

THE ROAD TO POVERTY - DISTURBING TENDENCIES

Many aspects of life in South Africa have a direct bearing on successful agricultural production. Some are out of our hands – the weather, world commodity prices and falling and ascending markets of particular products, to name a few.

In our previous chapters we have brought to the reader's attention the patent failure of some of the most crucial aspects of the South African government's land reform program. In this chapter we focus on further alarming trends which could have a serious effect on the continuation of productive farming in this country, given that farming is currently successful under the most trying of circumstances.

Unlike subsistence farming (and indeed a subsistence mentality!), long-term planning has been the hallmark of successful states. Looking ahead has been the linchpin of why the first world progresses and develops and innovates. One thing leads to another, and research is possibly the most crucial element in this continuous development.

Section A:

THE AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH COUNCIL (ARC)

Until the present government came to power, South Africa was not only a leading player in agricultural research in Africa but indeed in the world. Many of its institutes were world famous - Onderstepoort for example was South Africa and Africa's most prestigious veterinary science research institution. South African scientists were lauded throughout the world (as were South African doctors and other professionals) for their dedication, skill and innovation. It looks as if this has come to an end. In 2002 already, the red lights were flickering. A report entitled "Onderstepoort in Crisis" ⁽¹⁾ named important scientists who had fled the institute:

- Dr. Frank Vreede, a molecular genetics expert who left for Europe. He specialized in controlling gene expression by manipulating animal responses to vaccination to optimize immunity.
- Dr. Mandy Bastos, a molecular epidemiologist who specialized in foot and mouth disease. She played a large part in tracing the origin of the disease.
- Dr. Kelly Brayton, molecular parasitology expert, now in Washington. She had trained in the techniques needed for parasite whole genome sequencing.
- Dr. Etienne de Villiers, a bio-informatics expert, is now in Nairobi. Bio-informaticians are essential computer experts who analyse the masses of genome sequencing data.
- Nico Gunter and Henriette Macmillan, both cellular immunologists who worked on vaccine development. They worked on understanding how animals control infections with parasites that live inside the animal's cells.
- Dr. Mary Louise Penrith, a head of pathology after 10 and a half years at the institution, left for Mozambique.
- Dr. Leon Prozesky, veterinary pathologist and head of pathology, had extensive experience in performing post-mortem diagnoses of tropical diseases.

- Dr. Theo de Waal, veterinary parasitologist, was head of the parasitology department. His expertise was in tropical parasites in domestic animals. He is now in the United Kingdom.
- Dr. Albie van Dijk, a virologist and previous head of the biochemistry department. He developed vaccines against tropical viral diseases such as African horse sickness and bluetongue. He is now in Australia.
- Dr. Gavin Thomson, internationally recognized expert in foot and mouth disease and rabies. Previously the director of Onderstepoort, he now works in Nairobi as an international consultant in the disease.
- Dr. Durr Bezuidenhout was an expert in heartwater disease. This disease is a tick-borne disease and is a killer of cattle, sheep and goats. He took early retirement.
- Dr. Janusz Paweska was head of the virology department with experience in tropical virological diseases of animals and man. He is now a consultant on Ebola fever in Central Africa.
- Dr. Jan du Preez was head of the technology transfer department, which is now closed.

(This report was dated May 3, 2002. It is possible these scientists are not currently working where the report stated.)

In the year 2003, matters came to a head at Onderstepoort. Reports that the institute was “collapsing” were underpinned by various political parties, one of which - the Democratic Alliance - said the Minister of Agriculture Ms. Thoko Didiza appeared “unaware of the dire situation at the center”.⁽²⁾ DA Agriculture spokesman at the time Dr. Kraai van Niekerk said the news that the center was to close its pathology unit was shocking. This now means that research into animal deaths will not now take place.

In August 2003, Dr. Fred Potgieter told the world that the institute’s scientists were “deeply demotivated”.⁽³⁾ He criticized the appointment of researchers for two-year periods, saying research was a long and diligent process which could be adversely influenced when researchers worked with a sword over their heads. A researcher in the institute’s tuberculosis unit resigned because of this two-year problem, and the institute now has no researchers in this important field.⁽⁴⁾ It was the only institute in the country which investigated TB in, particularly, buffalo breeding projects. At the time of this report, Dr. Gerhard Verdoor of the Endangered Species Trust declared that TB is already a big problem in South Africa.

Many buffalos in the eastern part of the country have TB, he said. Lions and other predators then become infected after eating the carcasses.⁽⁵⁾

The institute has been hemorrhaging expertise for some time. An article as far back as 2000 revealed the paucity of bursaries being made available to young researchers.

It was said that bursaries for young white students were not being made available, and more than 400 agricultural researchers withdrew their services from the ARC over the previous year.⁽⁶⁾

The acting executive officer Dr. Mishack Molohe said at the time that he told ARC personnel in an open letter that there had been discrimination in the past, and that there had been a “skewed” representation between black and white at the ARC, and there were instances where parliamentary financing had been directed at “non-profit undertakings” which provided no “returns”. (Here of course is the kernel of the problem - a manifestation of the subsistence mentality writ large. Clearly there is no sense of long-term thinking here, a tragedy for first-world research).

Loss

Up to May 2002, Onderstepoort had already lost almost 200 years of experience through resignations.

The mentality that funding research of “non-profit undertakings” is not acceptable had clearly won the day. Money dried up and salary increases were far below the norm.

People said they left because of this, but researchers with whom we talked declared it was virtually impossible to work for people who were not scientists, who knew nothing about science, and who did not understand long-term thinking. This bleeding of exceptional people was all the more tragic given that Onderstepoort has been at the forefront of South African veterinary science since 1908. In mid 2002 already, several departments had closed - the departments of information technology, bacterial vaccine development, ostrich diseases and marketing. Many middle-level researchers with specific expertise had left.⁽⁷⁾

The government’s new broom approach precipitated the centralization of authority. Thus the ARC’s thirteen institutes could not make decisions on their own, sometimes having to wait months for a reply from the top. The directors of these institutes had no control over their organizations. The new president of the ARC Dr. Nthoana Tau-Mzamane has come under attack from all sides, but seems unperturbed. In an October 2003 interview, she blithely brushed off concerned questions about the ARC.

Her style of answering is quite non-committal, even brusque. In ten years time, she says, the ARC “will be more representative of the racial and gender demographics of South Africa and will be a much younger organization.”⁽⁸⁾ “We have a core staff of young, vibrant technicians and scientists who will locate scientific excellence in the socio-economic realities of South Africa, the SADC and the African continent”. Well, we’ll see! Her prognoses may go the same route as those of the Minister of Land Affairs and her land reform guarantees.

Expertise

Dr. Mary-Louise Penrith said she left Onderstepoort because she feared she could no longer make a difference. “We were losing too many people and the burden of working under those conditions was too great.”⁽⁹⁾ Expertise, contrary to some popular ideas, is not acquired via a year’s mentorship by an expert who is then encouraged to depart. Breaking Onderstepoort down can be accomplished within a year or two, because experts have a market elsewhere, as do bright young people who could be the experts of the future. Building it up again will take at least the 90-plus years of its present existence.”

The situation reached crisis proportions in late 2003 when researchers from the ARC’s thirteen institutes took to the streets in protest. For scientific South Africans to take this type of action is highly unusual, but they were watching years of achievement being destroyed before their very eyes.

The thirteen ARC institutes throughout South Africa cover all there is to know about agriculture and animal care, from tropical and sub-tropical crops to animal nutrition, to soil, climate and water research and plant protection. There are 81 branches of these institutes throughout South Africa.

In August 2003, Dr. Fred Potgieter, acting director of Onderstepoort's veterinary services, was suspended for talking to the press about the parlous situation at the institute. On Friday 31 August 2003, this expert with 31 years experience, was ordered to leave his office.

The trade union Solidarity had for some time been involved in putting the case for its members (numbering around 1 000 of the 2 600 employees at the institute).

In a Memorandum of Concern dated 2 September 2003, Solidarity said there was a clear lack of vision towards agricultural research in South Africa by the government. There was a lack of commitment to the organization and its personnel, it declared.

"Agricultural research is the reason why European countries and countries in North and South America and Australia produce enough food for their citizens and a substantial surplus for export," said the Memorandum. "The inability to maintain and replace equipment used to provide diagnostic and research services in general, and specifically in the area of foresight research, is making agricultural research in South Africa more and more difficult. Over the past ten years there has been a drop in researchers of 51%. Forty percent of researchers with a doctor's degree left the ARC during the past year."

The biggest decline was at Onderstepoort and three other institutes. These four institutes are doing critically important work in order to improve the quality of food produced in South Africa. In order to make the food safe, they needed to work at full capacity. Since 1993, there was a decline in the number of researchers at these four institutes of up to 74%.

Unmoved

Management appears to be "totally unmoved" by this decline, said Solidarity. In fact, they are in denial that there is even a problem. The consequences of this decline are serious. The diagnoses of animal diseases will not be conducted, and there may be an outbreak of diseases *that cannot be identified*. (Italics ours). "South Africa is at the moment playing dangerously with tuberculosis. The last TB researcher at Onderstepoort resigned last month", declared Solidarity. TB is transmitted to people through unpasteurised milk. It is one of the worst transmitted diseases in South Africa and is especially deadly for people with HIV/Aids.

"Furthermore, the more than 1,5 million small farmers in South Africa can suffer badly if they don't get support from the ARC to build up their herds and improve their crops", continued Solidarity.

The union demanded a commission of enquiry into the deterioration of the ARC. The union's actions were supported by organized agriculture throughout South Africa.

Crossroads

Agricultural research in South Africa is at a crossroads. Not one of the ARC's institutes can claim to be without a flaw of some nature. Staff employed by the ARC has declined from 4 800 in 1994 to 2 554 at the end of March 2003.

Employees at the ARC no longer see a future for themselves. These people are approximately 30% behind their public service colleagues in terms of salaries.

Private sector organizations are shifting their contributions to other research facilities, since the ARC can give no guarantee that long-term research projects can be

brought to a successful conclusion. Funds for specific research projects are closely linked to specific researchers. If they leave, the funds follow them.

Decision making has been centralized at head office. Many opportunities are lost because the decision-makers at head office are unfamiliar with conditions at the coal face. The distrust has grown, and the level of victimization of employees deserves scrutiny. The brain drain must be halted, or all of South Africa will lose.

