, especially in Duncan Village'. About 10 000 Africans were living in the white areas as domestic servants, and there were up to 15 000 'illegal' Africans lived in the city. 'A contributory cause of the chaotic position in East London is the ease with which countless numbers of natives had in the past been imported into the urban area'. Mr. van Zyl claimed that East London's Registering Officer, due to his 'desire to please and to accommodate employers', was making only ' cursory efforts at filling reported vacancies from local sources'.

Mr. Van Zyl insisted that every effort be made to ensure 'that all available local labour be used to the best advantage'. His suggested remedies had far-reaching implications for the administrative processes of East London's Native Administration Department. Registering Officers should not requisition any new labour before they could show that over a period of **at least** three weeks they had been unable to fill the vacancies. 'All requisitions for labour will be subject to approval at this office. Periodic checks of the Register of Vacancies reported against requisitions placed will be carried out'.¹¹⁴

Mr. van Zyl insisted that stricter action be taken against the urban unemployed, thus 'forcing present loafers to seek a legitimate means of livelihood. Police activity should therefore be intensified and this should be arranged, without avoidable delay, at the highest level!' Furthermore, migrant workers must 'under no circumstances ~~whatever~~ be allowed to flit from one employer to another and must be endorsed out of the Urban area upon termination of existing contract'. Municipal constables should be instructed 'to **continually** check reference books in order to ensure that those endorsed out of the area **actually** leave!' Meanwhile, he concluded, 'the position is keenly

¹¹⁴ Letter from Regional Employment Commissioner to Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner, 1 November 1963; Included in NAC minutes, 4 April 1962. Emphasis in original.

watched'.¹¹⁵

This opening salvo produced a hostile response from Mr. Venter, the Township Manager. He disputed the Commission's population figures, and he rejected the claims that the municipal officials were lax in their administration of influx control. In fact, the pending removal of Duncan Village to Mdantsane made matters very difficult, since it did not make sense to make new appointments in the NAD.¹¹⁶

The Council also defended the rights of local employers to 'import' labour, especially if workers with special qualifications were needed. Since these industrialists had found little sympathy at the regional offices of Bantu Affairs Department in King William's Town, they approached the Councillors with their problem.¹¹⁷ By January 1964, several Councillors referred to the 'desperate' labour position in East London, especially in the building industry. Councillors Van den Bos and Abramson said that BAD did not appear to appreciate the fact that the labour available in Duncan Village was mainly office messenger 'boys' or 'shop boys' who were not capable of undertaking the heavy labour required by the building industry.¹¹⁸ However, when a Council delegation visited Mr. van Zyl 'with a view to obtaining a relaxation of the arrangements',¹¹⁹ they were summarily told that employers must make do with workers already living in the area.

The coercive disciplinary ethos of the BAD was coming up against

¹¹⁵ Letter from Regional Employment Commissioner, King Williams Town, to Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner, 1 November 1963; Sent by latter to Town Clerk for comment on 13 November 1963. NAC files, 4 April 1962.

¹¹⁶ Memorandum by Township Manager, 6 January 1964.

¹¹⁷ NAC minutes, 17 September 1963.

¹¹⁸ NAC minutes, 2 December 1963.

¹¹⁹ Town Clerk's report, 7 January 1964.

the local authority's patriarchal ethos. The local patriarchal philosophy had its own strength, not remotely based on formal philosophical assumptions, but steeped in a woolly local common sense which blunted the edge of its influx control practices. The needs of both the industrialists and the African migrants made perfect sense to the Council, even at the cost of the orderly disciplinary influx control mechanisms. Councillor Stakemire, for example, believed that 'where there was specific need for permission to be granted to a specific person to enter and work in the urban area, such person should be allowed to do so'.¹²⁰ For Clr. Stakemire, regulations had to be humanised by allowing for exceptions.

Evidently, Clr. Stakemire had no inkling of the far-reaching and uncompromising exercise in Verwoerdian social engineering which was being moved into place around the Council. In February 1964, Mr. van Zyl renewed the offensive.¹²¹ Without informing the Township Manager, Mr. Venter, he did some amateur sleuthing around the East London District Labour Bureau. He visited the Registering Officer at the East London NAD and found, to his great consternation, that 'labour required was requisitioned from the District Labour Bureau **upon the same day** that the vacancy was reported! ... The only conclusion that can be drawn is that little or no effort had been made to fill such vacancies from local resources!'

This state of affairs could not be tolerated:

'In the circumstances I regret to state that the usual statement [which appears on all requisitions] to the effect that no suitable local labour is available to fill a particular vacancy will, in future, be accepted with the greatest reserve! Though this is certain to have repercussions in the form of inconvenience and dissatisfaction on the part of the general public, I would be failing in my duty should there be any

¹²⁰ NAC minutes, 17 September 1963.

¹²¹ Letter to Chief Commissioner, 5 February 1964. Emphasis in original.

relaxation of the most stringent control which has now become imperative!'¹²²

His conclusion accurately represents the winds of change that were blowing through the administration of urban Africans:

'...It must be emphasised that **positive** action is called for and it is urged that the seriousness of the position be brought to the notice of the powers that be most forcibly. Unless the Department can depend upon the wholehearted co-operation of the local authority ... with regard to influx control in particular, it is not difficult to imagine the inevitable consequences!'

The cities' own departments were becoming increasingly transparent to the scrutiny of central officials and their regional agents. No longer would local eccentricity, permissiveness, or exceptions be tolerated.

The Chief Commissioner's response to Mr. van Zyl's investigations also reveals this new authoritarian spirit. He sternly wrote to the City Council:

'As the labour supplied during January 1964, had not been accommodated in the Hostel, it must be assumed that they are living as lodgers, and therefore ... the following information would be interesting:

- (a) How many lodgers permits were issued to these Bantu?
- (b) If no lodger's permits had been issued, **where** are the Bantu living?
- (c) How does he propose to remedy this most unsatisfactory position which has been allowed to develop?

What steps had been taken to **ensure** that the almost 6 000 Bantu endorsed out, had **actually** left the urban area?'¹²³

This was the most intrusive and aggressive kind of surveillance which the City Council had as yet experienced from the Department

¹²² Letter by Mr. van Zyl to Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner, 5 February 1964. Emphasis in original.

¹²³ Letter, Regional Employment Commissioner to Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner, 5 February 1964.

of Bantu Affairs. The Chief Commissioner was no longer requesting co-operation; he was demanding it. In the light of staff shortages, the Township Manager could only conclude lamely, 'What further control can be exercised by the Manager, short of doing the requisitions himself, is difficult to conceive'. This argument probably weakened the Manager's position, as he had to admit that his department was unable to fulfill its duties.

Even at this late hour, the Township Manager attempted to defend the interests of the local community, including those of African workseekers and white employers. He informed the Department that hundreds of Africans came from the surrounding areas to report to the District Labour bureau for work. 'It is inconceivable that these Bantu would report daily to that office, and return to their homes miles away from East London. It is only natural that ... they will live at the expense of the Council in the urban locations.' And if the Regional Labour Commissioner refused to allow labour requisitions, 'it might well be that it will bring the building trade, Commerce and Industries to a partial standstill'.¹²⁴

Despite this warning, there was no option but to conform to Departmental demands. The Council's Bantu Affairs Committee (as NAC was now known) promised that only once all suitable local labour had been employed, could a requisition be forwarded to the DBAD for additional labour.¹²⁵

Inexorably, the Department's demands intensified. In November 1965, another DBAD instruction reached the Council. Farm labourers must not be employed in the urban area.¹²⁶ Subsequently, DBAD instructed that the 'Identity numbers, names and surnames of all Bantu males registered as employees in the urban area' be submitted to the Central Reference Bureau. This

¹²⁴ Township Manager's Report to Council, June 1964.

¹²⁵ Town Clerk's report to BAC, 2 March 1965.

¹²⁶ Manager's report to Council, November 1965.

increased the municipality's work load - the Manager reported that it would not be possible to undertake the work during office hours, and hence it was done by means of overtime work.¹²⁷

The relationship between DBAD and the Council was moving rapidly in the direction of a total capitulation by the Council. The culmination of this process was a report by the Manager to the City Council's Bantu Affairs Committee - a report which seems more equivocal than sincere:

...The stage has now been reached where no further problems are experienced in respect of the availability of bantu labour for Industry and Commerce. This state of affairs has been reached as a result of the whole-hearted co-operation of the authorities and, in particular, the Regional Labour Commissioner, Mr. van Zyl, at King William's Town. Whilst carrying out his duties strictly in terms of legislation, he has never closed an eye to the problems of the Council's Bantu Administration Department and the development of East London ... The assistance so rendered and the resultant beneficial steps taken are too numerous to mention.¹²⁸

In addition, the Manager suggested that, 'a letter of appreciation in respect of Mr. van Zyl's assistance and co-operation be sent to the Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner'.

I. Paternalism under strain: Alienation of the black community

At the same time as the Council was losing its autonomy, and was gradually redefining its role as an unambiguous agent of the central government, its relationship with the African residents was coming under increasing strain. Advisory Board complaints about the procedures and excesses of influx control now became more frequent, and also changed their nature. Whereas previously they tended to concern the excesses of the police, they increasingly concerned the administrative processes at the Labour

¹²⁷ Manager's report to Council, June 1964.

¹²⁸ Manager's report to NAC, June 1965.

Bureau and the Location Office.

For example, Mr. Siyo complained about the lengthy delays, and the experience of men and women having to wait for long periods to get their reference books 'fixed up'. He also referred to the conditions under which work seekers had to wait at the offices during inclement weather.¹²⁹ Furthermore, he said, he failed to understand why applicants were continually being called upon to produce further proof, when all the information required was contained in their reference books. Mr. Gaga complained that 'quite often when one went to the registration office one was told that a circular had been received amending the procedure followed in the past'.

By 1971, Africans had to arrive at the Registration Office as early as 3.00 am to ensure that their cases would be heard. About 100 to 150 workseekers per day could not be assisted, and such workseekers therefore lost the opportunity of finding vacancies. It usually meant that they had to travel again the next day from Mdantsane to Duncan Village.¹³⁰ The Township Manager reported that 'the position has become critical ... It is difficult to attend to all the workseekers daily, let alone give each individual the attention he is entitled to'. He admitted that the staff could, at times, not cope with the work.¹³¹ In anticipation of the removal of Duncan Village to Mdantsane, the Council could not commit money or staff to Bantu administration functions.

¹²⁹ JAB minutes, 17 March 1969.

¹³⁰ 'One Assistant Labour Officer deals with all Bantu female workers, employers of Bantu females, telephone enquiries, complaints, etc. Similarly, one Assistant Labour Officer deals with the male employees and relieves the Municipal Labour Officer when he is out of office. One clerk deals with the filling of vacancies reported and with the issue of permits to those workseekers placed in employment after they have been screened by the labour officers' (Manager's Report, 3 February 1971).

¹³¹ Manager's Report to BAC, 10 June 1969.

J. Influx control versus urbanisation: The limits of Verwoerdian 'discipline'

As we noted in Chapter One, any successful exercise in social discipline involves the very constitution of individuality.¹³² Successful social power is not simply imposed on individuals in a uni-directional way. 'Power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production'.¹³³ Individuals are 'created' by the ways in which they are recognised. Hence true 'discipline' has an intrinsically normative component - the participants must experience certain identities, actions or attitudes as intrinsically right and proper.

In a successful disciplinary order, well socialised individuals would become part of the disciplinary apparatus itself. Their appointments as 'officers' within disciplinary institutions - as prefects, corporals, class captains, foremen, tutors, all entrusted with tasks of surveillance and evaluation, would form a 'network of gazes that supervised one another'¹³⁴:

'By means of such surveillance, disciplinary power became an integrated system... although surveillance rests on individuals, its functioning is that of a network of relations from top to bottom, but also to a certain extent from bottom to top and laterally; **this network holds the whole together and traverses it in its entirety with effects of power that derive from one another: supervisors, perpetually supervised**'.¹³⁵

As a form of 'discipline', influx control never succeeded. It was far too explicit and coercive. It did not offer psychic or material gratification to those who complied with the laws; the

¹³² M. Foucault, Discipline and Punish (1979), p. 192.

¹³³ M. Foucault, Discipline and Punish (1979), p. 194.

¹³⁴ M. Foucault, Discipline and Punish (1979), pp. 171-5.

¹³⁵ M. Foucault, Discipline and Punish (1979), p. 176-7.

emphasis was on punishment, not reward. In a situation of numbing poverty, breaking the laws offered more rewards than observing them. Punishment had no moral impact, and a prison term became a normal hazard of life. Punishment had lost its meaning. Although some of the respectable and long-standing residents of East London's Duncan Village often accepted influx control as an unpleasant fact of life, it had not succeeded in generating any moral commitment on the part of African residents.

There was one fundamental philosophical reason for the failure of influx control as a form of discipline. This was that it delineated completely utopian and inappropriate social categories in the cities. By imposing social categories that conflicted directly with people's urge to become part of the modern city, the system of influx control failed to provide any psychological rewards or achieve the reconstitution of individuality which successful 'discipline' demands.

The result was increased social instability. In East London, 'School' (or Westernised) migrants often wished to become part of the more sophisticated urban society. However, they faced the vexations of influx control.¹³⁶ They had to keep some roots in the countryside, in case they lost their jobs and were endorsed out of town. Consequently, such workers experienced a chronic sense of insecurity. Instead of returning to pastoral tribal utopias, the School migrant remained in town for long periods, being 'in' the city but never wholly 'of' it. As Mayer concluded, 'the more a man wants to become urbanised the longer he must submit to remaining doubly rooted'.¹³⁷ Paradoxically, the influx control system undermined stability and order. It was a futile, wasteful and pathetic attempt to impose 'discipline' by force, according to utopian bureaucratic visions.

Because of the distress caused by these regulations, local

¹³⁶ P. Mayer, Townsmen or Tribesmen (1961), p. 56.

¹³⁷ P. Mayer, Townsmen or Tribesmen (1990), p. 225.

officials vacillated between exasperation, despair, stern dedication to duty, and acute moral discomfort. The system could not generate a moral credibility of its own. The remnants of patriarchal paternalism which were still found amongst East London officials were the only humane elements of the system of influx control. The Superintendents found themselves playing the role of defendant against the excesses of the Police; of intermediary between aggrieved employee and irate employer; and of patient unraveller of bureaucratic snarl-ups. They had to deal with the innumerable exceptions and special permissions which were morally required by their patriarchal conscience. The confused affections and sympathies of paternalist officials supplied the missing moral component which Verwoerdian 'discipline' lacked. Even these were, at best, pathetic attempts by white officialdom to soften the harsh edges of the system. In short, the influx control system did not generate its own credible version of 'humane reform'; its humane dimension had to be supplied anachronistically by a social ethos that was rapidly becoming obsolete.

The system of influx control never successfully neutralised the dynamics of urbanisation. Since the system lacked any moral commitment on the part of those subject to it, every function had to be policed. The Government required that all employers of Bantu labour, including commerce, industry, offices, flats, and private households, '... be checked at least once every six months to see that the various fees are paid, no illegal or unregistered Bantu are employed or accommodated in back yards, etc'.¹³⁸ Influx control inspectors collected Labour Bureau fees, Registration fees, licence fees for accommodation of blacks on employers' premises, services' levy fees, and fines. As the Township Manager commented with regard to white employers, 'It is necessary to have Inspectors checking on the public for it is a fact that the public just do not pay up unless they are chased up'. In addition, the Inspectors checked on illegal labour,

¹³⁸

Manager's report to BAC, 30 September 1971.

supervised the Bantu Police in the locations, brought rent defaulters to the office, and ejected illegal lodgers and rent defaulters from houses.

The DBAD was quite out of touch with the realities of township life. When the Secretary of DBAD complained about the increasing population of Duncan Village¹³⁹, the Township Manager had to remind the Department that the population increase in Duncan village was partly due to the high birth rate, which had reached about 4.8% per annum. Many residents had married and started new families. Because of the lack of accommodation, many of these new families never registered and just stayed on with their parents or 'crept in with other families'. All were legally resident in East London.¹⁴⁰

The Manager's demoralised assessment of the situation reflected his helplessness in the face of the rising tide of urbanisation:

At the present rate of removals, which averages 100 families per month, it will take between 11 and 12 years from now, that is to 1980/81, to remove the remaining 1 300 families from Duncan Village, and by that time there will be many more families to cater for from Duncan Village as well as thousands more new families that will have sprung up in Mdantsane itself'.¹⁴¹

Conclusion

By the late 1960s, the patriarchal communal bonds in East London had systematically been broken down. A pseudo-disciplinary system, characterised neither by a moral credibility or a practical effectiveness, had taken its place. Township

¹³⁹ Letter, Secretary of DBAD to Chief Commissioner, undated, quoted in Town Clerk's report to BAC, 14 May 1969.

¹⁴⁰ Manager's Report to BAC, 14 May 1969.

¹⁴¹ Township Manager's report to BAC, 14 May 1969.

residents' grievances were no longer moderated by a sense of trust in the reasonableness or sympathy of officials, and their complaints had assumed an increasingly strident tone. Central officials remained out of touch with the human realities of the system they had put into place, and their only response to policy failures was to draw the local authority further into the Departmental 'Panopticon'. The city had lost whatever sense of autonomous communal identity it had enjoyed. Except for the Verwoerdian disciples of the Department, no-one had a coherent vision of the city's future.

By 1970, it was apparent to the Department that even stricter controls had to be imposed, in order to realise its utopian visions. This led to the introduction of Administration Boards, which attempted to fill the moral void left by the decline of the patriarchal order. In 1971, the Council's administration of Duncan Village came to an ignominious end.

CHAPTER TEN

UTOPIA DISFIGURED: BUREAUCRATIC OSSIFICATION AND THE DECLINE OF PATRIARCHALISM IN EAST LONDON DURING THE 1960s

As we noted in Chapter Seven, utopian political movements contain very contradictory seeds within themselves. On the one hand, they represent a striving towards a more fulfilled human existence, organised in a hypothetically perfect society. On the other, utopias tend to be characterised by certain rigidities, based on absolutist claims about knowledge and moral virtue. Although utopias are not necessarily anti-democratic, totalitarian or coercive, they do tend to carry the seeds of intolerance within them.

This chapter will examine this question in the light of two main dimensions of African administration in East London during the 1960s. The first was the question of rentals, and resulted in the temporary collapse of the Advisory Board. The second was the establishment of Mdantsane, which was designed as the flag-ship city of the emergent republic of Ciskei. The Verwoerdians' utopian vision was that the bifurcation of the African and white sectors of East London's community and the coercive redirection of African urban residence towards Mdantsane, would be necessary means to a highly desirable social end. The achievement of this goal, however, could not take place with clinical precision. It was a chronically messy process of undermining the inherited patriarchal order in East London, and imposing new, disciplinary forms of social order.

This chapter will consider three themes, viz. (1) the nature of bureaucratic dysfunctions in general; (2) the collapse of the Duncan Village Advisory Board in 1961 due to the Departmental insistence on increased rentals; and (3) the City Council's

increasing willingness, under bureaucratic pressure, to abandon the Duncan Village residents to their fate, despite the Advisory Board's appeals for assistance. Selected themes from East London's history during the 1960s will be used to explore the City Council's problematic handling of Departmental pressure. They are the fate of the Duncan Village traders in the resettlement process; the question of transport between Mdantsane and East London; and the residence rights of Duncan Villagers who owned land in the rural areas.

A. Ambiguous utopia: Totalitarian dimensions of utopian thought

Paul Tillich has commented on the intrinsically contradictory nature of utopian thought. On the one hand, utopia opens up social and political possibilities which otherwise would have gone unnoticed.¹ Utopianism provides an incentive to people to transform the present. On the other hand, utopians often forget the finitude of human effort. In the case of South Africa, the Verwoerdiens had great difficulty in accepting the inevitability of constraints on the achievement of their grand projects. Consequently, they tended to simply ignore indications of looming disaster. Utopianism often leads to a measure of disillusionment:

'It is a disillusionment experienced again and again, and in such a profound way it disrupts man in the deepest levels of his being. Such disillusionment is an inevitable consequence of confusing the ambiguous preliminary with the unambiguous ultimate. However provisionally we live in the future, we actually live in the preliminary and the ambiguous'.²

¹ P. Tillich, 'Critique and justification of utopia', in F.E. Manuel (ed), Utopias and Utopian Thought (London: Souvenir Press, 1973). In fact, one can argue that a degree of utopianism is always necessary to avoid a stagnant, sterile world.

² P. Tillich, 'Critique and justification of utopia' (1973), p. 301.

Such disillusionment can, tragically, tempt utopians to resort to totalitarianism and terror.³ This does not mean that the drift towards totalitarianism and terror is premeditated; instead, it occurs as an unanticipated by-product of attempts to realise a benign social vision. As Michel Foucault noted, 'People know what they do; they frequently know why they do what they do; but what they don't know is what, what they do, does'.⁴ Furthermore, failed utopias may well cause the emergence of equally coercive counter-utopias as political actors grope for solutions to social problems.

In the process of implementing the Verwoerdian utopia in South Africa, millions of people had to be redirected to approved places of residence, and their political aspirations had to be reconstructed within the parameters of utopian communities. In short, Africans had to become 'Bantu'. This governmental programme can be described as 'totalitarian', in the sense of a centrally-devised purpose to remake society as a whole, according to an idealistic vision.⁵ According to Thomas Sowell, a totalitarian government involves 'the political blanketing of the vast range of human activities, from intimate personal relations to philosophical beliefs'.⁶ As little as possible is left to individual discretion. Coercion and force are typically used in totalitarian settings, if resistance is encountered; however, the state obviously prefers and expects voluntary and enthusiastic compliance. In the next chapter, we will consider the brief totalitarian period in South African urban history, and

³ P. Tillich, 'Critique and justification of utopia' (1973), p. 301.

⁴ Quoted in Dreyfus and Rabinow, Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics (University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. 187.

⁵ E.M. Coulter, Principles of Politics and Government (Boston: Allen and Bacon, 1984) p. 163.

⁶ T. Sowell, Knowledge and Decisions (New York: Basic Books, 1980), p. 307.

especially the institution of Administration Boards.

Since the 1960s, this totalitarian dynamic was steadily gaining force. It had its origin in the misdirected disciplinary methods with which the Verwoerdians attempted to coerce their reluctant 'Bantu' to develop their ethnic consciousness. It entailed the growth of bureaucracy - a phenomenon which, ironically, usually represents the antithesis of any utopia. In the next section, we will consider the phenomenon of bureaucracy as a form of modern social pathology. In the sphere of 'Bantu administration' during the 1960s, the force of bureaucracy engulfed all who attempted to co-operate with it - inexorably leading to the co-optation of the East London City Council in its designs.

B. From utopia to bureaucracy

Max Weber, who can be regarded as the founder of the systematic study of bureaucracy⁷, has described bureaucracies as the ultimate form of legal-rational authority, since they are based on a consistent, deliberate system of abstract rules.⁸ In a bureaucracy, authority is always executed according to legal prescriptions, and officials only command authority as members of an impersonal order. Several other factors enhance efficiency: officials are usually trained and specialised; they do not own their offices, and hence cannot use official resources for their private ends; and there is a great emphasis on written documentation and records, which promotes continuity and predictability. A bureaucracy provides strict, stable, intensive and calculable administration.⁹

⁷ R.K. Merton et. al. (eds), Reader in Bureaucracy (New York: Free Press, 1952); p. 17.

⁸ M. Weber, 'The essentials of bureaucratic organisation: An ideal-type construction', in R.K. Merton (ed), Reader in Bureaucracy (1952), p. 18.

⁹ M. Weber, 'The essentials of bureaucratic organisation' (1952), pp. 20, 25.

However, the notion of 'rationality' in Weber's analysis remains disconcertingly ambiguous. . According to Weber's usage, 'rationality' refers to habits of regularity, legality, formalism, neutrality, and the objective, non-arbitrary application of calculable legal norms, regardless of content, equally to all persons and situations.¹⁰ As such, the concept of 'rationality' refers merely to the processes employed by a bureaucracy.

This definition, significantly, does not imply the concept of **reasonableness** of the policy to be administered.¹¹ Consequently, a bureaucracy can be very 'rational' in the Weberian sense and yet be 'irrational', in the sense that it has grown beyond the control of political decision-makers. This seems to be a typical hazard in implementing utopian schemes. The most dramatic of such experiences was that of the U.S.S.R. and Eastern Europe, where disillusioned activists such as Lenin, Trotsky and Milovan Djilas were prompted to develop notions such as 'bureaucratism'¹², 'bureaucratic collectivism', and 'bureaucracy as the new class'.¹³ These theorists had to contend with the uncomfortable fact that modern mass society, whether capitalist or socialist, and regardless of leaders' ultimate social visions, invariably spawns a layer of unaccountable, privileged, powerful administrators. Weber shared this unease. He drew attention to the twofold danger of the bureaucratisation of the whole of society (in the sense of the permeation of bureaucratic values and behaviour throughout a population); and the tendency of

¹⁰ F.S. Burin, 'Bureaucracy and National Socialism: A reconsideration of Weberian theory', in R.K. Merton et. al. (eds), Reader in Bureaucracy (1952), p. 38.

¹¹ I am indebted to Mervyn Frost for this distinction.

¹² M. Krygier, 'Weber, Lenin and the reality of socialism', in M. Krygier (ed), Bureaucracy (London: Edwin Arnold, 1979); p. 84.

¹³ M. Krygier, 'The revolution betrayed? From Trotsky to the new class', in M. Krygier (ed), Bureaucracy (1979).

bureaucrats to become the actual rulers of a state.¹⁴

In the Western literature on bureaucracy, this phenomenon has generally been addressed under the rubric of 'bureaucratic dysfunctions'. This approach indicates an acceptance of the necessity for bureaucratic administration as well as an awareness of the dangers of bureaucratic excesses. The following problems emerge repeatedly in the literature on 'bureaucratic dysfunctions':

- secrecy, and the avoidance of public discussion of bureaucratic techniques¹⁵;
- inflexibility, conformity, an excessive adherence to rules and regulations, formalism and even ritualism;
- conservatism, and an inability to adapt to new situations¹⁶;
- intellectual 'blind spots', in which certain issues, such as exceptional cases, become screened out from patterns of perception¹⁷;
- 'red tape', a confusion of means and ends, or 'displacement of goals', in which adherence to the rules becomes an end in itself¹⁸;
- a shared sense of common destiny, or 'esprit de

¹⁴ M. Krygier, 'Weber, Lenin and the reality of socialism' (1979), p. 67.

¹⁵ R.K. Merton, 'Bureaucratic structure and personality', in R.K. Merton et.al. (eds), Reader in Bureaucracy, (1952); p. 361.

¹⁶ R.K. Merton, 'Bureaucratic structure and personality' (1952), p. 364.

¹⁷ R.K. Merton, 'Bureaucratic structure and personality' (1952), p. 364, 368;

¹⁸ R.K. Merton, 'Bureaucratic structure and personality' (1952), p. 365; G. Morgan and M. Burrell, Sociological Paradigms and Organisational Analysis (London: Heinemann, 1979), p. 186.

corps', leading bureaucrats to defend their entrenched interests rather than assist their clientele¹⁹, pressure on members to conform to shared values²⁰, and co-optation of sectional interests into the bureaucracy²¹;

- arrogance and haughtiness, and the insistence on impersonal treatment of clients, even when individual, personalised consideration would be appropriate²²;
- the tendency to evade responsibility by constant deference to superiors, asking their advice, requesting instructions, and securing approval in advance²³;
- inadequate, time-consuming information flows²⁴;
- excessive specialisation, which restricts officials' scope of comprehension; and leads to lack of co-ordination.²⁵

In sum, bureaucrats may alienate members of society due to their 'inflexibility, unimaginativeness, uniformity, complexity, routinism, stratification, delay, dispersion, timidity,

¹⁹ R.K. Merton, 'Bureaucratic structure and personality' (1952), p. 367.

²⁰ A.K. Davis, 'Bureaucratic patterns in the Navy Officer Corps', in R.K. Merton (1952), p. 386.

²¹ G. Burrell and G. Morgan, Sociological Paradigms and Organisational Analysis (1979), p. 187.

²² R.K. Merton, 'Bureaucratic structure and personality' (1952), p. 369.

²³ A.K. Davis, 'Bureaucratic patterns in the Navy Officer Corps' (1952), p. 385.

²⁴ A.K. Davis, 'Bureaucratic patterns and structure' (1952), p. 389.

²⁵ M.E. Dimock, 'Bureaucracy self-examined', in R.K. Merton et.al. (eds), Reader in Bureaucracy (1952), p. 398.

unresponsiveness, officiousness, mediocrity and stagnation'.²⁶
Bureaucracy produces 'words, papers, inaction':

'[T]here is an intricate network of routine mechanisms, constant dissipation of forces, chains of costly links, on which business stagnates as successive verifications pile up; men consider, then reconsider; men verify, then re-verify or counter-verify; the least discrepancy gives rise to doubt, to supplementary inquiries to commentaries, to pointless arid discussions. Meanwhile, the interested party languishes from chagrin or hunger, happy when he is not congealed in the process'.²⁷

Such failures of administration are especially prevalent in governments' attempts to fulfil utopian dreams. The more aspects of society are deemed worthy of transformation, the more likely is the development of bureaucratic empires. Many of these weaknesses characterised the Department of Native Affairs (later 'Bantu Administration and Development') which increasingly made its presence felt in East London during the 1960s.

