

IZWI lase TOWNSHIP



Mass meeting in no 3 square Alexandra Workers vote to continue the boycott. Madzunya and others address the masses during the bus boycott of 1957

Azikwelwa!

Bus-boycott of 1957

The Alexandra bus boycott occurred 25 years ago. Every working day for three months the workers of Alexandra Township footed it to Johannesburg and back, a full 18 miles. PUTCO wanted an extra penny on the bus fare: the people would not pay that penny.

The boycott began by spontaneous action of the people on Monday 7th January 1957. The same evening, when workers returned after their first long walk, the Alexandra Peoples' Transport Committee (APTC) was formed to run the boycott. There were representatives from every organised group in the township on this committee.

The prominent groups and members are shown in this chart.

PUTCO FARES UP AGAIN

Who can afford it?

PUTCO fares go up from Monday 26 April. On the route *Alexandra to Noord street*, you will now pay 35c cash fare or R2,00 for a five day weekly.

Transport is essential for workers. Every rise in fares lowers the standard of living. The workers have resisted fare hikes for fifty years.

In this issue IZWI offers an historical account of one such struggle, and a short analysis of present day PUTCO

ANC (Charterist)	Alfred Nzo Thomas Nkobi Caleb Pelo
ANC (Africanist)	Josias Madzunya M. Motsele Mathopa
ANC (Womens' Section)	Florence Mphosho Muriel Sodinda Virginia Mngoma
ANC (National-Minded)	Dan Gumede
Movement for Democracy of Content	Dan Mokonyane Simon Noge Arthur Magerman
Workers League	George Hlongwe
Standholders Assn. Vigilance Assn.	S. Mahlangu J.S. Mathebula

Differences

The different groups had widely different interests. The **Standholders**, being business men, were generally in conflict with the workers and tenants. This was seen clearly at the time of the **Squatters Movement of 1945**. The **ANC** was split between the **Freedom Charter group** and the **Africanists** whose differences on this committee, were many and complex. Despite the range of conflicts and differences the boycott turned out to be a triumph. The reason for this must be analysed.

It is important to note that the boycott began spontaneously. It was launched by the masses themselves, who walked on the first Monday and who walked day after day thereafter. The **APTC** came into existence after the boycott had begun. Thus the boycott was first and foremost a movement of the people, who were determined not to lose a penny more out of their low incomes. It remained to be seen whether the committee would try to make the boycott go the way they wanted, or whether the masses would be able to control the committee. For there is always this problem of leaders and committees trying to take the initiative away from the people, and often then leading them wrongly.

It was decided at one of the first mass meetings held in Number 3 Square, that policy decisions would be taken *only* at mass meetings: also that press statements would be made *only* at mass meetings: also that future meetings would be arranged *only* at mass meetings. It was thus impossible for the committee or any part of it to hijack the boycott, and drive it to the wrong destination.

This was a very real problem. Some members of the committee were soon persuaded or frightened into trying to end the boycott and accept defeat. Only because final decisions were reserved for mass meetings was it possible for the people to prevent such a betrayal of their boycott action. Some of the leaders stumbled, but the people were firm and they continued to walk.

Putco's problems

Every month of the boycott cost **PUTCO** about £30 000. On the one hand they claimed that they could not manage with fares as low as 4d, but on the other hand they were losing money much faster from the boycott, and they desperately wanted it to end. Commerce and Industry in Johannesburg were also losing. Workers arrived late and tired at their jobs, and

unable to produce properly. So the bosses too wanted the boycott to end. As for the government, it realised that a successful boycott would be a political victory for the workers, so they desired to smash it as soon as possible. In consequence the government used police intimidation, while the Johannesburg Chamber of Commerce used persuasion, to get the boycotters to give in. The Minister of Transport promised that the boycott "would be broken, and law and order would be maintained." (Pretoria News 25.1.57) Someone replied at a mass meeting in Number 3 Square, "Schoeman says he will break the boycott; but we say that we are going to break the government. . . ." (Quoted in S.A. Digest). This same Digest (a government propaganda organ) tried hard to misrepresent the boycott. "Underground Red workers masterminded the progress of the boycott through all its stages, with the aid of extremist elements in the Bantu population." "It was found that of all the townships where boycott attempts were made, the only really successful ones occurred in uncontrolled townships. . . . It was noticed that the least trouble was experienced in those townships which have recently taken action to deport work less agitators."

Leaders of Azikwelwa

Dan Mokonyane was Publicity Secretary to the boycott Committee, later becoming full Secretary. When the 'sell-out' plan was offered by the Jhb Chamber of Commerce to a meeting in Number 3 Square, Mokonyane jumped onto the platform, took the offer from Mahlangu and set it alight.

Josias Madzunya was regarded by the masses in Alexandra as their most trusted leader. He was at this time a leading ANC member in Alexandra, but he held an 'Africanist' position.



Josias Madzunya



Dan Mokonyane

These articles showed the governments' attitude to Alexandra, and their intention to 'deal with' the township as soon as it could get a hold on it. It was not long after these events that Verwoerd began to break Alexandra by indirect legislative means, transforming it into a controlled labour pool like other locations, hostels, compounds and reserves created by the state.

Stay-away strike

What made business men especially anxious to end the boycott was the possibility that it might turn into a 'stay-at home'. Early on, Dan Mokonyane began to urge people to save food 'for a rainy Monday', and Alfred Nzo said, "When we are tired we will stay at home and wait for commerce and industry to come and fetch us for work." (R.D.M. 7.3.57) Already the boycott had the effect of a go-slow strike, since workers' efficiency was low because they were tired when they got to work. There is an obvious connection between a transport strike and a stay-away since the workers are not struggling only against high transport fares but generally against low wages. Seeing this clearly, the bosses who depended directly on Alexandra workers were becoming desperate.

Sympathy boycotts

The PUTCO fare increase also applied to routes in Pretoria, Sophiatown, and the Western Native Townships. These areas joined the boycott, each having its own Peoples' Transport Action Committee, and there was a co-ordinating group for the Pretoria/Witwatersrand area as a whole.

In addition to these base-line boycotts, the movement began to spread country-wide. There were sympathy boycotts as far afield as East London, Randfontein, Port Elizabeth, Germiston, Moroka-Jabavu and Edenvale. Transport is a nation-wide matter, and all over the country workers experience the same problems. They are forced to live long distances from their work, to travel for long hours, but services are inadequate and uncomfortable and fares are high in relation to wages. The sympathy boycotts reflected a heightened consciousness among black workers everywhere in South Africa, and a sympathy that sprang from their sharing the same grievances regarding transport. The extent of the sympathy boycotts alarmed the state considerably.



The campaign spreads - P.E.

Struggle

The boycott was a struggle over the question Who Should Pay? Should the worker pay an extra penny: should the government increase the subsidy to PUTCO should PUTCO accept lower profits: should employers pay higher levies? That is what such disputes are about. In this case, though attempts were made to weaken the unity of Alexandra boycotters, they showed toughness and resolution, and went on walking. The Johannesburg Chamber of Commerce tried to get the people to accept its strategy, which was to refund passengers



The cops get busy

a penny on every ride. That would mean that at the end of their journey, people would have to queue up again at a kiosk and claim back a penny. A stupid arrangement. Speakers on Number 3 Square insisted that they did not have the extra penny with which to begin their journey; and they refused the deal. The next compromise step was that books of tickets would be sold to passengers at 4d each, but that a special fund would enable PUTCO to get 5d for each ticket sold.

The fund of £25 000 would last for several months, and in that time the Chamber thought that it could persuade employers to pay higher wages, or in some way make the 4d fare permanent.

There was disagreement among the boycott leaders, and among the masses. This scheme was accepted by enough people, however, to mean that the boycott could not be continued. So by the end of March, people again began to use the buses. "The people are riding the buses again - at 4d fare" (The Star 1.4.57) Nevertheless, the Transport Committee continued to hold meetings, every Saturday, in case when the special fund ran out there was an attempt to force a 5d fare on the people.

This they were still determined to resist.

Schoeman defeated

But in fact, in the next few months it was the government who climbed down. On 5th June the Native Services Transport Bill was rushed through parliament, enabling the government to increase the levy paid by employers 'for transportation of their

Native workers.' (RDM 5.6.57) During the debate, a Labour Party Member referred to Ben Schoeman, saying "... this bill is a big come down for him, after the attitude he originally adopted to the bus boycott."