Furthermore, there is a huge gap in salaries between researchers and new appointments. Secretaries at Central Office receive equal and more than researchers with M.Sc. qualifications and many years of service. There has been a dramatic increase in the number of secretarial and administrative staff at Central Office.

Solidarity has demanded full disclosure of the financial situation of the ARC.

In the meantime, the bleeding continues. The situation vis a vis food production and safety could become dangerous. A toxin has been discovered in a fungus growing on peanuts. This can cause liver cancer. Peanut butter is one of the basic ingredients supplied in the government's school feeding scheme, but the peanut butter researcher has resigned. There is thus nobody to monitor this situation. Further, the researcher monitoring bacterial and toxic residues in meat has resigned. Antibiotics are used on animals in South Africa, and it takes time for these anti-biotics to work themselves out of the animal's system. The withdrawal period differs with each type of animal. Periods vary from 48 hours to a month.

We were told that snap inspections of abattoirs have stopped. State veterinarians usually collect samples of meat at abattoirs and send these samples to the ARC. But there is no one left to analyse these samples, and the consequences of this hardly need elaboration.

The meat researcher told us he left because "he couldn't stand it any more. There is no research money, no promotions, no long-term thinking. There is only one nutritionist left. There is no research on the nutrition of animals for food safety for South Africa. Humans will eventually suffer," he said "If new products come on to the market, how will the public know they're safe? One needs proper research structures which the private sector cannot provide."

The pork research sector of the ARC at Irene was the best in the southern hemisphere, we were told. Now the pork researcher is gone.

Another scientist told us he couldn't survive on the salary, even though his wife was working. "Many people took early retirement, they saw the writing on the wall. The planning went haywire," he said. "Lots of projects were simply stopped in mid stream. We were not acknowledged for what we had done. We simply lost heart. We love our jobs, we love our country, we want to be part of helping South Africa with food safety, but we are not allowed to fulfill our dreams".

The ARC tried to kill the messenger when it suspended Dr. Fred Potgieter, said Solidarity. The organization is destroying research in South Africa. Other African countries are concerned because they depend on the ARC to keep their livestock and plant life thriving and healthy. Anthrax is a huge problem with cattle in Africa, and Onderstepoort helped numerous countries to fend off this disease.

Mr. Guy Robinson, president of the Zambian Agricultural Union said that his country's agriculture will "sink" without the assistance of the ARC.⁽¹⁰⁾ He said South Africa had an "unbelievable responsibility" towards Africa's livestock with vaccines which Onderstepoort manufactures. Robinson said a few years ago Japan had given money to Zambia to build another Onderstepoort in that country, but the buildings stand empty because of a dearth of money and expertise. Zambia is one of the countries which desperately needs vaccines because of a high incidence of lung

sicknesses in cattle. “The whole area is in danger if we don’t have vaccines”, said Mr. Robinson.

South Africa supplied Tanzania, Zambia and Botswana with vaccines. A TV interview with Ms. Elsje Pieterse and Dr. Potgieter revealed the ARC had enough supplies of foot and mouth vaccines nationally, but there was extremely low back-up within the borders of the country.⁽¹¹⁾

Although Dr. Potgieter resumed his duties after a court case, Ms. Pieterse was suspended for talking to the media. She has since resigned.

South Africa will pay dearly for this political interference in a scientific organization vital to the future food safety of not only South Africa but the whole southern African region. We don’t know what will happen. Judging by the couldn’t-care-less attitude displayed by various government ministers to other problems in government, we don’t expect much from the Department of Agriculture. If affirmative action is more important than scientific expertise, then Heaven help us. It appears as if this is the case.

All we can hope is that private organizations will step in, as they have done in the case of security, hospital care, education and other aspects of South African life, and save us from the government. We encourage business to move quickly and staunch the bloodletting. Private enterprise must act quickly because food safety is at stake. We simply cannot trust the government with this vital obligation.

Section B:

MUNICIPAL TAXES FOR FARMERS

When one thinks of it, this phrase is a contradiction in terms. Farmers do not reside in municipalities, unless of course one lives in South Africa where the new government stretched the boundaries of municipalities to include farm properties, thus widening the tax net to include people who are sitting ducks for the tax collectors. In this gerrymandering process, the government downsized the number of municipalities from 800 to 284. Concomitant with this “restructuring”, administrative systems went to pot. The country’s municipalities have descended into the shambles predicted by those who warned against this government move.

This process of widening the net has not helped. Indeed, things are worse. South Africa’s municipal debt climbs every year – in April 2003, Finance Minister Trevor Manuel announced it had reached the R24 billion mark, increasing by around R1,8 billion a year. Funds must be found somewhere to pay for the millions who use municipal services but do not pay. Two years after the Property Rights Bill (known as the Land Tax Bill) was published for public comment, farmers are still objecting to its contents.

Professor Johann Kirsten of the University of Pretoria says the proposed land tax as outlined in the Bill will not generate much revenue, and will damage the global competitiveness of South African farming.⁽¹⁾ He believes the income earned will not even cover the total cost of valuing land and collecting the revenue. “It is only at 4% or higher that this tax will make economic sense, but then all profits or returns from land will be taxed away. *Nobody will want to farm.*” (Italics ours).

A tax on agricultural land will lead to a considerable drop in the value of the land, says Professor Korsten. It will also lead to a reduced investment in improvements. The average return on agricultural land is 5% - not very attractive to any investor. Crops, vineyards and orchards are already taxed through income tax. Sometimes these crops are of more value than the land on which they grow.

Valuing land will be difficult. There will be litigation when the valuation base is disputed, declares the professor. Finally, farmers do not benefit from municipal services. The 38 functions provided by municipalities are largely to the benefit of urban dwellers. Already one of the important services of municipalities – road maintenance – is increasingly being taken over by farmers themselves.

In April 2003, the Free State Agricultural Union announced it would seek a court interdict against the local Nketoana Council to prevent its imposition of a 2% land tax on farmers in the district. (In 2002, the Bloemfontein Appeal Court found the Ekurhuleni municipality east of Johannesburg's flat rate tax on agricultural land unfair and discriminatory.)

Some South African municipalities, including the Nketoana Council, began to levy taxes on agricultural land, including unused land, even before the Property Rights Bill had become law! Desperate to cover their exorbitant arrears, badly-run municipalities saw the farming community as an easy target.

Free State farmer Hendrik Boshoff told the court the Nketoana municipality levied taxes merely to pay the local council's overdue debt amounting to R9 million. He produced documents to prove this, showing that taxes were being levied in an ad hoc manner. In December 2003, the Bloemfontein High Court set aside the levy imposed by the Nketoana Council on Mr. Boshoff. It is strange that only after winning his case did the government publicly state municipalities were in the wrong to impose municipal taxes on farms since the Property Rates Bill had not become law. The government could have stopped the municipalities from acting illegally if they had wanted to. It was again up to a private citizen (financially backed by organized agriculture) to take a matter to court. The problem should have received government's attention from the beginning.

The court's ruling does not outlaw land taxes, but it does set a precedent. "Ground must be properly valued", said Agri SA president Japie Grobler.⁽²⁾ Declared TAU-SA: "This judgement against the municipality of Reitz (Nketoana) only strengthens TAU-SA's viewpoint that taxes on agricultural land are impractical and are another form of wealth tax. We hope the government will realize with this court result that agriculture will not allow the taxing of agricultural land by municipalities to make up financial deficits caused by poor financial management."

Closer Look

Let us take a closer look at what can be expected in the way of "service" from South Africa's municipalities, many of which have virtually collapsed since the new government came to power.

One of the main problems is the question of huge salaries granted to themselves by inept and sometimes corrupt councilors. The Tshwane (Pretoria) municipal salary structure is mind-boggling – top officials earn between R672 000 and R775 000 per annum.

But let us start with Johannesburg, once billed as the "diamond of Africa". "City Revenue Department must confront its chaos – over one million people complaining about the billing shambles in Johannesburg" shouted a headline.⁽³⁾ One resident received an electricity bill for R70 000. A Sandton mother dumped her washing on a Johannesburg councilor's desk after her water supply had been cut three times, despite regular payments.

"Outsourced" meter readers are hopeless, according to one resident.⁽⁴⁾ (Why do consumers pay municipal personnel when basic functions are "outsourced"?) "She

didn't even read the first number on the meter. If I hadn't pointed this out, I would have been billed for thousands of rands", said the elderly resident.

Electricity thieves are costing Johannesburg a fortune while families are left in the cold and dark as a result of their actions.⁽⁵⁾ An official said this was the result of the theft of underground cables and the illegal use of electricity. Electricity supply fails with regularity in many areas of Johannesburg, leaving people without the means to cook and even see properly.

In December 2002, Johannesburg mayor Amos Masondo announced a R2 billion write off of arrear rates and taxes – approximately 16% of the city's total annual budget.⁽⁶⁾ He said the debt was owed by liquidated companies, poor residents who could not afford to pay, inaccurate information about debtors and untraceable debtors. But earlier that year, numerous promises were made to "fine tune revenue collection".⁽⁷⁾

The "human resources" employed by the Johannesburg municipality came in for some drubbing. "We are taking action against those committing fraud and against those we suspect of drunkenness, of being absent without leave or of being involved in fist fights", intoned Mr. Keith Sendwe, director of revenue.⁽⁸⁾

The billing department "lives all by itself. It employs lots of people who don't know what they're doing", said DA councilor Peter Heim.⁽⁹⁾

In the meantime it costs Johannesburg R20 million a year to clear up 1 000 tons of "illegally dumped" rubbish in Soweto.⁽¹⁰⁾ Teams were appointed to go door to door to "inform the residents about the illegality and hazards of dumping". Meanwhile, an outsource company Pickitup was appointed to collect the rubbish. (Remember the good old days when municipal dustmen came around and collected the garbage?)⁽¹¹⁾

At the same time, yet another scheme was put forward to rejuvenate a tired, dirty city that nobody goes to anymore. A variety of "renaissance" plans have come and gone, said one observer⁽¹²⁾, while Johannesburg continues its slide into slum conditions. Certain inner city "social projects" collapsed under the weight of non-payment and mismanagement. Of eight housing projects established since 1996, only one survived.⁽¹³⁾

A little north of the city, the Hillbrow area has become known as Little Lagos. Nigerians control the town, and drugs are their business. We can be sure very few rates and taxes are paid there, and collecting arrears would be a life-threatening job.

