Some people prefer to believe that the Khoikhoi (Hottentots) were destroyed by the smallpox epidemics of 1713 and 1755, acts of God which conveniently absolved the white man of blame for the fate of the indigenous inhabitants of the Cape Province and made it possible to claim the region as part of the white homeland. This comfortable myth, like others of its type, has not survived historical investigation. The American historian Richard Elphick demonstrated in his unfortunately-named Kraal and Castle (1977) that it was the Colonial disruption which made it impossible for the Khoi to recover from the smallpox disasters of the eighteenth century. The Khoikhoi Rebellion in the Eastern Cape documents another episode in the history of Khoi subjugation. It shows that the Khoi reacted to their destiny with resistance rather than indolence, and it shows that the Colonial authorities were directly responsible for enforcing that destiny.

By 1795 there was not a single legally recognised free Khoi community west of the Fish River. Most Khoi lived as labourers on their old lands, now divided among the Boers, and even those who managed to maintain an independent existence in the remote corners of the frontier were insecure and without legal rights. The Khoi saw their opportunity in 1799, when British troops arrived to fight the rebel Boers of Graaf-Reinet. They flocked to the British standard in the hope of getting their country back. "Restore," said Klaas Stuurman, "the country of which our fathers were despoiled by the Dutch and we have nothing more to ask." However, it was the aim of the British authorities to restore the old order rather than to replace it, and when the Boer rebellion collapsed, they came to view their erstwhile allies with embarrassment and worse. When the British began to withdraw, the Khoi - left once again at the mercy of their old masters - began to plunder. They were joined by the Xhosa, who feared that the British sought to push them back across the alleged boundary of the Fish River.

In September 1799, Acting Governor Dundas arrived to make separate peace with Boers, Xhosa and Khoi. The terms of the Khoi peace are instructive inasmuch as they illustrate the British view of the Khoi place in the Colonial scheme of things. Whereas the Xhosa were treated as an independent people, the Khoi were regarded as rebellious subjects, declared to possess no landed property of their own, and expected to enter the service of the Colonists as they had done before. The British did attempt to rectify what they saw as the legitimate grievances of the Khoi with respect to their conditions of service. The liberal Maynier resigned, the liberal dilemma in South Africa is an old one. Dundas in 1799 nor Janssens in 1803 was prepared to countenance the re-establishment of independent and self-sufficient Khoi communities. In the words of Landdrost Bresler, "great care should be taken . . . that the Cattle-breeding be not at once deprived of the indespensible
assistance by an unlimited resort of the Hottentots, who will not now fail to leave the Farmers and resort to the aforesaid Establishment (Bethelsdorp); which deserting would very much reduce the Cattlebreeding. The Khoi should be well-treated, but they should remain a servile class.

The Khoikhoi Rebellion in the Eastern Cape consists of two separate long papers. Although they cover the same ground, they are by no means similar. Newton-King is more general and more interpretive; Malherbe is more detailed and takes more care to substantiate her arguments. The lucidity of Newton-King sets the stage for the slower-moving Malherbe, but Malherbe fleshes out the picture with details, such as the following remark, addressed by a Khoi rebel to a farmer:

"Strike me, Louw van der Merwe, strike me. I will have you and all the (?) soon in the stocks, and you shall pull off your trousers and sit naked on the ground." A single joint account would probably have been better than the two presented here, but that would have been unduly hard on the authors, and, besides, the result is more than satisfactory. The University of Cape Town is to be congratulated on making this little book available, more especially in a cheap and simple, yet attractive format. Four reproductions from Daniell enhance the pleasures of the text. It can be recommended to all serious students of South African history.

NEWS COMMENTARY
by Vortex

We're appalled by the Polish Government:
it's sunk Solidarity.
It's clear the Russians were behind the scenes
with their lack of morality.
– You ask: do we like trade unions?
  Ah, that's quite different, you see.

And poor dear Lech Walesa:
he's our hero on TV.
We're told he's been detained without trial:
such Communist tyranny!
– Have we detained trade unionists?
  Ah, that's quite different, you see.

The Poles are enduring martial law
and the might of the military:
their lives are controlled at every point;
they're certainly far from free.
– Do we not rule by the gun? you ask.
  But this is South Africa, you see.