It is worth noting that such observations on bureaucratic dysfunctions leave many things unexplained. All these dysfunctions actually refer to consequences that are more or less unintended by the officials themselves. Hence a study of these phenomena should show how these dysfunctions are derived from officials' conscious purposes and attitudes. Such an analysis is beyond the scope of this thesis, but we can outline the form such a project could take. If not, we run the risk of simply demonising government officials, without situating them within the general human predicament of maintaining meaning within a normative social order.

A normative study of 'bureaucratic dysfunctions' should contain

²⁶ M.E. Dimock, 'Bureaucracy self-examined' (1952), p. 401.

²⁷ W. R. Sharp, 'Procedural vices: La Paperasserie', in R.K. Merton et.al. (eds), Reader in Bureaucracy (1952), p. 408; quoting M. Henri Chardon in La Pouvoir Administratif.

two dimensions. First, it should analyse the intersubjectively shared meanings, perceptions, epistemologies and ontologies of officials. Such work has been begun by ethnomethodologists and phenomenologists, who analyse the ways in which officials make sense of their functions, environment and relationship to one another.²⁸

Second, officials' own attitudes and purposes can be analysed in terms of the concept of 'ethical life', which we have developed throughout this thesis. Briefly, the concept refers to the normative ways in which people are constituted as persons, and the rights and obligations which they accord one another. From this perspective, bureaucracies (and especially highly insulated ones) provide an ethical life that is distinct from that of the broader society. Certain shared normative assumptions help to create and sustain officials' sense of one another as members of an institutional community.²⁹

Social psychologists have attempted to come to terms with the phenomenon of bureaucratic insulation from society, and the willingness of people to participate in extreme policies, such as the mass killing of defenceless civilians.³⁰ Such forms of behaviour occur in an authoritarian context, in which the moral principles that generally govern human relationships tend to become ineffective. A different kind of morality takes over. By emphasising their own role obligations, officials may refuse

²⁸ G. Burrell and G. Morgan, Sociological Paradigms and Organisational Analysis (1979), p. 271. These authors provide a useful overview of interpretivist methodologies in studying organisations.

²⁹ One example of such research is Edgar Schein's study of unarticulated assumptions held by members of organisations, regarding the the nature of individuals (Organizational Culture and Leadership, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1989, pp. 10-13).

³⁰ H. C. Kelman and V.L. Hamilton, Crimes of Obedience: Toward a Social Psychology of Authority and Responsibility (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), p. 15.

to take personal responsibility for the consequences of their actions. In fact, they minimise their own status as persons, and tend to see themselves as extensions of authority. Various institutional practices contribute to this problem. For example, routinisation of official activities allows officials to take action without really making decisions; and the dehumanisation of the subjects of administration means that the usual principles of morality no longer apply to them.³¹

Hannah Arendt has pursued this issue in the context of the administration of genocide in Nazi Germany. Arendt's comments offer extraordinarily rich material for a study of bureaucracy as an **ethical system**. Such a study would include the following questions: How do bureaucrats conceive of their own identity? What rights and obligations do they claim for themselves, and how do they conceive of their clients' rights, obligations, interests and dignity? To what extent do officials derive their sense of identity from their occupation?

Arendt found that the bureaucrat Adolf Eichmann showed a strange combination of single-minded idealism and easy-going pragmatism regarding the fate of Jews.³² Such idealism was only possible because Eichmann was existentially locked within his official institution. His job was the centre of his system of meaning, and he remained utterly ignorant of anything 'that was not directly, technically and bureaucratically, connected with his job'³³:

'[H]is inability to speak [without clichés] was closely connected with an inability to ... think from the standpoint of somebody else. No communication was possible with him, not because he lied, but because he was surrounded by the most reliable of all safeguards

³¹ H.C. Kelman and V.L. Hamilton, Crimes of Obedience (1989), pp. 16-19.

³² H. Arendt, Eichmann in Jerusalem (England: Penguin, 1977), pp. 38-42.

³³ H. Arendt, Eichmann in Jerusalem (1977), p. 54.

against the words and the presence of others, and hence against reality as such'.³⁴

Despite his extraordinary callousness to his victims, Eichmann considered himself a moral and law-abiding citizen.³⁵

In South Africa, the study of bureaucratic ethical life is long overdue. A notable start has been made by Annette Seegers, who has commented on the prevalence of institutional discipline, obedience to commands, and social hierarchy in Government departments staffed predominantly by Afrikaans-speakers. Such settings also tend to de-emphasise internal contemplation, universalist moral prescriptions, and freedom from group control. Afrikaners' institutional culture may well be related to their childrearing and educational practices, especially the highly unequal child-parent and child-teacher relationships.³⁶

It may well be, therefore, that the oft-repeated dysfunctions of bureaucracies are only the superficial manifestations of underlying inter-subjective and normative systems of meaning. Such an analysis would be required to provide a full explanation of the behaviour of the Department of Bantu Administration Development (DBAD), in order to account for its remarkable insensitivity towards the needs of Africans. In this way, one could provide a full account of the bureaucratic disfigurement of the Verwoerdian utopia and the extraordinary inhumanities that it produced. The missionary zeal, absolutist epistemology, extremist forms of moral conduct, and transcendental values of the Verwoerdians contributed to a specific conception of the individual, which flourished behind protective bureaucratic walls.

³⁴ H. Arendt, Eichmann in Jerusalem (1977), pp. 48-9..

³⁵ H. Arendt, Eichmann in Jerusalem (1977), p. 135.

³⁶ A. Seegers, 'Civil-military relations in South Africa: A focus on state power', unpublished paper (1988), p. 23.

Such an analysis cannot be attempted in this thesis. In this chapter, we will concentrate on the East London City Council's experience of the DBAD's bureaucratic excesses, and its increasing inveiglement in the methods and purposes of the Department. In short, it is a story of bureaucratic coercion and the ultimate collapse of the City Council's moral commitment towards the African population of Duncan Village.

C. The first casualty of bureaucratic coercion: The East London Joint Advisory Board

By the late 1950s, Duncan Village was mired in extreme poverty. According to a report produced by Mr. B. Curran, the MPC representing the black population of the Eastern Cape, most workers received a wage slightly less than the amount required for food. Mr. Curran argued strongly for a general wage increase in East London. He believed this would boost the local economy by means of a significant multiplier effect and by enhancing African workers' productivity. As Mr. Curran fervently argued, 'The facts of the situation demand a crusading approach'.³⁷

The Curran report, and the events that flowed from it, revealed the central contradiction in the administration of urban Africans. The Stallard doctrine insisted on the principle of financial self-sufficiency for 'locations', implying that all administrative costs had to be met from the pockets of the black residents themselves. The main source of income of the Native Revenue Account was rentals paid by the African residents themselves. Levels of rent were low, in an absolute sense; but relative to the incomes of residents, they tested the limits of physical survival. It was clear to local officials that the vast majority of the African population could not afford even a small increase in rentals. The local authorities were being squeezed between the abysmal remuneration policies of local employers, and the increasingly dogmatic Stallardist policies of the Department

³⁷ B. Curran, Memorandum submitted to the Town Clerk, January 1958.

of Native Affairs.³⁸

By the mid-1950s, the Advisory Board was faced with growing obstacles in its efforts to retain credibility and support in the township. The Board and the East London Municipality were gradually becoming engulfed by ominous social and political forces beyond their control. The two questions of wages and rentals became the point of confluence where the escalating levels of Africans' poverty and misery met the increasingly insistent demands of the Department of Native Affairs' urban policies. In its ill-considered response to the wages issue during the late 1950s, the Council lost a valuable opportunity to promote the Advisory Board's credibility; and its attempts to increase rentals during 1960 caused the collapse of the Board altogether. These two questions will be discussed in turn.

a) The Council and the ANC's wages campaign

The Council was sympathetic to the principle of increased wages.³⁹ Unfortunately, despite its moral concerns about rentals, the Council was constantly distracted by the political dimensions of the issue. In June 1957, the national ANC leadership called for a stay-at-home in protest against apartheid and in support of the call for a pound-a-day basic wage.⁴⁰ In this context, East London's municipal officials soon associated Mr. Curran's report with these political events - especially since it was also signed by five members of the local ANC. A speech by Mr. Curran to Duncan Village residents on 12 December 1957 did little to allay the Township Manager's fears:

³⁸ This also accounts for the alacrity and fervour with which the Council seized upon the municipal beer scheme.

³⁹ JLAB minutes, 22 January 1958.

⁴⁰ M. Benson, South Africa: The Struggle for a Birthright (International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, 1985), pp. 193-4.

Fathers, mothers, daughters and sons ... You have a right to demand money not only for yourselves but also for your children ... You should organise, speak to others in connection with a demand for increased wages. Do so during your work, in factories, elsewhere and during your lunch breaks. You must form cells of say 20 and appoint one as spokesman. You must become wage conscious ...'⁴¹.

Pamphlets were apparently distributed at the meeting, advocating the formation of African trade unions and the abolition of job reservation.⁴²

The populist overtones of such speeches alarmed the Township Manager, Mr. Venter.⁴³ He interrupted the proceedings, and ordered Mr. Curran to close the meeting, since he felt that Mr. Curran's meetings 'could develop into riotous behaviour of the Natives'.

This was an unfortunate instance of bad political judgement, for Mr. Venter confused the two main issues that were at stake. Mr. Venter sympathised with the call for higher wages; but what he actually objected to, was the way in which the ANC activities had bypassed the Advisory Board. These two issues were never clearly separated out. Consequently, despite talks between Mr. Curran and the Mayor, the Town Clerk and the Native Commissioner, the Council found it quite impossible to recognise Mr. Curran's ANC-dominated wages committee as a 'properly constituted body'.⁴⁴

Once again, the parameters of patriarchalism left the distinction between true interests and subjective wishes unresolved. While

⁴¹ Manager's Report to NAC, January 1958; Describing a meeting on 3 December 1957.

⁴² Manager's Report to NAC, January 1958. Interestingly, Cnr. Stakemire also attended the meeting, and apparently supported its sentiments.

⁴³ Manager's Report to NAC, January 1958; Describing a meeting on 3 December 1957.

⁴⁴ JLAB minutes, 22 January 1958.

the white local authority agreed that wages had to be improved, they felt very uncomfortable when this reasonable demand was made by an organisation which appeared to challenge the entire patriarchal framework. The Council wanted the substantive issue of wages to be raised within the existing patriarchal structures. The Council was accustomed to deal with issues from a perspective of a combination of black requests and white benevolence. It was the fact that a demand had been made, based on a claim of power, which was so disconcerting. It was possible to argue that increased wages were in the interests of Africans; but the white city fathers did not believe that political mobilisation, as a method of conducting politics, was in their interests. The emerging style of politics challenged the fundamentals of the moral community.

The Council therefore became as concerned with bolstering the authority of the Advisory Board as with the question of dealing with the wages issue. It had to reassure the Board of its importance, and it proposed makeshift measures to try to bring it to the centre of events. The Council offered to invite the Government's Wage Board to visit East London to lay down new minimum wages; and it would encourage other employers to improve their wages. The Council also urged the Board to formulate ideas on the matter. However, the Council refused to support any 'sectional or party-based activities on the matter'.⁴⁵ Ironically, the local authority and the Board themselves undermined a valuable opportunity to fight for higher wages - a cause which would have improved general township conditions, enhanced the political credibility of the Board, as well as enabled it to challenge the Stallardist policies of the Department of Native Affairs.

The comments of the Board's members revealed the extent to which its credibility in the township had diminished already. Mr.

⁴⁵ JLAB minutes, 22 January 1958. Ironically, most of these proposals were contained in the Curran Report itself.

Qongqo reported that the Board members had become the laughing stock of the location. In response, the Chairman continued to encourage the Board to use its influence to stop people attending mass meetings 'which might prejudice employers from supporting the cause'. Mr. Gaga assured the Chairman that the Board accepted his advice.⁴⁶

b) The rentals issue and the collapse of the Advisory Board

The Council did not anticipate dynamics within the Department of Bantu Administration and Development. The DBAD was increasingly insisting that deficits on the Native Revenue Account (NRA) be eliminated. Towards the late 1950s, Departmental officials were preparing for a confrontation with recalcitrant local authorities.

The first inkling of things to come were visits to East London by Departmental officials during the course of 1960. The losses on East London's NRA had become embarrassingly evident.⁴⁷ The officials claimed that these losses were caused by the fact that many lodgers did not contribute to service payments. This was in clear contravention of the Department's policy. Furthermore, in the sub-economic scheme, the tenants paid rentals only for dwellings, and not their sites. The Department emphasised that it could not accept these anomalies and the resultant loss of income. The Departmental officials recommended to the Council that several measures be introduced to remedy its NRA position. These included increasing site rentals to cover service costs;

⁴⁶ JLAB minutes, 27 February 1958. Nothing much came of the Council's proposals. The visit of the Wage Board was repeatedly postponed, because of its busy schedule (Town Clerk's report to NAC, 10 March 1958; NAC minutes 3 June 1958).

⁴⁷ 1957 L56 570
 1958 L56 369
 1959 L57 429
 1960 L47 250 (estimated) (Source: Manager's report to NAC, July 1960).

charging visitors' and lodgers' fees; and that the Council immediately introduce municipal beer brewing.⁴⁸

At this time, the Advisory Board was a highly vulnerable point in local native administration, due to political mobilisation in African townships during the late 1950s. Several former ANC Youth Leaguers in East London joined the Pan Africanist Congress.⁴⁹ In 1960, the PAC launched a campaign for the abolition of the pass laws, and called for a minimum wage of L35 a month.⁵⁰ The PAC in East London made its presence felt. During 1960, public meetings and a small demonstration were held, and leaflets circulated. Between March and April, there were five attempts to burn down churches, and telephone booths and buses were damaged. At least 1 430 people were arrested.⁵¹

In other cities, the campaign led to extreme tension, which culminated in the Sharpeville shootings of 21 March 1960. As a consequence, both the ANC and the PAC called a Day of Mourning, including a stay-away, on 28 March. This was very successful in Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and Johannesburg.⁵² Soon after, the ANC and PAC were declared unlawful organisations. The government banned public meetings, and a state of emergency was proclaimed. Wide powers were given to magistrates and police officers to prohibit gatherings, search premises, seize documents, carry out arrests without warrants, and detain people without legal

⁴⁸ Quoted in the Town Clerk's report to NAC, 16 November 1960.

⁴⁹ T. Lodge, 'Political mobilisation during the 1950s' (1987), p. 325.

⁵⁰ M. Benson, South Africa: The Struggle for a Birthright (1985), p. 221.

⁵¹ T. Lodge, 'Political mobilisation during the 1950s' (1978, p. 326, quoting the Daily Dispatch, 29 May 1960, 19 April 1960, 11 May 1960.

⁵² M. Horrell, Action, Reaction and Counteraction (Johannesburg: SAIRR, 1963), p. 30.

recourse.⁵³

East London's white officials also perceived the growing restiveness of politicised Africans. According to the Township Manager, 'trouble-makers' were entering East London from other areas.⁵⁴

Consequently, the East London City Council decided that, despite the substantial losses being suffered by the NRA, no action be taken to increase rentals at that stage. It maintained that 'the vast majority of Bantu families resident in the locations are already living below the minimum food requirements to enable them to subsist, due to the low wages received by them'. Many residents already had rents in arrears, and the slightest increase would only aggravate the problem. 'The raising of rentals ... will not only cause further hardship but dissatisfaction amongst the hitherto well behaved Bantu population of the city'. The Department was informed accordingly'.⁵⁵

In August 1960, the Secretary of the DBAD responded, with ponderous arrogance and in complete ignorance of local political conditions:

'... [T]he present financial position of the Native Revenue Account is causing the Department grave concern and the Honourable the Deputy Minister of Bantu Administration has again directed that every endeavour should be made to improve the financial position as soon as possible ... It is felt that ... six months have elapsed during which your Council has no doubt been able to investigate the question of the rentals and that it is now possible to submit same for consideration ... Your co-operation in finalising the

⁵³ M. Horrell, Action, Reaction and Counteraction (1963), pp. 31-2.

⁵⁴ Manager's Report to NAC, September 1958.

⁵⁵ Town Clerk's report to NAC, 25 August 1960; referring to NAC minutes of 13 July 1960.

matter would be appreciated...'⁵⁶

The Department's attitude threw the Council into disarray. A strong difference of opinion developed between the Township Manager and the Finance Committee, on the one side, and the Town Clerk and NAC, on the other. The Township Manager proposed a site rental increase, which would contribute about L27 000 to the NRA. In this way, 'a greater equity in the incidence of charges to the inhabitants of the sections would be achieved, although a large number of resident families would be required to pay considerably more for their accommodation than at present. For those Bantu residents unable to pay the renewed rentals 'for reasons beyond their control', remissions of rentals would be considered. The Finance Committee supported the Manager's proposal of a site rental increase.⁵⁷ Despite its sympathy with the plight of black residents, the Finance Committee felt that many site holders were exploiting the lodgers and their families on the sites.

There was a great discomfort and anxiety about the issue. The Council's attempt to serve notices on white employers in cases where their employees were habitually in default, evoked strong opposition from the Border Chamber of Industries, who feared that such an unpopular measure would harm employer/employee relations.⁵⁸ The Town Clerk argued strongly that rentals should not be increased. In despair, the Council decided that the Deputy Secretary of the Department be taken on a 'tour of inspection of shanty town, so that he can see the poverty of the people there for himself'.⁵⁹ For its part, NAC first agreed to a rental increase, and promptly changed its mind a month later.

⁵⁶ Quoted in NAC minutes, 11 September 1961.

⁵⁷ Town Clerk's report to NAC, 25 August 1960; referring to Finance Committee meeting of 19 July 1960.

⁵⁸ Letter from Border Chamber of Industries to Town Clerk, 3 October 1960.

⁵⁹ Town Clerk's report, 15 September 1960; referring to Council minutes of 25 August 1960.

It decided to defer the matter until it had been discussed with the Department.⁶⁰

The Council made one last attempt to resolve its dilemma. It sent a high-powered deputation, including the Mayor and the NAC Chairman, to Pretoria to interview the Minister. This extraordinary expedition clearly shows the importance which the Council attributed to the rentals issue. However, the Department officials remained totally uncompromising. Mr. Smuts stated 'there was no reason why the Native Revenue Account should be subsidised from general revenue'. Rentals had to be increased.⁶¹

Consequently, NAC once again recommended to Council that immediate steps be taken to increase site rentals, and to collect 'Lodger's Fees' and 'Visitors' Fees. The scheme to sell municipal beer (see Chapter Six) also took on a new urgency. These measures were not adopted unanimously; Councillor Stakemire recorded his dissent.⁶² Nevertheless, NAC was uneasy. A lengthy discussion at its next meeting resulted in a reduction of the proposed increases.⁶³

The new schedule of rentals was duly publicised in the location. It was a blow to patriarchal relationships of trust. The political implications of the rent increase hit the Council with full force in February 1961, when almost all Board members resigned. As Mr. Siyo wrote in his personal resignation letter, 'I feel my dignity, prestige and integrity is strongly jeopardised'. At a public meeting, in the midst of 'an uproar causing an abominable pandemonium', a vote of no confidence in 'the dummy members of the Board' was passed. Nine Board members

⁶⁰ NAC Minutes, 25 August 1960; 20 September 1960.

⁶¹ Town Clerk's report to NAC, 16 November 1960.

⁶² NAC minutes, 16 November 1960 and 11 September 1960; Council minutes, 29 November 1960.

⁶³ NAC minutes, 4 October 1961.

signed a memorandum outlining their reasons for resigning:

'The hostility that has arisen amongst the Location people, ... caused us to have no alternative but to resign, under the following reasons:-

- '1. We have lost Reputation.
- '2. We have been called with all sorts of names.
- '3. We have been threatened to lose our lives...'⁶⁴.

The situation warranted an immediate Council response, and a special meeting of NAC was called. It was recognised that the township residents had sufficient justification for their grievances. Furthermore, it was admitted that the lodgers had had no means of airing their grievances, as the Board had represented only the site owners. The Township Superintendent noted, '...There were definite signs of frustration and rebellion, and it would not need much to spark off open rebellion against their present living conditions'.⁶⁵ The Council decided to hold another Advisory Board election, but no nominations were received.⁶⁶

This uncomfortable situation propelled the officials beyond consideration of the rental issue, to the problems of the Advisory Board system itself. In a patriarchal order, it is difficult for a parent to accept that the grievances of his children are so intense that all communication has become impossible. The Council still believed that an improved representative mechanism could restore relations with the African community, and therefore discussed proposals for restructuring the Advisory Board system. It briefly contemplated compiling a 'Roll of Mature Bantu Males legally in the City locations', so that Africans can be consulted.⁶⁷ A more serious proposal was the restructuring of the Board into several small ward-based

⁶⁴ Quoted in Township Manager's report of NAC, 21 February 1961.

⁶⁵ Special NAC meeting, 21 February 1961.

⁶⁶ Manager's report to NAC, May 1961.

⁶⁷ Manager's Report to NAC, June 1961.

Boards, each chaired by a Superintendent⁶⁸, and united in an Executive Committee representing all the Boards. However, not only was the success of such a scheme far from assured; it would have to get the approval of the Department - an inevitably time-consuming prospect.

In the meantime, the rentals issue was shuffled back and forth within the Municipality.⁶⁹ By law, the Council needed to submit proposed rent increases to an Advisory Board before implementing them. In a mood of desperation, the Council resorted to the dubious measure of appointing certain Africans as Board members⁷⁰, and a quorum was manufactured.⁷¹ The first meeting of the new Board was attended by the full array of local officials, as well as the Bantu Affairs Commissioner.⁷² The newly constituted Board duly approved the rent increases.

The Board's existence was obviously fragile, and its members reported that their lives and property had been threatened. It was decided, therefore, that 'in view of the intimidation of ... Board members and to add to the dignity of the Board', their meetings would henceforth be held at the City Hall. This did not enhance the Board's legitimacy. The elections of May 1962 elicited no nominations for almost all the wards in Duncan Village. The Manager expressed reluctance to appoint members, as 'past experience shows that appointed members are not regarded as being representative of residents'.⁷³ Councillor Stakemire bluntly asserted that the lack of genuine representatives made the system 'farcical', and hence he refused to attend any further

⁶⁸ NAC minutes, 6 June 1961.

⁶⁹ Town Clerk's report, 11 September 1961.

⁷⁰ NAC minutes, 6 November 1961.

⁷¹ Manager's report, November 1961.

⁷² JLAB minutes, 27 November 1961.

⁷³ Manager's report to NAC, May 1962.

Advisory Board meetings.⁷⁴

The Board members were acutely aware of their dwindling influence. They found that Duncan Village residents no longer appreciated the Board's efforts to improve facilities. Mr. Gcumeni gloomily recalled that 'the people used to listen to what the members of the Board had to say', but now 'the people today do not wish to be represented on this Board'.⁷⁵

In these troubled times, the Council developed a strong attachment to the remnants of the Advisory Board system. For the sake of their sense of moral decency, Councillors had to believe that the Board was still viable, for once it was accepted that the Board was a farce, the Council would have to accept the radical opposition's claim to know the true interests of black residents. The Chairman of the Advisory Board assured the Board that 'if one race was to get on with another, they had to have bodies like the Advisory Board to sit around the table and talk about their joint problems'.⁷⁶ When a new Board was eventually elected in 1963, Clr. Rowland assured it that the Board would 'have the co-operation of the European officials who sat with them at the board meetings'.⁷⁷ It was a time of social upheaval, and the white city fathers found themselves claspings the co-operative native 'children' ever more tightly to their chest.

This situation had two unexpected consequences. First, the Board's shaky position translated into significant bargaining power vis-a-vis the Council. For example, Mr. Vanga reminded the Council to 'give requests by Members of the Board every possible consideration with a view to their implementation (where possible), as this was the only way in which the faith of

⁷⁴ NAC minutes, 7 March 1963.

⁷⁵ JLAB minutes, 28 May 1963.

⁷⁶ JLAB minutes, 26 March 1963.

⁷⁷ JLAB minutes, 14 October 1963.

constituents could be restored in members of the Board'.⁷⁸ The question of introducing a municipal beer scheme illustrated this phenomenon. The Council was reluctant to antagonise the Board whose credibility amongst its constituents was morally so important to maintain. Ironically, therefore, the patriarchal system of reciprocal rights and obligations was strengthened - even at a time when the Council was implementing the removal to Mdantsane, and thereby attempting to remove Duncan Village altogether from its sphere of responsibility.

The other consequence was that, during the 1960s, the Board's motivations developed a crude materialistic slant. When Mr. Siyo read in the Press that City Councillors were paid an allowance for attending Council meetings, he argued that the same should apply to Board members. He maintained that Board members were setting aside their business duties in order to attend Board meetings. His idea found obvious appeal amongst the other members, and suggestions ranging from R3.00 to R15.00 per meeting were made.⁷⁹ NAC did not argue the matter, and resolved to include such allowances in the draft estimates for the following year.⁸⁰ This was not well received by the Board: Mr. Siyo asserted that Board members were 'very disappointed that they would have to wait for such a long time', and he urged NAC to make earlier provision for allowances.⁸¹ The Board's efforts were successful, and soon members were paid R2.00 per month.⁸²

The issue of payment for attendance at meetings sowed the seeds of a new moral order in the townships. It was very difficult to distinguish between an allowance as **compensation** for expenses

⁷⁸ JLAB minutes, 17 November 1969.

⁷⁹ JLAB minutes, 16 March 1964.

⁸⁰ NAC minutes, 7 April 1964.

⁸¹ JLAB minutes, 20 April 1964.

⁸² JLAB minutes, 15 February 1965.

incurred, and an allowance as **salary** for services rendered. At the heart of the matter was the notion of voluntary public duty. By the mid-1980s, its successors, the Community Council and the Black Local Authority (BLAs) successfully pressed for allowances which rivalled average salaries in the townships. As pseudo-salaried staff of local authorities, these BLA members' loyalties tended to shift towards their 'employer', instead of their constituents. The BLAs became primarily **patronage** instead of **representative** institutions. This would have a crucial effect on events in East London in 1985-6, for it led to a lack of legitimacy and the emergence of rival political movements in Duncan Village.

This, however, was far in the future. During the late 1960s, the Board recovered some of its legitimacy, because, faced with the prospect of the entire removal of Duncan Village to Mdantsane, it once again became an avenue for appeals to the City Council to soften the harsh apartheid policies of the Department. Within the local patriarchal order, it did its best to protect the interests of Duncan Village during the traumatic period of resettlement in Mdantsane. In 1968 the Manager referred to 'the satisfactory manner in which the Advisory Board is functioning'.⁸³ The elections of 1969 produced representatives for all the wards⁸⁴, and Board members conscientiously arranged ward meetings with their constituents.⁸⁵ Mr. Vanqa said that, in the past, Board members had not enjoyed the support of the people they represented but they were now receiving all the co-operation they required'.⁸⁶

The decade of the 1970s would be a decade of tragedy and pathos. As the Advisory Board rediscovered its moral commitment towards

⁸³ Manager's Report to Health, Housing and Non-European Affairs Committee (HHNEAC, previously NAC), 7 February 1968.

⁸⁴ JLAB minutes, 28 October 1969.

⁸⁵ JLAB minutes, 15 June 1970.

⁸⁶ JLAB minutes, 17 November 1969.

maintaining the patriarchal ethical life of East London, the City Council inexorably slid towards co-optation by the Department. Ultimately, the Board would find common cause with hitherto quiescent members of the East London community, viz. the coloureds and Indians. Together, they would sustain the notion of a shared community, in an increasingly harsh political climate.

D. Pressure on the City Council: Towards moral abdication

The removal of Duncan Village to 'Bantu Dorp 55' began in earnest in 1963. Until 1971, when the Eastern Cape Administration Board took over all responsibility for black administration, the growth of Mdantsane was accompanied by never-ending squabbles between various authorities over different aspects of the removal process.

As we saw in Chapter Eight, the City Council had initially been stunned by the proposal that the entire Duncan Village would be relocated to Mdantsane. However, as time wore on, the Council became attuned to the idea, and began to share some of the Department's utopian idealism. Some City Councillors evinced an optimistic naivete regarding the homeland policy. Clr. Rowland, for example, broached the topic of homeland development in 1963:

'In the Transkei, the first experiment in South Africa was taking place in regard to the establishment of a purely Bantu rural State. The strange thing about that State was that there were citizens living outside its borders as well as citizens living within the State. Everyone, both Bantu and European, would have to play their part in maintaining bridges between the two realms..'