The Johannesburg town planning department is "in chaos", said a Midrand estate agent in a newspaper interview.⁽¹⁴⁾ "The situation is causing outrage among those whose lives and businesses are shackled by the long delays and incompetence". The estate agent says that a simple sub-division which should take a month takes up to a year to complete. Another well-known estate agent said "plans are lost, clearance certificates take a long time and transfers are tardy".

This is having a devastating effect on estate agents and builders. The department is a shambles, said Councilor Judith Briggs.⁽¹⁵⁾

A budget deficit of R4 billion emerged in an Auditor General's (AG) report in March 2003. There are "serious flaws in municipal accounting" said the AG.⁽¹⁶⁾ The money is "missing" said the report. Two months before, Johannesburg wrote off R2 billion in bad debts.⁽¹⁷⁾ For the eighth year in a row, the Auditor General slammed the city's financial proficiency.

Meanwhile, people are stealing the water meters.⁽¹⁸⁾ From February to August 2003, 1 760 water meters were stolen, leading to thousands of litres of water being washed down the drain. Johannesburg Water, the company responsible for the city's

water supply, set up a hotline to deal with the vandalism. “The thieves are stealing the metal meters installed ten years ago. They sell the brass to scrap dealers for R10 each”, said a spokesman. It costs the company about R200 to install a meter.

Emergency services in the city have apparently fallen prey to a mafia-type cartel.⁽¹⁹⁾ The result is there are only three emergency-response cars and 24 rickety ambulances to serve 2,8 million people. “The ambulances are reduced to half in the rainy season because the roofs of some of the vehicles leak”, declares a media report.⁽²⁰⁾

The city needs at least 10 response cars and 56 ambulances. Operations chief David Tembe said that to tackle the shortage of ambulances, the city occasionally uses fire trucks to transport medics from one of their 28 bases to the scene of an emergency. To make up for the shortage of firefighters, ambulance personnel have been made to undergo part-time training as firefighters.

Pretoria/Tshwane

Scandal permeates the administration of one of South Africa’s most beautiful cities. Revolutionary cleric Father Smangaliso Mkatshwa moved very smartly into gravy-train mode when he became mayor. He lives in a palatial mansion which cost R2,5 million while using his housing allowance of R39 000 to pay off his private home in Edenvale on the East Rand.

His managers’ salaries run from R775 000 to R692 000 per annum. Recently his council had to pay millions of rand to get rid of an incompetent city manager who was described as arrogant and who failed to deliver.⁽²¹⁾ Mr. Thoahlane Thoahlane earned R830 000 a year, yet demanded a payout of R9,5 million. He “only” received a R3 million handshake.

After his suspension in January 2003, he continued to draw his monthly salary of around R70 000 while boasting in a local Pretoria newspaper that he was busy “enjoying my golf while earning a good salary every month”.⁽²²⁾ Thoahlane’s brief stay at the council (two years of a five year contract) was preceded by a short stint at the National Development Agency where he also got a golden handshake. His exit there was shrouded in controversy.

For this money, what do Pretoria’s residents receive in return? Efficiency is not at the top of the list. At the end of 2002, R1,8 billion was owed by electricity users. The net growth per month of this debt is R15,7 million.⁽²³⁾ In February 2003, it was reported that R83,9 million of water “disappeared” during the period of the book year 2001/2002. The Tshwane Metro also could not give an accounting of why R98,5 million worth of electricity also disappeared.⁽²⁴⁾ These figures represent 20% of the water and 12% of the electricity’s total distribution.

The council’s report said that this loss was due mostly to leaks, vandalism and the tampering with meters. “Informal power” is another problem in Tshwane/Pretoria. A woman resident turned her government-awarded RDP house into a mini-power station by illegally providing electricity to more than 15 of her neighbours.⁽²⁵⁾ She had charged her “clients” R150 a month for the last two years, since her electricity was installed. (Remember those politicians who said modernizing the black urban areas of South Africa would bring stability and a booming economy?)

Electricity cables were carefully buried in trenches dug into the ground around her house and extended across the street to a squatter camp. Strangely enough, a newspaper report said that “everyone made it a point to pay on time, as a delay could

mean darkness". So why can't other users "pay on time" to the municipality? Perhaps because the council does not cut the power, as Mrs. Mini-Eskom threatened to do.

So what is mayor Mkatshwa doing about this shambles? He's busy organizing the change of names in the city. While the city's pipes and structures collapse because of poor maintenance, Mr. Mayor is planning "large-scale" name changes, at a cost of R16 000 at each facility.

Cash strapped Cape Town council is facing blackouts and sewer collapse. Budget cuts could lead to catastrophic problems in these two areas, the council was warned in August 2003.⁽²⁶⁾ Because of incompetent management, capital spending has been drastically cut. Vulnerable electricity areas include the CBD .

Other problems include waste water plants. "Virtually all of the council's 17 waste water treatment plants need upgrades or extensions to comply with statutory obligations".

Even the historic old Company's Garden near Parliament in Cape Town is going to ruin. This heritage garden was established in 1652, the oldest garden in the country. Over the years, it had become the setting for some of South Africa's most important buildings including Parliament, the national museum, the national library and art gallery.

It has been badly neglected.⁽²⁷⁾ Piles of rubbish, broken garden seats, weeds and overgrown shrubberies now deter visitors, "even if there were not a good chance of being mugged", says a newspaper report.

And the rest of South Africa? Just a few examples. In a town of just 35 000 registered voters, the council manager has awarded himself a R630 000 per annum salary. The council of greater Wolmaransstad is so bankrupt, it hasn't enough money to repair the potholes in the main street. If it were not for money received from the provincial government, the town would have ceased to function.

Despite this, Mr. Elie Tsietsie Motsemme, 38, the well-paid town manager of this beleaguered council, has given himself a whopping salary increase of 20% from the end of 2003. The council's salary bill is 81% of the council's total income. There is not enough money left over to do even the basic maintenance work, said the assistant town manager.⁽²⁸⁾

Eight ANC councilors in the Kungwini (Bronkhorstspuit) municipality have been implicated in various irregularities including the taking of bribes and the misuse of public funds.⁽²⁹⁾

At the Klerksdorp City Council in October 2003, the majority ANC party told the opposition DA that it would be a "cold day in hell" when it supported the ousting of executive mayor Dr. Magome Masike.⁽³⁰⁾ He was asked to resign because the council's finances were a "disgraceful shambles" and because the mayor had neglected his duties to Klerksdorp. DA councilor Peter de Jongh charged that the mayor had embarked on "wild and speculative ventures without consulting council, that the council's investments had dropped from R69 million to R35 million in six months, that he had allowed consumers to accumulate R190 million in debt for services, and that the National Treasury had rejected the budget and returned it to the council. But it will be a cold day in hell before anything happens to him!

(It says something for the governing party's accountability that party loyalty stands above all else, including the bankrupting of a once-functioning city council.) Forcing increases on ratepayers to pay for presidential salaries and luxury cars were among the council's "multitude of mistakes" said councilor Ted Hart.

Developers in the Midrand area are battling to get even the simplest applications processed.⁽³¹⁾ "All we want are the same standards we had in the past"

lamented a Midrand, Gauteng developer. General problems include a backlog in the approval of building plans, delayed transfers and people not being correctly billed for rates and taxes.

In the nearby township of Tembisa, meanwhile, there have been no service bills “for years”.⁽³²⁾ “Pay what you think you owe us”, the council told residents of the Hospital View area of the township. These residents are non-existent on the council’s data base, although they get serviced every month. (Note: the farmers have not been told to “pay what you think you owe us”. Wouldn’t that be nice!)

In other parts of Tembisa, rats terrorize residents. The rodents “emerge” from piles of uncollected rubbish and “harass us”, say the residents. Last year, the township was without a refuse-collection service. The previous black empowerment collector had his contract nullified when it was discovered he had no equipment with which to collect rubbish.

Residents of Rustenburg in North West Province complained last year that the town’s sewage system was overloaded.⁽³³⁾ The situation was so bad that a local developer asked the Pretoria High Court to order the supply of basic water and sewage facilities to his business so he could complete his work.

West of Johannesburg is the historic town of Krugersdorp, now named Mogale City. Every month the ratepayers pay R11 000 for the mayor to lease a luxury car. The metallic-blue BMW four-wheel drive is more expensive than the mayoral car of Johannesburg.

Mayor Lentswe Mokgatle recently decided his R1,5 million house was too humble, and received R3,6 million to purchase a more luxurious residence. This town of only 300 000 residents (many of whom do not pay tax) must now set aside R215 400 to maintain this estate. Mokgatle also owns a home in Sandton for which he has also been granted a subsidy.

And in Polokwane (Pietersburg), a new manager Mr. Leshabe Sam Rampedi has been awarded an annual salary of R650 000.

He and former acting municipal manager Henry Lubbe together draw R1 million a year remuneration, quite a burden on this rural town in the north of the country.

Bankruptcy threatens many of South Africa’s local governments. African National Congress MP Yunus Carrim says “ineffective administration in local government has resulted in accumulated services debt of more than R24 billion and many municipalities are on the edge of bankruptcy”.⁽³⁴⁾

The municipal salaries bill is putting a damper on economic growth and fuelling inflation, said Trevor Manuel, Minister of Finance.⁽³⁵⁾ He said municipalities had spent about 32% (R19,8 billion) of their operating budgets on personnel in 2002/3. This compared with only 19% a few years ago.

Further, municipalities are not budgeting for repairs. This finding was published by the SA Local Government Association on July 14, 2003. The report said repairs and maintenance are still well below the 10% norm of total expenditure. It also highlights the declining allocation for capital projects at local government level.

Is it any wonder farmers baulk at paying municipal taxes? Apart from the fact that urban dwellers have grounds for real complaint about the wastage of their hard-earned money on lavish salaries and accommodation (with poor concomitant capacity to handle the job for which they are paid), farmers will receive little or nothing for their contribution to this profligacy. There should be a basis for a court case somewhere here.

Section C:

THE COMMANDOS

For decades, South Africa's farming community has been protected by the Commando system: deriving its name from the old Boer military formation, the Commandos traditionally consisted of civilians with military training being called up for service when and if necessary.