AZIKWELWA WAS WON

The formula for victory by the workers of Alexandra seems to have been: the determination of the people: also, democratic mass decisions taken at public meetings: also, a leadership compelled to keep close to the peoples' wishes: also, on the other side, the necessity felt by Commerce and Industry to get the workers to work every day on time. Without labour, no production. And without production, no wealth!

What is PUTCO

PUTCO is a business company, and its purpose is to make profits. PUTCO does not say this in its publicity. It says that its object is to 'provide transport' for people. It also claims to 'provide employment'. Thus it attempts to give the impression that it generously helps passengers and people who need jobs. But in reality, its purpose is to make profits. And it makes huge profits. "Mr Chaskalson told the Commission that Putco could make a

profit of between R20 million and R25 million in 1 year without the fare hikes" (RDM 26.2.82) Mr Simpson, an accountant commissioned by PUTCO, said that PUTCO's profits had increased from R21 million to R47 million during the past 4 years' (RDM 25.2.82)

Profits

Putco is one of the most profitable companies in S.A. The profits come from the fares paid, and from a subsidy from the government. The subsidy comes from two sources: employers pay a certain amount for each worker, this is called a levy, which is a kind of tax: and the Department of Transport makes money available from its own funds, which come from general state taxes. The Department pays this to PUTCO, to subsidise bus fares and keep them low. The government is willing to pay this subsidy, because it wants workers to get to work each day, relatively cheaply, so wages can be kept low. Employers are able to pay the levy, because they pay workers low wages. It is often therefore said, that the government and employers 'subsidise' workers transport. This is similar to PUTCO saying that they 'provide' transport. The fact remains that workers standard of living is low, and the profits made by capitalists are high. Bus fares are part of this structure that keeps labour cheap and profits high.

COMWASO

In 1979 some community organisations opposed PUTCO's attempt to raise fares. They formed Commuters Watchdog Association (COMWASO) to keep an eye on PUTCO and to look after the interests of passengers. Today there are more than 15 organisations represented on COMWASO, including The Committee of 10, trade union groups, JISWA, civic and housewives groups etc.

CONFLICT

PUTCO wants high fares: passengers want low fares. PUTCO gains if their buses are crowded and fast: passengers prefer buses to be cautious and not crowded. The better the service, the more it costs PUTCO to run and the less profit they make: on the other hand, a better service would give the passenger more value for his money. You can see that the interests of PUTCO and the interest of passengers are opposed. They cannot be the same, because PUTCO is a money-making business. It has to run like that. PUTCO cannot be on the peoples' side. It regards people as a source of income. Money-making concerns operate in terms of accumulation, not in terms of service.

TIMETABLE OF CONFLICT WITH PUTCO. 1982

January 14	PUTCO asks National Transportation Commission (NTC) for permission to increase fares by 35%. NTC permits a rise of 24% on cash fares and 15% on week-fares There are angry reactions from community organisations who say that they were not notified of the hearings.
January 20	COMWASA decides to apply to the Supreme Court to stop PUTCO's action.
February 2	Ms Mulligan, Chairman of United Womens' Organisation, in Ennerdale, makes the application. The Judge overturns the NTC ruling. PUTCO has to apply for a new hearing.
February 24	At the new hearing COMWASA legal representative Arthur Chaskalson shows that PUTCO makes colossal profits, that passengers are very poor and cannot afford high transport costs, and that PUTCO's service is considered bad.
March 18	NTC allows PUTCO to raise its fares

"If there are 36 million passenger/trips per year, an extra cent on every unit would be 36 million extra cents. That adds up to R360 thousand, just by charging one more cent per trip, which no-one will notice!" And in this way the shareholders, directors and managers of the company make their fortunes.
The only defense against this process, is for passengers to make it uncomfortable for PUTCO to ignore their wishes. That is what boycott accomplishes. It costs the company a lot. This is also why angry commuters stone buses that arrive late. But this is not a solution in the long run.
A transport system will benefit the people genuinely only when it is owned by the people and is run in the interests of passengers. It should be a public utility.

The people walk

Although PUTCO is called a Utility Company, in reality it is a state supported monopoly, whose duty is to its shareholders, not to the passengers at all.

The government (through the Department of Transport) subsidises PUTCO to prevent fares being even higher than they are; but there is some doubt whether it wishes to continue supporting a private company in this way. It has appointed a Commission (the Welgemoed Commission) to investigate the whole question of urban bus transport. It might recommend that the government buy out PUTCO and establish a state run utility transport company. Whether or not this would make any significant difference in a bad service, is anybody's guess.



Mental subjugation by entertainment

MIND MACHINE

Sometime last year the editor of *Die Transvaler* wrote, "The SABC must stand firm against any pressure groups that might want to make a propaganda instrument of TV2"

What a joke. The SABC is itself a pressure group, and TV2/3 is first and foremost a propaganda instrument. Perhaps what the editor had in mind was the struggle between the Verkrampes and the extra Verkrampes and he feared TV2 might be used in that quarrel. There are more important things for the black channels to do. They have the entire black population to enslave. Why is it that when you hear people discussing TV they seldom mention propaganda? They talk about the 'entertainment value' of this or that programme. The state put a lot of money into the development of TV2/3, and their purpose was not simply to make people happy. They are not all that interested in our happiness. But they are interested in holding on to their minority power over 35 million people. And to do this they need to control peoples minds as well as their bodies. One way to do this, of course, is to make them happy. It used to be said in ancient Rome, If the people have no bread, give them more of the Circus. TV is our modern Circus.

They are: the technique of the structure, and the technique of the blindfold.

STRUCTURES

Ideas cannot be forced directly on people. For example, you cannot make a person racist simply by telling him he must be. But if you get him to accept a racist structure, he will begin to think racist thoughts automatically. Segregation is a structure. It is not natural or necessary, but it has been set up as a structure, and a lot of people believe that there is something natural about it. And so they become racist without knowing that is what has happened to them. The division between white TV and black TV, and the division between Sotho and Nguni TV - these are TV structures. It is the way TV is organised, and people have begun to think that it is a natural way to do things. The 'ethnic' character of this TV structure is a propaganda technique. It makes us accept ethnicity as natural, and this is the basis of the governments policy of 'multi-nationalism' (ie apartheid, ie domination over African workers).

To give another example, not from TV but from what everyone knows about Alexandra: the case of the so-called 'illegals'. It is well known that the state wants to limit the size of the population of the township, and it also wants to get the

well, they are illegals". Not long ago 100 people were left homeless when WRAB bulldozed their rooms, and a prominent person said, "The Liason Committee is not morally obliged to give these people shelter. Most of them do not belong in the township. They are people who have streamed to Alexandra from nowhere." (Sowetan 4.11.81). This person has swallowed government propaganda whole.

He accepts the structure set up by the government which calls certain people 'squatters', others 'illegals' others 'legals' on the basis of a few dates and a piece of paper. Where is the 'nowhere' from which these people are meant to have come? *'Nowhere is outside the structure in which some people have been taught by the government to think.*

We must not forget also, that structures like this are more easily accepted by people who gain an advantage. Since there is competition for accomodation in the township, people with the right papers are encouraged to betray people without the right papers, so that they can get their houses. Man is turned against man. The only way to stop this horrible practice, is to challenge the structure, to deny the difference between one person and oppose the 'legal/illegal' system of the state.

Total (TV) strategy

The chosen means of getting hold of peoples minds, is propaganda, and it is the propaganda function of TV that should be discussed more than it is.

"Propaganda? There is no propaganda on TV. How can music be propaganda, or how can drama be propaganda" Propaganda is best when it is invisible. As soon as you notice it, it loses its power. Every good propagandist knows this, and he knows how to put his ideas across without you knowing it. There are two important techniques in propaganda, which should be understood by anyone who watches TV.

co-operation of the people in this task. It therefore plans a strategy based on the difference between 'legals' and 'illegals'. The illegals are those who do not have certain papers, or who did not get to Alexandra by a certain date, or what what Anyway, people have begun to think that this difference is somehow natural, and that it is quite reasonable to call some people by the name 'legals' and some by the name 'illegals'. It is a structure, and it has come to seem a natural structure. When these so-called 'illegals' are evicted from their homes by the strong-arm of WRAB, people say "Oh



PROPAGANDA

contd from pg.5

Blindfold

The other important technique of propaganda, is the blind-fold. This works by leaving things out, and thus making them invisible. To discover this trick, you have to ask "What has been left out" ?