This, according to Clr Rowland, was the role of the Advisory Board.⁸⁷

Throughout the period of removals to Mdantsane, the Council

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JLAB minutes, 14 October 1963.

showed a keen awareness of the material benefits which the policy held in store for the Municipality. The General Rate Fund acquired the land and buildings from the Bantu Revenue Account. For example, the removal of West Bank Location provided much appreciated relief for the Municipality's financial affairs. The Council's financial position improved as sites were sold to industrialists and income was received from rates and services.⁸⁸ In addition, it was hoped, removals would help to reduce the deficits on the Bantu Revenue Account. Bit by bit, the Council shed the burden of its patriarchal moral obligations. The future of Duncan Village residents was increasingly seen as the business of the Department, while the Council wished to direct its attention to 'coloured' and Indian housing and welfare.

However, the process of disengagement was an uneven one, as moral concerns and practical self-interest competed in Councillors' minds. The interests between blacks and whites in the urban context were intertwined more thoroughly than the Council had anticipated. The Advisory Board did not oppose the removal in principle - but the Advisory Board and the fledgling Mdantsane community kept turning to the Council for advice, assistance and moral support against the Department's bureaucratic excesses. The Board, which was still based in Duncan Village, became the conduit of the grievances of the Mdantsane residents, and it directed their pleas to the Council. For their part, the Councillors constantly found themselves torn between, on the one hand, concern and moral discomfort, and on the other, a practical desire simply to get on with the job of removing Duncan Village to the Ciskei. The Council increasingly wanted to be rid of Duncan Village and its endless problems. Furthermore, the removal process had important repercussions on other aspects of East London municipal administration, such as transport, municipal finance, town planning, and housing. As the Council systematically became drawn into the Department's designs, the sacrifice of established patriarchal obligations in favour of a

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City Treasurer's report, 29 December 1964.

total removal of the location became the only practical option.

It was also a period in which the Council had to come to terms with a complete loss of control. This was frustrating for the Council, partly because it often felt concerned about the circumstances of Mdantsane residents, and partly because the Department's mismanagement had practical consequences for the East London municipality. However, the Council's interventions were usually sharply put down by the Department.⁸⁹

This section will present three separate cameos of the painful experience of removing Duncan Village to Mdantsane. They will illustrate the Council's increasing powerlessness, its ambiguous desires and moral impulses, its dwindling patriarchal spirit, and the strength of patriarchal sentiments in the Duncan Village community.

a) The plight of the traders

The Department's approach in allocating trading sites at Mdantsane repeatedly elicited criticism from the Board.⁹⁰ The prospective traders faced a tortuous procedure if they wished to open shops in Mdantsane. The Department procured a list of traders from the Council, which would enable the Department 'to go into the question of screening the traders concerned'. The traders then had to apply to the Department for permission to trade at Mdantsane. Applications for trading sites were sent to Pretoria for consideration. If a trader was deemed acceptable, he would be told to apply for the necessary licences and

⁸⁹ For example, when the Council raised the issue of a hospital at Mdantsane, the Bantu Commissioner emphasised that the Mdantsane residents should not approach the City Council, but should consult the Superintendent at Mdantsane (JLAB minutes, 18 November 1968).

⁹⁰ JLAB minutes, 19 March 1968; Township Manager's report 15 February 1968. This was at least partly due to the fact that several Board members were prominent traders.

certificates. The Department stated that very few traders would be refused licences - a claim not carried out in practice.⁹¹

This centrally-controlled regulation of commerce, which can perhaps be termed 'totalitarian laissez-faire', left the traders feeling powerless and frustrated. The Department admitted that the majority of small traders, most of whom operated from single rooms in Duncan Village, would not be allocated sites at Mdantsane. It offered the preposterous justification that 'a very large number of them are women who would not qualify and others would not be suitable persons to be allocated trading sites.'⁹²

Hence Mdantsane remained for several years with hardly any shops. In 1964, there were only four trading stores serving the 40 000 people living there. This affected the quality of life of the residents, and the Advisory Board complained that residents had to walk long distances to shops, and shops were congested. In addition, many Duncan Village traders, who were waiting to get Departmental approval to establish premises at Mdantsane, could not trade and hence had no funds to pay their debts. Many of them received summonses to appear in Court. According to the Bantu Commissioner, lengthy delays were being experienced with the erection of premises, but he was at a loss to know what to suggest in order to speed up the work.⁹³

The City Councillors were perturbed by this situation. A letter was addressed to the Department expressing the Council's anxiety, and requesting that the Department consult with the Council in the allocation of trading sites, 'in order that the most deserving applicants were selected'.

⁹¹ Minutes, BAD meeting with Council, 10 June 1965.

⁹² Minutes, meeting between Township Manager and BAD officials, 19 November 1964; Quoted in Township Manager's report of December 1964.

⁹³ JLAB minutes, 21 November 1966.

Gradually, the tone of Board discussions became strident and angry, for the traders were confronted with a Kafkaesque degree of bureaucratic red tape. Mr. Guzana referred to 'the different explanations furnished by officials of the Bantu Affairs Department.' The people no longer knew what to believe. Board members maintained that this state of affairs caused the Advisory Board a great deal of embarrassment in the community. Mr. Guzana said that persons who had been granted trading sites were most distressed at the difficulty experienced in obtaining approval of their building plans. Sometimes the plans were returned three or four times for amendments in accordance with Departmental requirements. In the past, these plans had been submitted to the Council, and there had been little difficulty in getting approval. The applicants and other people were beginning to suspect that obstacles were deliberately being placed in their way: 'It was only natural that people should believe that something was wrong when a plan which was perfectly good enough for premises in a white area was turned down as unsuitable for erection at Mdantsane'.⁹⁴

The City Council decided that the only course of action was to appeal to the Secretary of DBAD. The fact that such a local issue could only be resolved at Ministerial level indicates the degree of centralisation within the Department, and the Secretary's response revealed how removed the senior Departmental officials were from urban realities. The Secretary maintained that sufficient suitable applicants for trading licences could not be found.⁹⁵ The Secretary was evidently not aware of the desire of many Duncan Village traders to resettle at Mdantsane. As the Board observed in January 1968, it had taken the Chief Commissioner almost six months to respond to their complaints.⁹⁶

The Council was also becoming annoyed by the Department's

⁹⁴ JLAB minutes, 21 November 1966.

⁹⁵ JLAB minutes, 15 May 1967.

⁹⁶ JLAB minutes, 15 January 1968.

incompetence. The Chairman of NAC, Clr. Addleson, said that the reply from the Department 'did not meet with the approval of the Council's Health, Housing and Non-European Affairs Committee'. The City Council's own interests were also at stake. Because of the uncertainty with the allocation of sites, the Council was experiencing difficulty in budgeting for the compensation it had to pay to relocated traders.⁹⁷

The Council began to resent its own powerlessness. It had been agreed from when Mdantsane first began that the Township Manager would be consulted in the allocation of business premises. This only took place when the first three trading sites were allocated - only one of which was allocated to a person recommended by the Manager.⁹⁸

Gradually, conditions in Mdantsane improved, and new business premises were provided. However, the experience of the 1960s caused the institutional environment to change completely. The Department had imprinted its ethos on inter-governmental relations, and in the process, it had alienated the black traders, the Advisory Board, and the Council. As we shall see, however, the Department's modus operandi also subdued the City Council into a growing timidity.

b) The question of transport

The question of transport also revived moral bonds of patriarchalism, for the Advisory Board insisted on turning to the Council for help. The question of the white-owned bus monopoly was raised at an Advisory Board meeting in 1964.⁹⁹ Two African

⁹⁷ HHNEA Committee minutes, 19 June 1967; Minutes of meeting between ELCC, Duncan Village traders and Chief Bantu Commissioner, 18 July 1967, quoted in JLAB minutes, 21 August 1967.

⁹⁸ Township Manager's report, 19 March 1968.

⁹⁹ JLAB minutes, 16 November 1964.

bus-owners had been refused motor carrier certificates to operate public buses by the Local Road Transportation Board. Instead, Mr. Palazzo's East Bank Location Bus Service had been given a certificate. Advisory Board members maintained that it was unjust that Africans had not been granted certificates, as it was Government policy that all development in the African townships should be by the Africans for the Africans. According to the Board, 'It would help the Board members in explaining the Government policy, if a Bantu operator could operate a bus service to Mdantsane'.¹⁰⁰ Clearly, the Board still operated within a patriarchal framework, in terms of which the government had to live up to certain expectations held by its subordinates - such as consistency of policy. The Manager promised to discuss this with the Department in Pretoria.

The Board intuitively believed that the Council was on its side against an unjust Government. Mr. Guzana said he wished to 'pay honour and respect to the Council for withdrawing its application for transportation certificates to Mdantsane'. Yet the Council's position was not as clear as the Board believed. The Council had little desire to take on the transport issue, and kept reminding the Board that this was a matter which had nothing directly to do with the Municipality but was merely 'being brought to notice because of the known feelings of the Bantu'.¹⁰¹

The Council duly raised the matter with the Department, and discovered that the Government deemed it reasonable for a European-owned bus service for Bantu to operate between a European area to the boundary of a Bantu area.¹⁰² The Advisory Board had numerous complaints regarding Mr. Palazzo's bus service, including infrequent buses, lengthy waiting periods, discomfort at bus stops on rainy days, and the need to produce

¹⁰⁰ JLAB minutes, 7 December 1964.

¹⁰¹ JLAB minutes, 7 December 1964.

¹⁰² JLAB minutes, 7 December 1964.

the correct fare when boarding buses.¹⁰³ The Council willy-nilly found itself acting as the Board's spokesman in discussing the matter with government and private bodies, since the Board held the Council morally responsible for the welfare of African residents. The moral bonds of a patriarchal order proved to be very durable, and the Council could hardly abandon them.

The Advisory Board's complaints found sympathy amongst employers. The East London Chamber of Commerce complained that many Africans were absent from work, travelling costs had increased about three-fold, the bus service was inadequate, and travelling time to Mdantsane was very long. According to Mr. Stroh of the Chamber of Commerce, 'No further excuses should be accepted; something concrete had to be done and without further delay'. There was clearly a need for orchestrated action on the transport question. But who was responsible? The Council insisted that it was not responsible for Mdantsane, and that any protests regarding the bus service should come from employer organisations. The employers, in contrast, felt that the Council should take the lead.

Reluctantly, the Council became entangled with the numerous organisations affecting 'Bantu' transport. It agreed to meet with the Secretary of the Local Road Transport Board, and it pressured the authorities to introduce bus subsidies.¹⁰⁴ After numerous meetings, the Council's efforts had a degree of success. In 1968, the Town Clerk reported that the Minister of Transport had, on the recommendation of the National Transport Commission, authorised an improved basis of subsidisation of the fares of Bantu workers commuting between Mdantsane and East London.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ BAC minutes, 16 September 1965.

¹⁰⁴ BAC minutes, 17 October 1967.

¹⁰⁵ Town Clerk's report, 12 June 1968; quoting letter from Secretary for Transport, 22 May 1968.

c. The City Council and the fate of African landowners

In late 1963, the Department introduced Proclamation No. 293 of 1962, which announced that any residents of Duncan Village who owned land and kraalsites in their original rural areas of domicile would not be allocated a house in Mdantsane.¹⁰⁶ This injunction had far-reaching administrative consequences, most of which would be suffered by the City Council. The Township Manager angrily commented on this new turn of events in his report to the Council:

'There are large numbers of site owners and lodgers who have qualified in terms of section 10 of Act no. 25 of 1945, as amended, as **permanent residents** in East London, notwithstanding the fact that they do own land elsewhere. Are these people not to live at Mdantsane? If that is so, how can Duncan Village and West Bank shanties and the Emergency Scheme be removed?'¹⁰⁷

The furious Township Manager concluded, for good measure, that his vocabulary was 'too limited to express his views on this piece of information'. The Council also felt offended by the Department's arrogance and capriciousness, especially because they had not been consulted on the matter. The Manager said that the Council had been led to believe that **all** the African residents would be removed.

The Departmental officials remained unsympathetic, and blamed the Council's plight on its lax influx control policies in the past. The Bantu Affairs Commissioner, Mr. Young, blamed the Township Manager for not using the 'pruning knife' to get rid of excess labour.¹⁰⁸ According to the Department,

¹⁰⁶ Letter to Bantu Affairs Commissioner, 15 November 1963.

¹⁰⁷ Township Manager's Report to NAC, 25 November 1963.

¹⁰⁸ Minutes of meeting between NAC and Bantu Affairs Commissioner, 25 November 1963.

'The lodger must make up his mind whether he was going to remain in the rural area or whether he was going to forfeit his rights in the rural area and take up permanent residence in the urban area ... [The Bantu] could not walk with one leg in East London and the other leg in Umtata'.¹⁰⁹

It appeared that even residence in Mdantsane had now become a privilege for the select few. Being a Ciskeian did not automatically entitle a person to live in Mdantsane, for owners of rural land would be excluded.

The Council found itself in an extraordinary predicament. Part of its dissatisfaction was genuinely moral. Clr. Stakemire said that it was 'repugnant' that a person who had worked for 10 or 15 years in East London should forfeit his land in the rural area in order to obtain urban residential rights. 'What is to become of these people?', he asked. The Town Clerk pursued the same theme in a letter to the Department: 'It does seem iniquitous that the Bantu must forfeit any land they own elsewhere to be able to obtain a house in Mdantsane. What would he do when he reaches an age when he can no longer work and thus cannot afford the comparatively high rentals of houses at Mdantsane?'¹¹⁰

Alas, the Council was not altogether acting in good faith. The new policy had important practical consequences for town planning in the city. The Council had become committed to the total removal of Duncan Village. The new Departmental policy seriously jeopardised that goal. Councillors feared that those Africans who refused to give up their land would continue to reside in Duncan Village. According to the Township Manager, it would make 'an orderly and planned disestablishment of such locations extremely complicated'. He wished to continue with the disestablishment of the East London urban locations in the manner originally visualised, i.e. 'demolishing all residences in the block without

¹⁰⁹ NAC minutes, 25 November 1963.

¹¹⁰ Town Clerk's letter to Secretary of DBAD, 10 December 1963.

leaving isolated structures in between them'. The Chairman of BAC observed that the Department's regulation would result in Bantu housing being left in 'pockets' in the gradually cleared areas of Duncan Village and other locations. This would create a 'horrible spotty mess' in East London.¹¹¹

The situation produced a curious moral paradox, in terms of **rights and obligations**, in the standpoint of the City Council. The Council had to argue that the Mdantsane authorities had an **obligation** to provide a house for any Bantu working in the urban area. The only way to defend this claim was to assert African landowners' **rights** to be in an urban area (which included Mdantsane). Ironically, the Council had to **defend Africans'** right to be in the city, in order to **justify their removal to Mdantsane!**

The Chairman of BAC¹¹² feared that the Africans who were going to be 'hurt' were probably not going to 'squeal'. Therefore 'someone must bring to the notice of higher authorities the difficulty which had arisen', and this was the Council's duty.¹¹³ Paradoxically, the Council was taking a strong moral stand, in order to ultimately divest itself of its moral obligations towards the African population altogether. The Council wanted the African population, with all its attendant expenses, complications, miseries and squalor, to become somebody else's problem.

Other practical considerations also spurred the Council to pin its colours to the mast. Clr. Armist said that some of the Bantu might not be prepared to give up their land in the outside area, and this would have a very disturbing effect on the labour force. Clrs. Coetzee and van den Bos added that a number of industries were 'crying out for labour'.

¹¹¹ NAC minutes, 25 November 1963.

¹¹² The Bantu Affairs Committee of the East London City Council, as NAC was now known.

¹¹³ NAC minutes, 25 November 1963.

The Chief Commissioner remained unconvinced. In a letter to the Bantu Commissioner¹¹⁴, he maintained,

'Bantu townships are a necessary adjunct to economic unit planning of the rural locations as one of their purposes is to draw off the surplus population in the reserves and, at the same time, to provide housing on a family basis to Bantu within commuting distance from their work. Experience has taught that where Bantu have dual residential rights the tendency is for them to leave their wives and families in the rural locations and to enter into illicit associations with other women with a consequent accentuation of an already serious social problem'.

The Secretary of DBAD unreservedly supported this position:

'It is quite impossible to provide for all the Bantu residents of the Bantu areas on an agro-economic basis due to the scarcity of land ... The only alternative therefore, is to draw off those families who cannot be accommodated on an agricultural basis and to settle them in Bantu Townships such as Mdantsane, where they can reside permanently and where they will be in a position to find employment ... in East London'.¹¹⁵

It was difficult to decide what to do in the face of the Department's implacable policies. On 13 February 1964, a meeting was held between the Chief Commissioner and BAC. The Councillors still attempted to argue their case. They could foresee all kinds of practical difficulties with the Department's policy. Clr. Bezuidenhout said there were some Bantu who had worked there for over twenty years and still had land and wives in the homelands. Clr. Coetzee mentioned that Bantu men might have two or more wives at their rural kraal, while living in East London with another wife and some children for the purpose of obtaining schooling for them. In response, Mr. Crossman of the Department replied that the 'wife' in the town was literally a concubine and as soon as the true wife settled at Mdantsane, the concubine 'would have to go'.

¹¹⁴ Letter dated 10 December 1964.

¹¹⁵ Letter to Bantu Commissioner, 7 February 1964.

The Councillors kept pressing their case. Clr. de Lange, who was generally a loyal member of the National Party, asked if it would not be in the interests of Government policy to allow a man to keep his land in the reserve. If he died, his family could go back to the reserve. 'He thought it was reasonable to allow a man to retain his land'. Mr. Crossman replied that Clr de Lange's suggestion cut across Departmental policy. That was a 'half-baked' type of farming, because such a man neglected his land and 'just scratched about in the soil'. The Department's policy would provide a proper livelihood for the man who farmed his land properly on a fulltime basis. 'The emphasis was on proper farming', he said.

In their enthusiasm, the Departmental officials did not shy away from all the administrative work their policy would entail. They announced that all Africans' title deeds would be checked in the Deeds Registry in King William's Town. The Bantu Commissioner would then obtain affidavits from all Africans concerned and send them to the home districts for checking. 'His Department did not anticipate any difficulty at all. All applicants who wanted a house at Mdantsane would be required to complete such affidavits'. Not surprisingly, Clr. Coetzee ventured that there might be some delay while these affidavits were checked up. However, as we indicated in Chapter Nine, the Department relished disciplinary methods, together with the meticulous categorising and documenting of individuals' rank and status.

The ground had been prepared for a complete moral abdication by the City Council. In the face of Departmental intransigence, it decided that residents would only be given houses in Mdantsane provided that they signed an affidavit to the effect that they were prepared to give up rights to any kraal site or arable allotment in any Trust area. Rural landowners would gradually be repatriated 'to where they came from'. Only Councillor Stakemire dissented. After numerous lengthy meetings, the Council had

become reconciled to the new principles of urban planning.¹¹⁶

The Advisory Board was well aware of the costs of the policy. What would happen, Mr. Siyo asked, to those persons who, because they failed to pay their rental, were ejected from their homes in Mdantsane?¹¹⁷ If they had no land in the rural areas, where would they go? Four years later, a memorandum by the Township Manager showed deep sympathy with the hundreds of Duncan Village residents who had signed away their land rights: 'If one of the signatories is chased out of Mdantsane, as is happening very often, then these people have nowhere to go'.¹¹⁸ He reported that the residents were very discontented, and were saying that 'the White man has broken his word to them and they no longer have security at Mdantsane and are being chased from pillar to post'. He continued,

'This is all very frustrating to the Bantu and as they haven't been endorsed out of East London by the Municipal Labour Officer (where can a Section 10 (1) A of East London be endorsed to anyway?), they just creep back into Duncan Village and when picked up eventually just want to know how can a person be driven out of a Bantu homeland with nowhere to go.'

The matter eventually ended, not with a bang, but with a whimper. At a meeting between the Department and the Council, an uncomfortable little interchange between Mr. van Onselen and Mr. Venter, illustrated the extent of Mr. Venter's resignation to Departmental policy. The subject under discussion was the fate of people evicted from Mdantsane:

'Mr. Van Onselen: Do you feel that if [a Bantu] does not pay his rental he must be allowed to retain occupation of his house at Mdantsane?

'Mr. Venter: No.

¹¹⁶ NAC minutes, 3 March 1964.

¹¹⁷ JLAB minutes, 21 November 1966.

¹¹⁸ Township Manager's report to Health, Housing and Non-White Affairs Committee, 8 July 1970.

'Mr. Van Onselen: Do you accept him back in the urban area once he has been evicted at Mdantsane?

'Mr. Venter: No.'¹¹⁹

The Township Manager's anger about the suffering of Mdantsane residents who had fallen foul of the system was effectively neutralised. Mr. van Onselen had called his bluff. The Council certainly did not want the victims back in Duncan Village. The Council had willy-nilly become as committed to the homeland policy as was the Department - a complete reversal of its original position in the late 1950s. It found itself committed to a coercive disciplinary system not of its own making.

The Board, however, still believed that the patriarchal relationship existed, and hence expected the Council to defend the right of black people to retain their land. It is difficult for a historian not to be moved by the pathos of the lingering trust which the Advisory Board placed in the Council. In July 1968, the Town Clerk received a letter from the urban representatives of the Ciskei and Transkei Chiefs. 'We trust that His Worship the Mayor will put up a fine stand against the imposition of hardship to people', they concluded.¹²⁰ As late as 1970, Messrs. Makatala and Dibela paid tribute to the services of the Superintendents. They maintained that the Mdantsane residents would be far happier if the Duncan Village Superintendents would also be transferred to Mdantsane.

Their trust had, of course, not been without foundation. City Councillors had always shown some genuine sympathy with the grievances of the Board.¹²¹ Even now the Chairman's response

¹¹⁹ Minutes of a meeting between Departmental officials and BAC, 28 August 1970.

¹²⁰ Letter to Town Clerk, dated 15 July 1968.

¹²¹ For example, in 1967, the Chairman of the Advisory Board expressed the view that 'while it was not competent for the Board to discuss matters directly affecting Mdantsane, it nevertheless should continue to discuss those matters which affected Duncan Village

recalled the patriarchal moral obligations of a previous era: 'If any Board member was aware of any dissatisfaction, it can be brought to the notice of the Council, so that representations can be made to the Department on behalf of the Bantu people'.¹²² In the African community, the faith in these sentiments would prove resilient enough to survive fifteen years of Departmental rule, to re-emerge in the crisis of 1986.

Conclusion

As the 1960s wore on, the Council became increasingly exposed to the 'bureaucratic dysfunctions' which characterised the behaviour of the Department. This included their inflexibility, unimaginativeness, insistence on uniformity, delays, unresponsiveness, officiousness, and mediocrity. The Department's high-handed arrogance, its capricious changes of direction, its willingness to subordinate human feeling and community ties to the divisive effects of administrative categories, all gradually undermined East London's patriarchal ethical order. In sum, the nightmarish era of full-blown administrative apartheid had arrived.

These faults were not necessarily due to malevolence; as in the case of Adolf Eichmann, they could be ascribed to intellectual 'blind spots' which simply screened out important dimensions of human life from official comprehension. Their shared values, esprit de corps and sense of common destiny still remain to be studied in depth by historians - especially because these characteristics may affect South Africa's administrative ethos well into the future.

In addition, the Department's shortsightedness as regards the severe difficulties in policy that were looming caused it to

residents who were moved to Mdantsane' (JLAB minutes, 20 March 1967).

¹²² JLAB minutes, 19 October 1970.

lurch on in its quest for utopia. Officials increasingly resorted to coercive bureaucratic prescriptions to achieve their goals. Inexorably, a vision of human beneficence became a form of totalitarianism. Administrative means became ends in their own right, demanding obedience on the part of the municipalities. The next chapter will describe the full flowering of utopian totalitarianism, with the establishment of Administration Boards.

By the 1970s, the East London City Council had become a full partner in these totalitarian schemes. It had begun to rely on the complete removal of Duncan Village, in order to carry out its own plans for resettling the coloured and Indian communities in tidy Group Areas, in the space vacated by Africans.

However, even as the new Eastern Cape Administration Board settled into its new role in the early 1970s, a source of opposition was already growing from within the East London community itself. The 'coloured' community increasingly found common cause with the Africans of Duncan Village, and together they forcefully revived East London's sense of community - albeit on new philosophical foundations.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

BUREAUCRATIC TOTALITARIANISM AND THE REVIVAL OF COMMUNITY IN EAST LONDON DURING THE 1970s

In this chapter, the decade that formed the height of the 'apartheid dream' will be considered. The 1970s was a decade of radical administrative changes, that illustrated the problem of bureaucratic dysfunctions and excesses. After 1971, the City Council abandoned all remnants of the patriarchal ethos, and concentrated on its own economic and administrative survival. It faced increasing opposition from the coloured, Indian and African sectors of the East London population, who valiantly battled the dictat of central government officials, while fruitlessly turning to the City Council for support. Both the Department and the Council remained implacably committed to the removal of Duncan Village to Mdantsane.

The end of this era was precipitated by an important realignment of opinions and interests. It was the East Cape Administration Board which, despite a general image of heartless fanaticism, first responded positively to the plight of the African residents of Duncan Village.

A. The concept of 'Bantu Affairs Administration Boards'

Since 1910, local authorities had had an awkward relationship with the central government. Whereas broad policy was formulated at central government level, local authorities had great latitude in choosing how to implement these general principles.

After 1948, the relationship between the Department and certain local authorities deteriorated. United Party-controlled municipalities, such as Johannesburg, were reluctant to implement government policies in all their facets. They were increasingly

criticised by central government officials.¹ The deliberations of an Interdepartmental Committee under Dr. P.F.J. van Rensburg contained a thorough condemnation of the loopholes and inadequacies of the existing administrative procedure.² By the late 1960s, the Department had produced an institutional solution to these problems. A new form of regional governmental authority, the Bantu Affairs Administration Boards, were established in 22 regions (later reduced to 14).

The Boards had jurisdiction over all aspects of African administration, including the entire gamut of Africans' social and economic life. They administered urban as well as rural areas. Control was now unambiguously centred in one organisation in each region. In its area of jurisdiction, a Board acted as local authority for Africans as far as the provision of housing was concerned. This entailed the acquisition, planning, servicing and developing of township land, as well as the building of houses. Since Africans could own neither land nor immovable property during this period, the Board was both landlord and owner of all fixed property in the black urban areas under its control.³

An Administration Board comprised a group of white Board members appointed by the Minister, as well as its own administrative personnel appointed and remunerated by the Board. Sympathetic individuals from white local authorities in the Board's area of jurisdiction were also appointed. The Boards were directly responsible to the Department of Bantu Administration and Development, who remained responsible for policy-making.

¹ S. Bekker and R. Humphries, From Control to Confusion (1985), p. 6.

² S. Bekker and R. Humphries, From Control to Confusion (1985), p. 8.

³ S. Bekker and R. Humphries, From Control to Confusion (1985), p. 20.

Administration Boards were seen as extensions of the Department.⁴

There was no likelihood that these Boards would be staffed by individuals whose loyalty to government policy was less than certain. With the advent of the Boards, an enthusiastic corps of visionaries found an institutional base from which to implement their views. The apartheid era had begun in earnest, after twenty years of sluggish municipal compliance with National Party directives.

B. Verwoerdian totalitarianism and the Administration Boards

As we noted in the previous chapter, 'totalitarianism' refers to the design of a government to remake society as a whole, according to an idealistic vision.⁵ A totalitarian state is often based on utopian visions of the future, in terms of which it explains and justifies its detailed interventions in society. Totalitarian states tend to emphasise a collective societal quest, based on a thorough and unquestioning application of a single explanatory key.⁶ Opponents tend to be characterised as subversive or ignorant. In South Africa, the moral discrepancies in the political order, the need to formalise and institutionalise a viable conception of Africans' citizenship, required a total remoulding of the way South Africans lived, interacted, thought and felt about themselves. As little as possible was left to individual discretion.

Dr. Verwoerd's notion of volkere supplied this need. For the

⁴ S. Bekker and R. Humphries, From Control to Confusion (1985), pp. 17-18.

⁵ E.M. Coulter, Principles of Politics and Government (Allen and Bacon, Boston, 1984), p. 163.

⁶ T. Sowell, Knowledge and Decisions (New York: Basic Books, 1980), p. 307-8.

first time since 1936⁷, Africans were conceived by the government as having political rights, but the institutional framework within which these rights would be constituted, had to be remoulded. The Boards were based on the Verwoerdian philosophy that all African persons in the country were temporary residents, and that their permanent homes were situated in the homelands within which they could enjoy rights of nationality and citizenship.⁸

The establishment of the Administration Boards was a response to the frustratingly unresolved notions of 'community' espoused by patriarchal city authorities. For Departmental officials, Africans' ambiguous citizenship and their plight in the cities presented a moral and political problem. The solution had to be fundamental and far-reaching, because it had to reconcile ethnic separatism with black political and economic progress. Hence the Verwoerdian visionaries in the DCD produced a clear-cut definition of community along centrally-delineated ethnic lines, and linked it to language and romanticised historical and geographical ties. Ethnic identities, which affected every detail of their lives, including residence, family life, schooling and recreation, were ascribed to people. For the Boards, 'natives' were now 'Bantu' - they were part of definite, putatively primordial ethnic units.