South Africa's efficient commandos are to go. The number of commandos vary, from 50 000 to 70 000, according to different sources. Whatever the figure, the commando system of the South African National Defence Force or the part-time component of the military will be phased out "because of the role it played in the apartheid era", according to Safety and Security Minister Charles Nqakula.⁽¹⁾

This announcement was greeted with consternation by South Africa's organized agriculture and opposition political parties. Nqakula said the commando system did not have the "level of acceptance" by the public that it ought to have.⁽²⁾ He said the commandos would be replaced by a new unit of the SA Police Service (SAPS) which would be responsible for border protection and national key points. He claimed part of the responsibility would be farm safety.

These part time soldiers belong to more than 180 commando units and carry out thousands of operations each year, many in support of border control. Many of the members depend on their part-time soldiering as their only source of income.

Organised agriculture has warned the government about abandoning the commandos before a replacement organization was in place.

The South African countryside is "chillingly violent", says Jonny Steinberg, author of the book on a farm murder *Midlands*.⁽³⁾ Policing on the ground is often incompetent, always woefully thin. Who is to protect the settlements of the hinterland, both black and white, he asks.

The commandos are to be replaced, inter alia, by a police reserve. Many of the recruitment criteria – a matriculation certificate, a driver's licence, passing a psychometric test – are to be dropped.⁽⁴⁾ People from the countryside are to be recruited – the idea is to incorporate grassroots policing. But, says Steinberg, the social topography of rural South Africa does not lend itself to adequate policing.⁽⁵⁾ When communities are homogenous, people trust each other. But how to police areas where strangers are viewed with suspicion?

Freedom Front leader Pieter Mulder warned President Thabo Mbeki that the South African countryside was "the most dangerous in the world", and that the president's decision would leave many millions of rural dwellers totally unprotected from the thousands of heavily-armed gangs which terrorize them.⁽⁶⁾ More than 20 000 of the commandos are not white South Africans, so President Mbeki's statement that the commandos are "mainly white structures" is incorrect. Around 300 people of all races out of every 100 000 population are now being murdered on South African farms, both commercial and subsistence.

In the broader South Africa, says Mulder, about 55 out of every 100 000 people are murdered each year. Compare this to six out of 100 000 in the United States and 2 out of 100 000 people in Europe.

Farmers feel betrayed by Mbeki's decision. Some communities benefited almost exclusively from commando protection. The commandos have been traditionally used in rural areas to assist under-resourced police to combat crime.⁽⁷⁾

The commando system goes back to 1715 when part-time volunteer commandos were established to safeguard the community in the Cape. The system has undergone several changes in the past 100 years to adjust to changing

circumstances.⁽⁸⁾ Henri Boshoff of the Institute for Security Studies says phasing out the commandos and replacing them with police “will mean that the country will lose all rear-area defence capability.”⁽⁹⁾

Minister Nqakula announced that 30 000 police force members and 100 000 reservists will be used for the protection and security services division, but the SAPS is already struggling to fulfill its obligations to fight regular crime in South Africa, says Boshoff.

South African Police Service

So with whom will the commandos be replaced? What is the state of the South African Police Service, the people who are being mooted to replace the commandos? The government has promised 30 000 people to help with farm protection. How is the SAPS run? What is the personnel capacity of SAPS members? Can they do the job they are paid to do, and are they paid enough? Can South Africa’s commercial farmers depend on the SAPS to defend them in crime-ravaged rural areas?

From all reports, the SAPS is badly run, under-staffed and poorly capacitated. Altogether 366 people died in a nine-month period in 2002 “as a result of police action or while detained in police custody”. The SAPS Independent Complaints Directorate (ICD) announced this in Parliament in March 2003. Seventy-three percent of these were found tortured in police holding cells in Durban, KwaZulu/Natal alone.

An enquiry was launched in 2002 into alleged police misconduct at Nyanga police station in the Cape after officers were caught sleeping on duty.⁽¹⁰⁾

Police dockets are regularly stolen or destroyed. The police are often involved in robberies, hijackings and burglaries. Police vehicles are misused, and police run shebeens while on duty. Politically correct appointments sometimes leave good people unpromoted.

The Institute for Security Studies reported that there were five and a half times more inspectors than constables in the SAPS.⁽¹¹⁾ Sergeants and constables comprise only a third of the total police force when they should be in the majority. (This reveals an attitude that the police force is a salary cash cow to be milked). Australia, Britain, Canada and the US have one sergeant for between four and six constables, but in South Africa there are 5.1/2 times more inspectors than constables. For sergeants to constables, the ratio is nearly four to one. Despite these promotions, the country is still short of quality policemen. At station level, for example, 60 percent of personnel do not have driver’s licences.

Studies undertaken show that full police strength should be 161 755 but the force is 25% understaffed. Lack of intake at the bottom is said to have worsened the imbalance.⁽¹²⁾

Two policemen were arrested at Philippi Police Station for allegedly issuing firearm licences to people not entitled to them, such as gang leaders.⁽¹³⁾ “Child raped while in Police Care” reads a headline.⁽¹⁴⁾ A policeman under criminal investigation was transferred to the Child Protection Unit where he raped a 14-year-old girl he was supposed to be assisting.

A Pretoria motorist was shot dead by a policeman after a heated verbal exchange on a road. The officer was arrested and detained and appeared in court.⁽¹⁵⁾

There are numerous problems with the public calling the police emergency number 10111. A Germiston, Gauteng woman was ignored when she called this number on behalf of her seriously-wounded husband. He had been shot, and she

rushed him to various police stations where she said officers refused to help her.⁽¹⁶⁾ Passers by eventually took the man to a hospital, where he died of his injuries.

Complaints against the police have increased markedly. The ICD received 217 complaints of deaths in police custody and 311 deaths resulting from police action in the 2003 financial year.⁽¹⁷⁾ A report tabled in Parliament stated that these were among the 4 443 public complaints received within its mandated period in 2002/3. This is 38% more than the previous financial year.

Pretoria prosecutors descended on Mamelodi police station on 26 September 2003 to “check whether investigators were collecting enough information in crime dockets to enable them to successfully oppose bail and obtain convictions in court.”⁽¹⁸⁾ This has become a “regular exercise”

The European Union donated R17 million to a “police driver program” to teach 6 000 police officers how to drive.⁽¹⁹⁾ It says something for the state of the SA police force that the security industry in South Africa employs four times as many staff as there are police. The police continue to ask the public to help them with crime detection and prevention. Local newspapers often carry pleas from the police for the public to help them, but “residents are slack in SAPS support”, said one editor.⁽²⁰⁾ The police blame “poor community involvement” in crime prevention. There are few volunteers to help, said the local police commander.

But why should people assist when the cause of crime is a weak government unable to maintain law and order, and a top-heavy police force where members sleep at their desks and don’t answer phones?

Reports of police malfeasance are daily occurrences. Policemen held on bribe charges⁽²¹⁾; evidence in murder case “lost” by police⁽²²⁾; 921 service weapons lost in one year by police⁽²³⁾; killer cop sentenced to 18 years (he murdered a suspect)⁽²⁴⁾.

A Free State police captain Vincent Tebogo Makoko was arrested on charges of helping and supplying weapons to gangs of African youths who were attacking local farmers⁽²⁵⁾. The entire management team at the Gugulethu Police Station in the Cape were replaced because of public complaints about poor service and violence at the station, including an assault on a journalist which blinded him in one eye⁽²⁶⁾.

The police were accused of robbing illegal aliens instead of arresting them⁽²⁷⁾. According to one of the victims, he was robbed of all his money during a raid at Rosebank, Sandton but was afraid to lay a charge because of his illegal status.⁽²⁸⁾

There are 38 000 illiterate and semi-literate police officers in the SA Police Service.⁽²⁹⁾ Twenty five percent of police in the Mpumalanga province are illiterate. One report said SAPS recruits get “minimal training”.⁽³⁰⁾ Parliament’s Safety and Security committee was told new recruits were only receiving three months training before going into service.

Ted Leggett of the Institute for Security Studies said new recruits were being pressed into service after ninety days training. The core of the problem was that there were 2,5 million recorded crimes in South Africa in 2001/2. This translated into 115 crimes for each detective to investigate each year, one new case every two days.⁽³¹⁾ “This results in crisis management”, declared Leggett.

Five policemen were held after robbing a cell phone shop in Hillbrow.⁽³²⁾ A police spokesman said the five would be facing charges of armed robbery, corruption and theft.

Police corruption is on the rise, says the Internal Complaints Directorate (ICD).⁽³³⁾ Director Karen McKenzie declares “the numbers are increasing. We have a 100% increase in corruption cases compared to the past two financial years.” Low pay was one of the reasons, observers said.

They could have a point. The government has its priorities wrong, said one young policeman to us. “They allow useless corrupt and inefficient mayors to receive R700 000 a year, with perks, while we – who put our lives on the line – only get around R44 000 per annum”. In September 2003, 73 students at the Pretoria Police Training College had not received any pay for three months.⁽³⁴⁾ Adding to the anger of these rookies, staff allegedly threatened to halt their graduation if they talked to the press.

In the meantime, it was announced that Commissioner of Police Jackie Selebi has a luxury aircraft set aside for his use that costs R5 000 an hour to operate. Selebi’s office told a newspaper the plane was bought by the previous government. Selebi’s Beechjet eats into the SAPS Air Wing’s budget, as its running costs are twenty times those of other planes in the SAPS fleet. The Beechjet could have been sold to boost the Air Wing’s budget, said a newspaper editorial.⁽³⁵⁾

During our research throughout South Africa, the role of the SAPS in crime prevention and the apprehension of criminals has been of a very low standard, according to farmers. A very high percentage of farmers say the police can do nothing, or they are overwhelmed, or they simply open a docket and “that’s the last we hear of them.”

Of course there are many efficient and dedicated people in the SAPS, and this fact must never be over-looked, but on the whole, standards have dropped considerably (where in the world are nearly 40 000 of a police force illiterate?) Replacing the commandos with unskilled and poorly-trained policemen will not suffice.

The SA National Defence Force

On July 24 2002 it was announced that South African National Defence Force (SANDF) troops would be withdrawing from border defence posts.

The SANDF stated that border protection is the duty of the South African Police Service and there are not sufficient funds to provide back-up.⁽³⁶⁾

At the same time, it became known at an Institute for Security Studies seminar in Pretoria that the South African border with Namibia and Botswana was totally unprotected and that only 952 troops were stationed on the country’s borders with Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Lesotho.