For example, have you seen any TV2/3 drama which includes characters living 8 to a room (or even more than 8), in a dirty, dangerous location? Have you seen a handcuffed by police on a pass raid? Have you seen characters with no jobs, hanging around Albert Street hoping for even one days work on some construction site, for low wages? No, you havent seen anything like that on TV, *because such things are left out.* In fact most of the truth about life in S.A. is left out of TV, in the hope that people will come to believe that kind of thing doesnt exist, or only exists in small quantities. Anyway, the job of TV is to cool you down, not make you angry. It is there to make you feel that everything is OK. And because it is pleasant to have something to watch, after a while we come to believe the picture, and forget the blindfold.

A window

Propagandists are busy telling us that TV is a 'window'. They want us to think that just as when we look through a window we see real things (which we must believe, because we see them), so whatever we see on TV must be believed, because we see it. But the difference is, outside the window there is no producer, no selection committee, no controller general, and no propagandist. But on the other side of the TV screen there are hundreds of people busy preparing things for us to see, and hiding things we are not meant to see. You cant do it with a window, but you can when you make TV films.

People are far too easily caught in the trap of TV. They fall for those tricks as a rat falls for the sweet sugar that contains cyanide.

In a TV review for The Star, Derrick Thema became excited at the way TV was going to alter race relations in S.A.: "The commercials that we see showing blacks and whites enjoying cold drinks, bode well for harmonious race relations." Because advertisers lie, Thema look forward to a bright political future! Advertising is a bigger con than state propaganda (as we will discuss in the next issue of this paper)

Our Strategy

We must be careful with TV. Treat it like you treat a rat-trap. We must not sit and gape at the screen — every one of us must study it. We must try to work out what the producers are up to. We must be suspicious and critical.

Here is a method:

1. Every group of people who watch TV together should discuss the programmes, and try to work out what is missing, and what the hidden intention of the programme is.
2. It would be useful for such discussion groups to take specific tasks. One group might decide to study NEWS programmes, and analyse the news presented by comparing it with news in the Daily Mail or The Sowetan. Another group might study dramas and work out what they try to make people believe about this country. It is always useful to study advertisements, to see the technique used. Commercial lies are interesting
3. If enough people study TV in this way, it would be possible to form a Society to discuss TV!

Masterplan for a white country

'. the separate radio services for the black nations and the coming television service must play an enormous role here. A public opinion sympathetic with the homelands must be built up.' (Masterplan for a white country: the strategy)

SECRET DOCUMENT DRAFTED BY THE BROEDERBOND

"To carry out the policy of separate development, the idea of multinationalism must be conveyed to the different Bantu population groups. Therefore not only mass communication channels must be created to these groups, but the channels must be placed under proper control.

"Three of the most important of such channels are radio, television and the film . . . The first two are, or will be effectively controlled by the SABC, and the giant success of Radio Bantu is generally known." (From a secret memo from Mulder to Horwood, 1974)

'An area where the propaganda machine works incredibly efficiently is in music.' (MUSIC IN THE MIX p 87)

"I wont let my groups do political songs, because of having to hand lyric sheets to the SABC" (Billy Forrest, music producer.)

"We keep the radio in mind when we compose. If something is contentious they dont play it, and then it wouldnt be known to the public anyway" Joseph Shabalala, leader of Ladysmith — Black Mambazo.)

A valuable comment

(House of Assembly debate, 30 April 1963)

G.H. van Wyk: *Mr Speaker,* I know Alexandra Township. . . . When the sun sets in the evening, a great dark and dirty cloud of smoke emanating from that area pollutes areas such as Sandringham, Orange Grove and other parts in the northern areas as well as Germiston. That is not all, Sir, but that smoke also contains germs. If that area is cleared and a decent residential area is established there for Natives, I am convinced that we shall no longer have this foul smoke that moves across the white area. (Hansard 5074)

Housing for control

There are thousands of people in South Africa for whom housing is a serious problem. Either they do not have a house at all, or they live in cramped conditions, or they fear that their house will be bulldozed, or they have to live away from their families. As everywhere else, this is a central issue in Alexandra. The threat of demolishing houses leads to despair: the promise to build houses leads to excitement. Many times in the past Alexandra has been threatened with destruction and then reprieved. Now, at this stage of its history, it is very hard to see clearly what is going on. What is the status of the township, and what will happen in regard to housing?

For three years the Liaison Committee has presented itself as the representative of the people of Alexandra: consequently the confusion surrounding such things as housing has meant also that there has been confusion about the Liaison Committee itself. Have these men 'saved' Alexandra? Are they to blame for certain injustices, such as the removal of free-hold rights, and the persistent shortage of houses? Whose side are they on?

Such questions, about housing and about leadership or representation, cannot be answered simply by looking at current events, or by taking anyone's promises. Events and promises change from day to day. They cannot be trusted. What we need to do is try to understand the main forces that lie behind events. We must look at the background and at the history of townships and of housing policy. We must also recognise that Alexandra is not isolated or special. It is part of the same repressive system as all other black townships in South Africa.

HISTORY

Alexandra was not overcrowded in its early days. Only 7 000 people lived here in 1930 and there was a lot of open space. It is true there were health problems but they were under control. 5 years later there were 20 000 people; and by 1940 there were 40 000. The stands were now

cramped with buildings, shacks, barracks, zinks. Health conditions were terrible. In 1947 Alexandra was 'the most densely populated square mile in Africa.' (The Star 7.3.47)

What caused this crowding and these bad social conditions?

SEGREGATION

The Urban Areas Act of 1922 provides for segregation between black and white residential areas. Johannesburg was declared 'white' in 1933, which meant that every black person living then in Johannesburg became suddenly 'illegal'.

The city council began to house these people in locations, or to boot them out altogether. Many people preferred to move to the free-hold townships of Sophiatown or Alexandra. Only later they filled up the municipal locations, like Orlando. The manager of 'native' affairs in Johannesburg, G. Ballenden, commented in 1936 "500 people had left slum areas that I was cleaning of Natives in Johannesburg, and had gone to Alexandra. . . . The effect at Alexandra has been very recent, when we got into the central area of Johannesburg where we forced out 4 000 Natives in the last 3 or 4 years."

At the same time that this was going on, there was also a massive influx of people from farms and from the reserves, moving into the cities.

Two questions must be asked: Why were so many Africans entering the urban areas; and why were they made to live in separate locations?

INFLUX

The answer to the first question is that people go where they can earn a living. At this time people were being forced off farms, and they were leaving the reserves because there was not enough food produced there. Meanwhile industry was developing rapidly, from the early 1930's, and it was to these industries that people came to look for work and wages. Their labour was welcomed by industry and by

business people in towns. After all, production does not take place unless there are workers. It is workers who produce value.

CONTROL

The second question, about separate areas, is more difficult to answer. It seems that the South African state (the various governments) realised quite a long time ago that a large mass of workers was needed for the mines and for industry and commerce, and that these workers had to be controlled. Urban Areas policy is one link in the chain of that control. It is a policy that serves several purposes. Firstly, locations can be controlled by municipal police, SAP, and the army.

LOW WAGES - HIGH PROFITS

Secondly, costs of labour are kept down by providing low-cost housing, low-cost sewage removal, low-cost roads, low-cost water provision (stand taps), low-cost education, sport and medical facilities. These minimal living conditions make it possible for workers to live on very low wages. Black townships have developed as a method of controlling workers, and keeping their wages low. The bosses make super high profits, because wages are low. It is to their advantage that workers are controlled and that they live in poverty.