In this, it proffered a less vague response to the problems of modernisation than that of the patriarchal order. It offered, at least initially, a sense of coherence and direction. Since the 1950s, the Department of Bantu Administration and Development had penetrated many of the pockets of discretion which had survived under the patriarchal municipal order. This process would be completed and consolidated under the Administration

⁷ The Native Trust and Land Act, which removed the last remnants of the African franchise on the common voters' roll.

⁸ S. Bekker and R. Humphries, From Control to Confusion (1985), p. 12.

Boards.

In the task of reconstituting South African citizenship, the state and its agencies had to be strengthened and co-ordinated. Moral and political visions had to be implemented by legal-rational and disciplinary forms of administration. Opposition could not be tolerated, and the utopian goal justified several forms of unpalatable means.

Administration Boards represented a new style of administration in South Africa - centrally designed, uniform in all important respects, rid of the eccentricities and inconsistencies which had characterised municipal administration of black people, just as a French administrative reformer envisaged in 1772:

'Discipline must be made national. The state that I depict will have a simple, reliable, easily controlled administration. It will resemble those huge machines, which by quite uncomplicated means produce great effects ...'⁹.

Ultimately, the Boards had to be totalitarian, since they had the formidable task of preventing and even reversing urbanisation in a modernising country. They would exert stringent controls over labour mobility, using extensive forms of policing, and closely monitoring the populations of black townships. As such, it was a misconceived and hopeless quest, and it became the Achilles heel of Verwoerdianism in South Africa.

As soon as the Administration Boards were established, they developed an esprit de corps as a new stratum of officialdom.¹⁰ Senior white Board officials maintained a sense of high motivation and commitment to their work and their institutions. Despite the Department's intentions, the Boards remained jealous of their relative autonomy from the Department. With regard to

⁹ Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish, (1979), p. 169.

¹⁰ S. Bekker and R. Humphries, From Control to Confusion (1985), p. 18.

some staffing matters, Boards retained a measure of freedom of activity from the Department. Very few managerial positions were filled by African employees, and white staff members were overwhelmingly Afrikaans-speaking. Bekker and Humphries found very little turnover in staff, resulting in a cohesion and unity of purpose.¹¹ Most officials had attended one of the Afrikaans universities, where they had read courses in 'Bantu' administration and indigenous languages. This training, couched in Verwoerdian ideology, provided the assumptions on which they defined their tasks. Furthermore, their unrepresentative nature tended to isolate their functionaries from other points of view, and from political criticism. Officials were also forbidden to disclose information concerning Boards' activities unless with the Boards' consent or in accordance with a directive issued by the Minister.¹² In short, these directors formed a group that was 'homogeneous both in terms of class and culture, and in terms of a career path that [remained] almost totally within the public service'.¹³

Gradually, a form of ethical life emerged within the Administration Boards. As we noted in Chapter Three, 'ethical life' refers to the way in which officials normatively define themselves and others, and how they are defined in turn. It involves fundamental questions of identity, the nature of 'persons', and the rights and obligations which accrue to different categories of persons. The new generation of 'Bantu administrators' wanted to be recognised in a specific way by the 'Bantu'. The Boards' officials saw themselves as advocates of efficiency and service to African communities. In this, they adopted bureaucratic and coercive notions of guardianship.

¹¹ S. Bekker and R. Humphries, From Control to Confusion (1985), p. 34.

¹² W.B. Vosloo, D.A. Kotze, W.J. Jeppe, Local Government in Southern Africa (Pretoria: Academica, 1974).

¹³ S. Bekker and R. Humphries, From Control to Confusion (1985), p. 35.

process, ECAB initially antagonised the East London City Council, then caused the Council to become locked into Verwoerdian visions, and simultaneously alienated the African, coloured and Indian residents of the city. Because of their fundamental misreading of the dynamics of modernisation, the Boards could not impose a viable disciplinary order on the cities. As we saw in Chapter One, the process of modernisation inevitably requires discipline, coercion, repression, and formalisation as individuals are shaped by institutions appropriate to an industrialized society. However, genuine discipline must be accompanied by material, psychological and moral rewards. In South Africa in the 1970s, the various coercions of the Administration Boards were experienced as frustrating, unjust, arrogant, alienating, and ultimately, fruitless.

C. The Administration Boards and the cities

In the process of shaping the political order, the Administration Boards' tenets implied the demise of the city as a coherent political unit. A crucial feature of the Administration Boards was that they took no cognizance of the distinction between town and country. A Board's area of jurisdiction, which typically included both rural and urban areas, was not only larger than those of municipalities, but included the African townships of all the towns in the area. Indeed, this aspect was taken to its logical conclusion - Administration Boards became responsible on a large scale for the physical development of homeland towns. They also had to promote the settlement of black people from their areas of jurisdiction in the homelands.¹⁴

The urge to resolve the political identity of Africans meant that the city could not be recognised as a political order in its own right. Since the cities were populated by people of all race groups, the need to establish the 'correct' racial order had to take precedence over the city's sense of corporate unity and

¹⁴ S. Bekker and R. Humphries, From Control to Confusion (1985), p. 19.

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¹⁴ S. Bekker and R. Humphries, From Control to Confusion (1985), p. 19.

identity. The political life of urban Africans had to be remoulded. The Department maintained that Africans had no intrinsic right to live in the cities, and those who in fact lived there, were not considered to be an integral part of the city. The Boards destroyed the notion that the African 'locations' had any interests or characteristics in common with the rest of the cities. An institutional 'Berlin Wall' was foisted on each town and city, with the African township administered by regional, white-staffed authoritarian institutions, while the white portion of the cities proceeded with a western form of democratic city government. For the DBAD and the Boards, cities as such did not have an integrity which should be respected. Strictly speaking, a totalitarian order offers no scope for a 'local state' at all, since it would be a base of communal identification which would threaten the central state.

It was during this period that certain white local authorities descended to new moral depths, as they increasingly co-operated in their own belittlement. Part of the problem was that the Board's interpretation of their responsibilities towards urban Africans seemed, on the face of it, to be quite progressive. They spoke the language of paternalism, which the local officials intuitively understood. It was only later that the white city fathers realised that their traditional, intimate paternalism, based on face-to-face contact, had been harnessed to justify an abstract, distant and coercive form of control. Yet without a clear vision of their own, white local authorities found it difficult to evaluate the Boards' claims and actions. Who could resist the Department's claims when they were based on justifications of ethnic progress and welfare?

The Boards' regime also seemed acceptable because there were certain similarities between their policies and those of their predecessors. For example, the Stallardist financial principle which stipulated that a Board's current account should balance at the end of each financial year, was strictly applied. African residents and their employers carried the running costs of

Administration Boards.¹⁵ City Councils were very familiar with this idea, and were relieved that townships' financial problems had been removed from their own sphere of responsibility.

The City Councils also grew accustomed to homeland-directed planning. By the mid-1960s, the East London City Council had accepted the removal of Duncan Village to distant Mdantsane as a fait accompli. After a few years, so much of East London's town planning was based on this assumption, that the Council became, during the 1970s, one of the Board's most faithful allies in promoting a highly unpopular and discredited policy.

In the abstract, the Administration Boards' vision of ethical life seemed perfectly viable. In 1971, the hope was expressed by local authorities, by employers and even by black township leaders that the Boards might be the harbinger of better times, and that they indicated a concern on the part of the Government to improve township conditions. In practice, however, their actions steadily alienated those whose identity they attempted to remould. The story of the Administration Boards can therefore be read as the inexorable degeneration of the initial moral vision of the Verwoerdians.

D. The establishment of the Eastern Cape Administration Board

The questions concerning the size and organisation of the Eastern Cape Administration Board (ECAB) illustrate the nature of the totalitarian impulse in African administration. East London City Councillors, largely for reasons of self-interest, felt that an Administration Board's jurisdiction should not be too large, for it would encourage Africans from a large area to seek work in East London. The Council proposed a jurisdiction consisting of East London, King William's Town, and a few small coastal villages.

¹⁵ S. Bekker and R. Humphries, From Control to Confusion (1985), p. 21.

The final decision taken by the Department paid little attention to the City Council's views. The new ECAB consisted of East London, the Border Area and extended as far north as Aliwal North. Despite the fact that the Council nominated East London as the venue of the central offices of the Board, Queenstown was selected as headquarters. The Board was established on 1 September 1973.¹⁶

The extent of the Council's loss of control gradually became evident. The Board could intervene in every minute aspect of black people's lives. One Administration Board spokesman described it thus: 'We are responsible for total welfare'.¹⁷ This, however, also affected the residents living under the City Council's jurisdiction. For example, coloured pedestrians experienced constant harassment simply by walking through Duncan Village to their own homes. Despite protests by the Council, the Board insisted that people obtain permits before entering an African residential area.¹⁸

The minuteness of Departmental prescriptions almost reached ridiculous proportions. A remarkable Departmental circular spelt out the requirements for African eating-houses: 'Such eating-houses ... will be allowed to the extent that they do not alienate whites, or, like a honeypot, have the effect of attracting Bantu...'. The Minister himself had specified the requirements for overnight accommodation facilities for Africans: 'They must be merely functional and neat. Luxurious facilities are not desirable'.¹⁹

¹⁶ Telex from Town Clerk to Chairman of ECAB, 10 September 1973.

¹⁷ Daily Dispatch, 30 June 1977.

¹⁸ Letter from ECAB to Town Clerk, 26 April 1976; CMC minutes, 15 March 1977; Letter from Town Clerk to Administrative Secretary, DCD, 15 November 1979.

¹⁹ Circular, DBAD, to all Administration Boards, n.d.

Yet it was only in the late 1970s that the City Council became really angry about its lack of influence. This was the occasion when the 22 Administration Boards were amalgamated to form 14 much larger Boards. The new Eastern Cape Administration Board would include Port Elizabeth, Mossel Bay, and the Cape Midlands towns of Colesberg and Graaff-Reinet.²⁰ The new ECAB's headquarters would be located at Port Elizabeth. Because of the larger geographical area, encompassing no less than 70 local authorities, the interests of each individual town were even more submerged in the dynamics of the whole. The sheer administrative effort in launching such a large organisation was reflected in a comment by the ECAB Chairman in 1979:

'It was not simply the merging of three sets of books. A gigantic task preceded it, and is still continuing. Personnel was transferred, offices altered, accounting systems adjusted, and at the same time, normal duties had to be carried out'.²¹

Aspects of this institutional restructuring forced the East London City Council to emphasise its loyalties to its own area. The Town Clerk reported to Council:

'It is difficult to understand how it is proposed to serve the blacks in and around East London from as far afield as Port Elizabeth, having regard to the many pressing problems facing the City Council at the present time, and which are so well known to the City. The Headquarters of the existing Board should have been established at East London instead of Queenstown in the first instance; now the proposal is to move it even further away, to Port Elizabeth'.²²

The Council decided to make urgent representations to the Government to reconsider their proposal.²³ It argued that East

²⁰ Letter from Cape Midlands Administration Board to Town Clerk, 2 October 1978.

²¹ Budget speech, ECAB Chairman, 13 July 1979.

²² Town Clerk's report to Action Committee, 3 July 1978.

²³ Council Minutes, 3 July 1978.

London, situated amidst the African populations of the Ciskei and Transkei, with their combined population of over half a million, and with an unemployment figure of almost 35 000, should be the seat of the new Administration Board.²⁴ Placing the headquarters of ECAB in East London would also, they argued, create economic confidence in the region.

None of these arguments had the desired effect, and the Department refused to budge.²⁵ The Minister claimed that it was too expensive to operate the Board from East London, but it would have a Regional Office. All the major decisions would be taken at Port Elizabeth.²⁶ Some of these decisions illustrated East London's low priority in the resource stakes: In 1979/80, the Border Region only received 1.6% of all proposed housing (the Algoa region received 58%), and received none of the R3 million made available by the Department for infrastructural projects.²⁷

E. ECAB's administrative style

It was clear that, in the Administration Board's extended fiefdom, there was little time for the unique perceptions, problems and local culture which characterised each locality. After 1974, the Council lost jurisdiction over Duncan Village itself. It had to watch helplessly as the Administration Board used coercive methods never before employed to solve local problems.

In October 1978, three large squatters' sites near the coloured

²⁴ Letter to the Administrative Secretary (C.P. Mulder) of Department of Plural Relations and Development, 14 July 1978.

²⁵ Letter from Administrative Secretary of DPRD to Town Clerk, 27 September 1978.

²⁶ Council minutes, 30 November 1978.

²⁷ Budget speech, ECAB Chairman, 30 May 1980.

area of Parkside were unceremoniously burnt down by Board officials. No special provision was made to house the residents elsewhere. After spending a few days without shelter in the inclement winter weather, more than a thousand shacks mushroomed in Duncan Village.

This event unleashed a storm of public debate and protest. Certain sectors of the East London community felt that the City Council was morally obliged to challenge the actions of the Board. The Daily Dispatch reminded the Council of its moral obligations: 'The question that must be asked is what the East London City Council intends to do about this violent intrusion into its area of jurisdiction by a government agency which seems determined to harass and hound black squatters wherever they may be found?' The newspaper also spoke of a local 'social conscience [being] outraged by such brutal deeds'.²⁸ There were indeed indications of such a social conscience. The Institute of Race Relations organised a fund to assist the squatters.²⁹

The Chief Director, Mr. Swanepoel, claimed that the presence of illegal residents was detrimental to the welfare of the other residents, since they contributed to the unemployment problem and constituted a health hazard.³⁰ He asserted that the process of clearing structures would continue 'until the problem is solved'.³¹

However, the ramifications of the removal continued to spread. Thomas Mfundisi, a squatter leader, appealed to members of East London's Coloured Management Committee to come to their aid. The Chairman of the CMC accused the Board of 'institutionalised

²⁸. Daily Dispatch, 5 October 1978.

²⁹ Daily Dispatch, 5 October 1978.

³⁰ Oosterlig, 4 October 1978.

³¹ Citizen, 5 October 1978.

brutality'³², and the CMC demanded that sanitary facilities and water be provided to squatters.³³ The CMC also criticised the Council's failure to condemn the Board's actions outright, and warned of a dangerous tide of feeling amongst the thousand African and coloured squatters in a nearby squatter area.³⁴

Yet the most significant aspect of the incident was the Council's recognition of its own powerlessness. Certain Councillors organised a special committee 'to go into the whole thing'³⁵, but it was difficult to present a united stance, especially since one member of that committee (Clr. de Lange) was a prominent member of the Board itself. The PFP took up the matter at Ministerial level³⁶, but when challenged, Mr. Swanepoel of the Board maintained that his Board did not need the Council's approval for actions in its area.³⁷ City Councillors had to admit that the Board officials had acted within their legal rights when they burnt the structures. One Councillor resignedly admitted, 'It seems they can do what they like. In principle, we disagree with what they did, but our hands are tied'.³⁸

F. Muddling through with Verwoerdian planning: The removal of Duncan Village

The Council's response to the activities of the Administration Board must be seen in the context of the Council's group areas planning. Since 1957, it had been the express policy of the Department of Native Affairs that Duncan Village would be removed

³² Daily Dispatch, 6 October 1978.

³³ Daily Dispatch, 10 October 1978.

³⁴ Daily Dispatch, 10 October 1978.

³⁵ Daily Dispatch, 6 October 1978.

³⁶ Cape Times, 6 October 1978.

³⁷ Oosterlig, 4 October 1978.

³⁸ Daily Dispatch, 10 October 1978.

in its entirety and settled in Mdantsane. After initial incredulity at the idea, the Council had come to terms with it. At the same time, the Council was under severe government pressure to implement Group Areas in the city. The area which drew most government attention was the highly mixed area called 'North End'. The relocation of Africans from Duncan Village meant that the Duncan Village area could be redesigned for separate Indian, coloured and Chinese group areas relocated from North End. The Council had initially been very reluctant to engage in such racial engineering. However, the Department of Community Development, which was responsible for coloured and Indian affairs, urged the comprehensive replanning of the area. The tone of the Department of Community Development's approach was indicated by a warning that it would 'definitely move in and clear the area of slum conditions whether the council approved such actions or otherwise'.³⁹

By 1969, the Council had accepted the inevitability of the replanning process, and put forward its own plans for what it regarded as the city's best interests.⁴⁰ The Council was concerned about the interests of the coloureds and Indians. It was evident that these sectors of the community were suffering a severe housing shortage. Small squatter settlements were appearing in the bush, and indications of typhoid fever were found.⁴¹ A steady stream of rural coloured people were moving to the city in search of work and amenities.⁴²

Hence by the time the East Cape Administration Board was established, the Council was already being pressured by the

³⁹ E. Nel, 'The spatial planning of racial residential segregation in East London' (1990), p. 109.

⁴⁰ E. Nel, 'The spatial planning of racial residential segregation in East London' (1990), p. 113.

⁴¹ Report of Medical Officer of Health to HHNEAC, 14 August 1968.

⁴² Letter from Secretary for Coloured Affairs to Council, quoted in Town Clerk's report of 15 January 1969.

Department of Community Development to remove black residents as fast as possible, to bring the North End Group Areas plans to fruition. Under the rubric of homeland development, the Board shared the concern with removing Duncan Village as soon as possible.

Despite an over-arching agreement on this policy between the Council and the Board, the Council soon began to resent its loss of control over the removal process. The Board wanted the Emergency Housing Scheme moved first, to obviate a health hazard. The Council, on the other hand, was being pressured by the Department of Community Development to remove the oldest site-and-service sections of Duncan Village first, in order to house coloureds and Indians.⁴³ This dispute bedevilled Administration Board-City Council relations for at least four years.⁴⁴

This kind of administrative puzzle could only be resolved by appealing to higher authorities. In 1975, the Chairman of the Board invited the Deputy Minister, W.A. Cruywagen, to visit East London to assist in solving its problems.⁴⁵ The Minister was duly requested to expedite the building operations at Mdantsane, and to delay the resettlement at Mdantsane of Transkeian families repatriated from the Western Cape.⁴⁶

Despite the Deputy Minister's sympathy, not much could be done to speed up the development of Mdantsane. The Department was becoming caught in a financial squeeze. By 1974, an intimation was given to the Council that it could not expect to be allocated any large increase in the money provided by DBAD for the

⁴³ Minutes, Council and ECAB meeting with Deputy Minister, 10 December 1975.

⁴⁴ It was still being discussed in 1979 (Daily Dispatch, 31 January 1979).

⁴⁵ Memorandum from Town Clerk to Chief City Engineer, 3 December 1975.

⁴⁶ Town Clerk's report to Council, 5 December 1975.

construction of houses at Mdantsane. Councillors were very concerned by this news, and reminded the Department that Duncan Village was urgently required for coloured housing, and that serious administrative and social problems would arise if the clearing of Duncan Village was not accelerated.⁴⁷

The Department itself was in a predicament. The Government Treasury had provided only about half of the funding it had requested. The Department perceived the urgency of the matter - the Emergency Health Scheme had become a health hazard, with an incredible 129 persons per toilet. The 3263 houses in the EHS were in danger of collapse⁴⁸, and vandalism was rife.⁴⁹ At the same time, the African residents of Duncan Village, who still had to be resettled at Mdantsane, amounted to more than the number of people who had required housing eleven years previously.⁵⁰

In 1975, the Secretary of DBAD notified the East London Town Clerk that despite all his efforts, it was impossible to obtain more than R3 million for Mdantsane for the next year. 'This is a small increase on the 1975/6 allocation, only achieved by awarding the Mdantsane development the highest priority, and by strongly motivating the housing position and stressing East London's position as a border industrial area'. Verwoerdian planning was coming unstuck against financial constraints.

Between 1975-1977, little was achieved except the slow resettlement of Duncan Village residents at Mdantsane. Consequently, the population of Duncan Village was increasing at

⁴⁷ East London Action Committee report, 14 October 1974. About eight houses per week were being built (ELCC Action Committee minutes, 30 June 1975).

⁴⁸ ELCC Action Committee minutes, 10 February 1975.

⁴⁹ Meeting between Council and ECAB, 3 September 1975.

⁵⁰ Minutes, Council meeting with ECAB and Deputy Minister, 10 December 1975.

a faster pace than that at which the Village was being cleared.⁵¹ Neither the Emergency Housing Scheme nor the site and service scheme were cleared. Since no land outside the Duncan Village area was made available for coloured housing, the coloured housing shortage steadily intensified. Coloured shack settlements sprang up in the bush.⁵² In 1979, the Town Clerk frantically contacted the Secretary of the Department of Plural Relations, when it was announced that, instead of the anticipated R7,5m, just over R4 million would be spent on Mdantsane. 'For East London, this will be fatal ... We request your urgent reconsideration of this most important matter'.⁵³ In due course, the situation would become a political nightmare, from which it became impossible for the Council to backtrack. Too many authorities were committed to the removal of Duncan Village. The only way out of this unpleasant situation was to push on towards its final removal.

G. The origin of African and coloured opposition to removals

At the same time, there was growing resistance on the part of Africans as well as coloureds to this removal and reshuffling. The first signs of social conflict had already begun to emerge in 1965, when the removal of several coloured families from West Bank to Duncan Village was contemplated. Councillor Stakemire commented on the 'strained relations between the two racial groups in this area'.⁵⁴ By 1971, the Assistant Township Manager commented that

'The general feeling among the Bantu in Duncan Village is that they are being exploited by Council for the

⁵¹ Town Clerk's letter to Mr. Lotter of BAD, 30 December 1975.

⁵² Letter to Secretary for BAD, 24 November 1977.

⁵³ Telegram from Town Clerk to Secretary for Plural Relations and Development, 22 February 1979; Daily Dispatch, 21 April 1979.

⁵⁴ BAC minutes, June 1965.

benefit of the coloured people ... and the illwill it has engendered towards Council has reached serious proportions. There is no doubt that should this move be misinterpreted by the Bantu, this explosive situation could erupt with dire consequences...'⁵⁵.

After the south-eastern areas of Duncan Village were cleared of black residents, and coloured people resettled in those areas (known subsequently as Parkridge and Charles Lloyd Township), the Council turned its attention to the north-eastern areas. Another racial manoeuvre had to be performed. After African families were evacuated, coloured residents from the old East Bank location were temporarily settled there, even though their new houses were ultimately scheduled for Chinese occupation.

This move prompted an agonised letter from a coloured resident:

'We have been living in a mixed area for over 60 years but that was in peaceful co-habitation. Now the City Council intends removing Africans from an area ... and push us into these displaced Africans' homes. As has happened in Lloyd township and Parkridge, such a move brought about a strong anti-coloured feeling from the Africans. Numerous assaults took place ... and mysterious fires have destroyed a hall and homes ... What will happen to us in Duncan Village, the good Lord alone knows ... Will the City bear the responsibility of such injuries incurred?''⁵⁶.

The anonymous author finally got to the nub of the matter: 'We desire to settle down, not be moved around like pawns on a chess board'. His letter also illustrated the increasingly high-handed methods which the Council was using: 'If Council had [consulted us] in the first place it would have saved time and unnecessary anxiety that we have suffered in the past few weeks'.

This letter caused some discomfort on the Council. A survey of 100 black Duncan Village families in the site and service scheme was carried out, to find out whether they were prepared to move

⁵⁵ Report of Assistant Manager of Bantu Affairs, 3 September 1971.

⁵⁶ Letter to Town Clerk, 23 September 1970.

voluntarily to Mdantsane. Only three such families were found, and they commented,

'What is the good of objecting to this move? If we don't go voluntarily now we will be forced to go sooner or later in spite of the City Council's assurances that we will be the last to be removed to Mdantsane ...'⁵⁷.

In response, the Town Clerk warned the Council that

'The Bantu ... are beginning to lose faith in the Council and are prepared to fight the Council both in the Courts and in the streets. This Department can feel the mood of the people and would be failing in its duty if it did not warn the City Council ... The two senior officials of this Department ... are of the opinion that the Sharpville riot will be child's play compared to what could happen in Duncan Village if the Council attempts to deproclaim the Site and Service area in the immediate future...'⁵⁸.

By the mid-1970s, most of those Duncan Village residents who had wished to move to Mdantsane, had done so. Subsequently, the removals became more and more unpopular. Events in 1985 would prove the Town Clerk's dire premonitions to have been prophetic.

When the East Cape Administration Board was established, it inherited this legacy of popular dissatisfaction. The Advisory Board increasingly criticised the Administration Board's handling of the matter. At a mass meeting, Mr. Matotie called the removals 'ungodly and unfair'.⁵⁹ In a letter to the Mayor of East London, Mr. Matotie wrote of the injustice done to the African community: 'Your worship the Mayor, I feel people should be treated equally in the eyes of the Law or regulations'. The methods of the Administration Board were described as 'Gestapo regulations'. The Advisory Board angrily noted that it had

⁵⁷ Town Clerk's report to HHNWAC, 8 April 1971

⁵⁸ Town Clerk's report to HHNWAC, 5 April 1971. Events in 1985 would prove the Town Clerk's words to have been prophetic.

⁵⁹ Daily Dispatch, 8 October 1975.

never been informed or consulted by the Administration Board.⁶⁰ It also resented the racial favouritism displayed towards the Coloured people. Mr. Makatala described the removal as a white plan to drive a wedge between Africans and coloureds.⁶¹

In the meantime, the coloured community was also becoming politically assertive. The Coloured Management Committee (CMC)⁶² expressed its opposition to the removal of Duncan Village. It explicitly rejected group areas, and stated that it did not believe that one race group should reap benefit at the expense of another. It condemned the Administration Board's high-handed action, which caused racial friction and created hardship for families. The CMC stated that it had never asked for the removal of African families so that coloureds could be housed there.⁶³

By early 1979, popular pressure was mounting to prevent the removal of Duncan Village. The Advisory Board had been replaced by the Duncan Village Community Council (DVCC), because the Department had ruled that community councils should be established for all those communities where removals would take longer than three years.⁶⁴ The Department would live to regret

⁶⁰ Letter from Mr. Matotie to Mr. Yazbek, 5 October 1975.

⁶¹ Daily Dispatch, 10 October 1975. Ironically, Mr. Makatala still portrayed the Council as the protector of his people: 'Now because the black African people have no mayor in the East Cape Administration Board, I have decide (sic) with my people to get your helping hand to save my people in their plight'.

⁶² Town Clerk's report, 14 October 1968. A 'Coloured Management Committee' is an advisory body, which should be consulted on budgetary matters, rates and charges, and the provision of facilities, housing schemes, and social services. A 'CMC' could inspect facilities, make recommendations to Council, report on the work of Council employees, and obtain information from the Council (Regulations, Provincial Notice no. 564, 16 August 1963).

⁶³ Daily Dispatch, 10 October 1975.

⁶⁴ Meeting of DVCC, Council and ECAB, 4 September 1979.

this decision, as the 'temporary' Community Council in Duncan Village would become an effective campaigner against removal.

By 1979, the opposition had changed in two ways. First, the DVCC had lost patience with the City Council. It believed that the Council had been discredited, for it 'only seems perturbed by the shortage of coloured housing and pays little attention to the fact that we have problems in moving to Mdantsane'.⁶⁵ A second factor was the increasing co-operation between the leaders of the African, coloured and Indian communities. The chairman of the CMC, Mr. Peter Mopp, asserted that

'We object strongly to having our black brothers moved to solve our housing crisis. And the City Council has a very bad reputation in being the agent for this vicious system of removals'.⁶⁶

The Indian Management Committee refused to even discuss the removal of Duncan Village residents with the Council, because of its hostility to the policy.⁶⁷

By September 1979, the realisation dawned on the Community Council that the government might never succeed in removing Duncan Village. The Community Council's hour had come. At this time, Mr. Mantuntuta of the Community Council announced a 'dream to build a new Duncan Village and write a new page in the annals of the history of the township'.⁶⁸ As the Daily Dispatch commented, 'In the light of the government blueprint for the area, it is indeed a revolutionary concept the Community Council is entertaining, and it will take some doing for Pretoria to agree'.

⁶⁵ Daily Dispatch, 24 April 1979.

⁶⁶ Daily Dispatch, 24 April 1979.

⁶⁷ Town Clerk's report to Action Committee, 1 October 1979.

⁶⁸ Daily Dispatch, 7 September 1979.

The Duncan Village Community Council (DVCC) became the prime mover in a public campaign against the resettlement of the remaining 50 000 residents. Mr. Matuntuta felt the Community Council had a good case. He referred to the reprieve which Crossroads had been granted, and the permanent city status to be given to Soweto. It was evident, he maintained, that the homelands could not afford to provide housing for all Duncan Village residents. But his most interesting argument was a moral one, for it revived time-honoured notions of rights and obligations. He pleaded with the City Council to 'remember those old people living in Duncan Village who had given their services so faithfully to East London all their lives and who now had to be moved to Mdantsane'. In fact, he took great pains to argue the interdependence of interests between Duncan Village and East London.⁶⁹

Due to its firm stand between 1979 and 1985, the DVCC was set to experience the most influential and exhilarating period of its five-year existence. The DVCC played an important role in the ultimate re-unification of East London. Its sense of urgency was bolstered by idealism, as well as a fear for its own survival in the African community. As a member of the Grahamstown Community Council noted, an acceptance of removals usually causes a Community Council to be seen as 'nothing but a bunch of ja-baases'.⁷⁰ Grahamstown's successful anti-removal campaign in Fingo Village offered valuable lessons to the DVCC.⁷¹

The responses of the City Councillors to Mr. Matuntuta's proposal were mixed. Clr. Kemp and Clr. de Lange (who belonged to the

⁶⁹ Minutes, meeting between DVCC, ECAB and Council, 4 September 1979.