The curbing of trans-national crimes such as stock theft and car theft syndicates, plus the flow of illegal immigrants across South Africa’s borders, would be severely crimped because “there is not enough money to fill the gaps”, said Major General Jan Lusse at the time.⁽³⁷⁾

Some months before, disquiet was expressed when 70 students who failed the staff paper in a formative course for officers at the Army Gymnasium were granted passes for the course.⁽³⁸⁾ At the same time, nine basic flying students at the Military Academy failed their ground school phase and would have to repeat, and only two out of a narrowed-down four former homeland pilots made their SAAF wings.

The Democratic Alliance’s spokesman on Defence Hendrik Schmidt called on the Defence Minister Mosioua Lekota to urgently investigate. “Transformation should never lead to a lowering of standards”, said Schmidt. Developments within the SANDF were worrying. In October 2002 it was revealed that twenty one SANDF members had been paid millions of rands over the previous 20 months to stay at home because of drawn-out negotiations over the payment of pensions to former liberation army members.⁽³⁹⁾ In 2001, R4,2 million had been paid to this group.

Then the SANDF was rapped over the knuckles for spending R203 million on consultants over two years.⁽⁴⁰⁾ (The use of consultants by government was criticized by the opposition, with more than R1,6 billion being spent across all government departments in 2000/01.)

A rash of promotions caught the public's attention. The Defence Minister was asked to explain why the army had promoted another seven generals when the department gave the assurance it would reduce the top brass, DA spokesman Hendrik Schmidt declared.⁽⁴¹⁾

Figures presented before Parliament in October 2002 showed the SANDF had 206 generals in the army, with 60 000 ordinary members, a ratio of 1:291. The German army has one general for every 1684 soldiers, and America's ratio is 1:2 428, making the SANDF one of the world's most top-heavy armies.

One year later, in November 2003, this situation had not been rectified. In fact, nineteen new generals were appointed.

"Serious doubts have been raised about the suitability and qualifications of some of our top brass" editorialized *The Citizen*.⁽⁴²⁾ These are highly-paid persons, and their salaries are more questionable given that the SANDF is strapped for cash to defend the country's borders.

An SANDF 2002/3 annual report revealed that nearly half the SANDF's members took sick leave in one year. This cost the taxpayers R45,6 million, the report said.⁽⁴³⁾ Figures released by the SANDF in December 2002 show that SANDF members are getting older. In answer to a Parliamentary question, the Defence Minister declared the average age of a SANDF soldier, including the auxiliary service, was 35. The average age of the rank group private to corporal was 32.

This in light of a March 2003 warning that few young whites were joining the SANDF. Lt. General Gilbert Ramano told a National Assembly defence committee that 92% of the 47 000 strong army is black, 6% coloured and only 2% white.⁽⁴⁴⁾

Further, General Ramano said many soldiers "steal state property and misuse state vehicles. Many belong to gangs and syndicates or are corrupt and keep busy with illegal activities." Deadly weapons have been stolen from the SANDF, 73 to be exact. These include R4 and R5 assault rifles which are frequently used in transit robberies. These rifles cannot be bought over the counter, said the Freedom Front's Pieter Groenewald.⁽⁴⁵⁾

However, in some areas the Defence Force is excelling. In cooperation with local farmers, personnel from the SANDF have successfully weakened stock and drug smuggling across the border between Kwazulu/Natal and Lesotho.⁽⁴⁶⁾ The SANDF can make a difference, given the quality of some of its personnel. How the rank and file will contend with commando duties remains to be seen.

Section D: **NAMIBIA**

The American Central Intelligence Agency's website says Namibia, a former German colony north west of the Republic of South Africa, is a land of "very limited natural fresh water reserves, where desertification, land degradation and wild life poaching exist. It is mostly desert, hot and dry with sparse and erratic rainfall. Its surface area is 825, 418 sq. km. (82,541,800 hectares), about four times the size of the United Kingdom, with a small population of less than 2 million, only 6% of whom are whites."

Namibia's arable land is just 0,99% of the total, with no permanent crops. It has only 70 sq. km (7 000 ha) of irrigated land. Clearly, agricultural development in Namibia is seriously hampered by a lack of water. As a result of the low and spasmodic rainfall, normal dry-land cropping can be practiced on only 1,1% of the country's land surface. The grazing areas have an extremely low carrying capacity.

The country's salvation is its treasure chest of important minerals, but we wish to focus on agriculture. Given the facts above, one could believe there is no agriculture to speak of. However, despite its aridity, the country's 3 500 mainly beef-producing commercial farmers provide 50% of the food requirements for nearly 2 million Namibians (the balance of the country's food requirements is imported from South Africa).

Who owns what land in Namibia is a subject for the historians. Suffice it to say that the only truly indigenous peoples are the Bushmen tribes. In South Africa, they were the Khoi and the San in the south, and the Bushmen in the north western parts.

What the Namibian government should be focusing on is how to feed its people. (In fact, all African governments should be doing this but, as we see every day, this is not so). One would think that a former office sweeper like President Sam Nujoma⁽¹⁾ who came to power after a prolonged revolutionary bush war (and with the help of the West) would look to the future. He is adjudged one of the world's least-educated heads of state – he was taught by (white) missionaries and only has a grade school education.⁽²⁾

Namibia became independent in 1990 with a constitution that limits the president to two-five-year terms, but in 1999 Nujoma managed to have this altered to allow himself a third term – he insisted that it would be his final one.⁽³⁾

His utterances over the past eighteen months have alerted his countrymen and the world to one implacable fact: his rhetoric is modeled on that of Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe, a tyrant of the first order whose official policies include murder, rape, torture and the indiscriminate expropriation of his country's productive farmland. Mugabe, as the world knows, has irreparably destroyed what used to be a breadbasket of Africa. His sins are legend. Suffice it to say that commercial farmers in Namibia are stunned at Nujoma's utterances in a land where the margin between the success or failure of food production is one of the slimmest in the world.

But who said logic is a norm in some parts of Africa? Nujoma is not only calling for white land expropriation, he is building himself a palace outside Windhoek, the country's capital, for R186 million, in a country where a third of his citizens earn less than R7 a day. He awarded the job to a North Korean firm without a tender, the same firm that built a giant monument of him holding an AK47 in Windhoek.

He is increasingly paranoid and is following the Mugabe path to the letter. "The arrogant whites" are his *bête noire*. In August 2002 he warned the country's white farmers that they had better comply with the country's land reform program or else. During his party's congress at the time, he told his followers he planned to take over 192 farms owned by foreigners.

Then came his "landless majority" clarion cry (he's trying for a third presidential term?), followed by threats of expropriation if the "arrogant white farmers" did not adhere to the government's willing seller, willing buyer policy. It certainly sounds familiar!

Expropriation cannot be too far away. The law in Namibia already says the government can expropriate "under-utilized farms" with due compensation. In a

country where the cattle-carrying capacity is probably the lowest in the world, how does one define “under-utilization”? The South West African Peoples Organisation (SWAPO) of which Mr. Nujoma has been president since its founding in 1960, declared at its 2002 congress that the party “was concerned at the slow pace of land distribution which has the potential to cause civil strife”.⁽⁴⁾ The message was loud and clear to the farmers. Fears of a Zimbabwe-type grab were palpable, and with reason. Nujoma had loudly supported Mugabe at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg shortly before, with talk of “British colonialists” owning 80% of Zimbabwe’s land. (This of course is not true!)

Some Namibian farmers there and then decided to sell their farms. “I was sick and tired of being told I was arrogant and punished for being white. Why should I invest my money and time in a country where I no longer feel welcome?” said one farmer.⁽⁵⁾ “The whites are being driven out. In 20 or 30 years’ time I don’t imagine there’ll be any whites left in Southern Africa”.

As in South Africa and Zimbabwe, overseas press reports always refer to whites owning the “best” land, but no reference is made as to how it became the “best” through hard work and skill. As in Zimbabwe, Namibia has a healthy opposition “He’s the twin brother of Robert Mugabe” said Ignatius Shixwameni, secretary general of the opposition Congress of Democracy. “The ruling party needs scapegoats to divert attention from the real problems of poverty and unemployment, and the easiest targets are white farmers” declared Shixwameni.

President of the Namibian Agricultural Union Jan de Wet said he was telling his members “that our relationship with the government is good”. It was only three years ago that the Commercial Farmers’ Union in Zimbabwe was giving its members similar reassurances, commented a journalist.⁽⁶⁾

Clearly, the policies of Mugabe and Nujoma are the policies of resentment. Their people sat in Africa for millennia and achieved little except subsistence farming and fratricide. Along came the whites and created productive agricultural systems and first world structures. These two men have monumental inferiority complexes and lash out at those who show them up. The tragedy is that they are in power and can act upon their venomous designs.

Bureaucracy

“Leaden-footed bureaucracy rather than commercial farmers dragging their heels, is the main reason why it will take decades before black Namibian farmers will own half of the country’s commercial farmland”, the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) said.⁽⁷⁾

In 1999, the state bought only four of the 142 farms for sale. In 2000 this increased to the purchase of 15 farms. By August 2002 the state had bought only 118 farms in total. There is the complaint that farmers want too much for their land (the going price is around R250 to R350 a hectare, far below South Africa’s average market prices.)

The political reality is that the bulk of Swapo’s support base is made up of Oshiwambo-speaking groups from Northern Namibia who never lost any land to the colonial process.⁽⁸⁾ Some of the farms owned by “foreigners” are in the high-income tourism business. Some of these foreigners are South African while other properties belong to German passport-holders who have lived in the country for some time. However, nearly every Namibian cabinet minister has availed himself of cheap Agriculture Bank loans to buy farms for themselves – Nujoma himself owns several

in the Otavi district – so the land reform program, as in Zimbabwe, is presently benefiting the privileged elite.⁽⁹⁾

Government rhetoric was followed by land invasions, as happened in Zimbabwe. The threats against the arrogant whites were translated as a go-ahead by the masses to grab farms. In December 2002, workers took over the farm Kalkpan near Gobabis and vandalized property. There was talk that that farm would be expropriated without compensation.⁽¹⁰⁾ The owner Mr. Ron Pieterse, obtained a court order evicting the workers.

Due to poor health, Pieterse's 95-year-old father in law left the farm and by the time Pieterse and his son visited it to take occupation, the four families resident on the farm had increased their cattle herd to 500. They had simply availed themselves of the sparse grazing and, as a result, Pieterse asked them to reduce their herds. This they refused to do. When the bailiff began removing workers' structures, a mob moved towards the farm armed with weapons including knives and pipes. They assaulted the bailiff's workers. They then moved to the farm residence, broke the gates and fencing and destroyed outbuildings. Pieterse was ordered to come out of the house where he had taken refuge.

