

"To find the slums of West Berlin, Düsseldorf, or Cologne one must travel south, to the impoverished towns and villages of the Algarve, of Andalusia, Calabria, Greece, and Anatolia. Here is the home of West Germany's present reserve army, in conditions of poverty as bad as those in our traditional Harlems ...

"The question arises whether this mass of foreign workers is truly 're-exportable', as it ought to be to fulfil one of its purposes; there is always the danger that these workers will remain in the industrial cities in a time of economic crisis, and form an angry cohort, just as dangerous to political and social stability as the previous urban reserve army." (Ward, 1975:19 & 23)

The concept of the reserve army of labour is used to explain the function of a large number of people under the capitalist mode of production who do not have access to their own means of production and yet are not permanently in wage employment. This industrial reserve army serves a dual purpose: firstly, it is there to be absorbed during periods of economic expansion when the number of employment opportunities increase; secondly, the reserve army functions to the advantage of capitalists in forcing down wages through competition between workers for jobs. One need look no further than the pages of the newspapers at the moment to see this second function in operation. Reports are regularly appearing of employers going to the labour department where the unemployed, or some of them, congregate. Here crude and direct competition between workers is being exploited to obtain cheaper labour.

However, in a situation of 'peripheral capitalism' as in South Africa, unemployment is aggravated not only by the national and international crises of capital, but also by a number of other factors. For example, the nature of capitalist penetration in the initial stages; the links between capitalism at the centre of the system (this changed over time) and within the South African social formation ("society"); present economic dominance of 'monopoly' capital in South Africa; the 'legacy of the past' as expressed in structures, policies, location of people, etc. Each one of these aspects, and more, need to be analysed in terms of their inter-relatedness, but all that can be done here is to mention one of the effects, namely that the problem of control of the unemployed becomes of increasing importance to the smooth functioning of capital. The mechanisms employed by the state and directly by capital are more clearly observable during periods of crisis and a sharpening of conflict.

This briefing will look at a few aspects of control, both political and ideological, and of the condition and location of the ever increasing number of unemployed. A 'Briefing' in the September WIP looked at urban squatting and made the point that "what had been a rural/reserve 'squatter problem' is increasingly becoming an urban phenomenon." In other words both aspects of the European migrant labour system are present within contemporary South Africa. The migrants are not fully re-exportable as evidenced by the squatter communities around Cape Town, in Clermont outside Pine-town, in the alleys and vacant lots of every "white" city in South Africa. This is not to say that all squatters are unemployed. But at the same time, the situation in rural areas, the reserves or "homelands", is many times more serious. This is where the

slums of Cape Town, Pretoria, Port Elizabeth, Durban, Vereeniging, are located. This is where the South African system of labour control situates its marginalised labour force and industrial reserve army - or attempts to. But not only within the South African social formation but also, because of South Africa's position in southern Africa, in Lesotho, Mocambique, Zambia, Botswana, Swaziland. The ability to direct recruitment away from these areas means in effect a re-export of the unemployed to these countries.

Statistical information on the "homelands" is notoriously difficult to get hold of or frequently inaccurate when available. It is, therefore, not possible accurately to determine the extent of unemployment in rural areas, but some indications are available. Furthermore, any visit to these areas shows the obvious signs of poverty, malnutrition, landlessness, unemployment, apathy that characterise the 'waste' areas of capitalist production.

No accurate quantification is possible at this stage of the increase in population of specific "homeland" areas because of industrial unemployment. People resident and working in these areas do however confirm that such increases are enormous. It is ironical that families should be re-united for long periods of time under such circumstances, whereas normally the male member is away as a migrant labourer. An aspect of "homeland" population movement that has been remarked upon is that of the spatial location of squatter communities around towns just inside the "homeland" border (dormitory towns).

"The emergence of towns just inside the borders of the homelands where family housing is provided, has led to accelerated migration from the heartlands of the homelands to these towns (...). Large squatter communities have established themselves near these towns and it has been estimated that the population of the towns of Ga-Rankuwa, Mabopane and Temba themselves is less than half that of the squatter camps which have arisen around them....It would seem that the emergence of squatter conditions around white towns and cities in the 'thirties and 'forties is now repeating itself in the vicinity of homeland towns."

(Smit and Booysen, 1977:33)

See also the "Indicator" in the September WIP (p31).

The same is occurring in the "homeland" areas outside the Durban/Pinetown/New Germany industrial complex. Diakonia News (May, 1977) reports that: "Just south of Umlazi and within the KwaZulu boundary an estimated 500 shacks have been erected... With assurances from the KwaZulu authorities that fears of police harassment can now be dispelled, increasing numbers of families are choosing to build their own homes close to the industrial areas of Durban, where until recently, work has been most readily available." It is estimated that more than 350 000 people are living as squatters in this industrial area.