⁷⁰ Daily Dispatch, 30 October 1980.

⁷¹ This included using all possible spheres of influence, getting the support of the Ciskei and Transkei governments, mobilising sympathetic whites, and taking the Government to court (Daily Dispatch, 3 August 1981).

National Party) argued that the Council had no jurisdiction over Duncan Village, and should not intervene. In contrast, Clr. Card asked the DVCC for a full motivation, including economic and financial details.⁷²

The DVCC then took the initiative. It organised a meeting with the City Council and ECAB to discuss the matter. This meeting illustrated the various currents in the authorities' perspectives on the issue. Curiously, the strong moral stand of the DVCC seemed to cause the moral resolve of both the City Council and the Board to melt away. Both the Board and the City Council tried to absolve themselves by claiming that the DVCC had to take up the matter with the Department itself, which was the only authority capable of making policy regarding African settlement.

An extraordinary aspect of the discussions was the position of certain Board officials. They did not seem startled by the DVCC proposal of the retention of Duncan Village at all, leading one to believe that they had already discussed it amongst themselves. In fact, Mr. Koch, the Chief Director, unexpectedly agreed that the policy to dismantle Duncan Village should be reconsidered under the present conditions. He admitted that Mdantsane could never house all the residents of Duncan Village. As yet, however, neither the City Council nor the Board were prepared to argue explicitly for a change of policy.

The real source of opposition to the Community Council was the Department of Co-operation and Development (as DBAD was now known). The Secretary of DCD argued that the development of Mdantsane had proceeded so far that was irreversible. He presented some curious moral arguments:

'It would not be regarded as fair by those already removed from Duncan Village, since they would see it as favouritism to those remaining behind. It would also not be fair towards those who looked forward to

⁷² Daily Dispatch, 7 September 1979.

resettlement in an area where they could enjoy permanent ownership rights'.⁷³

The Secretary hinted threateningly to the City Council that a change of plan at this late stage 'could lead to widespread dissatisfaction and negative criticism of your Council'. He indicated that white residents in the area were becoming annoyed (kriewelrig) at the slow pace of the removals.⁷⁴ Finally, if the expansion of Mdantsane was curtailed, he warned, the Department might not be able to support the case for industrial decentralisation incentives in East London. The author's kind valedictory⁷⁵ belied the veiled threats contained in the letter.

Nevertheless, unforeseen circumstances would bedevil the Department's plans. Institutions have a dynamic of their own, and apartheid institutions were no exception. The Ciskeian government was developing its own notions about the proper development of Mdantsane. It claimed that there was a dire need for infrastructure in Mdantsane⁷⁶, and these expenses would reduce the housing programme to only 500 new houses in 1980/1. Furthermore, rumours circulated to the effect that the numerous families on Mdantsane's own waiting list were threatening to occupy the newly erected houses. There was every possibility that, should the Ciskei be granted independence (as indeed happened in 1980), the Ciskei government might refuse to accept

⁷³ Letter from Administrative Secretary of DCD to Chairman of Housing Committee (Mrs Kemp), 22 October 1979. The DCD's argument implies that, since some residents had suffered already, it would be unfair if the policy was changed and all residents did not suffer equally.

⁷⁴ This was no idle threat. In 1984, the Amalinda Ratepayers' Association approached the Prime Minister in order to have the whole of Duncan Village removed, even though the Department had changed its mind by then (Daily Dispatch, 17 July 1984).

⁷⁵ 'Seenwense en vriendelike groete' (God bless and friendly regards).

⁷⁶ Town Clerk's report to Action Committee, 18 February 1980.

any further residents from Duncan Village.⁷⁷

In response to this alarming prospect, the Council's only response was to advise the Minister of the situation, and request that a substantial increase in funds be allocated to Mdantsane, so that Duncan Village could be relocated in three years. The Minister of DCD was not helpful. He suggested that the Council contact the Minister of Finance directly.⁷⁸

H. The meeting of 10 March 1980

The Council was subjected to more and more contradictory pressures. A powerful united front had developed between the CMC, the Indian Management Committee, and the DVCC.⁷⁹ The CMC were prepared to support African residence in Duncan Village, provided the DVCC allowed the 500 coloured families to remain in Duncan Village.

These bodies organised a watershed meeting with the City Council and the Administration Board on 10 March 1980. The CMC urged the Council to agree to reincorporate Duncan Village as part of East London. Similarly, the Indian Management Committee offered to relinquish some of the land set aside for Indian use, in order to support the DVCC.

At this meeting, the DVCC was strongly supported by its own Secretary, Mr. Naude. This official argued that Duncan Village already had an infrastructure which simply needed upgrading, and

⁷⁷ In 1983, the Ciskei Government attempted to halt any further resettlement of Duncan Village residents (Daily Dispatch, 7 May 1983); and in 1985, it strenuously objected to being treated as a dumping ground for South Africa's unwanted people. Mdantsane was experiencing acute accommodation and unemployment problems (Daily Dispatch, 31 May 1985).

⁷⁸ Action Committee minutes, 3 March 1980.

⁷⁹ Minutes of meeting between ECAB, DVCC, East London City Council and CMC, 10 March 1980.

that the residents would be prepared to pay taxes in return for some security of tenure.

In a radical realignment of forces, Mr. Koch, the Chief Director of ECAB, supported these arguments.⁸⁰ The Chief Director pointed to the constant influx of people into Duncan Village, and the unlikely prospects of a complete removal. 'The Board was ready to support any decision taken, ... as it would act in what was the overall interests of East London and its people'. The minutes reveal, then, that the Administration Board was not as intransigent as its public image tended to suggest - a phenomenon which we need to explore more fully.

I. An evaluation of the Eastern Cape Administration Board: An ambiguous product of the Verwoerdian era

The attitude of ECAB raises interesting questions about the dynamics of the South African bureaucracy. Why was the Board one of the first official agencies to recognise the need for a policy change? How could an organisation so steeped in Verwoerdian thinking produce such a radical reconsideration of policy? As Bekker and Humphries noted, Administration Boards laboured under a muishondbeeld ('skunk image') in the public eye.⁸¹ Administration Boards were not known for their concessionary or yielding attitudes.

This section will trace the Board's worsening problems in three areas of its operation: influx control, crime management, and its increasingly intractable financial position. We will argue that its encounter with these problems inexorably led to a greater pragmatism, and an eventual willingness to dispense with

⁸⁰ A year later, when the City Council and the Department were still firm in their resolve to remove Duncan Village, Mr. Koch re-iterated his argument for retention (Minutes of meeting between City Council, DCD, ECAB and DVCC, 20 August 1981).

⁸¹ S. Bekker and R. Humphries, From Control to Confusion (1985), p. 15.

the worst excesses of Verwoerdian planning. Yet the Board's response cannot be reduced to institutional dynamics; the political judgement of its Chief Director, Mr. Louis Koch, played a key role.

a) Influx control

The policy of influx control required constant policing and surveillance activities on the part of the Boards. This involved a great deal of administrative work. Board inspectors, together with members of the South African Police, attempted to identify and arrest Africans whose presence in urban areas was deemed to be illegal; inspectors and labour bureau officials investigated illegal employment and prosecuted offenders; and inspectors with township managers took action against illegal housing.⁸²

To make the system of control of physical presence effective, it was necessary to throw the police-net as wide as possible, catching and holding offenders and innocents alike. The problem with this approach, admitted by many Administration Board officials, was that the procedure implied continual and often severe harassment of innocent urban African residents and their visitors. These unpleasant activities did not leave the Board officials unaffected. The Boards' poor reputation derived largely from their policing role. From their extensive interviews, Bekker and Humphries found that many Board officials disliked carrying out these measures.⁸³

In East London, this problem produced a contradictory response from the Board. On the one hand, the Board was pressured by the Department to implement influx control conscientiously. The Department maintained that 'the Administration Board would be considered irresponsible if regular inspections are not carried

⁸² S. Bekker and R. Humphries, From Control to Confusion (1985), p. 70.

⁸³ S. Bekker and R. Humphries, From Control to Confusion (1985), p. 71-4.

out to prevent further deterioration of the present labour position and the squatter problem'.⁸⁴ In 1980, penalties on 'illegal' black labour were introduced.⁸⁵ Intensified steps were taken against black people living in servants quarters.⁸⁶ As late as 1984, the Board planned a campaign to clear East London of illegal black residents.⁸⁷ These extremely unpopular actions contributed to the Board's 'skunk image', but the adverse publicity given to the Board did not sway it from its course. Many of the Board's local officials remained obstinately committed to carrying out existing regulations. They had been schooled in a specific institutional culture, and this contributed to various 'bureaucratic dysfunctions' described in Chapter Ten - such as inflexibility, arrogance, an excessive adherence to rules, intellectual 'blind spots', and a confusion of means and ends.

On the other hand, by the early 1980s, certain ECAB officials could perceive the sheer impossibility of removing a settled community, in addition to clearing the area of 'illegal' residents. By the late 1970s, it became evident that the Board was losing the influx control battle in East London. There were at least 9 000 male and 6 000 female unemployed Africans in East London. A very large number of squatters were illegally employed by the white community, because they were an abundant source of cheap labour. Demographic engineering had come up against the sheer tide of urbanisation, spurred on by rural poverty. This dilemma was recognised by senior officials of the Board. As Mr. Koch noted in 1981, the Board was not sure how many people actually lived in East London, since 'lack of co-operation made

⁸⁴ Letter from Administrative Secretary, DCD, to Secretary of Coloured Management Committee, date unclear.

⁸⁵ Daily Dispatch, 1 October 1980.

⁸⁶ Daily Dispatch, 23 September 1982.

⁸⁷ Daily Dispatch, 30 March 1984.

a population survey impossible'.⁸⁸

b) Upgrading and housing

The official housing policy after 1968 was one of the provision of family housing in the homelands, rather than in the white cities. By the 1980s, the housing shortage in urban African areas was reaching critical proportions. However, the parallel emphasis on housing provision and homeland development prevented Administration Boards from seriously coming to terms with the housing crisis. Newspapers carried reports of housing backlogs, and unrealistic Administration Board proposals to deal with them. An ECAB proposal to build an R11 million model black township in the Border area could not be launched, because the Board could not raise a loan for the project, except at unaffordable rates of interest.⁸⁹ A government plan to spend R542 million on improving Eastern Cape townships proved to be chimeric, since the Deputy Minister warned that the scheme could only become a reality if the money was granted by Treasury, and this could take up to 10 years.⁹⁰ The Deputy Minister mentioned a frightening figure of 160 000 housing units which were required in the Eastern Cape, and the Administration Board added that much funding was required simply to upgrade existing housing and services.⁹¹

By 1981, it was obvious to officials of the Administration that the removal of a settled community in East London, for whom expensive houses had to be built in Mdantsane, would simply be a luxury they could not afford.

⁸⁸ Minutes of meeting between ELCC, DVCC, ECAB and DCD, 20 August 1981. The process of the Boards' administrative collapse is well documented in S. Greenberg, Legitimizing the Illegitimate (1987), chapter 3.

⁸⁹ Daily Dispatch, 23 July 1977.

⁹⁰ Weekend Post, 21 February 1981.

⁹¹ Daily Dispatch, 13 June 1981.

c) The financial position of the Administration Board

Since 1923, the Stallardist financial principles of black administration had prevailed in African townships. The administration of 'locations' was meant to be largely self-financing, deriving its income from the sale of traditional beer and liquor, from levies on employers of black labour, and from rents and service charges payable by black residents.⁹²

The Bantu Affairs Administration Boards inherited this financial structure, together with significant deficits. Furthermore, the 1970s was a period of rising costs, and the state urged financial cutbacks.⁹³ Higher interest rates meant that housing schemes became a heavy financial burden. The consumption of beer dropped steadily, due to an increasing preference for liquor and commercial beer amongst younger, more educated residents.⁹⁴ The consolidation of the 22 original Administration Boards into 14 large ones made the Boards even less cost-effective. In the Eastern Cape, distances were vast, and rising petrol prices further bedevilled budgeting. Within ten years, the financial position of virtually all the Boards had deteriorated drastically.

The result was that Administration Boards repeatedly had to increase the levels of service charges in the townships, simply to break even. (Rentals were rarely increased, since the Board was reluctant to arouse Africans' hostility. Consequently, inflation outstripped rental revenue). In East London, it attempted in 1978 to increase service charges, because the Board was running at a loss of about R1,4 m per annum. It proceeded

⁹² S. Bekker and R. Humphries, From Control to Confusion (1985), p. 119.

⁹³ According to Mr. G. Coetzer, Chairman of ECAB, in Daily Dispatch, 26 March 1976.

⁹⁴ S. Bekker and R. Humphries, From Control to Confusion (1985), p. 133.

despite strenuous objections from the City Council, which argued that the political climate was not conducive to such a move.⁹⁵ However, even increased service charges left little revenue available for infrastructural improvements, and this, in turn, made the Board even less popular amongst African residents.

Throughout the country, Community Councils opposed service charge increases because they were anxious about their own political survival. This matter could not easily be dismissed by the Boards, as the political development of the Community Councils was also an important part of the Boards' task. As ECAB's Director of Finance commented,

'The current political policy of strengthening the image of the Community Councils can be jeopardised if too much pressure is put on the communities to increase service charges ... Service charges and rentals are factors which political organisations exploit in order to create dissatisfied residents and to further their own political aims ...'⁹⁶.

Many African communities were several months in arrears with their rentals. The Board appealed to the Department to subsidise the R2 800 000 owed by Community Councils to the Board, but the Department refused.⁹⁷ On occasion, ECAB officials appealed to the Minister of DCD to force the Community Councils to increase service charges.⁹⁸

Another source of income, viz. employers' contributions and fines (in the case of illegal employment of Africans) proved equally difficult to collect. The tracing of defaulters was time-consuming and expensive. Furthermore, this activity tended to

⁹⁵ Meeting between ECAB, Council, Chambers of Commerce and Industries, 16 June 1978 (File 15/4/5/1).

⁹⁶ Memorandum to Chief Director, 22 May 1980.

⁹⁷ Memorandum of the Director of Finance, ECAB, to Chief Director, ECAB, 22 May 1980. The Department argued that the matter was still under consideration, by the Browne Commission.

⁹⁸ Memorandum from Finance Director to Chief Director, ECAB, 22 May 1980.

sour relations between employers and the Board, and hence the officials had to be circumspect in deciding to prosecute recalcitrant employers.⁹⁹ As the implications of rapid urbanisation became apparent, ECAB officials also began to perceive a basic contradiction in government policy, since increased financial burdens on employers would lead to the loss of jobs. An ECAB official even argued that the government should determine a blanket minimum wage, so that wage earners could afford sub-economic housing and proper services.¹⁰⁰ The Boards also began to argue that financial support should be given directly to the Boards from the state itself.¹⁰¹

By 1981, ECAB's financial position was desperate. The Board suffered an annual loss of R2-3 million. If no additional revenue was made available, the Board would be unable to continue the provision of services. Official posts were often left unfilled. In Duncan Village alone, there was a R500 000 shortfall in revenue, since residents were refusing to pay amounts owing to the Board. The Board could barely provide refuse services and infrastructural maintenance.¹⁰²

The financial records of the Eastern Cape Administration Board tell a story of increasing financial anxiety. The basic problem was the Board's narrow revenue base, since impoverished communities could not generate sufficient revenue for administration as well as infrastructural improvements.¹⁰³ Gradually, Board officials began questioning some of the basics of government policy. According to ECAB's Director of Finance,

⁹⁹ Memorandum, Director of Finance to Chief Director, 22 May 1980.

¹⁰⁰ Memorandum from Director of Finance to Chief Director of ECAB, 22 May 1980.

¹⁰¹ Budget speech of the Chairman of ECAB, 30 May 1980.

¹⁰² Minutes of meeting between ELCC, DCD, ECAB, and DVCC, 20 August 1981.

¹⁰³ Daily Dispatch, 24 October 1981.

'In order to ensure harmonious relations between the various racial groups ... it is imperative that the state lay down a clear, concise and acceptable policy in regard to the future development of Blacks economically, socially and politically. Any policy which will tend to stifle this development and perpetuate a position of inferiority would to say the least, be difficult to maintain'.¹⁰⁴

Such 'harmonious relations' implicitly raised the question of the relations, rights and obligations which should prevail amongst the different race groups. Stallardist self-sufficiency was clearly unviable.

d) Portents of a new order: The role of ECAB

In the mid-1970s, far-sighted officials began to appreciate the mounting difficulties of implementing government policy. Rifts were emerging within the Administration Boards, as well as within the Department itself.

In the Department, the young Punt Janson became Deputy Minister of the Department of Bantu Affairs in 1972. He soon became known as a reformer in the Department, sensitive to the unpalatable effects of government policy on the lives of Africans.¹⁰⁵ Janson showed a much greater willingness than his predecessors to value the opinions of Africans themselves. He paid attention to numerous practical problems, such as African job training, the removal of job reservation, township facilities, the shortage of schools, African property rights, and recreation and sport. He also favoured the establishment of more powerful elected African

¹⁰⁴ Memorandum from ECAB Director of Finance to Chief Director, 22 May 1980.

¹⁰⁵ This information is contained in Matthew Chaskalson's excellent study of bureaucratic dynamics, 'Apartheid with a human face: Punt Janson and the origins of reform in township administration, 1972-1976' (African Studies Institute Seminar, University of the Witwatersrand, 1988).

councils in townships to represent residents' interests.¹⁰⁶ Most significantly, Janson also evinced a new understanding of the South African community: '[The housing shortage] is not in the interests of the Bantu, and for that reason it is not in the interests of South Africa either'.¹⁰⁷

Unfortunately, Janson's influence was outweighed by the conservatism of Departmental officials, who saw no need to change their policies, and they resented Janson's reformism. With the tacit support of the Minister of Bantu Affairs, Mr. M.C. Botha, they obstructed the implementation of his reforms, and in 1976, his verkrampte opponents succeeded in forcing him out of the Department altogether.¹⁰⁸

However, Janson's initiatives found more support amongst Administration Board officials.¹⁰⁹ Various senior Administration Board officials began to perceive the inability of the homelands to fulfill their grand apartheid mission. They also had to face the urban administrative problems created by a decade of neglect of township development. For them, Janson was a valuable senior spokesman in the Department; he understood their predicament and offered them a way out of it.

After Janson was ousted, more progressive Administration Board officials lacked any guidance from the Department, and they had to muddle through on their own. The decade after 1971 had been a painful one, in which the Administration Boards had steadfastly, albeit coercively, tried to carry out their mission. In each locality, different political configurations required

¹⁰⁶ M. Chaskalson, 'Apartheid with a human face' (1988), pp. 7-11.

¹⁰⁷ Quoted in M. Chaskalson (1988), 'Apartheid with a human face', pp. 9-10.

¹⁰⁸ M. Chaskalson, 'Apartheid with a human face' (1988), p. 14.

¹⁰⁹ M. Chaskalson, 'Apartheid with a human face' (1988), p. 14.

rapid and sensitive decision-making, despite the dearth of local officials capable of such political finesse. In the interim, the practical problems increased, which provided some senior Administration Board officials with an incentive to find constructive and innovative local solutions. Unlike the Department, some Administration Board officials showed a capacity for discriminating between fantasy and reality; and against constant Departmental discouragement, a few brave Board officials were prepared to sacrifice the former in favour of the latter.

In the light of the political and administrative problems in Duncan Village, it is not surprising that Mr. Koch was amenable to reconsidering Government policy in East London.

These dynamics formed the backdrop to Mr. Koch's admission in August 1981 that ECAB did not have the funds to pay its debts owing on the provision of services in Duncan Village. Furthermore, he suggested that, 'if [Duncan Village] came back within the Municipal area it could also solve the problem of funding of services in the area'.¹¹⁰ Mr. Koch had quietly thrown a cat amongst the pigeons. His suggestion to re-incorporate Duncan Village into East London, was outrageous in terms of government policy.

The subsequent history of Administration Boards illustrates both the significance and the limitations of Mr. Koch's insight. It was significant, because it helped to open the way for the City Council to reassess its relationship to Duncan Village. In general, however, the Administration Boards were so mired in bureaucratic confusion that they could not become a meaningful agent of progress towards a new moral order. Instead, their hesitant reformism would be taken up by a much more confident agency of reform, the Department of Constitutional Development and Planning. The final section in this chapter takes up this issue.

¹¹⁰ Minutes of meeting between ELCC, DVCC, ECAB and DCD, 20 August 1981.

J. The decline of Administration Boards, and the rise of technicist government

By the 1980s, the Administration Boards had lost the battle against the pressures of urbanisation and modernisation. Throughout South Africa, white employers constantly sought exemptions from influx control, and the tribal labour bureaux had virtually disintegrated. The Administration Board system ground to a halt, partly because of bureaucratic incapacity (such as limited staff), and partly because local officials and employers did not take central state directives seriously any more.¹¹¹ By 1985, the Government renounced its policy of forced removals, and influx control was abolished in 1986.¹¹²

Many of the weaknesses of the Administration Boards had already been exposed by the Riekert Commission of 1977. It had concluded that the Boards 'already have too many functions and that some of them should be taken away from them'; most notably, its racially discriminatory role should make way for more 'functional' responsibilities to serve all racial groups.¹¹³ By the early 1980s, Administration Boards were beginning to fashion a new role for themselves. They were keen to move away from the coercive functions they previously were obliged to perform, towards a more positive, 'developmental' role. The Boards would retreat to the role of supporter and advisor of Community Councils, in their development towards political maturity.¹¹⁴ For this purpose, Administration Boards were transformed into 'Development Boards' in 1985.

¹¹¹ S. Greenberg, Legitimizing the Illegitimate (1979), p. 68.

¹¹² S. Greenberg, Legitimizing the Illegitimate (1987), pp. 77-8.

¹¹³ S. Greenberg, Legitimizing the Illegitimate (1987), p. 59.

¹¹⁴ See S. Bekker and R. Humphries, From Control to Confusion (1985), p. 40.

In this process, the Development Boards heralded the beginning of the pragmatic and **technicist** conception of the social order. However, political events outstripped the Boards' innovations. An entirely new political dispensation was instituted after 1983. This new approach differentiated between the political status of homeland citizens (who remained excluded from the South African political order), and African residents in non-homeland South Africa, who became part of a broader South African citizenship. The Government declared itself in favour of nurturing an African urban middle class, and introduced Black Local Authorities to serve as fully-fledged local government in the African townships.¹¹⁵

The Department of Co-operation and Development could not survive this remarkable change of direction. In 1985, urban African administration was transferred to the Department of Constitutional Development and Planning (DCDP), where the spirit of technicist reformism would take root and flourish. For the DCDP, the crucial political question was the political relationship between urban Africans and the white, coloured and Indian sectors of the population in non-homeland South Africa. The Development Boards, whose character had been fundamentally repressive and racist, had no place in this new order. In 1986, they were dismembered, and the various fragments were posted to Black Local Authorities and to the Provincial Administrations.

Yet the Development Boards left behind two important legacies. The first was that the original ethical conundrum remained unresolved. It was one thing to recognise that certain Africans were South African citizens; it was quite another to determine their political status in such a way that political equality did not result in the political demise of whites. The tricameral

¹¹⁵ R. Humphries, 'Intermediate state responses to the Black Local Authority legitimacy crisis', in C. Heymans and G. Totemeyer, Government by the People? (1988), p. 106.

constitution was intended as an outlet for the political aspirations of coloureds and Indians; but this left the political status of urban Africans unresolved. During the 1980s, the DCDP ceaselessly searched for an urban political dispensation that could simultaneously afford urban Africans political rights, and yet not yield to the principle of non-racialism. The fundamental problem regarding the nature of the South African community tempted DCDP officials to attempt to engineer a new moral order.

The DCDP's ordering concept was that of 'group rights', defined on racial (not ethnic) grounds. The detailed exploration of this concept is beyond the scope of this thesis, but it invites further investigation in the light of the normative concepts of 'ethical life', 'moral conduct', and 'discipline'. Their vision visualised new forms of intersubjectively constituted identities, rights, and obligations which would be ascribed to various categories of citizens in the cities.

The second part of the Development Boards' legacy was its technicist ethos. A centrally-organised, well-qualified corps of social scientists attempted to delineate the parameters of the new ethical order. The transition from Verwoerdianism to Constitutional Planning was not simply a question of state strategy. The transition involved a fundamental redefinition of what the state was about. For the Verwoerdians, the state was the embodiment of a metaphysical principle; for the DCDP, the state was an expert arbiter between the competing material interests of various racial groups.

To this end, the sphere of local government once again rose to prominence. The DCDP set out to strengthen separate local governments for whites, coloureds, Indians and Africans respectively. The Council for the Co-ordination of Local Government Affairs studied municipal voters' qualifications, criteria for viable local authorities, municipal finance, and personnel issues. The National Training Board assumed

responsibility for the dissemination of knowledge to fledgling black local authorities.

For the DCDP, local government was only important because of its pragmatic and technical tasks. It emphasised local **administration and development** instead of local politics. It designed local government in such a way that the different local governments in each locality would co-operate, not because of any intrinsic metaphysical bonds or community loyalty, but because they all needed clean water, cheap electricity and reliable sewerage systems. Only through bulk provision, and hence through inter-racial co-operation, could this goal be achieved.

The main achievement of the DCDP was the introduction of Regional Services Councils in 1986. The RSCs became the centrepiece of the Department's new vision of the South African political order. The significance of the RSCs has not been fully appreciated in the literature.¹¹⁶ While the RSCs' performance has rightfully been criticised for entrenching racially-defined institutions and for centralising power at the Provincial level, the DCDP's technicism allowed an important breakthrough. It was now considered to be in the interests of local whites that township residents had the same level of infrastructure which all middle class Westerners desired. The DCDP acknowledged that the various race groups in each city had key interests in common. Instead of

¹¹⁶ Many authors have been tempted to interpret the technicist impulse solely as a form of 'legitimation', and as a disguise for political domination. See, for example, A. Todes et.al., 'Local Government Restructuring in South Africa: The case of the Western Cape', in R. Tomlinson and M. Addleson (eds), Regional Restructuring under Apartheid (Johannesburg: Ravan Press) pp. 125-8. Pierre du Toit analysed RSCs as a form of political control, in 'Regional Services Councils: Control at Local Government Level', in C. Heymans and G. Totemeyer (eds), Government by the People? (Cape Town: Juta, 1988), pp. 63-76. Steven Friedman's more nuanced analysis of RSCs also de-emphasised their potential for change, in 'One step forward, two steps back?', in SAIRR, Councils and controversy, (1987), pp. 1-24.

the Verwoerdian metaphysics of volkere, the DCDP's vision included radical new concepts, such as 'inter-group co-operation', economic interdependence, and consociational decision-making. Hence local whites could be taxed to provide these amenities to their African, coloured and Indian neighbours. The DCDP finally demolished the financial principles of Stallardism, and thereby took a significant step towards city reunification. In this way, it prepared the way for the Government's acceptance of the principle of 'one city, one tax base' in 1990.

Conclusion

This chapter considered the rise and decline of Administration Boards. In a surprisingly brief period, the Boards' attempts at implementing Verwoerdian policies were proved to be utterly unviable. However, they had a powerful impact on urban politics. They successfully pressed most local authorities into accepting divided cities; and their belated attempts at reform encouraged subsequent Government institutions to develop a coercive and technicist approach to solving the problematic consequences of apartheid.

In the next chapter, we will concentrate on East London's experiences during this traumatic period. This will include the City Council's change of heart, its negotiations with local African leaders, and its campaign to re-incorporate Duncan Village into East London itself. This sequence of events will illustrate the changing definitions of 'community' in East London, as well as the limits of the DCDP's technicist reformism. By 1986, East London would reassert its moral autonomy in the face of the prescriptions of central government. Despite its failure to implement a shared, non-racial democratic order, the heady events of 1986 would remain a symbol of hope and reconciliation in the region.

PART FOUR

**TOWARDS A REDEFINITION OF CITIZENSHIP IN
EAST LONDON, 1985-6**

CHAPTER TWELVECOMMUNITY AND CITIZENSHIP IN EAST LONDON, 1982-1986

'Democracy is not an alternative to other principles of associated life. It is the idea of community life itself ... [It is] a name for a life of free and enriching communion' (John Dewey)¹

Throughout this thesis, we have interpreted local politics in post-1950 South Africa as a quest for community - and more specifically, the kind of community which would be compatible with a modernising, disciplinary society. We also interpreted politics as, to a significant extent, the outcome of individuals' moral choices and political judgments.