In the meantime, the mob wrecked Pieterse's motor vehicles, tractors and farm implements. All of this was encouraged by one Laura McCleod, governor of the Omaheke district in which the farm falls. The following day the workers threatened to burn Pieterse's house down. In the meantime, the Namibian government instructed lawyers to appeal the eviction order! Appeals usually take two years in Namibia and in the meantime, all evictions were stopped. Thus the workers remained, with their cattle.

For the sake of peace and his own safety, Mr. Pieterse came to an agreement with the workers that they pay a small amount per head for their cattle's grazing. The SWAPO youth branch in Gobabis demanded the government expropriate the farm without compensation! It was later rumoured the cabinet decided to expropriate the farm, but with compensation. This was not however confirmed.

Clearly, the government's ramblings about arrogant whites bore fruit in terms of citizens' demands for expropriation, albeit in this case as an ad hoc move. Now everyone is working on the land reform "question", but the real question is: is there any reason to believe that resettled land will not end up in the condition in which South African transferred land has been found?

In November 2003, the invasion of 15 commercial farms was planned but staved off by the authorities. However, unrest had begun - a few months earlier, a farm dam, irrigation pipes and fencing were damaged on the farm Krumhuk belonging to Mr. Ulf-Dieter Voigts.⁽¹¹⁾

It can only become worse, given the fragile farming conditions in Namibia. Reports are already filtering in about the conditions on resettled farms. A Namibian newspaper said on November 11, 2003 that officials from the Ministry of Lands in the Oshikoto region of the country were taking bribes in exchange for farmland earmarked for resettlement, according to documents in the newspaper's possession.⁽¹²⁾

These irregularities came into the open when people resettled on the farm Welmoed about 20 km north-east of Tsumeb complained about overcrowding and overgrazing.

In another instance, the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance's member of Parliament McHenry Venaani said the government's resettlement program was simply "following in the path of Kenya and Zimbabwe by apportioning land to government leaders".⁽¹³⁾ "You are giving land to the wrong people" he said. He also declared that

farms acquired by government for resettlement “were deteriorating rapidly and that productivity on these farms was not what it could be. Those who do not work the land must be evicted from the farms and replaced with others who want to be resettled and want to farm”.

The government told the House of Parliament in early October 2003 that “little was known about how effective the resettlement policy actually might be”.⁽¹⁴⁾

If such land degradation continues, Namibia will descend much faster into desert than other countries in southern Africa. But who seems to care in the ruling elite? On 14 November 2003 Mr. Risto Kapenda of the National Union of Namibian Workers said “whites must go”.⁽¹⁵⁾ “You Europeans must go back to Europe, nobody will miss you. Before you stole our land, we were self-supporting farmers. If we get back the ground which belonged to our forefathers, we will be able to sustain ourselves. We don’t need you!”

If he’s wrong, which he is, the consequences of this racist invocation to national suicide will be, as the saying goes, too ghastly to contemplate. “Land reform” in its various guises has meant nothing but tragedy in southern Africa. Namibia’s president is determined to tread the path of Zimbabwe. Let us hope South Africa will not move along that road as well.

SLAUGHTER – THE FARM MURDER PLAGUE

Department of Land Affairs minister Ms. Thoko

Didiza's newest expropriation legislation has become law. Amendments to the Land Restitution Act went ahead, despite objections by several institutions, commercial agriculture and some parties.

"The Act was ratified on November 27, in the absence of the President, notwithstanding expectations that ratification was to be debated early in 2004", declared Mr. Willie Lewies, Transvaal Agricultural Union South Africa (TAU-SA) vice president.

South African property is now subject to expropriation by the government. Some "sweetener" clauses were added to this legislation at the last minute, but the bottom line remains – nobody, least of all a South African farmer, possesses secure property rights.

TAU-SA is planning to oppose this unilateral termination of property rights, and has placed accountability for the economic and security consequences of land invasions and trespassing at the door of the State President, claimed Mr. Lewies.

Land invasions, intimidation, arson, stock and crop theft, the vagaries of the weather and the devaluation of farm properties – farmers try to cope with these adversities every day. What has become impossible to bear is the emergence of farm murders and attacks as a terrible fact of daily life in the ANC's new South Africa.

Since the new South African government came to power in 1994, 1 600 farmers have been murdered, and there have been well in excess of 8 000 farm attacks. Some victims have been horribly tortured, and in many instances, nothing was stolen during the perpetration of the crime.

(Since the SA government's ascendance to power in May 1994, a farm murder has occurred on average once every second day, while there have been on average 77 farm attacks per month).

The pervasiveness of these murders and the Mau Mau-type behaviour of the criminals who commit them has alerted the world to what is happening to commercial agriculture in South Africa, especially in light of the catastrophe which has befallen Zimbabwe. Critical eyes have now been fixed on the South African government's reaction to these murders, and what the regime proposes to do about them.

Not much, it seems. South Africa has become the crime capital of the world. In itself, this is a devastating indictment of the ability of the new SA government to govern. But what is alarming about the farm murder plague is the systematic destruction directed at the very few people who keep over 100 million people in Southern Africa fed.

The public outcry about farm murders precipitated the appointment of a commission of enquiry by the government into farm murders, but the commission's report has been disappointing and frustrating. It has been met with scathing censure in some quarters. Like so many official enquiries in South Africa, this one appears to be something of a whitewash.

It was due for release in August 2003, but was delayed. Apparently two government ministers said they were unhappy with the report, resulting in an outburst

of criticism that there would be interference in the final draft. This was denied by the ministers involved. It was claimed the report was referred back to the independent committee, to all intents and purposes thus sully their independence.

Whatever caused the delay, the interpretation of certain facts was disputed. In nearly 90% of the murders, says the report, the motive was robbery. Intimidation was given as the reason for 7,1% of the attacks, while only 2% were attributed to racial motives. The committee found there was a perception that farmers were rich, and that they had many firearms. The report recommended the government give “urgent attention” to the illegal land invasions which have beset South Africa, as these could have led to farm murders and attacks.

What do we say about farm murders? What have we found throughout South Africa?.

It is a fact that most murders are carried out by young black men between the ages of 18 and 30. There is no law and order in the country, an extremely low murder conviction rate (9% as against Japan’s 99%), no jobs for people whom the State President himself describes as “unemployable”, and the belief in many black communities that having a piece of land, even as a subsistence possession, is better than living in a squatter camp.

Murder Rate

The murder rate among South African commercial farmers (who are not all white) is the highest for a specific group in the world – 313 per 100 000.

In his keynote book “Farm Attacks and the African Renaissance”, Professor C.J. Moolman outlines the role of land in traditional Africa. He succinctly defines the basic polarity between Western and African cultures. “The livelihood of Blacks has traditionally been, and is currently still in rural areas, intricately connected to their system of land tenure. They erect their dwellings on the land, cultivate it, graze their livestock upon it, and hunt over its surface.”

“They use its water for domestic purposes and for their herds and flocks. They eat the wild fruits and other fruits it produces, and make medicines from its vegetation. They convert its wood into huts, palisades and various utensils, and its reeds and grass into basket-work, thatch and string, and they extract from it metals, clay for their pots, and earth for the floors and walls for their huts.”

This describes traditional Africa. But traditional Africa cannot feed itself. There is not one single African country self-sufficient in food. They have to depend on the West for survival. And the West has a completely different approach to food production, and to life itself.

This cultural dichotomy unfortunately occurs in one country – South Africa – and the contents of this book shows clearly that Western commercial farming has rescued South Africa from the fate which befell the rest of the continent.

“Rural land hunger”, says Professor Moolman “cannot be satisfied when its needs for land are based on anything other than agricultural production. Ideologically motivated “liberation of the land” is not an accepted motive for either redistribution of land or the intimidation of white farmers in an effort to force them off their land”.

Thus the government’s promise to return the land to the people as outlined in the Freedom Charter is an invitation to famine. By turning a blind eye to land invasions (except of course when the government itself owns the land or where diamond mining is involved), and by withdrawing the commandos from rural areas, the government has exposed the South African commercial farming sector to the

current wave of criminality, where hatred, resentment and cruel savagery accompany so many farm murders.

South Africa cannot survive this genocidal wave, and it must be checked. Given the disastrous results of Minister Didiza's handover of productive farms to unskilled people, many wonder why she insists that 30% of productive farmland will be transferred to emerging farmers before 2015. (We use the term "emerging" with some caution, given that most people who received restitution or redistribution farms were not farmers.)

There is talk that Ms. Didiza knows her policy is a failure, and is prepared to sacrifice 30% of South Africa's productive farms "in the interests of her party's idealism and promises".

It is claimed she believes that the remaining 70% of the farming community will continue operating "and carry us all". She may be in for a big surprise.

A large number of farmers have had enough. Some would sell tomorrow at a fair price, others for what they can get. When four members of your family have been murdered on your farm, it is not really an attractive proposition any more. When you see what has happened to Zimbabwe's commercial farming community, the future looks bleak, despite government assurances that "it won't happen here".

When your grazing is burnt out four times a year, when your crops and stock are stolen, when you can do little to stop squatter invasions on what is after all your private property, and when your chances of being slaughtered in your home are the greatest in the world, why bother?

Then of course there's the expropriation legislation. Why put your heart and soul into something that can be taken away at the stroke of a pen? Why, indeed!

Many farmers soldier on because farming is their life. But their children? Are they attracted to a life of danger, or does a career overseas or in the cities look more alluring? Ms. Didiza should not depend on her 70% back-up. There are no guarantees here.

The Questions

The next question about farm murders is why? The government report declared that most murders and attacks are simply criminal. But Professor Moolman points out the following:

- Why are the attacks and murders on farms so premeditated, while statistics indicate that the overwhelming majority of murders in South Africa are related to alcohol, drug abuse, and interpersonal and domestic conflict?
- Why are farm attacks so extremely brutal which is not the case with the majority of murders in South Africa?
- Why are farm attacks and murders mostly black on white, while this is not necessarily the case in the rest of South Africa? If theft is the most important motive, why are thousands of black shop owners in rural areas not brutalised remotely as much during attacks by gangs as is the white farming community?
- Why are farmers constantly accused of mistreating their workers, thus precipitating farm attacks, while the Helen Suzman Foundation found that 93% of farm workers indicate their relationship with their employers is good?
- Why have bad socio-economic conditions become the reason for attacks, while it is acknowledged that bad socio-economic conditions existed before 1994 in black communities?