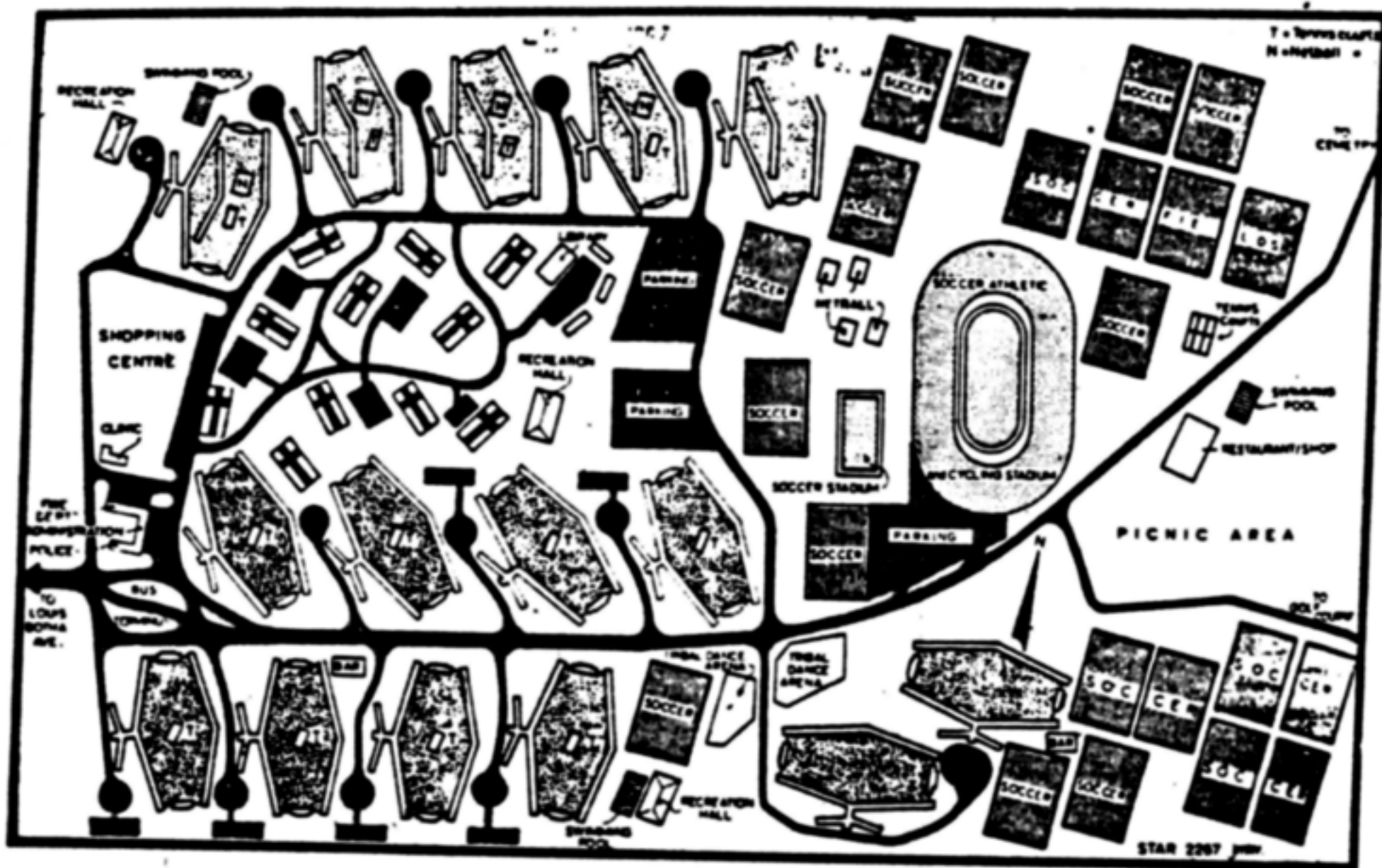
A HOUSING PROBLEM

The housing shortage is a problem for the workers, but it is not necessarily a problem for the bosses. To them it is a solution - a solution to the problem of making high profits.

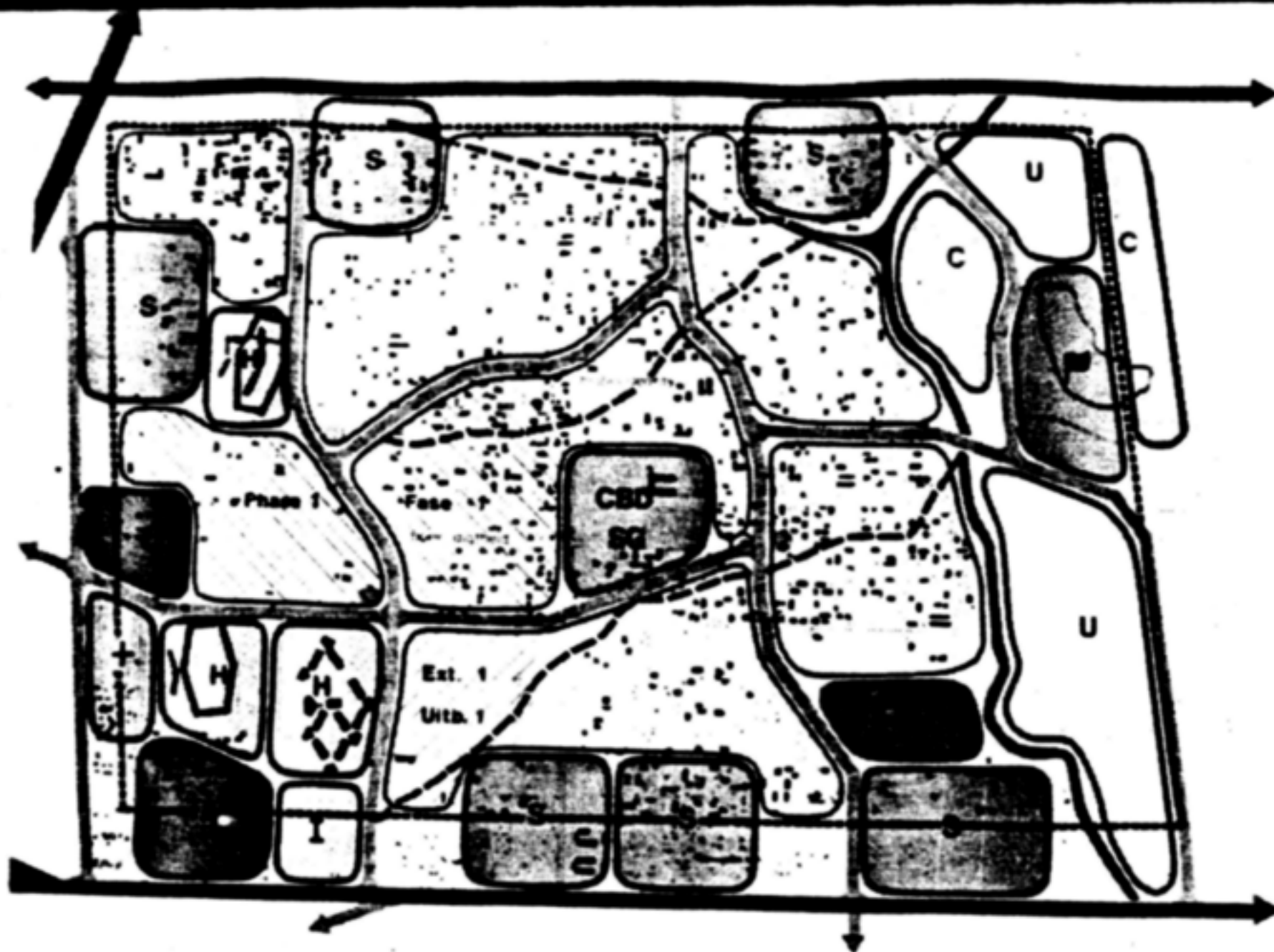
This situation has a long history. It was reported in 1919 that 114 000 extra dwellings were needed for urban blacks. Today the number may be more than 300 000. If anybody has wanted to, or has tried to solve the problem, they have not managed very well over these sixty years. In fact, there has never been any intention to solve this at all; and there won't be in the future either.

Plans, plans

The state is fond of drawing plans. In 1963, it was a plan to make everyone in Alexandria live in hostels.



The 1979 'urban renewal' plan was drawn by the social engineers.