In this chapter, the themes of ethical life and political judgement will be brought together, in the following way: To the extent that a sense of community and a viable ethical life was achieved in East London, it was the result of a new form of political practice, which Benjamin Barber terms '**strong democracy**'. This was not a premeditated or engineered phenomenon; it emerged spontaneously as various local political leaders tried to deal with the impasse of the Verwoerdian urban heritage. Hence it crucially depended on ordinary individuals' political judgement, skills and finesse. In the process, the East London community developed a new understanding of itself - an understanding which remained controversial and contested, but was nevertheless sustained by a new conception of politics.

Drawing on the work of theorists such as Benjamin Barber, as well as that of various South African theorists, this chapter will explore the concept of 'strong democracy', and its implications for community and citizenship. It will then demonstrate the applicability of these concepts to East London in the early 1980s, as well as the way in which political leadership and

¹ Quoted in B. Barber, Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p. 117.

innovation contributed to this process.

First, however, we will undertake a methodological digression, as a response to questions that have been raised throughout this thesis.

A. Normative theory and epistemology

Thus far, our analysis has also been a normative one, in the sense that we are postulating certain values or goals as being worthy of being striven for. There are three dimensions to this:

(1) In Chapter One, we referred to the level of ethical life, and maintained that the achievement of a viable local community, with clear and legitimate boundaries, and in which inhabitants could feel a sense of belonging, is intrinsically valuable.

(2) We also maintained that the achievement of a viable disciplinary order in a modern society is indispensable, notwithstanding the coercive methods that are usually applied. We insisted, however, that a successful disciplinary order does not rely solely on coercion, but also involves the true reconstitution of individual subjectivity.

(3) In Chapter Two, we maintained that good political judgement and an appreciation of moral choice are qualities that should be appreciated when evinced by political actors.

In sum, then, we postulated three intrinsically valuable social desiderata. The exact content of this normative argument should be made very clear. We do not postulate values that are completely unknown to political actors. Political analysis is ultimately an attempt to understand the lived experience of ordinary people. However, it should be noted that we do not

reduce our values to those of political actors, since some actors hold values and act in ways which we reject.

These claims have important epistemological implications. The observer, theorist or academic is not a tabula rasa. She is as much part of society as are the people whom she is studying. She has her own way of making sense of the world, which may (legitimately) on occasion differ from those of other social actors. In other words, the further we, as observers, move away from mere empirical description of events by the use of 'essentially-contested' theoretical terms, the more our values intrude and serve to constitute the meaning of those terms. Even though we may attempt to make our analysis look value-neutral or 'objective', it is still based on personal predilections. The more abstract our level of analysis, the more the personality and creativity of the theorist shape the insights that emerge. As Robert Nisbet recognised, just as in art, social knowledge falls into 'styles', and both 'exist most luminously in the motivations, drives, rhythms, and itches which lie behind creativeness in any realm, artistic or scientific'.² In Chapter Three, we provided an overview of the work of 'radical' scholars in South Africa, who approached their subject matter from a specific perspective; in contrast, we have attempted to develop another approach, which followed a different rhythm and was informed by a different mood.

This does not entail a tacit approval of methodological realism, in which the theorist postulates an underlying set of true causal connections below the superficial ebb and flow of political events. Such realist epistemologies are absolutist, for they derive their analysis of political dynamics from abstract, non-negotiable truth claims, regardless of the contrary experiences of political actors themselves. Furthermore, despite their apparent objectivity, realist epistemologies are also value-laden, for they are eminently constructions based on the

² R. Nisbet, Sociology as an Art Form (London: Heinemann, 1976), p. 4.

researcher's normative intuitions. Because such values remain unacknowledged, however, they cannot be explained, justified and debated.³

When we, as theorists, acknowledge the values we hold, we do not postulate an absolute, transcendental truth which shapes history unbeknownst to political actors; we are simply recognising that we have values, since we are human. The onus is on us to make our values explicit, to justify them, and to apply them to society with empathy, forbearance and compassion. In this way, a dialogue (real or hypothetical) about the meaning and significance of historical events or actions can emerge between the observer and those observed.

Such a 'dialogue' (or normative openness) can only take place if we move away from one-dimensional notions of human nature. We have to challenge the Hobbesian interpretation of human nature which is so prevalent in 'radical' analysis, because it subjects political actors to a ruthless and unfair estimation of their nature and worth. In this thesis, political conduct was explored with reference to **the things which are valued by actors themselves**, and more particularly, the following kinds of values:

- (1) We maintained that people needed and wanted coherent social identities, which would entail viable reciprocal rights and obligations. This has been termed a '**constitutive**' conception of human subjectivity, for it depends essentially on the way in which people regard, recognise and treat one another.

³ The 'radical' school in South Africa has vacillated between claiming the status of objectivity (being able to see the 'real' forces at work in apartheid), and admitting values and biases (history as part of the struggle against apartheid). The tension between these two positions has never been addressed. A thorough critique of this weakness in radical analysis can be found in L. Pretorius, 'Substance and process in proposals for new forms of local government' (Paper presented to the Conference of the Political Science Association of South Africa, October 1989, pp. 11-20).

(2) Since people's motives are diverse, political actors also value certain pleasures derived from political action, such as prestige, a sense of accomplishment, debate, power, and social service.

(3) In conditions of rapid social change, many actors feel a need to search for viable ways of imposing modern discipline on themselves and others. This need is often not articulated as a search for modernity, but it reflects, in a minor key, the pervasive anxiety of individuals caught in the maelstrom of modernisation.

The latter theme, viz. the transition towards modernity and discipline, will be taken up in the next chapter. For the time being, we should note that it always lurked behind the exhilarating events of 1986, and suggests the presence of problems that were not (and could not have been) resolved by East London's groping efforts at negotiation, but which would be a sine qua non for future urban policy. Problems such as population control, decent housing, sanitation, education, and employment, in the context of third-world conditions, informed local whites' perspectives when they decided to negotiate the future of East London with black populist organisations.

For the rest of this chapter, we will consider the first two normative issues, viz. the quest for a viable form of local ethical life; and the revival of political leadership, innovativeness and political judgement amongst East London's political actors.

B. The hallmarks of 'strong democracy'

According to Barber,

'Strong democracy ... rests on the idea of a **self-governing community of citizens** who are united less by homogeneous interests than by **civic education** and who are made capable of **common purpose and mutual action** by virtue of their **civic attitudes and participatory**

institutions rather than their altruism or good nature'.⁴

It will be argued that the local negotiations that took place in East London during 1986 amounted to the emergence of 'strong democracy' - a notion that has theoretical implications regarding epistemology, human nature, citizenship, democracy, and local government. Drawing on the insights of Benjamin Barber, we will briefly consider each in turn.

a) Epistemology and the practice of politics

We need to develop an understanding of the practice of politics which will not fall into a realist trap. We therefore emphasise a central theme, viz. that **it is ordinary people's attitudes to political conduct and to one another that makes the political realm what it is.**⁵ There is no transcendental political reality beyond the political experience of people, and hence their sense-making efforts forms the substance and tenor of politics in any given situation.

This has important practical implications. Whereas radical analysts have always been eager to prescribe a 'correct' form of political activism, based on their transcendental analysis of society, we need to recognise that politics offers no fixed epistemological co-ordinates or political destinations'. The practice of politics generates its own knowledge. In Benjamin Barber's words, 'It will mean conceiving **politics as epistemology** and thereby inverting the classical ... priority of epistemology over politics'.⁶

⁴ B. Barber, Strong Democracy (1974), p. 117. Emphasis added.

⁵ This, of course, is a value-judgement. It shows, once again, that any academic methodology is premised on the researcher's values.

⁶ B. Barber, Strong Democracy (1984), pp. 165-6.

A fundamental condition for politics is, in Barber's terms, public action that cannot be resolved by means of 'true science' or transcendental truths. Politics concerns itself only with those realms where truth is not - or is not yet - known.⁷ Political knowledge is characterised by the '**absence of an independent ground**'. Political knowledge is provisional, flexible, creative, and communal.⁸ The test of political knowledge is not 'Does it conform to the standards yielded by an incorrigible metaphysic?', but 'Is it the product of an imaginative consensus of the citizens' autonomous wills?' Satisfactory policies are not the expression of an a priori truth, but are the result of political talk, in which different people's knowledge, preferences and opinions are forced to run the gauntlet of public deliberation and judgement. They emerge legitimised and transformed by the process of politics.⁹ In this sense, then, 'political talk is not talk about the world; it is talk that makes and remakes the world'.¹⁰

It is only in this way that political actors can develop political wisdom and discover meaningful political insights, without being subjected to the absolutist and transcendental prescriptions of social scientists, policy experts, or radical

⁷ B. Barber, Strong Democracy (1984), p. 129. This is a radical claim. It means we must not look for political answers in 'rational' or 'scientific' or 'natural' solutions to political questions. Politics challenges the supremacy of theoretical reason (e.g. Kant's categorical imperative or Rawls's principles of justice), natural law (e.g. as in the work of John Locke), naturalistically grounded theories of absolute rights (e.g. Thomas Hobbes), or true knowledge (as in Plato). Philosophy cannot provide norms external to the political process with which political problems can be resolved (Barber, Strong Democracy (1984), p. 130).

⁸ B. Barber, Strong Democracy (1984), p. 167.

⁹ B. Barber, Strong Democracy (1984), p. 136.

¹⁰ B. Barber, Strong Democracy (1984), p. 177. Emphasis in original.

historians. Such subjection is a recipe for political prescription, and ultimately, political hegemony - and it explains why authoritarian states tend to claim to be function as a repository of truth.

b) Human nature, individuality and sociability

What does such a conception of 'politics as epistemology' entail? Barber offers the metaphor of truth as a cable woven together from many slender strands. In a situation of strong democracy, many citizens are bound together intimately through their interactions, guided by diverse opinions that are in themselves slender and provisional, but when woven together into a communal will and a public purpose, inspire powerful conviction.¹¹ A genuine communal will, as Rousseau recognised, cannot drown individuality and difference; instead, it is a product of, and a transformation of, individual wills.

There is, of course, a latent tension between communalism and individualism in Rousseau's vision. This tension cannot be wished away, for it is an honest recognition of the dilemma of human nature and society. We do have individual wills and make individual choices, and yet we are irredeemably communal. It is only through a meaningful recognition of our sociability and our freedom that we can derive a form of political association which does not lapse into either dictatorship or anarchy. Rousseau highlights this tension in these powerful words:

'There can be no patriotism without liberty, no liberty without virtue; no virtue without citizens; create citizens and you will have everything you need; without them, you will have nothing but debased slaves, from the rulers of the state downwards'.¹²

This tension between individuality and communality only makes sense from a specific conception of human nature. In contrast

¹¹ B. Barber, Strong Democracy (1984), p. 166.

¹² Quoted in B. Barber, Strong Democracy (1984), p. 213.

to the Hobbesian creatures which populate 'radical' political analysis, we postulate human nature as compound - it is potentially both benign and malevolent, both co-operative and antagonistic. People are not solely motivated by self-interest and instrumental prudence. Furthermore, it is also open to change and transformation by legitimate or illegitimate social and political forces. People have neither fixed natures nor absolute, independently grounded notions of reality and right.¹³

What this means, in short, is that desirable political institutions must be created to accommodate this fluid notion of human nature. This is, emphatically, not an attempt to prescribe certain substantive political policies, but instead, an effort to derive a mode of political conduct and interaction that will be conducive to liberty and community simultaneously. Rousseau described the problem by using the concept of 'social contract':

'The problem is to find a form of association which will defend and protect with the whole common force the person and goods of each associate, and in which each, while uniting himself with all, may still obey himself alone, and remain as free as before. This is the fundamental problem of which the social contract provides the solution'.¹⁴

Rousseau's inspiring words provide the gateway to modern politics, statehood and individuality, for they combine the intensely social character of modern life with the equally powerful yearning for individual freedom.¹⁵

As such, this is a good description of the human predicament; it is not sufficient, however, to serve as a blue-print for institutional change. Louwrens Pretorius has advanced two important arguments regarding the design of political

¹³ B. Barber, Strong Democracy (1984), p. 215.

¹⁴ J-J. Rousseau, The Social Contract (London: Dent, 1973), p. 174.

¹⁵ I am indebted to Raphael de Kadt for this insight.

institutions. First, a crucial rule for the design of political procedures and institutions is that their **purposes** should be fairly clearly and coherently defined. Second, the way in which we create those institutions, should be compatible with the ultimate purposes they are designed to achieve (e.g. if the end is justice, then discriminatory means are probably not appropriate).¹⁶

In this chapter, we will postulate two specific substantive goals for our proposed conception of politics. The first is the goal of **community**, or the establishment of meaningful social identities in which people experience themselves and others as rights-bearers of a certain sort. The second is democracy, in the sense of **political choice** and the cultivation of individual judgement and responsibility in politics. The rest of this section will explore these desiderata.

c) Democracy and politics

What kinds of institutions, then, can accommodate the ever-present tension between sociability and individuality? Barber offers the following suggestion: 'The task of democracy must be to invent procedures, institutions, and forms of citizenship that **nurture political judgement and succor common choice and action**.¹⁷ Private preferences must be transformed into public goods, and this process of transformation is called politics. Those institutions that allow for politics will be able to achieve **communality** and tolerate individual choice simultaneously. To this end, we need to explore our concept of politics further.

Politics is first and foremost a realm of **human action**. As Hannah Arendt recognised, it entails energy, work, making, doing,

¹⁶ L. Pretorius, 'Substance and process' (1989), p. 5.

¹⁷ B. Barber, Strong Democracy (1984), p. 166. Emphasis added.

debating, constructing and participating. For Arendt, politics is the active life (vita activa).¹⁸

More specifically, politics is **public** action.¹⁹ This can refer to two kinds of interaction. The first is practical co-operation on substantive issues and projects (such as building roads or organising creches). The second is debate about the political rules themselves. 'Getting involved in politics' may mean inquiring into the basic ways in which we constitute one another within a given sphere²⁰ (such as trade unions challenging labour laws). Significantly, politics and public action is not confined to the realm of the state or government; hence we can have politics in sport, universities, or even in the home.²¹

Politics also entails **necessity**. It concerns social questions which people have to deal with, for their own survival. Political actors have to respond to events that are part of a train of cause and effect already at work in the world. The momentum of history makes political decision inevitable.²² This also implies that we should evaluate political actors' performance with a measure of forbearance. Politics is not something which should be left to those with 'perfect' motives, intelligence, character or skill. As Michael Stocker recognised, reliance on a meritocratic elite would deprive others - the vast majority of us - of important responsibilities and possibilities

¹⁸ B. Barber, Strong Democracy (1984), p. 122.

¹⁹ B. Barber, Strong Democracy (1984), p. 123. Emphasis in original.

²⁰ M. Frost, 'Politics, reform and oppression', Inaugural lecture, University of Natal, 1987.

²¹ M. Frost, 'Politics, reform and oppression' (1987). Of course, what is defined as 'public' can also be contested. 'What is politics' is a fundamental question of politics (Barber (1984), p. 124).

²² B. Barber, Strong Democracy (1984), p. 126.

for acting and living well.²³

Despite the context of necessity, politics is also about **choosing** - about deliberating, determining and deciding. A citizen is a person with the right, the capacity and the desire to choose with deliberation and act with responsibility.²⁴

Politics is about **conflict**. No perfect consensus can ever be achieved. As Barber put it, 'The garden where there is no discord makes politics unnecessary; the jungle where there is no reasonableness makes politics impossible'.²⁵ Furthermore, politics always threatens somebody, because existing and projected social arrangements invariably benefit some at the expense of others.²⁶ The crucial condition for handling conflict is to have strong institutions, constitutions and social contracts which enforce agreement on the processes of politics, while leaving the substance of politics open to argument. 'Politics consists precisely in the creation of a space for free competition and for the co-operation between different groups in spite of their differences.'²⁷

In democratic politics, free choosers must therefore have a degree of **reasonableness**. They must be non-impulsive, thoughtful, practical and fair. Compromises have to be made; and hence the result of politics will never approximate any perfectly Right or True or Scientific prescriptions.²⁸ This also

²³ M. Stocker, Plural and Conflicting Values (1990), p. 48.

²⁴ B. Barber, Strong Democracy (1984), p. 120.

²⁵ B. Barber, Strong Democracy (1984), p. 128.

²⁶ M. Frost, 'Politics, reform and oppression' (1987).

²⁷ J. Degenaar, 'The politics of negotiation' (Address to the Annual General Meeting of the Cape Western Region of the South African Institute of Race Relations, September 1987), p. 4.

²⁸ B. Barber, Strong Democracy (1984), p. 127.

implies the strong liberal value of tolerance; we cannot prescribe, in advance, which positions and interests are illegitimate. All people must have at least get a fair hearing.

Finally, politics is something we value. According to Frost, 'a person who is political has a sense of him or herself as a being capable of rational criticism of the existing order'²⁹, as well as being willing to enter the public arena by speech or action. From this perspective, an analysis of politics must be normative; we have described the concept in such a way that we must approve of it. Hence our analysis of historical events discriminates between those aspects which we deem constructive, progressive and wholesome, and those we find unfortunate, unproductive or ominous. Most fundamentally, we would disapprove of those social forces that stifle politics itself, including those that lull people into apathy or complacent material bliss. The essence of politics is self-awareness and being recognised by others as a fully-fledged citizen, even if it leads to events that cause material hardship.³⁰

The importance of political judgement now becomes clear. If citizenship depends on the viable functioning of participatory democratic institutions, then a high premium is placed on political actors' foresight, articulateness and sensitivity to others. They must be able to choose and act, even when locked in conflict with others. A crucial dimension of political judgement is the skill of 'public seeing', and the ability to place private needs and wishes in the context of public goals.

Consequently, those democratic systems that are solely based on the principle of representation and voting are not adequate for genuine politics. Voting fixes choices, and thereby stultifies the political imagination.³¹ As Rousseau warned, representation delegates and thus alienates political will, at the cost of

²⁹ M. Frost, 'Politics, reform and oppression' (1987).

³⁰ M. Frost, 'Politics, reform and repression' (1987).

³¹ B. Barber, Strong Democracy (1984), p. 137.

genuine self-government. The voter is free only on the day he or she casts a ballot, and in doing so selects a public body which assumes all responsibility for civic affairs. Ordinary citizens become the passive constituents of representatives.³² Furthermore, the principle of counting heads invariably results in majoritarianism, which simply replicates private interests at higher levels of government. It reduces public goods to aggregations of private interests, and public decision-making then depends on 'the rambling willfulness of transient majorities'. Benjamin Barber condemns 'majoritarianism [as] a tribute to the failure of democracy: to our inability to create a politics of mutualism that can overcome private interests'.³³

Furthermore, it is not even necessary to have the vote in order to engage in politics. There are more important preconditions for politics, such as access to information about prevailing circumstances; intellectual skills which enable judgement of events; and opportunities to test conclusions against the conclusions of others. In sum, 'discursive space' may be more important than the formality of the franchise.³⁴

d) Political talk

The key to politics is not voting (although this may well be a part of it). The real key to political action is **political talk**, for it is only through public debate that political judgement can be educated and made effective. According to Barber,

'Talk remains central to politics, which would ossify completely without its creativity, its variety, its openness and flexibility, its inventiveness, its capacity for discovery, its subtlety and complexity, its eloquence, its potential for empathy and affective

³² B. Barber, Strong Democracy (1984), pp. 145-7.

³³ B. Barber, Strong Democracy (1984), p. 198-9.

³⁴ M. Frost, 'Politics, reform and oppression' (1987); Although the vote is an extremely important symbol of equal citizenship.

expression, and its deeply paradoxical ... character that displays man's full nature as a purposive, interdependent, and active being.'³⁵

The manifold contribution of political talk to politics should be noted.³⁶ First, it involves the articulation of interests, and hence bargaining about them. It allows rhetoric, persuasion, and agenda-setting (the definition of 'public issues'). More significantly, it allows mutuality, or the exploration of shared interests. This implies **listening** as well as talking; and this is listening in the strong sense - listening with empathy, putting ourselves in the shoes of others, straining to hear what we have in common. According to Barber, 'good listeners may turn out to be bad lawyers, but they make adept citizens and excellent neighbours'.³⁷ As people really listen for each other's real assumptions, emotions, symbols, hopes and anxieties, they may transcend received wisdoms and develop innovative policies. 'Thoughts of different species take wing and play around one another, responding to each other's movements and provoking one another to fresh exertion'.³⁸

A key problem is that of getting talking to begin in highly polarised situations. The development of a culture of compromise is not easy. It is often tempting for political actors to retain polarised relationships, partly because the myth of the unity of the oppressor and the myth of the unity of the oppressed sustains

³⁵ B. Barber, Strong Democracy (1984), p. 174.

³⁶ B. Barber, Strong Democracy (1984), pp. 173-198.

³⁷ B. Barber, Strong Democracy (1984), p. 175. 'Empathy has a politically miraculous power to enlarge perspectives and expand consciousness in a fashion that not so much accommodates as transcends private interests and the antagonisms they breed' (p. 189).

³⁸ M. Oakeshott, Rationalism in Politics (1962), quoted in B. Barber, Strong Democracy (1984), p. 183.

a comfortable solidary in their own ranks.³⁹

One party can begin to 'talk' by making a conciliatory gesture or meaningful concession to the other side. Such overtures need not be couched in verbal terms, but they should have symbolic force. Conciliatory gestures indicate goodwill, and help to de-escalate conflict (for example, through humanitarian aid, symbolic gestures, and bridge-building exercises). Concessions are more demanding, for they involve giving up something which is at the centre of what the conflict is about. The key to a successful concession is that it is recognised as such by the opposite party; for example, it may represent some noticeable change from a previous position, and may even involve some cost to the party making the concession.⁴⁰ In East London, such concessions were crucial to getting the process of talking off the ground.

Of course, there is a wide gap between beginning to talk and actually constructing viable democratic institutions. The East London negotiations of 1986 illustrated precisely this phenomenon. A significant degree of contact, talking, listening, arguing - in short, politics - took place, without achieving a formal and lasting political modus operandi. However, political talk allowed the various participants to get a sense of the dimensions of the conflict, and possible kinds of resolution.

e) Citizenship and civic community

In strong democracies, citizenship is the result of shared

³⁹ J. Degenaar, 'The Politics of Negotiation' (1987), p. 7. Degenaar also mentions that polarisation enduces laziness in thinking, for it ignores facts, arguments, nuances, and complexities in order to dramatise a situation for selfish reasons. Such habits have to be overcome in order to begin a culture of political talking.

⁴⁰ C.R. Mitchell, 'A willingness to talk' (Working Paper no. 4, Center for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, George Mason University, 1990), p. 4-6.

political institutions and processes, and the mutual recognition of rightful participants. Citizenship, then, would not simply be a documentary formality (the possession of a birth certificate or passport). Neither could it rest on territorial, ethnic, linguistic or religious ties, nor even on electoral rights. Rather, citizenship will, to a significant extent, be a product of a specific kind of political praxis. Individuals become involved in government by participating in the common institutions of self-government (a 'vertical' relationship), and become involved with one another by virtue of their common engagement in politics (a 'horizontal' relationship).⁴¹ This is a very strong sense of citizenship - in Barber's words, 'citizenship is not necessarily the highest or the best identity that an individual may assume, but it is the moral identity par excellence. For it is as citizen that the individual confronts the Other and adjusts his own life plans to the dictates of a shared world. **I am a creature of need and want; we are a moral body whose existence depends on the common ordering of individual needs and wants into a single vision of the future in which all can share**'.⁴² It should be reiterated that citizenship does not define what civic wants and needs should be. Instead, citizenship is the development of common procedures by which private needs and wants can be transformed into public goods and ends.

The outsiders are, then, those who cannot participate in politics. This usually includes children, criminals, the insane, and territorially-defined foreigners. In practice, it can also include entire categories of citizens, such as women, slaves or ethnic groups. It is in this sense, then, that African residents in patriarchal East London were not full citizens of the city (although they constantly attempted to edge closer to the centre of power). Furthermore, Verwoerdianism also failed to produce genuine homeland citizenship, since the political processes of

⁴¹ B. Barber, Strong Democracy (1984), p. 223.

⁴² B. Barber, Strong Democracy (1984), p. 224.

those distant rural areas were meaningless to urban Africans (and even many homeland residents themselves). In other words, the notion of **belonging** to a community must transcend bureaucratic formalities and territorial specifications; it is something that should be experienced by each individual, by means of interacting politically with others.

Such a sense of active belonging is not realised overnight. It is a profound part of an individual's identity, and takes much sustained experience to develop, consolidate and be enriched. Barber refers to this process as 'civic education'. This is, partly, a question of acquiring formal knowledge of the constitution, institutions and legal codes. However, it is primarily a result of political engagement itself.⁴³ Political participation is a skill, and citizenship is an acquired identity.

f) Strong democracy and local government

Local government and politics may a valuable school of citizenship. According to De Tocqueville,

'Municipal institutions constitute the strength of free nations. Town meetings are to liberty what primary schools are to science; they bring it within the people's reach, they teach men how to use and enjoy it. A nation may establish a free government, but without municipal institutions it cannot have the spirit of liberty'.⁴⁴

Local situations also offer a myriad ways in which shared problems can be discussed and solutions attempted⁴⁵ - ranging from rehabilitating deprived neighbourhoods and establishing recreation centres, to organising anti-crime units and child-care

⁴³ B. Barber, Strong Democracy (1984), p. 234.

⁴⁴ Democracy in America (1960), quoted in B. Barber, Strong Democracy (1984), p. 234.

⁴⁵ B. Barber, Strong Democracy (1984), p. 210.

centres. Furthermore, because towns and cities are more intimate settings than nation-states, it is relatively easy to build up a common memory of constructive experiences. Such a communal memory could, in turn, facilitate future politics, as it consolidates political patterns and thereby contributes to stability.

Of course, local government is not a panacea for building democracy. Local memories of injustice, conflict and oppression may compete with positive memories. Furthermore, the empirical validity of the claim that local government provides civic education and leadership recruitment is at least debatable.⁴⁶ Local government may remain a-political, or even anti-political, especially if a cohesive set of local notables closes the political arena off to competitors. Local government is not necessarily democratic, as the experience of many white South Africans towns illustrates. Also, centralised party systems may offer different forms of political education and advancement to aspirant politicians.

The claim about the likelihood of politics emerging at local level is simply based on the fact that local problems and grievances ~~may~~ be more tangible and comprehensible to ordinary townsfolk. Furthermore, to pressure local political leaders and thereby change local policies ~~may~~ be easier than getting access to the cumbersome ship of state at the national level. A great deal depends on the local political culture, and the availability of talented, courageous and innovative leadership. In East London, the geographical proximity of local white leaders to the distress in Duncan Village played a key role in motivating them to begin a process of genuine politics.

⁴⁶ L. Pretorius, 'Substance and process' (1989), p. 9.

. The emergence of democratic politics in East London

a) The heritage of Administration Board rule:
Polarisation and resistance in East London

In the previous chapter, we recounted the growing unanimity of the African, coloured and Indian communities on the removals issue. By 1981, senior officials of the Eastern Cape Administration Board had begun to admit that a total removal of Duncan Village was practically impossible. This new solidarity emerged at a historic meeting between the City Council, ECAB, and coloured and Indian leaders.⁴⁷ This emerging consensus of opinion left the Council stranded. It was unsure how to react, and began to show signs of internal division. Some Councillors retreated into bureaucratic conservatism, and argued that enormous planning had already been devoted to future housing schemes. Furthermore, 'the City Council was in no position to refute decisions made by the Government', and Councillors warned that any new initiatives would cause tremendous delays.

Conversely, other Councillors adopted a more fluid stance as they attempted to grope with the radically shifting ground. Cllr. Kemp, for example, said that if the Coloured and Indian committees were prepared to give up their rights to land, she felt that a re-evaluation of the issue was called for. Typically, the Council decided to turn to the central government for a resolution, and after much debate, resolved to invite the Minister to East London to this end. But at least it was action of a sort, and the meeting ended on a very cordial note. Cllr. Lipworth voiced his appreciation for the opportunity everyone had to sit around a table to discuss common problems. This step towards a sense of shared responsibility for East London's predicaments was the first tentative indication that the city's healing might begin.

The Council found itself caught between contradictory pressures.

⁴⁷ Minutes of Meeting between ELCC, ECAB, DVCC, CMC, and IMC, 10 March 1980.

On the very day that this watershed meeting between the various authorities in East London was held, a telegram from the Secretary of DCD reached the Town Clerk: 'The resettlement of Duncan Village residents in Mdantsane will continue ... The East London City Council, acting as agent of the South African Development Trust, will continue to build houses at Mdantsane, specifically for the residents of Duncan Village'.⁴⁸ Caught in the midst of this crossfire, the Council dithered. It was constantly tempted to resort to its stock response, which was that the whole matter was a question of government policy.⁴⁹ Councillors expressed sympathy with the plight of the coloured residents, but insisted that the Council was not involved in the matter.⁵⁰ Not surprisingly, the Council found it extraordinarily difficult to change its town planning principles, especially in view of the Department's directives. Clr. Spring stated his opposition in principle to forced removals, but pointed to important practical aspects of the matter: how could almost 50 000 people be accommodated on only 300 hectares in Duncan Village? Furthermore, he maintained, it was the government's responsibility to provide more land. The City Council did not really have anything to do with Duncan Village, since it was administered by the Administration Board.⁵¹

In the face of the intransigence of the Department and the vacillation of the City Council, the DVCC became more vociferous. Mrs Mdaka warned that she had been inundated with inquiries from distressed residents. 'Where will we go with our children?' she asked a joint meeting of East London civic bodies.⁵² The CMC

⁴⁸ Telegram from Secretary for DCD, to Town Clerk, 10 March 1980.