Professor Moolman says cases of “senseless killing” have been identified. Criminals wait at the farm house, without taking anything, and then torture and kill the farmer on his return. Other cases reveal a farmer’s family being held hostage until he returns. Some criminals travel vast distances to attack people on farms and then only take firearms or the family car, which is later found abandoned down the road. (See the case of Mrs. Viljoen in the North West chapter). Racial utterances at the crime scene are commonplace.

Gratuitous violence is widespread. If women are present, they are often raped. Torture is now fairly routine, something relatively new in South Africa’s criminal history. Cruelty to animals is recurrent, a hark back to the Mau Mau terror campaign which drove whites off Kenyan farms.

Space prevents us from placing pictures of gruesome farm murders in this book. In any event, out of respect for the families we cannot. Suffice it to say evidence has been placed before the South African public by way of television and the printed media of the sheer savagery of those who inflict pain on innocent people: an elderly farmer whose head was opened by an axe; a lady of 84 who was repeatedly raped. Vicious stabbings are common, as is using a heated iron to burn victims. Some victims have been suffocated, others slashed with a panga (a heavy knife used to cut sugar cane). People have been set alight (including a year-old baby), while others were strangled, garroted, pistol-whipped, mutilated, and dumped into boiling water. Children have been threatened and beaten up, and some youngsters were tied to trees and left to die.

Then there is the post-traumatic stress, the fear of returning to one’s farm, the frequent repeat attacks, sometimes up to four or five times.

Teaching people to secure themselves is big business in South Africa. People are warned not to do this or that, to watch for something here, to be vigilant for someone there. Security habits must be cultivated, we are told, and looking over one’s shoulder has become a way of life. Bakkies (pick-up trucks) are now being advertised as bullet-proof.

Clearly, robbery is not the main motive for farm attacks, and our research shows that farmers feel this to be so. “They want to drive us from our land” we heard continuously.

The additional problems of intimidation, crop and stock theft, illegal squatting and expropriation legislation all point to this being a fact.

Recently two men were given life sentences for killing an 81-year-old farmer. Judge J.M.C. Smit told the court that there were “other motives” besides theft. The old farmer was so terribly and brutally assaulted that he died from his wounds. In another similar case, Judge Smit made the same remark.

Minister Didiza should remember that attacks on farmers will considerably reduce her remaining 70% of commercial farmers who are expected to feed us all. The way things are going at present, she will be lucky to have any farms left to expropriate!

Chapter Seventeen

CONCLUSION

“Land Dilemma for Zimbabwe’s Farmers”
(from the *South African Farmer’s Weekly* March 29, 1991)

“The fairy-tale ending of the independence war in Zimbabwe ten years ago, with its emphasis on reconciliation between black and white ... has been rudely shattered. The cause is the state’s pronouncements on land ownership since the recent termination of the Lancaster House Constitution.

Black workers on white-owned farms are worried that farm take-overs will threaten their livelihoods. Among white farmers, there is a growing feeling the government has finally decided to run roughshod over their interests. In terms of the latest amendments to the country’s constitution, the state can legally take over any property at a compensation to be determined by itself and at a price that cannot be challenged by arbitration or in court.

Large-scale commercial farmers, almost all of them white, own nearly 29% of Zimbabwe’s utilized land. But they produce marketed products worth nearly two billion dollars a year and support more than 1,5 million black workers and their families on their farms.

Farmers foresee their highly-productive additional farms being reduced to small plots of 4 –5 hectares each for settlement by subsistence tribesmen, inevitably with resultant erosion, degradation and a massive loss of potential output.

*Agriculture Minister Dr. Witness Mangwende has assured white farmers the government is willing to discuss the procedure of land take-overs. **Once a white farmer has relocated elsewhere, his new farm would not be expropriated.** (Emphasis ours)*

White farmers’ strongest criticism is that the present government is unable to give an assurance as to how the powers will be used in future. The powers (of expropriation) will be very wide and vested in one minister and outside the scrutiny of the courts.

The minister warned the white farmers not to use the issue of farm workers as an excuse to maintain the status quo. “Government must redress the imbalances of the past in the interests of both political and economic stability”, said Dr. Mangwende.”

At the time, the greatest problem for Zimbabwe’s

commercial farmers was the potential loss of production to the country and the plight of their black workers. Never in their wildest dreams could they have imagined what was in store for the country known as “the breadbasket of Africa” – the terror, the murders, rapes and tortures, the famine, the destruction of the judiciary, the arbitrary closures of the media and the huge and obscene profligacy of the ruling clique while their citizens starved.

Could it happen here in South Africa? You bet it could, unless South Africa’s citizens stand up and do something now, not later.

The Zimbabwe government's assurances and the guarantees are eerily repeated in today's South Africa, and it is not "pessimistic" at all to wonder whether we could end up a second Zimbabwe.

Some Points to Ponder

- "The greatest danger in respect of land reform is not official action – it is official incapacity to support new small farmers. It seems very unlikely that the Department of Agriculture will be able to establish a level of support services to ensure that rural slum conditions on redistributed land will be avoided."

- Dr. Lawrence Schlemmer of the Helen Suzman Foundation at a Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) address 30 September 2003.

- "In no area inhabited by blacks were there any systems of individual freehold of land. There were only guaranteed rights of usage inside the territory of tribal leaders. The different tribal groups were separated by large sectors of uninhabited land so that the constant sub-division of tribes and the occupation by them of uninhabited land was possible. Because of the slow southward movement of tribes, a specific area was seldom inhabited for more than fifty years by the same people. The same area would frequently be inhabited by different tribes one after the other. If war between these tribes – through which tribal cohesion was sometimes destroyed – is taken into account, the question arises as to just how long a certain vaguely-defined piece of land would have to be inhabited before a legal right to that land would be established."

- Professor R.D. Coertze, former head of the Department of Anthropology and Archaeology at the University of Pretoria, quoted from Property Rights in South Africa, commissioned by the Transvaal Agricultural Union South Africa. (1999)

- There were 20 000 job losses in South Africa in the first quarter of 2003. Less than 6,5 million of South Africa's 44,8 million people were formally employed by March 2003. South Africa's third-largest singular employer group is the agricultural sector – although it now employs less than 600 000 people, down by 420 000 since 1992. The October 2001 census shows an estimated South African population of 44,8 million, up from 40,6 million in October 1996, with 79% African, 9,6% European, 2,5% Asian and 8,9% Coloured. The Census estimated that, overall, 43,9% of the SA population surveyed was "economically inactive". The African population has 47,1% unemployment.

- Statistics South Africa, official government website:
<http://www.statssa.gov.za/specialprojects/census2001>

- South Africa's unemployment rate increased by 54% between 1996 and 2003. The total number of unemployed people increased by 136%. Yet the total number of employed people rose by 25% in the same period. In other words, there were some 2,3 million more jobs in 2003 than there were in 1996. Why so much unemployment?

- SA Institute of Race Relations, Fast Facts, Nov. 2003.

- There are successful black farmers, and their achievements are often noted in the media. In most of the cases we investigated, they had used their own money (or they had invested a substantial shareholding in their farms). They had listened to and taken advice, and had sought out people who could help them. Various sustainable systems for small-scale farming have been developed by academics and agricultural

practitioners, and if the government would use these, and ensure that the methods are adhered to, there is a chance that sustainable small-scale farming could work.

“Professor Frits Rijkenberg of the University of Natal’s Centre for Rural Development Systems has developed a project that aims to foster sustainable, resource-efficient small-scale farming with the goal of encouraging the rural poor to uplift themselves throughout agriculture.” - Farmer’s Weekly, 4 July 2003.

The government should support the use of these projects, and assist the participants with constant supervision and advice.

- South Africa’s commercial farmers are among the best in the world, if not the best. They have to contend with a plethora of problems – the vagaries of the weather, constant drought, rising taxes on everything from the rain on their trees to municipal levies (for which they receive nothing), and excessively high toll road costs. South Africa’s land tenure laws make it difficult to dismiss workers, let alone remove these workers from their properties, and they are besieged by land invasions and squatters. They are the victims of crop and stock theft, more murders per capita of their group than any other community on earth. They are burnt out, their fences are destroyed, and they are intimidated to the point where many have abandoned their farms.

The government’s minimum wage policy has resulted in a fifty-percent drop in farm labour numbers, and many of these ex-employees now wander the cities looking for work.

“It is said that white farmers currently own 87% of South Africa’s land. When one deducts the 25% owned by the government, the remaining figure of 62% must be viewed against a background of other vital factors. Less than 12% of SA’s land is suitable for cultivation. South Africa has an average annual rainfall of only 464 mm, against a world average of 857 mm. Twenty one percent of the country has a total rainfall of less than 200 mm annually, 48% between 200 mm and 600 mm, while only 31% records more than 600 mm. Thus 65% of the country has an average annual rainfall of 500 mm – usually regarded as the absolute minimum for successful dry-land farming.”

“Some of the best and most fertile, high rainfall land in South Africa is found in six traditional black areas, but most farmers there produce only for their own consumption. More than 70% of South Africa, including more than 100 medium-sized towns, is dependent on underground water sources, tapped through the use of sophisticated borehole equipment. This represents about 13% of all the water used in the country. It should be remembered that huge tracts of land in South Africa, particularly in the northern areas, would be completely useless if it were not for these deep boreholes. Cattle farming in these areas depends almost completely on these underground water sources.

South Africa’s greatest export is topsoil, which is stripped away at a rate four times higher than the world average, and 20 times faster than it can be replaced. Thousands of tons of eroded earth disappear into oceans every year. Most of this scourge is due to poor land management.”

- Mr. Willie Lewies, TAU-SA Vice President, *The Citizen* 19 May 2000

- South African agricultural technology is world-renowned. The Zebediela Estate in the Limpopo province, for example, was a world leader in modern citrus production. Every week, farm magazines contain details of some new experiment or

innovation or patent registered or, significantly, some new theft preventative or innovative security measure.

(One such invention is a gravity gate – a boon to farmers who suffer from stock theft and/or loss.) One water expert was praised by National Geographic for his creative water saving programs. Another grows mushrooms with water hyacinths. Research is now being conducted into crops which can be irrigated with salt water. The creativity is seemingly boundless...