The same situation could probably be multiplied many times over for the various industrial areas of South Africa. The state policy of industrial decentralisation and border industries has probably aggravated the situation for capital as residential areas, and squatter communities, are located very close to the production sites. Prof WD Hammond-Tooke warned earlier this year (Rapport, 2/1/77) that: "Die tuislande kan ook nie meer as skokdemper dien vir werkloosheid onder stedelike swartmense nie... Hulle is almal

swaar oorbevolk en baie van hul inwoners woon op dorpe waar hulle sonder grond of vee self vir hul bestaan afhanklik is van die lone van stedelike familie." And, of course, it is just this source of income that is drying up in times of massive unemployment.

It is not only industrial unemployment that is leading to a massive increase in the population of the "homeland" areas. The extension of capitalist wage labour and mechanisation within white farming has meant that large numbers of people (labour tenants) have had to be resettled. They had been resident either on farms owned by whites, or on African owned farms that could not be incorporated into "homelands". Maasdorp (1970:5) says that: "In the resettlement areas only those who owned land in the Black Spots are allowed to keep livestock, and this has had an adverse effect on household incomes." What this means is that no tenants have been allowed to keep cattle in the resettlement area affecting potentially some 150 000 families (Maasdorp, 1970:7). Mr Donald Sinclair, Natal Agricultural Union president, said in 1974 that Natal farmers were giving "sanctuary to 400 000 Africans". (Maasdorp's figures also refer to Natal).

GR Naidoo, writing in the Sunday Times (31/7/77) on the Nondweni resettlement township, reported that some 10 000 people are already resident there, having been moved from Paulpietersburg. "The Nqutu district, of which Nondweni is a part, covers 1200 square km and has about 100 000 people. The Tomlinson Commission found the land could support only 13 000 people, yet the population is rising daily with new arrivals." The people in Nondweni are not allowed to keep cattle. A Bantu Affairs spokesman said that "they were not allowed to take their cattle because they had no right to cattle in Paulpietersburg." Nondweni is some 70 kms from Dundee, the closest reasonably sized town. Other than that the only employment is offered by the mines in the area. As Mr Solomon Mkhwanazi, a 70 year old pensioner commented, "In Paulpietersburg men and women were able to get work from time to time in the plantations, but here there is nothing."

In the Nqutu district itself there are about 2 000 employment opportunities (KwaZulu Government Service and a hospital as the chief employers). This is a district where the population has increased from about 30 000 in 1950 to the present 100 000. And yet there are plans to move another 1588 families into this district from Glencoe and Dundee (Natal Mercury, 25/7/77). The same report said that "(m)ore than 20 000 Africans from the Reef, Orange Free State, and Natal are squatting on tribal lands and trust farms in the Nqutu district." These are figures, and not always easy to translate into the lives of the people existing and dying under these conditions. The Nqutu district and similar areas, because this is not unique, have been described as "huge rural slums where despair and chaos are the order of the day" (Clarke, 1977:9). This is the situation within which the control mechanisms of the state have to operate - either directly, or through the decentralised apparatuses of the "homeland" authorities.

Despite the fact that apathy is more common than political struggle in the removed, depressed, and dispersed situation of the "homelands", the current crisis is also flaring up in the reserves and is increasingly doing so. Little news becomes available and political opposition may take forms that are not immediately recognisable as such, but the obvious signs of student revolt are there to be seen in closed schools in most of the "homelands".

As an example extracts from a report in the Rand Daily Mail (6/10/77) will suffice:

"All 35 post-primary schools in the Venda homeland have been closed after Tuesday's rampage by pupils. And more than 12 000 pupils have been sent home indefinitely 'because' said a Venda Education Department spokesman, 'the atmosphere is very bad'. In the unrest two people are believed to have died. Thousands of rands worth of damage was caused to buildings...Several hundred Grahamstown schoolchildren took part in a protest march yesterday and 97 were arrested under the Riotous Assemblies Act...In BophutaTswana, two post-primary schools have been closed because of unrest, says Mr P Lenyai, Assistant Secretary for Education."