⁴⁹ Action Committee Minutes, 3 June 1980.

⁵⁰ CMC minutes, 12 August 1980.

⁵¹ Daily Dispatch, 29 October 1980.

⁵² Daily Dispatch, 11 March 1980.

also became more angry.⁵³ The DVCC and CMC's forthright stance kept forcing the Council to rethink its position. These bodies were assuming the role of a moral monitor, raising problematic issues of moral obligation and social conscience.

In March 1981, DVCC refused to increase service charges, unless they were assured of the township's permanence.⁵⁴ The Councillors' political future was at stake: 'We have already been branded as sellouts by the people and now we are expected to go to them and ask them to pay more for services that have not been improved for the past five years', said Mr. Biyana. 'What we want is Duncan Village and when we have it we shall decide on whether we accept the increases', said Mr. Makatala. Once again, Mrs Mdaka demanded that the Council examine its conscience:

'Certain city councillors who claim to love and know blacks are to a great extent responsible for our plight in this area. Is it nothing to you that your neighbour is treated as he is by the powers that be? We need to hear your loud voice expressing your disagreement with this unwarranted removal of Duncan Village residents against their will ... I appeal to you, let us hear your voice in protest...'⁵⁵.

The DVCC found some support amongst concerned white East Londoners. A Duncan Village Support Committee was established in May 1981, to fight the removal of Duncan Village. Members of the South African Institute of Race Relations and the Black Sash spread awareness of the issue amongst local whites.⁵⁶ According to its chairman, 'Duncan Village is not a dead community, but a

⁵³ The fate of 500 coloured families to be removed, in order to make way for Indian development, still hung in the balance. The CMC was justifiably concerned, because many coloureds and blacks had intermarried and formed a shared community (Daily Dispatch, 11 June 1981).

⁵⁴ Daily Dispatch, 23 March 1981.

⁵⁵ Daily Dispatch, 26 March 1981.

⁵⁶ Daily Dispatch, 12 November 1981.

thriving, living community that must not be destroyed'.⁵⁷

By mid-1981, the CMC had had enough. It suspended its operations until the future of Duncan Village could be discussed fully with the Council.⁵⁸ The City Council was criticised for having 'no backbone' to speak up and complain to Government.⁵⁹ The cavalier attitude of the Government was condemned: 'Somewhere in Pretoria or here in the Council, their fate is decided by the flick of a pen', said Mr. Alexander. 'I wonder what would happen if this happened to anybody with a white skin ...' A community leader wondered if the Council had any Christian feelings. The CMC was clearly redefining its own sense of political citizenship - a CMC member insisted that 'one should not beg the city council but tell them what was needed'.

These comments had the desired effect. The very next day, the City Council embarked on a flurry of activities. It was announced that the City Council was endeavouring to organise a meeting with the Minister of the Department of Co-operation and Development and ECAB.⁶⁰

At this meeting, the Deputy Minister of DCD remained intransigent, and he threatened 'strong action' to enforce the removals. The disestablishment had originally been decided upon in 1961, he said, and there had not been any protests at the time. Unfortunately a Community Council had been created in 1977 for Duncan Village, and this had given the impression of permanent status for the township. He even suspected that Duncan Village had become a haven for subversives, terrorists and criminal elements. The removal should be done quickly, as the Government of Ciskei might be reluctant to accept them after it

⁵⁷ Daily Dispatch, 16 June 1981.

⁵⁸ CMC minutes, 9 June 1981.

⁵⁹ Daily Dispatch, 12 August 1981.

⁶⁰ Daily Dispatch, 11 June 1981.

became independent. The Deputy Ministers reaffirmed the need to remove Duncan Village within two years.⁶¹

At this meeting, ECAB came out clearly in favour of the retention of Duncan Village, on the grounds that there were insufficient funds to supply services to existing townships, let alone remove them and build new ones. As we noted in the previous chapter, the Administration Board found itself in a dead-end, caught between popular demands and financial constraints.

The clear differences of official opinion at this meeting left the City Council more perplexed than ever. Furthermore, the prospect of the Council subsidising Duncan Village caused some alarm. The Mayor said that he could not envisage ratepayers subsidising services to Duncan Village, 'particularly with the City's present financial problems'.

In the meanwhile, the repercussions of the dispute were affecting other political actors. The Progressive Federal Party was divided on the issue. Addressing a local PFP meeting, Dr. van Zyl Slabbert was asked by critical young PFP members why senior PFP members on the City Council had expressed support for the removals.⁶² Dr. Slabbert indicated that any form of community removals was 'a particularly fine form of political lunacy ... It is disastrous to move established communities away to where they will suffer hardships'. This opinion put senior PFP-oriented City Councillors in a very difficult position.

During 1981, the Mayor, Clr. Donald Card, became a key figure. He was courageous enough to air his views in public. Consequently, his opinions engendered a powerful symbolic influence in all sectors of East London. Mr. Card's attitude illustrated his moral discomfort about the situation. He expressed his sympathy with the Duncan Village community, but

⁶¹ Daily Dispatch, 24 August 1981.

⁶² Daily Dispatch, 29 October 1980.

maintained that its retention would result in worse problems. The population of Duncan Village had grown to such an extent, he claimed, that the area could not longer support it. 'The squatting in parts of Duncan Village is shocking and there is no more ground left.'⁶³ Furthermore, he said, the City Council had to abide by the Group Areas Act.

Mr. Card's statements indicate that he was torn between sympathy and obligation to duty. Some of his arguments were preparing the ground for a change of heart. He recognised that town planning in South Africa was distorted, because it places the poorest people on the perimeters of the city. The Group Areas Act entrenched poverty, he said. Nevertheless, Mr. Card vacillated. Even though his political party (the Progressive Federal Party) rejected all types of discrimination on the basis of colour, but as mayor he had to abide by the laws of the country.⁶⁴

Significantly, though, Mr. Card saw his task as mayor as working 'in the interests of all'.⁶⁵ This claim made him very susceptible to the moral arguments of Duncan Village residents. An impassioned letter to the Daily Dispatch urged Mr. Card to take a brave innovative stand on removals, and quoted precedents in Grahamstown and Vryburg. The author concluded,

'Come on, Mr. Card, please don't give up! How about forming a powerful delegation composed of blacks, Indians, coloureds and whites, who have always professed to have the welfare of their black brothers at heart.'⁶⁶

The moral dimensions of the issue were becoming uncomfortably explicit. The next mayor of East London, Clr. Errol Spring, found himself equally pressured. A remarkable letter from a black

⁶³ Daily Dispatch, 13 August 1981.

⁶⁴ Daily Dispatch, 13 August 1981; 15 August 1981.

⁶⁵ Daily Dispatch, 15 August 1981.

⁶⁶ Daily Dispatch, 20 August 1981.

resident of Duncan Village to the Daily Dispatch raised the question of urban citizenship:

'The question arises, who are meant to be the citizens [of East London]? Does this perhaps exclude the African people in Duncan Village who helped in all respects in building up East London? If not, were they just regarded as tools in the process? ... If Mr. Spring accepts the Africans as God's children and citizens of this beautiful city, why then is it that he does not promise to stop the removal of Duncan Villagers? ... Is East London so poor economically that it cannot afford a township for its urban Africans? The ball is in Mr. Spring's court ...'⁶⁷

The Department of Co-operation and Development remained opposed to the removal, although cracks in its ranks gave the DVCC valuable ammunition. An announcement by Dr. Koornhof to chairmen of community councils in the Eastern Cape to the effect that no black person or family would be moved against their wishes, found an eager audience amongst the councillors in Duncan Village. Furthermore, Dr. Koornhof had reversed decisions on Alexandra, Crossroads, and Fingo Village in Grahamstown.⁶⁸ However, Dr. Morrison, the Deputy Minister, remained adamant that Duncan Village be removed. Dr. Morrison also also claimed to have the true interests of Duncan Village residents at heart. He disclosed that children were 'sleeping like moles' beneath the floorboards of overcrowded houses in Duncan Village. 'We cannot expect human beings to live like that'. It was because of such appalling conditions, he said, that the Government was treating Duncan Village as a priority case.⁶⁹ He announced that the removal

⁶⁷ Letter to the Editor of Daily Dispatch, 27 October 1980. According to another resident, 'The point is that I chose to be an East Londoner, not a Ciskeian, if you understand me' (Daily Dispatch, 13 November 1981).

⁶⁸ Daily Dispatch, 2 February 1981.

⁶⁹ Weekend Post, 21 February 1981.

would be completed within two years.⁷⁰ The Deputy Minister also promised that adequate funds for full compensation of residents would be provided.

The DVCC responded by becoming even more assertive, and sent a strongly worded memorandum to Dr. Morrison. The Community Council feared that Duncan Villagers would lose their rights to work in urban areas, and that the Ciskei government would not provide single accommodation.⁷¹

b) The City Council capitulates

In February 1982, the pressure finally became too much for the Council to bear, and it voted in favour of retaining Duncan Village as a black residential area.⁷² The decision was only taken after the Mayor, Clr. Spring, used his casting vote. The Council also resolved to urge the Government to upgrade Duncan Village into an 'acceptable black residential township'.

The Council's decision to support the retention of Duncan Village was greeted with 'jubilation' in Duncan Village itself.⁷³ The Council was praised by the DVCC, the South African Institute for Race Relations, the East London Chamber of Commerce, and the PFP. The Daily Dispatch editorialised about the 'moral claim of blacks to residential rights in the city'.⁷⁴

The Council's volte face allowed it to address the Duncan Village issue with a new sense of moral conviction. When Dr. Morrison

⁷⁰ Action Committee minutes, 2 March 1981; minutes of meeting between Councillors and the Deputy Minister, 17 February 1981.

⁷¹ Daily Dispatch, 30 January 1982.

⁷² Daily Dispatch, 23 February 1982.

⁷³ Daily Dispatch, 24 February 1982.

⁷⁴ Daily Dispatch, 25 February 1982.

reiterated his determination to proceed with the removal⁷⁵, Ctrs. Spring and Card angrily responded that the Department had failed in its repeated pledges to remove Duncan Village. Instead, the population was growing at an alarming rate.⁷⁶ A new desire for local autonomy now animated these Councillors. According to the Mayor, Ctr. Spring, East London is 'in a far better position to determine the needs of [its] area than the politicians who are far removed from the situation'. As Mayor, he felt responsible for the well-being of the entire city, despite the fact that it challenged the Government's policy:

'If, by pointing out the facts and pleading for a more practical and humane alternative to a policy that is not working, I am accused of involving myself in politics, so be it. I ask the community of East London to decide.'⁷⁷

For his part, Ctr. Card admitted that he had supported removals in the past. 'Times however have changed, and so should decisions', he said.⁷⁸ According to Ctr. Yazbek, the Council was helping people whose birthright was being threatened: 'We need these people, they belong to us and it is our duty to support them'.⁷⁹ The Council was beginning to define the boundaries of the local community in a radical new way.

The Council's decision changed the balance of power in the region. The DVCC felt courageous enough to demand the resignation of Ctr. Robbie de Lange from the Board of ECAB, since his activities on ECAB were counter to the wishes of his Council.⁸⁰ The Council also became more spirited, and almost

⁷⁵ Eastern Province Herald, 27 February 1982.

⁷⁶ Daily Dispatch, 1 March 1982.

⁷⁷ Daily Dispatch, 1 March 1982.

⁷⁸ Daily Dispatch, 1 March 1982.

⁷⁹ Daily Dispatch, 30 March 1982.

⁸⁰ Daily Dispatch, 17 March 1982.

seemed to relish the ensuing head-on conflict with Dr. Morrison.⁸¹ Clr. Card took Dr. Morrison to task:

'Do you realise that with all the good incentives the government has agreed to for this area, we will still struggle to get going if we do not have harmony and goodwill between all races?''⁸²

A key reason for the Council's new-found courage was a town planning report submitted by a town planning specialist to the Council.⁸³ Prof. Wallace van Zyl argued that housing provision at current building rates would never eliminate housing backlogs. He also advocated that African residents be given security of tenure so that they would improve their own homes, and that 'removals ... destroy social ties and hasten structural decay'. These views offered held out a new direction for the Council, and it offered some scientific justifications for a new moral perspective.

c) The fate of the Duncan Village Community Council

Thus far, a slender majority on the Council had become persuaded that Duncan Village should be retained. Although this view was a significant departure from Government policy, it still did not directly affect the nature of local government in the area. Duncan Village still remained under the regime of ECAB, which was attempting to steer the Duncan Village Community Council towards a more fully-fledged local authority status.

By mid-1985, the Department still remained obdurate. In early 1984, ECAB destroyed some illegal shacks, leaving 2 000 people homeless.⁸⁴ The DVCC could do little to stop the actions of the

⁸¹ Daily Dispatch, 22 April 1982, 23 April 1982.

⁸² Daily Dispatch, 23 April 1982.

⁸³ Report by Prof. W. van Zyl, as summarised in Daily Dispatch, 8 March 1982.

⁸⁴ Daily Dispatch, 21 January 1984.

Board. It also had growing legitimacy problem in Duncan Village, owing to the impending removals, the virtual absence of any infrastructural improvements in Duncan Village, and its humiliating powerlessness vis-a-vis the Administration Board. In fighting removals, the Community Councillors were fighting for their political survival.

In mid-1985, a more populist organisation, the Duncan Village Residents' Association (DVRA), was established. Its opposition to removals was marked by criticism of the DVCC. It claimed that community councillors had failed to represent Duncan Village adequately. Nevertheless, it urged the DVCC to convey the strong feelings of the residents to the government:

'We, the residents of Duncan Village have lived here for many years. This is our home, however humble. Our forefathers are buried here. We know no other home, nor do we want another home.'⁸⁵

The DVRA also wanted the residents to be consulted more conscientiously on issues that affected their interests:

'We wish to be informed of developments and we also wish that our feelings and wishes be considered in any decisions regarding our future. If this is done, we will try to co-operate to the best of our ability.'⁸⁶

The subsequent history of the DVCC is a sobering example of the destructive effects of bad political judgement. Faced with this new voice from Duncan Village, DVCC explicitly refused to recognise the DVRA as a legitimate platform for residents' interests. Furthermore, the 'Mayor' of Duncan Village, Mr. Makatala, maintained that consultation with residents was not always possible: 'In certain matters, it was not possible to make public the decisions and negotiations of the council because it

⁸⁵ Memorandum from DVRA to DVCC, in Daily Dispatch, 24 June 1985.

⁸⁶ Daily Dispatch, 24 June 1985.

could prejudice their efforts'.⁸⁷ In this way, the DVCC set the scene for the most extreme polarisation that Duncan Village had ever experienced and which would result in the worst violence since 1952. To explain the background to this curiously ungenerous response by the DVCC, it is necessary to consider some aspects of township dynamics in the early 1980s.

The hostility between community councils (called 'Black Local Authorities' (BLAs) after 1983) and township-based civic associations had already emerged in the late 1970s. By the mid-1980s, it developed into an implacable and mutual hatred. To many whites, this hostility was difficult to understand, especially since both community councils and BLA's always claimed to oppose apartheid. Community councils had always criticised the Government's bureaucratic callousness; they condemned Stallardist financing principles; they consistently opposed both influx control and the homeland policy; they demanded better housing and facilities for blacks; they advocated a single, non-racial, democratic form of government; and even demanded the unbanning of liberation movements.⁸⁸ In substance, these demands closely approximated those made by the emerging populist organisations in the townships.

To trace the many reasons for the hostility between civic associations and BLAs would be a complex task, and would certainly be influenced by researchers' own political intuitions.⁸⁹ An explanation will be offered here, in the light

⁸⁷ Daily Dispatch, 26 June 1985. The status of 'mayor' derived from the Black Local Authorities Act of 1983.

⁸⁸ See D. Atkinson, The Search for Power and Legitimacy in Black Urban Areas: The Role of the Urban Councils Association of South Africa (Working paper no. 20, Institute for Social and Economic Research, Rhodes University, 1984).

⁸⁹ Radical analysts, for example, have emphasised the degree to which the BLAs were co-opted by government authorities. This view has its merits, even though (1) the term 'co-option' is seldom defined in radical literature, and (2) there were often hostile relations

of the arguments developed in this thesis. This approach emphasises political actors' conception of themselves and others as political actors, and a few points will be made briefly.

First, the two kinds of organisation had very different conceptions of politics. The civic associations were highly populist, and developed a form of politics which we can term 'mobilisatory' or 'unitary' politics.⁹⁰ Such a form of politics is democratic, but in a highly collectivist way. The civics tended to presuppose an absolute moral and political consensus in their constituencies, and aimed at the mobilisation of mass enthusiasm and resolve to overthrow racist official institutions. 'Mobilisation politics' emphasised concepts such as 'the people', 'the community' or 'the masses' as real and objective entities. Consequently, mass action was felt to be an appropriate form of political action, reflected in terms such as 'people's power', 'people's democracy' and 'people's education'. Civics' pragmatic principle of 'non-collaboration' originated as a prudent protection against Government attempts at manipulation; but it soon became an end in itself, illustrating a purist conception of political life.⁹¹ During the states of emergency of 1985 and 1986, Government repression strengthened this tendency, because it struck at civics' organisational structures, and led civic

between community councils and Administration Boards during the late 1970s. For a radical view, see R. Bloch, 'All little sisters got to try on big sister's clothes: The Community Council system in South Africa' (African Studies Institute, University of the Witwatersrand, 1982). On the relationship between community councils and Government, see D. Atkinson, The Search for Power and Legitimacy (1984).

⁹⁰ This is termed 'majoritarian democracy' by Bernard Crick, In Defence of Politics (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964); and is termed 'unitary democracy' by Benjamin Barber (Strong Democracy, pp. 148-50).

⁹¹ These features show some similarity with utopianism, as outlined in Chapter 7. A particularly ominous feature, which fortunately seems to have played a relatively small role in Duncan Village, is the temptation to use coercion to mobilise and enforce the community will.

members to de-emphasise the importance of organisation in favour of mobilising an emotive community will.

This conception of politics allows little room for opposition. In Barber's words, 'unitary democracy can turn malevolent, can be perilous to freedom and citizenship and ruinous to democracy'.⁹² Furthermore, civics tended to encourage what Thomas Sowell called 'categorical goals', which insist on total success.⁹³ Anything short of total liberation, total democracy or the total abolition of racism appeared suspect. Political outcomes tended to be portrayed in zero-sum terms, and potentially divisive arguments about the legitimacy of compromises were discouraged. In the light of this conception of politics, the community councils were not only irrelevant, but represented a betrayal, for they were seen as entrenching minority rule at the local level.⁹⁴ Councillors were branded as 'sell-outs' and 'collaborators'. To understand the origins of this anger, we need to consider the kind of politics which community councillors represented.

The politics of the community councils underwent a radical shift between 1978 and 1986. Initially, they saw themselves as fully part of the struggle against apartheid. They rejected all forms of racial discrimination, including racially-defined local authorities. It was their conception of political conduct that differentiated their approach from UDF-affiliated civic

⁹² B. Barber, Strong Democracy (1984), p. 149.

⁹³ T. Sowell, Knowledge and Decisions (New York: Basic Books, 1980), p. 145.

⁹⁴ M. Swilling, 'Taking power from below', in C. Heymans and G. Totemeyer, Government by the People? (Cape Town: Juta, 1988), p. 190. See D. Horowitz, A Democratic South Africa? (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991, pp. 19-23) for a discussion of majoritarianism, Leninism and 'people's democracy' in township politics. M. Frost has pursued similar themes ('Democratization: From below or from above?', Paper presented at the Conference of the Political Science Association of South Africa, 1985).

associations. Community councillors thought that their institutional base offered some meaningful possibility for action, even though it was flawed. Their conception of politics seemed to approximate that of liberal democracy, for it entailed consultation, conciliation and compromise, within the context of orderly government. It was sustained by the faith that suitable institutions would eventually develop as a result of negotiation.

One reason why the community councillors did not experience themselves as 'collaborators' was that they were often locked in conflict with their patrons and mentors, the Administration Boards. The Urban Councils Association of South Africa (UCASA) criticised the Broederbond loyalties of Administration Board officials, as well as their bureaucratic arrogance in decision-making and implementation.⁹⁵ In turn, Administration Boards were suspicious of UCASA's efforts to mobilise community councils.⁹⁶

After 1983, many community councils achieved 'Black Local Authority' status, with increased powers and functions. The crucial change in their fortune, however, came with the demise of the Administration Boards in 1985. The bulk of the DCD was transferred to the new Department of Constitutional Development and Planning (DCDP), which consisted of more progressive white officials. In terms of the DCDP's group-based philosophy of 'own and general affairs', in terms of which local government qualified as the 'own affair' of each racial group, the BLAs would assume an entirely new constitutional significance. They would, in effect, be an important building-block for the new constitutional dispensation. Consequently, UCASA's star rose in government circles, and it found itself increasingly drawn into

⁹⁵ UCASA Work Group, 'Report and recommendations to the UCASA Think Tank meeting' (1980), and 'Memorandum to the Schlebusch Commission (n.d.).

⁹⁶ Letter from UCASA to DCD, 11 April 1980.

multi-racial consultative bodies.⁹⁷ UCASA became the sole spokesman for the interests of urban blacks. The Government's reforms, such as the lifting of influx control, the move away from Stallardist financing principles, and the increased powers for the BLAs only proved to the latter that their consultative approach could bear fruit.

This process had two implications. The first was that BLAs became increasingly locked into patronage relations with the Government. To assuage urban blacks' grievances, large amounts of revenue were channelled to BLAs in order to improve housing and urban infrastructure. BLAs received powers to allocate business sites and student bursaries. As the councillors commanded greater resources, patronage became an ever more commercial and lucrative system. As we noted in Chapter Ten, East London's Advisory Board members had already persuaded the City Council to pay them allowances in 1965. In the late 1970s, UCASA took up the call for increased allowances.⁹⁸ Many councillors were aspiring businessmen, and used the councils to this end. Increasingly, the new patrons (i.e. the councillors) demanded more of their 'clients', in the form of escalating bribes.⁹⁹ This, in turn, increased the social distance between them and residents, thereby reducing any residual moral content in their patronage.¹⁰⁰ Allegations of corruption and mismanagement were rife; and such crude selfishness became

⁹⁷ Such as the Co-ordinating Council for Local Government Affairs, which functioned under the auspices of the DCDP.

⁹⁸ Minutes, UCASA meetings of 28 April 1979 and 6 May 1979; Memorandum to Dr. Koornhof of DCD, 9 August 1979.

⁹⁹ J. Seekings, 'The origins of political mobilization in PWV townships, 1980-1984', in W. Cobbett and R. Cohen (eds), Popular Struggles in South Africa (London: James Currey, 1988), p. 62.

¹⁰⁰ J. Seekings, 'The origins of political mobilisation in PWV townships' (1988), p. 62-3.

associated with political complacency and betrayal.

BLA Councillors' political shortsightedness cost them dearly, in several ways. First, in the eyes of African residents, the Government's important policy concessions were generally not attributed to BLAs' efforts, but rather to the civic associations' militancy. Secondly, the BLAs became associated with highly unpopular Government measures (such as security force action) to contain civic associations' mobilisation strategy. Third, the BLAs depended on substantial amounts of funding from central Government in order to improve their image through township upgrading. With the lifting of influx control and the constraints on Government revenue, the BLAs could hardly make a dent in housing backlogs. This added fuel to civic associations' grievances, and spelled political disaster for BLAs. It also set in motion a destructive dynamic: as BLAs failed in their quest for popular legitimacy, they sought support from white officialdom; this strengthened civic associations' claims to be the sole representatives of the 'masses' in the townships; and this further encouraged BLAs to shelter in the Government's fold. To retain the support of Government agencies, the BLAs portrayed themselves with increasing urgency, as the only proper, duly constituted representative bodies in the townships, on the grounds of having been formally elected. Civic associations were denigrated as intimidators. In sum, therefore, two sets of political actors, with entirely different conceptions of politics, found themselves in the similar position of claiming political hegemony.

In 1985, this process had taken root in Duncan Village. The DVRA's criticism of DVCC indicated an impatience with its use of flawed official institutions. In turn, the community council's dismissal of the DVRA's claim to legitimacy had profound historical consequences, for it meant that henceforth the conflict between them would be portrayed in zero-sum terms.

d) The revolt of August 1985

The price of bad political judgement can be very high. A series of school boycotts in Duncan Village had raised the political temperature amongst the youth. Initially, the boycotts were responses to limited and practical grievances.¹⁰¹ On 8 August 1985, the SAP entered school premises without consulting the school authorities, and dispersed demonstrating school pupils by force.¹⁰² On 13 August 1985, the youth began to attack white symbols of authority. Several days of violence in Duncan Village left 19 people dead. Official buildings were gutted, as well as the houses of all the DVCC members.¹⁰³ Since the DVRA and UDF condemned the violence, the August events can be attributed to a general mood of frustration with the regime of ECAB and DVCC, which inflamed the passions of the dissolute youth.¹⁰⁴

For three weeks, no police foot-patrols could enter the township. These events proved both the strength and the weakness of the DVRA. For a while, DVRA could ride on the tide of popular enthusiasm. The ousting of Government authorities left the DVRA in control, and it rapidly developed an organisational framework to consolidate its authority. Street committees were formed to keep peace. It also had to deal with the lack of facilities, since most schools and community centres had been burnt down.¹⁰⁵ For a few weeks, DVRA ruled the township. Its authority was reinforced by the lawlessness of SAP members who harrassed clergymen operating aid centres and clinics in Duncan Village.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹ The main grievances concerned unpopular headmasters. See Daily Dispatch, 21 February 1985, 27 February 1985, 7 March 1985, 9 March 1985.

¹⁰² Daily Dispatch, 8 August 1985.

¹⁰³ Daily Dispatch, 13 August 1985.

¹⁰⁴ Daily Dispatch, 14 August 1985; 15 August 1985; 16 August 1985.

¹⁰⁵ Interview, DVRA member, 10 February 1988.

¹⁰⁶ Daily Dispatch, 21 August 1985.

The DVRA also had to bring the youth under control. Street committees were formed to prevent intimidation and robberies by 'elements who pretended to be liberators'.¹⁰⁷ It is not clear how successful these attempts were.

After a state of emergency was declared, the police eventually restored order by conducting mass arrests and detaining leaders. The community council never disbanded, but the councillors continued to conduct their business from an office in the East London city centre. After August 1985, the rival claims to hegemony in Duncan Village hardened, and the chasm between the DVCC and DVRA became unbridgeable.

Despite it being hampered by the state of emergency, the DVRA won an important moral victory. On 23 August, the National Party MP for East London City, Mr. Peet de Pontes, publicly advocated the retention of Duncan Village.¹⁰⁸ A week later, the Department capitulated, and announced that the whole of Duncan Village would be retained, and would enjoy 99-year leasehold.¹⁰⁹ More than R10 million would be made available to upgrade the area.¹¹⁰ This decision brought the Government little real political reward. It had waited so long that its concession had lost the symbolic power it might have enjoyed at an earlier stage. It was a sign of defeat. Against the background of a devastated Duncan Village, the moral shallowness of the decision was starkly evident in a statement by Mr. de Pontes:

'The government has by this decision once again demonstrated its concern for, and commitment to, the well-being of everyone in this area. It has shown that also on local issues it is prepared to listen and negotiate in order to bring about a better life for every inhabitant. The power and effectiveness of negotiation rather than confrontation is proved beyond

¹⁰⁷ Daily Dispatch, 16 August 1985.

¹⁰⁸ Daily Dispatch, 23 August 1985.

¹⁰⁹ Daily Dispatch, 30 August 1985.

¹¹⁰ Daily Dispatch, 13 September 1985.

doubt by this decision.'¹¹¹

e) Towards negotiations: The changing view of the East London City Council

The violence and the schools crisis caused great concern on the Council. This concern was increased by an effective consumer boycott. In the aftermath of the Duncan Village uprising, the Mayor, Mr. Joe Yazbek, held talks with the Duncan Village Parents' Committee, an organisation with links to the DVRA.¹¹²

Gradually, the ground was prepared for intervention in the conflict by white community leaders. In the interim, a very low-key liaison committee of businessmen and clergy was formed to investigate the reasons for the violence and boycotts in the township. They wanted to serve as an impartial channel for communication between all relevant leaders in the township, and government institutions.¹¹³ This committee gradually developed the perception that DVCC had a credibility problem in the township¹¹⁴, and that the residents resented the upgrading money being given to the community council. Duncan Village residents apparently felt that it was their own mobilisatory activities, and not the community council's actions, which had caused the Government's capitulation.¹¹⁵

Soon after, a crucial regional meeting in Cradock between civic

¹¹¹ Daily Dispatch, 30 August 1985. The Government's main justification for its decision was that property ownership is an important bulwark against communism. Consequently, home ownership would restrain violence in future (Statement by the Deputy Minister of DCD, Beeld, 30 August 1985).