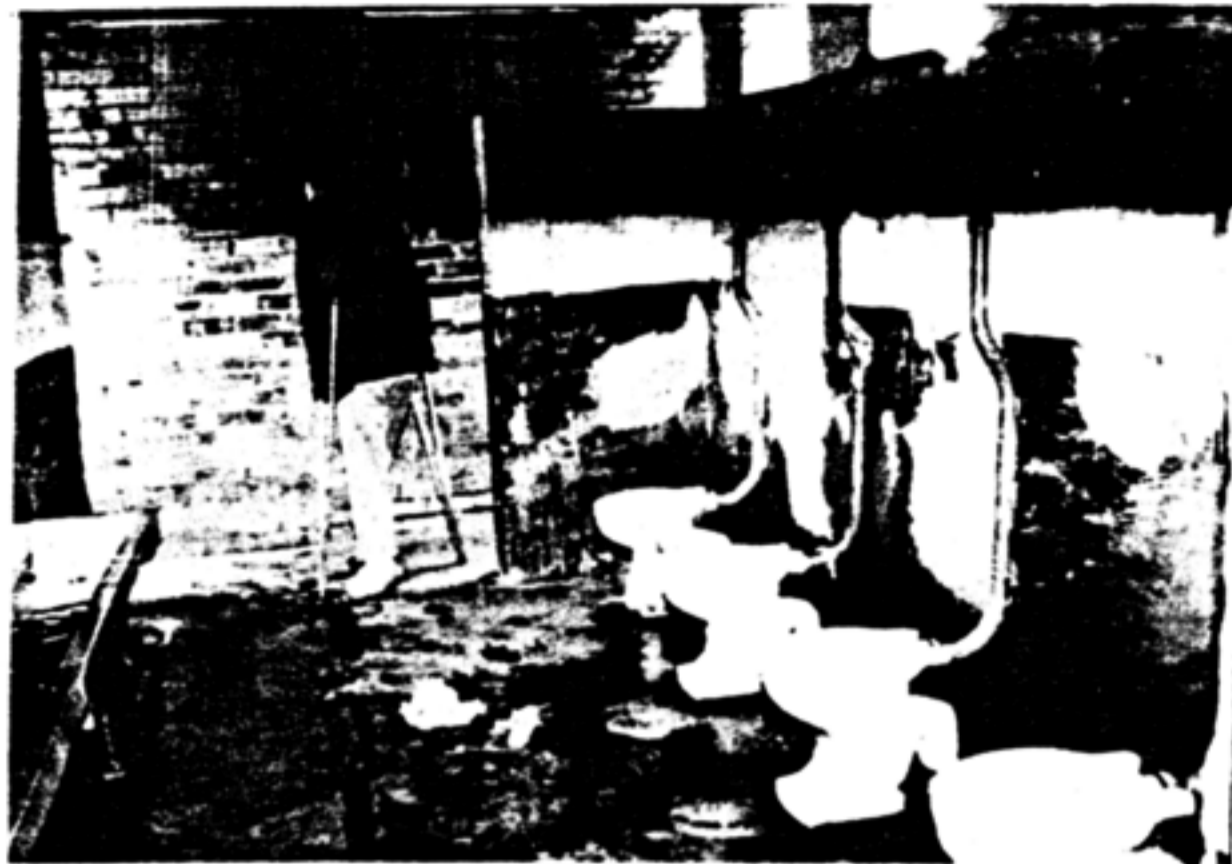


What will their next plan be? Hostels again?

Promises, Promises

Alexandra *reprieved, saved or uplifted* – this has been an illusion for 60 years. Almost since the beginning of the township, the promise of improvement has alternated with the threat of demolition. The following brief quotes and reports are provided to show how often this game has been played and how false the promises have always been. Alexandra is not altered because of promises or threats. It is shaped by fundamental causes; the same causes that shape all other locations in South Africa.

- 1926 *'In this year it became apparent that the position of Alexandra left much to be desired especially from a health point of view.'* (Memo from TPA)
- 1935 *'This Association (Waverley and Highlands North Ratepayers) calls upon the City Council of Johannesburg . . . to take immediate and whatever steps are necessary to have the whole Township transferred away from the European settlement . . . (Resolution passed 3 February)*
- 1944 *'Alexandra Township will probably remain where it is'* (The Star 21 July)
- 1957 *"The government's intention to lend the Peri-Urban Areas Board 100 000 to provide services in Alexandra Township means that the last slum in and around Johannesburg is to be tackled, and that all Natives working in the city will be properly housed – probably by 1960"* (The Star 4 June)
- 1960 *"Alexandra Township, one of Johannesburg's worst slum districts, is to receive a 120 000 face lift in the next few months."* (The Star 16 March)
- 1963 *The plan for Alexandra to be converted into a 'hostel city' is revealed.*
- 1969 *"The long awaited and delayed conversion of the 'unkempt city' of Alexandra into an orderly complex of single quarters for Johannesburg's Africans started this week."*(March 11)
- 1969 *"Demolition of the houses is only being done when alternative accomodation has been found"* (29 November)
- 1973 *"Figures released today show that the authorities are more than half way in their bid to wipe out Alexandra Township slums"* (January 24)
- 1979 *"Alexandra, the 'Dark City' has been reprieved."* (The Star 21 May)
"While Alexandra was today celebrating the announcement that they will not be moved out 3 families were told to quit their homes by WRAB. . . ." The Star)
- 1980 *'As we finish putting up a residential district, families will be resettled there before construction workers move on the rest.'* Rev. Buti, Alexandra Chronicle 18 July)
- 1981 *"About 100 people 'squatting' in backyard rooms of an Alexandra house were yesterday left homeless when WRAB bulldozers moved in to demolish the 26 structures. . . The people, said to be illegals, were not offered alternative accomodation. Among them were families with children. Mr. Leepile Taunyane, a civic leader in Alexandra, said the place was a "termite nest". . . He said the ALC was not morally obliged to give the people shelter."* (Sowetan 16 November)
- 1980 *"Dr Koornhof yesterday asked the community of Alexandra to accept the introduction of local government as soon as possible. This would allow the administration board to adopt a lower profile in the affairs of Alexandra"* (RDM 1 November)
- 1981 *"WRAB will build 500 houses and 150 flats in Alexandra before the end of the year. . . ."4th July)*
- 1982 *"Black housing and township development are likely to suffer severely as millions of rands will be slashed off the annual allocations. . . ." (21 July)*
- 1982 *"Tenders have already been received for the building of the first 79 houses in Alexandra Township"* (Sowetan 29 March)
- 1982 *"All 79 families (between Roosevelt, London and 11th) will soon be resettled permanently in new houses complete with all facilities. The Alexandra Liaison Committee appeals to all residents who will be affected to keep calm and cooperate in the redevelopment of Alexandra."* (Alexandra Chronicle 1979)



Life in the hostel

Why don't workers take responsibility for their own housing? In the first place, they are not permitted, as we know, to live in 'white' areas. They have to live in areas set aside for them. Even if there was accommodation available, at low rent, in a white area, this cannot be occupied by a black person except under prescribed conditions. Secondly, workers have such low wages that they cannot afford to buy or rent expensive accommodation. So they are trapped, and they have to wait for housing to be provided for them.

The authorities (the city councils or the government) generally only act vigorously to build additional houses, when they are forced to do so; that is, when they can see that it is their own interests. For example, in 1899 the Cape Town city council got scared that plague might break out in the city slums, so they built Ndabeni, the first 'location' in S.A., outside the city limits. The same sort of thing happened in Joburg: after an outbreak of plague in the slums of the city, the council built a location at Kliptown and moved blacks out there.

SOFASONKE MPANZA

In the 1940's massive squatter action forced the authorities to build houses. The success of Mpanza, Ntoi, Baduza, Khumalo and other squatter leaders, who set up squatter towns and ran their own affairs, bypassing the civic authorities, made the state try to break the movement by settling at least some of the squatters in new houses.

Houses are built when authorities are forced: they are not built because people need and want them.

We must realise also that houses are not 'provided' for workers, if this means that workers get their housing free or cheap. They don't. Houses built for workers are fully paid for out of rents. The only thing that is 'provided' is the right to live close to white towns and industrial areas: and this of course is merely a trick, because no city could survive without labour power (and the buying power) of workers.

SOCIAL ENGINEERING

The best way to understand the character of locations and location housing, is to put the question in the form of an engineering task: how would you keep a certain quantity of workers as cheaply as possible, in the smallest amount of space, with minimum facilities, but so that they are fit for work every day? Answer — by building Soweto, Kwa Thema, Langa, Gugulethu and every other location in the republic. Locations are places to keep labour units; they are not living areas for people.

Alexandra is complicated because it has been made to solve different problems at different times over the years. At first it was a free-hold township, sold to blacks because whites did not want to live so far from town. Later it was regarded as a labour pool for areas north of the Houghton ridge.

HOSTELS

Its most amazing use was developed in 1963, when the social 'engineers' under Verwoerd tried to convert it into a 'hostel city'.

Those planners decided that it was stupid to allow useless people to take up space in urban areas. Babies, scholars, cripples, the sick and old, anyone who wasn't working for a white boss ought not to take up space meant for workers. This was clearly the reasoning behind the decision to destroy family housing in Alexandra, and build twelve huge hostels, for single labourers — males and females separate. This would satisfy the labour needs of the north of Johannesburg; and moreover, the old free-hold Alexandra, which had given the authorities so much resistance in the past, would be tamed.

Although the state never completed this plan, it was not changed till 1979.