The "homeland" leadership have never been slow in responding to the threat to their own or national interests. The Ciskei's Lennox Sebe has now received the same powers as those of the Transkei's proclamation R400 (now part of "independent" Transkei's security legislation), viz. "detention without trial, banishment by decree, prohibition of meetings of more than 10 people unless expressly authorised, and punishment of people who neglect to show 'respect and obedience' to chiefs and headmen" (RDM, 4/10/77). Further regulations also give the Ciskei government indemnity from any civil claims "arising out of the enforcement of the regulations" (Star, 30/9/77). These measures follow shortly after an attack at Zwelitsha (Ciskei) by Sebe's unofficial army on pupils - "Wielding sticks, knobkerries and sjamboks, they assaulted all youths they thought were students they came across in the streets. It is believed the 'soldiers' were retaliating against attackers who smashed the cars of Chief Sebe's brother ... and a Sebe bodyguard..." (Star, 23/9/77).

Mangope of BophutaTswana threatened that "it won't be very long before we knock them down very hard", when speaking about "agitators" responsible for unrest in the town of Ga-Rankuwa. This "homeland" shares a common border with Botswana, and it is in this light that special powers that it has received has to be seen, but it does not exclude the possibility that these powers could be used against internal opposition, as well as against people crossing the border. "The regulations empower a magistrate or commissioned or non-commissioned officer of the security forces (South African) who suspects that anybody intends or intended to commit certain offences of a political nature, to search the person or place in order to determine whether an offence was committed. The alleged offender may be arrested without warrant, may be interrogated in connection with the offence and 'may be detained in any place he (the officer) deems fit, until he is satisfied that such person has replied fully and correctly to all questions put to him'". (Star, 7/10/77) BophutaTswana intends having 221 trained soldiers before "independence" on 6 December, 1977.

The security legislation operative in the Transkei and the way in which it has been used against the opposition parties, has received considerable publicity. A new development, however, is the reported use made of the Transkeian army. It was reported (Sunday Tribune, 16/10/77) that the army was used for the first time in order to support police in the Queensdale township near queenstown. They had cordoned off the township and had supported the police "to prevent trouble ... and to catch troublemakers." The head of the Transkei's security police, Major M Ngceba, had also been involved. He said his men had gone to Queensdale "to calm

the area." It was reported that the Transkei action "followed rioting in Queenstown during which two youths were shot by South African Police."

The Rand Daily Mail reported (20/10/77): "Regulations prohibiting the holding of unauthorised meetings, and dealing with subversive or intimidating statements and actions were proclaimed for the Venda Homeland yesterday. Offenders face a fine of R600 and/or three years imprisonment."

Buthlezi of KwaZulu came very close to having territorial emergency powers 'thrust upon him'. Proclamation R103, empowering police to arrest anyone suspected of theft or violence, without a warrant and to hold this person for 90 days, has been in force in the Msinga district since 1973 (at the request of the KwaZulu 'Cabinet'), supposedly to deal with "faction fighting" that regularly breaks out in this poverty stricken and overcrowded part of KwaZulu. The RDM reported (17/8/77) that KwaZulu Minister of Justice Mtetwa had requested extension of the regulations to the rest of the territory. By the next day it had been denied, and the request rescinded. Chief Buthelezi was reported to have said: "Neither the Cabinet nor myself knew that Mr Jeffrey Mtetwa intended to make such a request... Chief Buthelezi said Mr Mtetwa had made the request to Mr Kruger because many policeman had worried him with requests to have the same powers as Msinga."

All these powers are, of course, backed up directly, or indirectly supplemented by the central state. Having power distributed among the various authorities is intended and could have the effect of confusing the dominated as to the origin of repression, and also provides a wider 'cover' than would otherwise be possible with the already extended apparatuses of repression. With the directly repressive option taken by the state against the urban leadership (as against the strategy of cooption offered by the Urban Foundation), incorporation of the "homeland" bureaucracy and petty bourgeoisie becomes even more necessary to the maintenance of political stability. There are few indications that the "homeland" governments are disappointing their masters.

- Clarke, Liz (1977) - "Poverty and Unemployment in Nqutu"  
(Development Studies Research Group, Discussion Paper No.2, University of Natal, Maritzburg)
- Maasdorp, GG (1970) - "Economic Aspects of Black Spots Removals in Natal" (SAIRR Information sheet No.1/1970, Natal Region)
- Smit, P and JJ Booysen - "Urbanisation in the Homelands" (IPSO Monograph Series on Intergroup Problems, No.3, University of Pretoria)
- Ward, Anthony (1975) - "European Capitalism's Reserve Army"  
(Monthly Review, vol 27, November)

"The QwaQwa minister of education, Mr RJ Ngake, has accused 'subversive opposition who wanted to harm the government of QwaQwa and cause confusion among the students' of a petrol bomb attack on his official residence in Phutadi-tjaba on Wednesday night. The fire was put out before it could cause any damage."  
RDM, 22/10/77