¹¹² Daily Dispatch, 22 August 1985.

¹¹³ Daily Dispatch, 27 September 1985; Interview, City Councillor, 11 February 1988.

¹¹⁴ Minutes of committee, 25 September 1985.

¹¹⁵ Interview, East London councillor, 10 February 1988.

associations and business leaders expressed unanimity in favour of municipal control of townships. This marked a new balance of power. Several East London City Councillors publicly pledged that they would push for a municipal take-over of Duncan Village. Cllr. Spring maintained that he would 'like to see Duncan Village as a suburb of East London with its residents represented on the city council'.¹¹⁶ The Council would insist on Government financial aid to improve services in Duncan Village, he said. In the context of contemporary Government policy, this was a revolutionary idea. Its radical nature was also illustrated by a subtle change in the discourse of some City Councillors. No longer were their benign intentions couched in patriarchal terms. Instead, a discourse of civil society was beginning to emerge. In Mr. Yazbek's words,

'I have had repeated requests from residents of Duncan Village to help restore order in the area. They were heart-rending requests which **we as civic leaders** cannot ignore.'¹¹⁷

The Daily Dispatch enthusiastically supported the progressive City Councillors:

'We have long argued that residents of Duncan Village should have rights to property ownership and be recognised as **fellow citizens**.

This historic shift in perspective must be seen against the background of ethical life in East London. Before the Verwoerdiens imposed an institutional 'Berlin Wall' between Duncan Village and the rest of East London, local whites conceived of the local order as a patriarchal one. As we noted in Chapter Four, patriarchalism meant different things to different people, ranging from a strong emphasis on cultural emphasis to a tentative liberalism; but the 'city fathers' saw Duncan Village residents as part of their own local community.

¹¹⁶ Daily Dispatch, 3 October 1985.

¹¹⁷ Daily Dispatch, 3 October 1985. *Emphasis added.*

Such sentiments were demonstrated in many ways; for example, a motion to bar Africans the use of the City Hall was defeated in 1950¹¹⁸. In 1961, the mayor formed a multi-racial organisation for the development of the Border region.¹¹⁹ In the same year, seven City Councillors voted for a multi-racial City Council.¹²⁰

South African political analysts have not yet paid sufficient attention to the political and symbolic force of communal memories. This is a serious oversight, for our attempts at nation-building and city unification in the future will require every ounce of communal solidarity which our tortured history has to offer. The 1986 negotiations illustrated how vital the memory of shared experiences and loyalties can be to political reconciliation.

f) The deepening of DVRA-DVCC conflict

An unexpected result of the City Councillors's new standpoint was that it caused the DVCC's position to harden. The latter warned that they would oppose any attempts to re-unite East London and Duncan Village.¹²¹

This further intensified the hostility between DVRA, which supported the proposal for a single, non-racial local authority, and the DVCC. The extent of their mutual hatred can be gauged from the fact that the DVRA was prepared to block a R4 million

¹¹⁸ Council minutes, 4 July 1950.

¹¹⁹ A letter to the Daily Dispatch praised the 'city fathers' for appreciating that 'there are communities in the Border, other than European, who may have opinions and ideas regarding the area they live in, which it would be worthwhile to tap' (Daily Dispatch, 17 May 1961).

¹²⁰ It was defeated by the mayor's casting vote (Daily Dispatch, 28 April 1961).

¹²¹ Daily Dispatch, 3 October 1985.

local initiative because of DVCC's involvement.¹²² According to a DVRA spokesman, 'From time to time we told the exiled councillors to refrain from meddling in our affairs, because they do not represent us.'¹²³ This statement mirrors the DVRA's sense of being the sole representative of the Duncan Village community.

However, the existence of DVCC meant that DVRA would continue to be sidelined by the Department and ECAB. These official agencies still evidently believed that DVCC could be resuscitated to become a viable Black Local Authority. An amount of R4 million was therefore ceremoniously handed over to Mr. Makeba, the 'Mayor' of Duncan Village, for the purpose of erecting schools. Mr. Makeba, in turn, regarded this event as an important indicator of his council's future importance. He maintained that he had made history, since it was the first time a sum of money was received by a black community leader 'to see to our own affairs'. It also indicated how far DVCC had been drawn into the logic of racially-defined local government, for his statement was based on the separation of East London into black and white communities.¹²⁴

The opposition of DVRA to the schools project caused it to miscarry. When the academic year began in January 1986, the East London Students Council (ELSCO) organised a boycott of the new classrooms, because of the involvement of the community council in the project. Instead, ELSCO arranged church halls and other venues as temporary classrooms. The ELSCO statement coincided with the transferring of progressive teachers away from Duncan Village, as well as the banning of the Congress of South African Students (COSAS).¹²⁵ The students' response was, therefore, part

¹²² Daily Dispatch, 10 December 1985, 14 December 1985. DVRA also objected to the involvement of the NP MP, Mr de Pontes.

¹²³ Daily Dispatch, 14 December 1985.

¹²⁴ Daily Dispatch, 12 December 1985.

¹²⁵ Daily Dispatch, 12 February 1986.

of a broader climate of resentment against repressive government actions. Although the violence had ended, the general polarisation and anger was still very evident in the township.

g) The intervention of the East London City Council

In an attempt to resolve the deadlock between DVRA and DVCC, the East London City Council decided to intervene. In the light of our theoretical arguments, the significance of its initiative cannot be overstated. Its action illustrated a new sense of responsibility for resolving conflict in the city. It reflected a changing conception of communal ethical life in East London. For example, fifteen East London traders placed an advertisement in the Daily Dispatch, calling for the abolition of racial discrimination, influx control and group areas. They advocated the release of political prisoners, and most significantly, stated their support for 'power-sharing in a single institution'.¹²⁶

The Council's initiative was also a noteworthy example of moral courage and innovative political judgement. At the suggestion of Clr. Donald Card, the Council organised a public meeting on 1 December 1985, to which they invited all township leaders to discuss their grievances.¹²⁷ Despite the severe polarisation of the Duncan Village community, certain resolutions were taken by the end of the meeting: (1) all three tiers of government were urged to scrap apartheid; (2) DVCC should consult residents with regard to upgrading; (3) the East London City Council should undertake upgrading because it had the experience and skill to do so; (4) the City Council should govern the entire city; (5) the City Council should request the Defence Force to leave the township; and (5) all City Council facilities should be open to all races. The Mayor, Clr. Yazbek, emphasised that the DVRA was

¹²⁶ Daily Dispatch, 24 January 1986.

¹²⁷ Daily Dispatch, 22 January 1986.

welcome to discuss its problems with the Council.¹²⁸

In February 1986, the DVRA contacted the Council, stating that it wanted to enter into discussions. In effect, the City Council was the only white authority with which the DVRA was prepared to negotiate, and this needs further explication. One reason for its trust in the bona fides of the Council was that the Council had repeatedly made important concessions to the DVRA's position. The Council had accepted the retention of Duncan Village and its re-incorporation into East London. These gestures had enormous symbolic significance. They had been executed timeously, so that they seemed generous and not merely the result of pressure. A Council resolution in March 1986 in favour of open residential areas for all races contributed to this conciliatory climate.¹²⁹ Such measures resonated with the UDF's strong advocacy of non-racialism.

The Council was also developing an interest in the future of Duncan Village, because the violence and the consumer boycott harmed the interests of the city as a whole. Furthermore, the idea of the township being incorporated into the rest of the city made practical sense to some of the Councillors, because Duncan Village was too small and poor to sustain an independent municipality.¹³⁰ The East London municipality supplied water, electricity and health services to Duncan Village.

For its part, DVRA's readiness to seek a rapprochement with the City Council must be explained against the historical background of the previous three decades. According to a DVRA leader, the DVRA felt that the Council was the only sympathetic and appropriate body, because the last improvements to Duncan Village had taken place twenty years earlier, when the township was still

¹²⁸ Daily Dispatch, 25 January 1986.

¹²⁹ Daily Dispatch, 4 March 1986.

¹³⁰ Interview, City Councillor, 9 February 1988.

under the administration of the Council.¹³¹ The DVRA saw the Council as a refuge.¹³² This was not purely a strategic move; it was a move that recalled distant memories of patriarchal affection, rights and obligations, when East London was still one city and its city fathers were responsible for all its inhabitants.

The DVRA also had to deal with urgent practical matters. It was under pressure from the radical youth, and had to make visible progress to keep its mandate. Gang violence flared up in Duncan Village in March 1986.¹³³ The DVRA's appeal to the Council was, therefore, a rather desperate move.¹³⁴

In the face of constant harassment by the security forces, the DVRA insisted that its contact with the City Council was conditional. If any member of the DVRA was detained or harassed, it would end negotiations immediately. The Council accepted this condition.¹³⁵ The presence on the Council of some of the business liaison committee, mentioned earlier, may have promoted this response.

Negotiations between the DVRA and the Council began in late February 1986, despite the fact that the Council was internally divided on their response to the DVRA.¹³⁶ The meetings were attended by several Councillors, municipal officials, and DVRA representatives. Certain councillors felt that the community council, which still existed, should be regarded as the

¹³¹ Interview, DVRA member, 10 February 1988; Weekly Mail, 29 November 1986.

¹³² Interview, DVRA leader, 10 February 1988.

¹³³ Daily Dispatch, 6 March 1986.

¹³⁴ Interview, City Councillor, 10 February 1988.

¹³⁵ Interview, Councillor, 9 February 1988.

¹³⁶ Minutes of ELCC Special Action Committee meeting, 3 March 1986.

representative of the community. The DVRA rejected this argument, since none of the community councillors were still resident in the township. After some debate, the negotiating committee effectively agreed to bypass DVCC's claim to represent the residents, and the DVRA was, therefore, accepted as the only legitimate negotiating partner. The Councillors remained anxious about DVRA's lack of formal status, and urged DVRA to hold elections. In the interim, however, Clr. Card offered to make representations to the Government to secure the official recognition of DVRA as formal representatives of Duncan Village.¹³⁷ DVRA refused to commit itself to any electoral procedure, and maintained that a mass meeting in late 1985 had given its leaders a popular mandate.¹³⁸ In this way, the DVRA displayed an unfortunate predilection for political hegemony - a problem that will plague South African local politics for many years to come.

The main issues at stake were the following: (1) The DVRA opposed DVCC's involvement in the schools project and in township upgrading; (2) The DVRA wanted to be recognised as the real leaders of Duncan Village; (3) DVRA wanted Duncan Village to become part of the East London municipality. (4) DVRA wanted the Council to take responsibility for housing and for the upgrading of Duncan Village. The DVRA offered to take responsibility for the safety of Council workers in the area, during the building process.

The City Council was in a difficult position. It was being asked to intervene in an area where it had no jurisdiction, and where land was owned by the Development Board. There was, effectively, a stalemate in Duncan Village: neither the Development Board nor the DVRA was strong enough to assert undisputed authority over the area. Any planning initiative that remotely involved the Board or the community council was doomed to popular rejection.

¹³⁷ Minutes of a special meeting of the ELCC Action Committee and DVRA, 5 March 1986.

¹³⁸ The meeting had been attended by an estimated 10 000 people (Daily Dispatch, 16 August 1985).

The DVRA did not have the legal nor the organisational means to undertake any upgrading itself. The only party which had some image of neutrality, was the City Council.

In the interim, the City Council suggested a temporary form of government for Duncan Village, whereby one person should take total responsibility for the development of Duncan Village, until an appropriate representative body could be elected. This would help to overcome the vicious circle of bureaucratic delays, inaction, and suspicion which caused more exorbitant demands to be made. The "administrator" should be able to deal with all bodies in a neutral, unbiased, unemotional and efficient manner. He would be appointed over, and thereby effectively ignore, the community council.

This proposal, however, was not acceptable to the DVRA, which felt that its system of street committees was adequate. The township had been divided into several geographical areas, each electing its own executive committee at a general meeting. The DVRA 'general council' consisted of two members of each executive committee, and the central executive committee was elected at a mass meeting. The DVRA did not see any real need to change this system, or to accept an outsider as 'administrator'.¹³⁹

The Council was also divided on its future course of action. In this complex and tense situation, it was difficult for it to remain cohesive. Some Councillors expressed exasperation with the 'petty bickering and political point scoring' in Duncan Village. They appealed to all community leaders to accept each other's bona fides.¹⁴⁰ They believed that, if only leaders of all sectors of the community could negotiate honestly and present a joint proposal on the institutional future of East London, the government would be sympathetic. The community council should

¹³⁹ Minutes of meeting between ELCC Action Committee and DVRA, 8 April 1986.

¹⁴⁰ Daily Dispatch, 23 April 1986.

be dissolved, and an election held to establish the true leaders of Duncan Village.¹⁴¹ Such notions were rejected out of hand by the DVRA, who feared the loss of their power in Duncan Village.

The Council, in general, overestimated the government's approval of local initiatives. They did not realise that the existence of BLAs was non-negotiable as far as the government was concerned. In this situation, the DVRA ran the risk of losing the patience and goodwill of its most sympathetic forum, the City Council. When they initiated negotiations, the Council had not really appreciated the enormous political sensitivities of the various actors, as well as the government's intransigent political agenda.

More conservative councillors felt that the Minister of Constitutional Development and Planning ought to be contacted before any further discussions were held with the DVRA. However, the majority of the councillors on the action committee felt that such discussions had to take place first, so that definite proposals could be put to the Minister. The Council eventually wrote to Mr. Heunis, Minister of Constitutional Development and Planning, informing him of the Council's contact with DVRA, and requesting him for a meeting on the issue.¹⁴²

By June 1986, the Council had agreed with the DVRA that it would act as the agent for the construction of about 150 new houses.¹⁴³ The Council's 'Mdantsane Special Organisation', which had built houses in Mdantsane throughout the years, would undertake this work as it had long experience in constructing houses. The DVRA undertook to protect workers, and the Council agreed to consult DVRA on the designs for houses.

¹⁴¹ Daily Dispatch, 26 April 1986.

¹⁴² Letter from ELCC to Mr. Heunis, 13 March 1986; in minutes of Special Action Committee meeting, 10 March 1986.

¹⁴³ Council minutes, 30 June 1986.

The Council became involved in DVRA grievances in several ways.¹⁴⁴ It met with the local SADF authorities to discuss the behaviour of SADF troops in the township, who were accused of indiscriminate assaults on residents. It also investigated the aforementioned transfer of Duncan Village teachers. The Council, therefore, became involved in many issues in which it had no experience.

h) Contacting the authorities

The process of negotiation stimulated an excitement and confidence on the part of the Council. However, its initiatives antagonised the authorities. The Council vote against Group Areas¹⁴⁵, which was praised by the PFP, led the Minister of Constitutional Development and Planning to insist that no local authority had the right to designate residential areas, or declare them open, or even make a statement concerning them. Furthermore, the MP for East London North, Mr. H.S. Coetzer, recommended DCDP that the East London City Council be bypassed on any decisions concerning the upgrading of Duncan Village and surrounding areas.¹⁴⁶

On 29 July 1986, a delegation from the City Council met Mr. Heunis in Cape Town. The meeting did not go well. Mr. Heunis severely criticised the City Council for their involvement in the Duncan Village situation, and maintained that the community councils were the elected leaders. Any negotiation regarding the upgrading of Duncan Village should, therefore, be held with the community council, if at all necessary.¹⁴⁷ This uncompromising and humiliating dismissal of the Council's involvement echoed the Council's predecessors' unsuccessful deputation to Dr. Verwoerd

¹⁴⁴ Minutes of meeting between ELCC Action Committee and DVRA, 5 March 1986, 8 April 1986.

¹⁴⁵ Daily Dispatch, 4 April 1986.

¹⁴⁶ Daily Dispatch, 8 March 1986.

¹⁴⁷ Interview with City Councillor, 10 February 1988.

in 1956, and symbolically indicates the beginning and the end of East London's period of moral abdication.

j.) The aftermath

The immediate consequences of the Heunis meeting were depressing. Negotiations collapsed after the meeting with Minister Heunis, because there seemed no prospect of the Council retaining its role in Duncan Village. The DVRA was not very surprised by the Minister's reaction, because it was already bearing the brunt of the state of emergency.¹⁴⁸ Security force harrassment of DVRA leaders increased¹⁴⁹, and mass action and stayaways were organised.¹⁵⁰ The state of emergency decimated the DVRA's leadership.

For its part, the City Council remained powerless, but resentful of its treatment by the Government. The Mayor, Clr. Joe Yazbek publicly criticised the Government's conduct:

'How can community councillors who have been rejected by the people ... be seen as the true representatives of the people? How can Mr. Heunis turn down the request of the city council and the Duncan Village Residents Association for incorporation of Duncan Village into East London? Do the people concerned have no say in their own affairs?'¹⁵¹

The official position of the community council was consolidated during this period. The DCDP insisted that the remaining former members of the DVCC were still officially in charge of the township. The government continued to upgrade the township, on request of the town committee.¹⁵² The upgrading process remained

¹⁴⁸ Interview, City Councillor, 10 February 1988.

¹⁴⁹ See letter to the Editor of Daily Dispatch, 21 May 1986.

¹⁵⁰ Weekly Mail, 21 August 1986.

¹⁵¹ Eastern Province Herald, 1 October 1986.

¹⁵² Daily Dispatch, 27 August 1986.

controversial and produced further conflicts in the townships.¹⁵³ The City Council's last involvement in Duncan Village was the building of 150 Duncan Village houses.

However, the political thawing of the 1990s has revived the concept of a united city in East London. In 1990, a conference of delegates of over 60 local organisations explored future local government options for East London. This included representatives from town and city councils, political parties, residents' associations, organisations representing teachers, farmers, the youth, trade unions, lawyers, and conservation bodies. It was convened by the East London City Council, the National Party, the Democratic Party, and the Chambers of Commerce and Industries.¹⁵⁴

This groundswell indicates the power of shared communal memories. Despite the failure of the 1986 negotiations, East London can today rely on a collective memory containing important precedents for innovative action towards an inclusive community. The events of 1986 formed a crucial transitional experience. While drawing on memories of a shared patriarchal local order, the new forms of political action during the 1980s added a new dimension to political interaction. No longer would Duncan Village residents be the passive recipients of whites' beneficence; instead, they had begun to discover the effectiveness of 'strong democracy'.

Conclusion

Our analysis of the 1986 negotiations illustrates the importance of normative analysis. On the one hand, it enables us to appreciate the importance of changes in political actors' values. By situating political actors in a historical context, we can grasp the noteworthy attempts by ordinary people to transcend the

¹⁵³ Daily Dispatch, 7 November 1986.

¹⁵⁴ Information supplied by Chris Heymans, local government political analyst.

limits of their situation. On the other hand, our approach allows us to evaluate those events in the light of our own political and philosophical values.

The events of 1986 were remarkable. It was a local challenge to powerful vested interests, Governmental opposition and bureaucratic inertia. As such, it was a revival of local loyalties and solidarities.

Furthermore, local political leaders developed an innovative new conception of political conduct, which we can term 'strong democracy'. The Council and the DVRA embarked on their negotiations in an open-ended way, willing to expose themselves to new political opinions and develop new forms of political understanding as they went along. The relationship between DVRA and the City Council was remarkably equal, since both drew on important power resources, and each partner was willing to recognise the importance of the other's needs.

Implicitly, it was a new conception of local citizenship, united less by homogenous interests than by a willingness to engage in common action. It attempted to accommodate both liberty and communality, in new and innovative ways. Through talking, debating and exploring options, the participants were constituting one another as equals and as partners. The boundaries of the local polity were being redefined.

Yet the negotiations of 1986 did not last long enough for these qualities to mature. The heavy-handed response of the Government forced East London back into polarisation and stalemate. Ultimately, the value of the 1986 negotiations was that it kept alive a concept of a local community, and married it to a new understanding of political praxis. The task for the 1990s is to elaborate and enrich these values by making them meaningful to ordinary people. In the postscript, we will briefly refer to some contemporary efforts to come to grips with the themes of ethical life, political judgement, and modernity.

POSTSCRIPT AND CONCLUSION

The exhilarating events in East London in 1986 were significant for two very different reasons. The first was that it lifted the politics of East London out of the stagnation of racial polarisation. After their shared experience as equal participants in negotiations about the fundamentals of the local political order, the City Councillors and the DVRA could look back on the progress they had made. Behind them was a social and political wasteland, created by the decay of a ramshackle, but at least viable ethical order; the imposition of misdirected utopian schemes; the balkanisation of their city; and the decline of the community into polarisation and violence.

The negotiations of 1986 represented the first attempt of local citizens to insist on their own interpretation of their problems, and it thereby introduced a new, inclusive form of participatory problem-solving which was, in effect, an experiment in 'strong democracy'. In the process, the local actors redefined 'insiders' and 'outsiders', and took on powerful hostile institutions with enthusiasm, with moral purposefulness, and with a new desire to be masters of their own destiny - and with a touch of naivete that brought the rollercoaster ride to a halt.

The second significance of those heady events was that it gave the participants, as well as observers, a sobering sense of the long and difficult ahead in the process of city unification. Most immediately, it revealed the power of central government institutions during the P.W. Botha era. However, future problems go much deeper than the specific characteristics of the Botha regime. Three such problems, which refer back to the main themes developed in this thesis, will be discussed in the postscript.

a) Ethical life and social contracts

The first problem is the need for a viable, coherent and legitimate set of national and local community boundaries. It is the problem of 'ethical life', of creating a sense of

belonging and identity for South Africans, and of defining a set of appropriate rights and obligations in terms of which people can be constituted. As we argued throughout this thesis, the need for a viable ethical order has been a fundamental need during the entire 20th Century. Since 1990, certain sectors of political opinion have moved to a new level of sophistication in the quest for community and ethical life. The concept of 'social contract'; is increasingly heard in the context of debates on negotiation. As yet, the concept is mainly applied to functional social arenas, based on shared interests - such as the economy, education, and local government.¹ However, it offers a groundwork for discovering shared interests and institutions to deal with social conflict. As such, it also offers an entree into the world of 'strong democracy'.

b) Political judgement and civil society

Another emerging debate during the 1990s is that concerning the concept of 'civil society'. The concept has proved both fertile and controversial.² Broadly, it signifies an anxiety about statism and hegemony in public life, and is an attempt to find solutions to the kinds of exclusivist claims to power which characterised Duncan Village in the 1980s. The notion of 'civil society' illustrates many South Africans' desire for preserving, enhancing and multiplying spheres of liberty in society, and for developing an associational life 'that exists somewhere between

¹ A good analysis of current thinking on social contracts is contained in S. Friedman, 'Another elephant? Prospects for a South African social contract' (Centre for Policy Studies, 1991).

² See contributions to a seminar on civil society, held at the Centre for Policy Studies, May 1991: M. Swilling, 'Socialism, democracy and civil society: The case for associational socialism'; S. Friedman, 'Bonaparte at the barricades: The colonisation of civil society'; Thozamile Botha, 'Socialism, democracy and civil society'; K. Shubane, 'Civil society in apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa'; A. Stadler, 'Strong states make for a strong civil society'.

the individual actions of each person (the private realm) and the organisations and institutions of the state (the public realm)'. Put differently, 'building a civil society is about building "voice" at local level'.³

Such notions are controversial, for it is not clear how a meaningful associational life is to be protected. To what extent can populist organisations and liberation movements accommodate genuine diversity and liberty?⁴ Can grassroots organisations compete against the powerful voice of private sector corporations?⁵ These questions will still take a long time to solve. However, they are intrinsically constructive, because of their common underlying theme, viz. the nourishing of a public life in which political choice, action, participation, responsibility - in short, political judgement - can flourish. At the heart of the debate about civil society is a yearning for 'strong democracy', in Benjamin Barber's terms, or the vita activa, in the language of Hannah Arendt. It entails politics in the absence of transcendental truths and hegemonic power - in which politics can once again be an art, directed at achieving the possible.

The momentum of South African history is creating a growing number of arenas where politics can take place. In the schools, workplaces, universities, municipalities, indeed even on the sport fields, diverse pressure groups are mushrooming and are beginning to have dialogue with one another. As South Africa's outdated institutions and ossified patterns of conduct begin to crumble, a new style of politics is emerging. The 1990s will be the era of the innovative individual. All kinds of political

³ M. Swilling, 'Socialism, democracy and civil society' (1991).

⁴ S. Friedman, 'Bonaparte at the barricades' (1991); K. Shubane, 'Civil society in apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa' (1991).

⁵ M. Swilling, 'Socialism, democracy and civil society' (1991).

actors are learning to ply their trade in a manifold unexpected ways. At both the national and local level, we encounter statesmen, mediators, political missionaries, Machiavellians, ring-holders, and deal-makers. These roles are replicated in every political movement, in each sector of interests, and at all levels of government. The opening up of political space is allowing a much greater political menu of possibilities than ever before, and many energetic individuals are seizing their opportunities for action. The East London negotiations of 1986 illustrated both the power and the passion of highly motivated and innovative political action.

At present, most political analysts' attention is directed towards the drama of constitutional negotiations. However, an appropriate supportive political theory is lacking. Much theoretical work needs to be done. We need to explore appropriate concepts with which to analyse the logic of political action. We need to develop an appreciation of statesmanship and political judgement. We need to develop the skills and the courage to evaluate the moral quality of political action. And we need to evaluate actors' shortcomings in political judgement, empathise with their moral dilemmas, and praise them when they reach new heights of moral grandeur.

c) Modernity and discipline

This leaves the third theme of this thesis, which has accompanied our normative themes in a subdued but somewhat ominous way. It has been necessary to refer to the need for the disciplinary constitution of subjectivity, since not all forms of ethical life are suitable for modern societies. The brooding theme of 'discipline' also enables us to understand that the process of achieving modernity in social and political life cannot be painless. While modernity ultimately offers important new benefits (such as individual rights and material prosperity), the reconstitution of people's subjectivity is a protracted and

wrenching business.

Local negotiations such as those in 1986 in East London have done little to address the problem of modernity. Even though our cities have taken some steps towards a new form of non-racial ethical life (a process which seems relatively compatible with modernity), the enormity of the problem of steering highly divided cities and unstable urban populations towards modernity can only now be appreciated.

East London is a case in point. ANC-oriented organisations desire the inclusion of Mdantsane into a larger East London polity; but the East London City Council views this proposal with alarm. Both positions can readily be understood. If Mdantsane remains cut off from the pulse of modern development, its prospects are bleak. At best, it will become an unwelcome appendage to East London, dependent on it for employment and services, but forgotten as a locale for investment and growth. At worst, it will decline into a vortex of instability, unemployment, poverty and warlordism. This would be the very antithesis of modernity. The ANC position is an attempt to confront this problem head-on by forcefully re-uniting Mdantsane with East London.

Many white East Londoners view this prospect with utter trepidation. They fear that an inclusive metropolis would succumb to classic third-world problems, such as crime, instability and economic decline. Cities such as Johannesburg are already taking on a third-world air. The anxiety that this produces is not simply white racism (although that is certainly an important contributive factor). It is also a desire to sustain modernity in all spheres of life, including the economy, culture, government, and the constitution of subjectivity.

To the extent that these problems are addressed in the literature, it has usually been done so under the rubric of 'development', 'upgrading', and 'economic investment'. This

thesis has argued that such issues are, in fact, particular aspects of a more encompassing issue, viz. the achievement of modern disciplinary institutions. The Verwoerdiens felt the urge to impose discipline, but in their utopian excesses, they got it wrong. This raises all kinds of questions: How can discipline be imposed on a reluctant populace? What kinds of policies are appropriate? Is the imposition of discipline compatible with democracy? What kind of political vision is required? Would South Africa require strong central political leadership? Would local government have a significant role to play? Or does the answer lie with strengthening pluralism and modern forms of associational life? In sum, how does a neo-colonial, racially divided, highly unequal society, with a fragile political order, go about the perplexing task of reconstituting people's subjectivity? This problem is so vast that it is not even clear which are the appropriate questions to ask. In the meantime, however, ordinary South Africans of all races are looking on in increasing horror as the fabric of their society becomes frayed at the edges. The problems of modernity are extremely urgent, and needs much theoretical discussion.

Towards a conclusion

This thesis has attempted to address three very different, but interlocking, dimensions of politics, viz. ethical life, moral judgement, and modernity. The sphere of local government, and in particular, the history of East London, have been employed to show the importance of these issues and the prevalence of the problems generated by them. Furthermore, we have attempted to integrate these three themes, each with a different theoretical baggage, into a multi-layered perspective of political and social life.

The concepts developed in this thesis can only be regarded as exploratory. Each of them is a Pandora's box, containing unanticipated theoretical puzzles and untested assumptions that still need to be tested in debate, in the academic world as well

as in political practice. Ultimately, their importance will be judged to the extent that ordinary South Africans can draw meaning from them. In the political turmoil of the 1990s, the search for a meaningful and inclusive political order is an overriding priority. It is hoped that the arguments contained in this thesis can make a contribution in this regard.

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