What we have said so far shows that housing for black workers must be seen as a policy worked out by the state and the bosses; to control workers and to keep their wages low. Now let us apply this, and ask the following question: What lies behind the present plan for Alexandra? Why has the hostel plan been scrapped, and why has the state agreed to rebuild Alexandra for family housing? Some people think that the Liason Committee persuaded the state to 'reprieve' Alexandra. But this is unlikely. There are far more pressing reasons for their change of plan. There were big changes in government policy after the uprisings of 1976. The government began to encourage a middle-class among blacks, giving 'urban' people more stability and comfort than migrants, promising home-ownership and so on. It is hoped to develop this middle-class as a cushion against violent rebellion. Home owners are supposed to be much tamer than tenants. Secondly, it has tried to develop local puppet government, like the Urban Bantu Councils, Community Councils and so on. These are little duplicates of the homeland governments. Thebehali is a miniature Matanzima, as everyone knows. It may have seemed to Koornhof that the Liason Committee in Alexandra was a useful sort of puppet government, already in existence, and that he could use it to control the township. It has been reported in the press that "Dr Koornhof, in urging Alexandra to accept the introduction of local government in the area, said this would enable the Administration Board to adopt a lower profile in the affairs of Alexandra." (RDM 11.11.80)

Alexandra saved - for whom?



HAS ALEXANDRA BEEN SAVED?

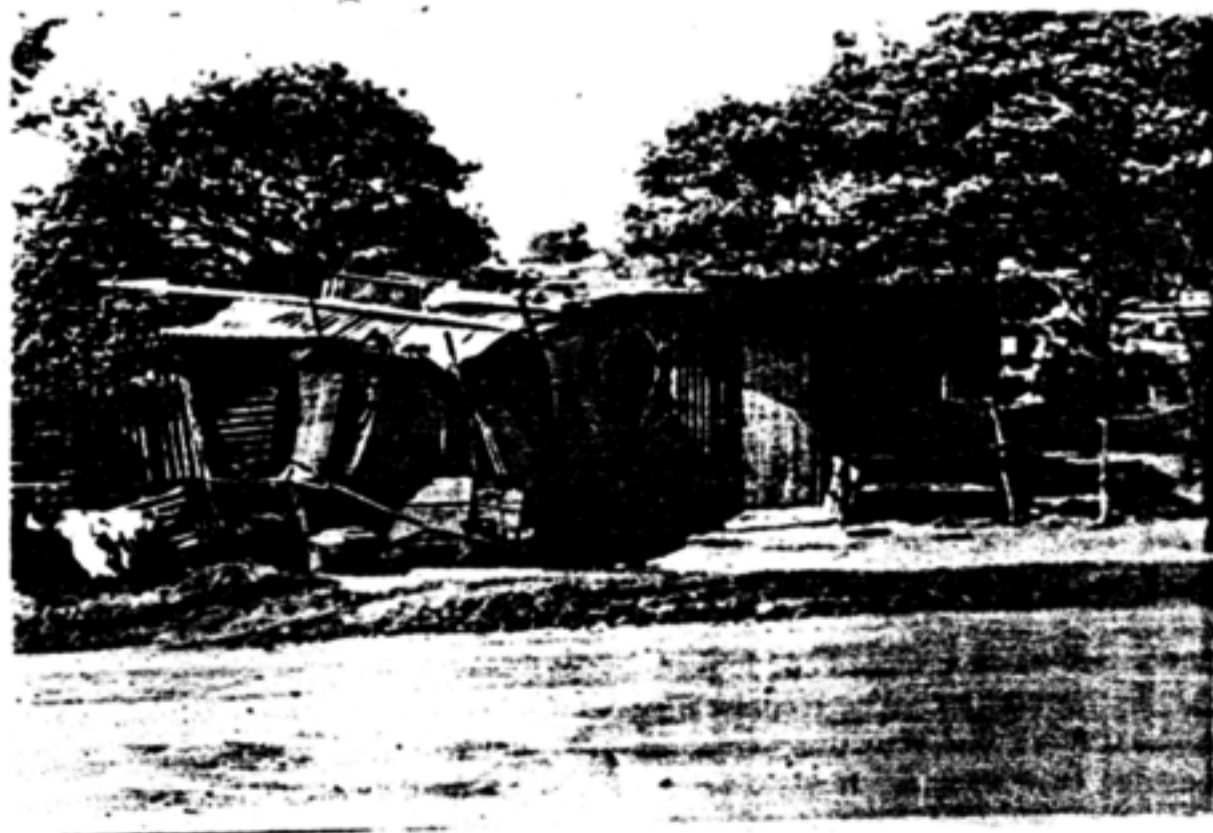
What is Alexandra, and what will it be like in the future? It is quite hard to visualise its future character. Some things can be predicted, but the full picture will only emerge slowly.

So-called illegals are being evicted. But even so there are probably too many people in the township for houses that will be built. Quite a large number of people who now qualify to be here, will also be driven out in one way or another. Perhaps it will be through high rents. Those who cannot afford to pay high rents, will have to find accomodation elsewhere. Though we cannot as yet predict what rents will be, it is a rule that all locations must support themselves. And as it is expensive to redevelop Alexandra, sooner or later the money is going to be taken from the residents, probably in rising rents. It must ultimately become a thoroughly middle class suburb, for traders, business men, supervisors, advertising executives, and the best paid workers. Other low paid workers will most likely no survive in Alexandra for long. This is, however, speculation. It cannot be proved.

Many people are in doubt about how to think about what is going on at present in the township. Should they be glad about the 'reprieve' or should they be suspicious?

Here are two reactions, from prominent people. On the one hand Rev. Buti has said that "Dr Koornhof has not only saved Alexandra, but has also saved the people of the Republic of South Africa." (The Star) On the other hand the Rev. Thema said, "Dr Koornhof and the Department of Cooperation and Development are emblems of oppression to the black man. Black people cannot afford priviledges and favours. We thirst for reality and our rights" (The Star) The position taken by the editors of IZWI is that Alexandra is a creation of Group Areas policy, it is consequently a ghetto, and cannot be justified in any way. Whether it is 'uplifted' or not, it remains a segregated location, and we are opposed to segregation in any of its forms. Secondly, the problem of housing is mainly a problem of wages, employment and political rights. There is no solution except liberation of the workers, full employment and a living wage.

In the short term, it is correct to resist eviction and removals, to demand proper housing, to protect free-hold rights - in other words to obtain maximum concessions from the state. But we must not be blinded into accepting anything short of democratic equality and freedom, the right to self government.



Crime

1 February The Alexandra Chronicle reported statistics of crime in the township for 1981. There were over 1000 cases of violence, including 89 murders and 111 cases of rape. Several responses are recorded in The Chronicle: the editor advises people to control themselves and not behave like hooligans. Somebody writes to the editor saying that 'the whole family whose child is involved' should be reported; this person also recommends reading the Gospel, and getting home early after dark.

Of course there is nothing wrong with recommending restraint; but it doesn't throw much light on the problem of crime. Crime is related to social disruption. When social conditions are bad, the rate of crime is high. What are social conditions like in Alexandra? Even before we point a finger at individual criminals, or seek solutions to the problem of crime, we have to ask why social conditions are bad. That is where we will find the roots of crime.

The plague of liquor

Perhaps more than anything else, drink contributes to crimes of violence. In this connection it is interesting to note that:

In South Africa, more sorghum beer is drunk than any other alcoholic drink. The main brewers and suppliers of this beer are the governments of South Africa, Bophuthatswana, Transkei, KwaZulu and Ciskei.

Locations are financed largely from liquor profits. In 1982 a surplus of nearly R4 million is expected from liquor sales, and this money will be allocated to WRAB and various Community Councils.

Liquor outlets are provided and looked after by authorities. Whatever else may be lacking in the township, liquor is provided in abundance. It might be said that the consumption of liquor is encouraged and stimulated by the state. Police found that in some areas in Soweto 88% of murder victims had excessive alcohol in their blood.



— There are no less than 4 official liquor outlets in Alexandra itself. The main bar is possibly the best built structure in the township, and was the first building reconstructed after 1976 (whereas the Secondary School is still an old, broken decrepit building, without adequate facilities for pupils)

HOSTELS

Another factor contributing to violence is the widespread disruption of normal family life, caused by the migrant labour system, and the single-sex hostels. There is a long history showing the tensions, frustrations and troubles caused by hostel life.

A memorandum was prepared in 1972 drawing Koomhof's attention to the dangers of hostels. This memo pointed out that "These hostels are potential universities of crime. An environment of this sort could be detrimental to the safety of the individual. The rule of lawlessness could well spread beyond the walls of the hostel to embrace heterosexual sex crimes and violence." Nevertheless, hostels and the system of migrant labour remain central to the policies of the government and the economic system in this country. Instead of dismantling hostels, since 1972 the government and private businesses have built many more.

Only recently a particular hostel in Alexandra was the scene of violence, which left people dead and wounded. The ALC denounced these hostels at the time, and promised to close this one. But it has since been occupied by a business called Fidelity Guards.

POLICE VIOLENCE

A third cause of violence in the community is violence from the state. A few weeks ago a family was evicted from their house in 10th Avenue. "WRAB officials came to the house at about 8 pm and ordered us to get out. Our belongings were thrown out and my furniture was damaged", Mrs Ndlovu said. (RDM 1.4.82) This sort of thing has been going on for many years. It is unlikely to be recorded in the police records as a crime of violence, but it is in fact violence committed by the state against the people.

Of course these are not the only things that breed criminal violence. We must add unemployment, overcrowding, bad education, poverty.

It is reported that campaigns have recently been organised to counter the high rate of knife attacks. Meetings in Johannesburg have included NICRO (National Institute of Crime Prevention) and AZAPO. The Soweto Police favour this community action (it also cuts down on their work) In Pretoria the initiative apparently comes from the Atteridgeville/Saulsville Community Council, and from the Atteridgeville branch of COSAS.

But how is one to stop the use of the knife, when from top to bottom society in this country has been laid waste. It is a disaster area.

When a place is governed by authorities who are not interested in the welfare of the community, and are not responsible to that community, bad social conditions develop. Such governors will not mind about the effects of drunkenness, shattered family life, or police violence. On the contrary, these things are useful because they prevent the community acting unitedly, and so it cannot be a challenge. It is precisely when a community is disunited, that crime takes a grip. The clue to the problem of crime, is the way people are governed. If they govern themselves, if they have their own affairs at heart and can organise properly, they will experience zero crimes. But if tyranny is imposed on them, the community disintegrates and people become frustrated, angry, bitter and demoralised. Crime and violence fester.

SELF CONTROL

During the 1957 bus boycott (see the article), for three whole months there were no more than 3 serious crimes in Alexandra. Because the boycott was a common action by the people, and because it was carried through in defiance of the (national) authorities, and because it proceeded under the peoples chosen leaders, a spirit of mutual help was present, and this drove crime away.

Disease

In many ways disease has the same origin as violence — bad social conditions. These conditions translate into DRINK, causing cirrhosis and heart failure; VIOLENCE, causing shock, physical damage and depression; PROMISCUITY, causing VD; MALNOURISHMENT, either from too little food or from the wrong food, causing people to be more liable to TB, measles and so on.

"A nations health is a response to its political and social environment. Progress of any nations health occurs with alterations in its political and social environment" (M. Savage, Economics of Health in S.A.)

"Patients seen at the Clinic reveal the problems within the township. Social disruption is shown by sexually transmitted diseases (VD) trauma, diseases related to alcohol abuse etc." (Chairman of Alexandra Clinic)

We must understand this link between ill-health and bad social conditions, because unless we understand it we will not be able to root out unnecessary disease.

NEIGHBOURHOOD GROUPS

We have already shown that bad social conditions arise when a community is oppressed by authorities that are not responsible. ~~One way to meet the problem is to try building a community organisation that is responsible. This must be done at the highest level, the level of national government; but that is not the only level. A lot can be done in neighbourhoods no within a yard. The first step would be to establish a group, to discuss common problems and try to work out ways of overcoming these.~~



CHILD MINDERS

An example has recently been set in the formation of a Child minders association. Here the problem is infants, who are not cared for during the day because their mothers must work, and the creche won't take any more kids. Child-minders can be trained to look after a small number of children, to recognise problems of ill-health in children and to know what to do in the case of accidents.

If a child gets hurt, or by mistake drinks something harmful, the Minder will know how to get the child to the clinic. This child-minding scheme can easily be set up and controlled by parents. It would provide an income for the minders, and it would enable parents to go to work without feeling worried about their babies. It would also be a marvellous chance for parents to get together to discuss the question of rearing children education, health and so on. (Anyone interested in finding out more about the Childminders Scheme, should contact Keneilwe Mohafa at the Alexandra Clinic.)

MEN AGAINST WOMEN

There are many other social questions that need to be discussed by groups of people who live in the same neighbourhood. One urgent question is the problem of male domination over women. The most violent form of male aggression against women is of course rape; but there are also other ways of dominating, like exploiting their labour, or abandoning them to the care of children. Mens' tyranny over women is of great use to the state, which governs, as we know, by dividing us — white from black, Basotho from Amazulu, 'legals' from 'illegals', section tenners from migrants, men from women. Some people make the mistake of thinking that male tyranny over females is natural. It is not. It is always a form of economic exploitation of some kind; and those who are against exploitation, must not consent to tyranny over women.

Women must be liberated from oppression by men, just as men must be liberated from the mistaken idea that it is natural to dominate women. Since both men and women suffer tyranny, they should unite together and not practice this disgraceful thing themselves.

It is not an easy habit to overcome, or even to understand. That is why it is useful to have community discussion groups, involving neighbours, members of families, people who live close to one another. Important social questions should not be left to elected Committees, to Authorities, to Governments. They should first of all be the responsibility of neighbours.

GRAFFITI

How much does it cost to publish a book? A lot. All the mass media – radio, TV, books, newspapers and so on, need a lot of money to produce. Private individuals or even groups of people, if they are not rich, find it hard to use the media. If they want to get into radio or TV they have to say things that the owners of media like to hear. It is those with money or power who own the media. Consequently money and power can spread their ideas widely, but anyone who does not have money or power cannot easily distribute their ideas. This is why graffiti and posters are so important. They are cheap ways of publishing ideas.

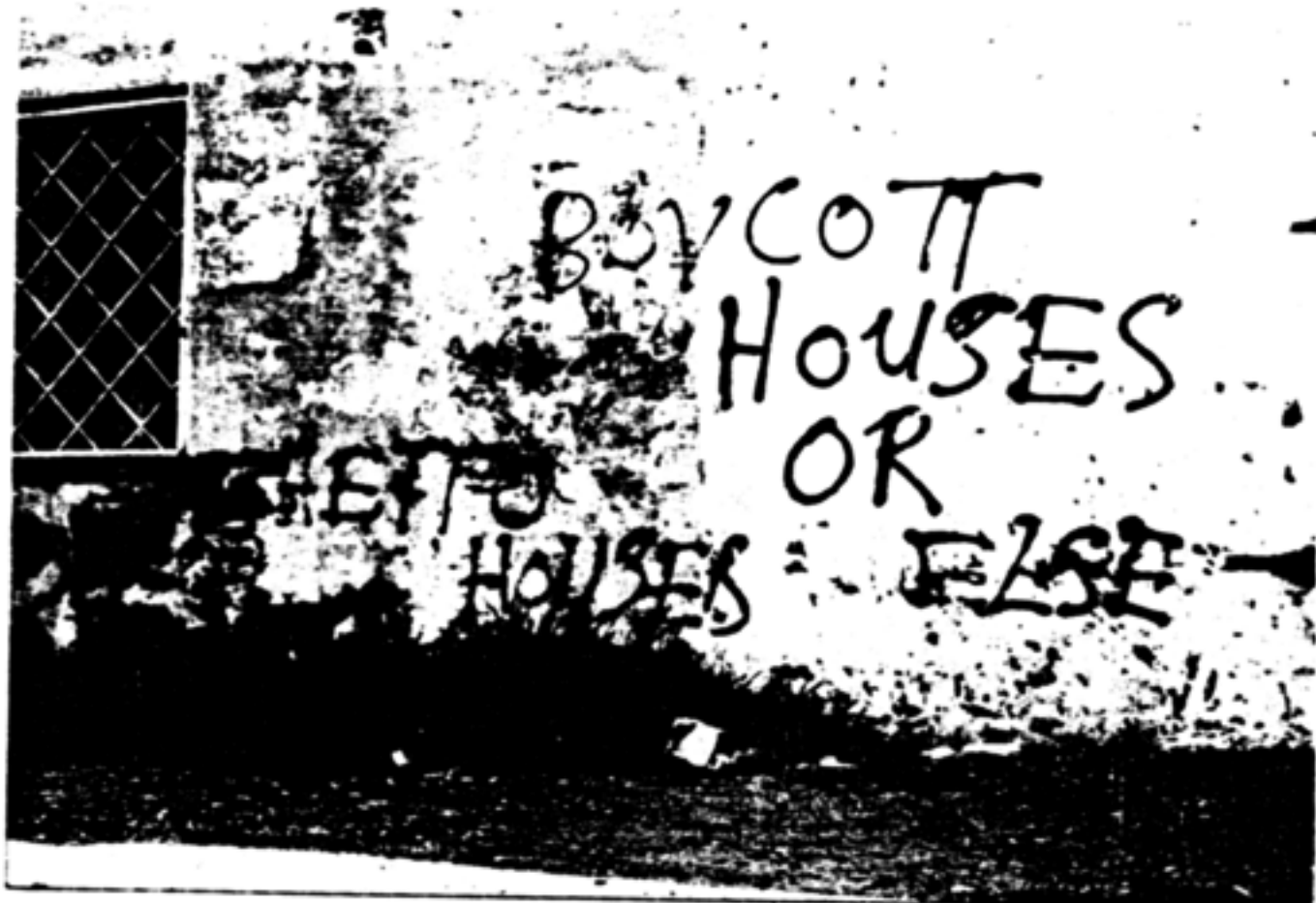
Graffiti is the writing on the wall
The writing on the wall as at Western
Heroes die young. . . .

That is how Chris van Wyk, the fine Riverlea poet, begins his poem about graffiti.

What are these wall-writings, these secrets published on buildings, these short thoughts written in large letters?

There are two qualities in good graffiti: they must be bold and they must be surprising. There is not as much space for writing on a wall as in a book. What you say must have a quick and astonishing effect. Graffiti thoughts are produced under pressure. This is why they are usually things that you are not supposed to say. Because they are forbidden, they burst out. *Free Mandela*. Graffiti are about the political ideas of people (White Republic No – Peoples' Republic Yes); about their anger (Boycott houses now); their desires (ANC lives)

Talking Walls of the Voiceless



Graffiti in Western 1982

Graffiti are also signs that reveal more than they say. Van Wyk develops this idea:

Graffiti is a scar on a face
The mine dump is graffiti
A cockroach is graffiti
A rabid dog is graffiti
Adrenalin and blood in the township
that's graffiti

Often the point of graffiti is a joke, not even a polite one. FREE WOMEN, writes a feminist: WHERE? demands a greedy man. An important thing about graffiti is that they have no author. They are not authorised. They are independent. For a community, graffiti can be a useful way of expressing feelings and frustrations.

We acknowledge The Sowetan for photos of Madzunya and Mokonyane: for other photos the Drum collection at SAAN and The Star

IZWI LASE TOWNSHIP is published by Ditshwantsho tsa Rona. It offers notes and views about events of today or of the past. Though mainly concerned with Alexandra, because that is the home location of Ditshwantsho, we hold that Alexandra is but a part of South Africa, and shares in the general struggle in this country. We reject the ghetto status of the township, and we reject strategies that attempt to divide it from other parts of the nation.

It is necessary to understand society in order to change it. We invite the public to participate in this paper, by carrying out research and by contributing to discussion.

Articles in future issues of IZWI LASE TOWNSHIP will include:
Squatters: Who are they?
Alcohol abuse
Hostels
What Advertising is All about
Library Research
Politics of Male and Female.

Letters

I will be glad if you expose this letter of mine in your columns.

In our township we have a high school — Alexandra High. In this school there are many things which do not satisfy me. For instance, we were told to nominate class prefects. We did that. But to my amazement we were not told to elect students' leaders. We were just instructed to obey and listen to what they say. I am against that. Why should the staff nominate our leaders, and worst of all only the senior students. Why should they not elect some from the form 1's and 11's? The only reason I get is that they are still **il**, and not yet mentally matured. That is not true: there are many things that do not satisfy them, like for example, being insulted, and given excessive punishment. So why should they not have representatives among the so-called students leaders?

The standard of teaching is very poor. In our classroom, if you don't grasp anything you are taught, it's up to you, and down to you! Some teachers don't even know what they are teaching; like knowing Grammar but being unable to teach Literature.

The situation at school is really in a bad state. The building is falling, but there's no action for repairs. Windows and even **ors** are broken. Some of the classes have no blackboard. There is no equipment for wood-work pupils, but fees are nevertheless paid by students. Children are packed in a small classroom. In these overcrowded classes there's a lack of desks and seats. School grounds are not healthy: toilets are small and filthy. Sometimes there is no water in the school and then the toilets don't work and then the children suffer, because the buckets are already full. They stay for a long time unrepaired. This has a serious effect on the children's health.

To make the situation worse there is a shortage of teachers. The present staff is weak and insufficient. Some of the teachers are not fit to teach the subject chosen for them. This results in pupils being confused. Some teachers don't even attend classes, because of not knowing what to teach. Some teachers have insufficient qualifications; some bully the pupils, but don't convey knowledge. Being bored, many pupils start roaming the streets. To add to this, the teachers don't make pupils aware of the educational

system they are confronted by. Honestly, the blame lies in the education department, not, as teachers claim, with the laziness of pupils.

AFRICAN HISTORY: A LETTER FROM A STUDENT

In 1981 we established the African History Study Group in our school, Alexandra High. At first there were about 10 scholars. This year there are now 4 of us studying the course, which is offered by SACHED. In 1980, the head-prefect of our school distributed pamphlets advertising the course, but there was very little response. But the following year a group of students felt that they should get the course going, and since then the group had continued to function. We are presently waiting for workbooks to be compiled.

History is a study of the past that helps us to understand how we arrived at the present. And in a way it foreshadows the problems and changes that are likely to be encountered in the future. The study of history is concerned with the selection, analysis and interpretation of facts. Generally, as there are many ways to tell a story, this is true also in history: thus historians tend at some stage to arrive at different conclusions as to what in fact did happen.

Often we find that the history of Africa is mystified and distorted. Many historians present Africa as a "dark" continent, and Africans as people with neither culture nor history of their own.

Africa, they seem to believe, started when Europe invaded and conquered it. In most cases African history was mystified so as to justify the exploitation of the indigenous people by their colonial oppressors. It is interesting to note that the African Studies writers look at the history of Africa with a different perspective from the classical, neo-classical and liberal approaches.

For those who want to understand contemporary Africa we strongly recommend that they enrol in the course.

We hope SACHED will make it a point that the course doesn't end up with those who are presently enrolled, but that it should continue. — JABULANI RADEBE

INTERVIEW WITH AN AFRICAN STUDIES GROUP

During September two African Studies Writers went to visit a group of African Studies Students. The group consisted of four young men who met once a week for two hours to read the course.

Q: Why did you choose to do this course in your free time?

A: We thought it would be interesting. We saw pamphlets advertising the course last year, and thought that the introduction was very interesting, but we did not do anything about it. At the beginning of this year we decided that it would be valuable for us to enrol because then we could learn about our history from a different perspective.

Q: Do you find the course interesting?

A: Yes. We think that it is important for us to study social and historical matters. If we don't know about history, then we can't understand the present world. Our roots are in the past.

Q: Do you think that the course gives enough information or would you sometimes like more information?

A: The course gives us a lot of extra information that we are not taught at school.

Q: What do you think is the most important thing you have learnt so far?

A: The African Studies Course helps us to assess other history books and distinguish the bias of the historian. For example, after the lesson on Theories of Imperialism, we can read any other history book on Colonialism and understand what kind of historian wrote the book.

Q: What kinds of things have you learnt that you didn't know before?

A: We have learnt to look critically at history and to be aware of bias. We have learnt about our origins. We have learnt about the aims and effects of

missionaries in Africa. We have learnt a lot about African history. We knew nothing before - at school we learn only about South African and European history as if the rest of Africa didn't exist.

Q: Have any people dropped out of your group, and if so, why?

A: Yes, our group started with 11 members. Now there are four people who still come regularly. The others

were not so committed and they have a lot of school work.

Q: How long does it take you to read one lesson?

A: It usually takes us two meetings of one and a half or two hours each.

Q: How much time do you spend discussing the things you have read?

A: When we do exercises, we try to watch the time limit that is given, but often

it takes us longer. We also stop reading and discuss an interesting point even if there is no exercise. And sometimes we talk about the course to our friends.

Q: What do you find the advantages are of working through the course as a group rather than alone?

A: In the group we can share ideas and discuss difficult new concepts. It is difficult to analyse ideas on one's own.