South Africa's mohair farmers are the world's best. The country's sugarcane industry is world-class, as is (was) its agricultural and veterinary scientific endeavours. In contrast to most of Africa, Western-style farm technology and methods have more than doubled South Africa's agricultural production during the past 30 years. South African agriculture earns around R25 billion in foreign exchange each year.

- Many academics concerned about land reform place the emphasis on settling millions of peasants onto farm land. In the numerous tomes presented at conferences and summits, and repeated in South Africa's media, this ideology wins the day.

The reason for this resettlement policy is "poverty alleviation", but no empirical data is given proving this notion to be successful. Whole sectors at South Africa's academic community are devoted to this premise.

We have found that the government's "resettlement" policy in point of fact creates more poverty. We wonder why so much money is spent on theorizing about the purported efficacy of resettlement without any academic institution actually investigating the results of government's handover policy, which we have now done, albeit without a bevy of researchers and unlimited funding.

This would have been a salutary exercise for South Africa's academic community to undertake! Surely the "poverty alleviation" theory should be backed by hard evidence that it works?

In addition, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO's) spend their time and their overseas-funded budgets supporting and indeed initiating the handover of productive farmland in South Africa to the so-called dispossessed. These groups, one of which is the Nkuzi Development Association, are actively involved in pressing communities to claim land, whatever the consequences.

Are the taxpayers in Norway, Denmark, Britain, Canada and the United States not concerned that their money is used to reduce farm production in South Africa?

The activities of these NGO's could eventually result in serious food shortages in South Africa. Are these same governments prepared to feed 45 million people when famine strikes this part of the world?

- Do young black people really want to farm?

Not according to an informal think tank meeting conducted at the invitation of the UN's Food and Agricultural Organisation's regional office in Harare, Zimbabwe. This get-together was held in Pretoria on 1 and 2 March 2003 and was attended by international land reform and agricultural luminaries from the United Kingdom, the Human Sciences Research Council of South Africa, South African university academics, and representatives from Mozambique, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Namibia and Senegal. They declared they wanted to analyse the constraints of sustainable land reform. Despite apartheid and colonialism, they said, it was becoming increasingly difficult for donors to justify the allocation of aid resources to land reform in southern Africa. (This is of course reflected in the South African

government's paucity of funding for land reform. After the Zimbabwe experience, countries are not going to throw good money after bad.)

It was agreed the Zimbabwe situation was a total disaster. More than one and a half million people lost their livelihood as a result of the Zimbabwe government's policy of grabbing white farms. What then for South Africa? Significantly, it was declared that a "systematic review of land restitution and redistribution projects implemented during the last decade is clearly needed, together with a review of the assumptions on which these models are based.

A rigorous re-examination of the economic rationale for redistribution is essential. *Hard evidence is required if current dysfunctional policies are to be challenged and alternative paradigms advanced.*" (Italics ours).

This we believe we have accomplished with this book, at least as a start. Small-scale farming came under the microscope. The committee declared that this type of farming could not compete production-wise, locally or in world markets, with large-scale commercial farming. Post-transfer support (or the lack of it) came in for a drubbing.

There has been a movement away from small-scale farming in Africa, said the committee, and the question they asked is – do today's young people (say 15 – 45 years) want to be farmers? This of course was a rhetorical question, because evidence throughout Africa shows young people want jobs, and they eschew the agricultural life.

Our research revealed a disappointment by older black people in the young people of today who are in many instances seen as worthless, lazy and unprepared to do a day's work. The last two years have seen a discernible increase in the number of youths involved in crime, and particularly young men. (*Citizen* 12 September 2003) This is borne out by the fact that most if not all crimes against farmers are committed by young black men. Indeed, most of the crimes committed in South Africa are by the same group, according to political observer Dan Roodt. His column to this effect was spiked by the liberal Afrikaans newspaper *Rapport* editor Tim du Plessis. Pity, because it is the truth and it needs to be publicly declared.

- It is a disgrace that America's wealthy Ford Foundation funds local land NGO's in their efforts to encourage people to claim productive farmland, in many cases without a legal basis. In one instance, the South African Legal Resources Center, heavily funded by this American foundation, has kept up its legal fight against South African farmers in the Mabaalstat case.

The Baphiring community/tribe owned 7 000 hectares and, upon removal, received 17 000 hectares of prime agricultural land, together with monetary compensation and infrastructure. Now they are claiming back the 7 000 hectares although the chief of the Baphiring tribe testified in court that he will not relinquish one inch of the 17 000 hectares. Land claim legislation specifies that if compensation was granted after a removal, then there is no valid claim.

So far it has cost farmers who are rejecting this claim R800 000, while those who are instituting a frivolous claim pay not a penny in legal fees! We will be investigating the role of the Ford Foundation and other overseas funders of land claimants in the coming year.

- What about land reform in other countries?

From our research, one glaring fact is apparent. Land reform depends on the ability and willingness of the recipients to farm, or to adapt to farming. Chile for example introduced serious land reform in 1958 where land barons' farms were split up and given to small farmers. This eventuated in a four-phase process, and with the exception of the third phase under communist President Salvador Allende, the process was successful. The old owners were compensated, and technical assistance and research was introduced to help the new owners. During the fourth phase under the government of Augusto Pinochet, land was set aside for the indigenous Indian population. Chile now has the most advanced economy in South America - the majority of its population is educated and hard-working.

During a question and answer session at a recent seminar on land invasions held at the Institute for Security Studies in Pretoria, Mr. Edward Lahiff of the University of the Western Cape was asked where land reform was successful. He mentioned his own country Ireland, and certain Asian lands. Ireland's history was always one of a political struggle for land, but its people adapted to modern farming because they had the innate capacity to do so. Such was the case in Asia.

Most Asians are hard workers. The example of South Korea's rise from the ashes is salutary. In the mid-1950s, Korea's per capita income was \$146 (on a par with Ghana and Nigeria). It had come out of 35 years of Japanese colonization, and was plunged into a civil war which left 25% of the population as refugees.

With no resources and virtually no agricultural economy and a population of 45 million (74% of whom were illiterate), it changed into the 12th largest economy in the world within 40 years. It had become the second largest shipbuilder in the world, and the fourth largest maker of electronics in the world. It was the planet's largest steel producer while its GDP grew on average at 9.1/2% per annum. (*Business Day* Oct. 4, 2002)

The small island of Hokkaido is Japan's most productive agricultural area - it produces 11% of the country's food. There are 5,6 million people on this island, the size of Pennsylvania. Hokkaido is subject to frequent earthquakes (the last one was in September 2003). The average farmer plot is 16,1 hectares. Hokkaido's land reform program consisted of developing the land from scratch, and placing farmers on small plots as far back as the turn of the previous century. Why does Hokkaido work? Because the people make it work, just as the Japanese have created one of the world's leading economies on a rocky, earthquake-prone series of islands, with few natural resources.

Contrast this with Brazil, one of the largest countries in area in the world. One per cent of Brazil's farmers own 46% of the country's arable land. (Reported during the Earth Summit in September 2002). Agri-business in Brazil accounts for 27% of the country's GDP. But in early 2002, the Brazilian government succumbed to peasant violence and pressure and introduced a land reform program which was to liberate millions.

This program was a monumental failure. It was precipitated with farm invasions. In one of the most ambitious land reform programs ever, Brazil parceled out 18 million hectares to 542,000 families - nearly 2 million people. It cost the Brazilian taxpayers \$6,5 billion, and these peasants were supposed to become "family farmers". The Landless Workers Movement was at the forefront of the land invasions and farm violence which forced the Brazilian government's hand. (This same movement was in South Africa giving advice to local land activists!)

What *Newsweek* (21 January 2002) calls "partial surveys" revealed that in some areas, up to half of the new landowners left their plots - *Newsweek* declared that

most new settlers were welfare cases. “The vast majority cannot feed themselves. Their collective output doesn’t even get tallied into Brazil’s \$80 billion a year agricultural production.”

In the last three decades, Brazil became an agricultural powerhouse. Large-scale commercial farming produced the 100 million tons of crops which brought in the annual \$80 billion. This commercial farm sector accounts for 61% of Brazil’s internationally-traded farm goods.

As in South Africa, most of the hand-over farms collapsed. Equipment rusted, people didn’t pay for electricity. And as in South Africa, political activists purported to speak for “disinherited” Brazilians and said that land reform “shouldn’t be measured by an economic yardstick”. The present government of Luiz Lula da Silva is under pressure to fast track more land reform, despite the disasters of the past.

Brazil’s indigenous Indians have now invaded border farmland. They have claimed 12% of the country’s productive farms. (BBC, 9 January 2004).

Where a country has a mass of people who are virtually unemployable, they cry for land as a last resort. They do not have the capabilities to become involved in other aspects of their country’s economy. They are unskilled and cannot compete. Western people in countries like the US, Canada and Australia, for example, do not demand land, even though they are landless. They are employable in other sectors of the economy. Only 2% of the US population farms, while the rest work in that country’s other sectors.

South Africa is unfortunately similar to Brazil, Venezuela and Peru (where 50% of the population lives in extreme poverty and where infant mortality is 78%).

- We do not have the space to discuss Zimbabwe. Everyone in South Africa knows about that country’s horrors and terrors, and the softly-softly approach to the tyranny by the South African government. It gives many South Africans pause for thought – if the SA government finds little to complain about north of the border, what are they prepared to permit in a future South Africa?

Will they sit back and see South Africa’s commercial agricultural sector destroyed? Will they watch as South Africa’s commercial farmers move to Zambia, Mozambique and Malawi as have some Zimbabwe farmers?

Do they realize the risk inherent in land expropriation in South Africa? Barloworld economist Pieter Haasbroek supports the oil-from-coal giant SASOL’s stance over black economic empowerment. “It has a negative impact on productivity, on the cost of business and therefore on the competitiveness and profitability of companies”, he declared. (*Business Day* December 1, 2003)

But the government’s policy of land reform is also a black empowerment policy. The same principle applies. Farms are given to unskilled people just as cushy jobs are handed to unqualified blacks. Those blacks who can farm and are competent to run a company are penalised because of this. The whole process is skewed and, ultimately, dishonest, and it is little wonder foreign investment is shaky. So many commentators both here and overseas find the SA government’s policies “unfathomable”, a word used often. Robert Mugabe’s behaviour is unfathomable, of course, but it is unfathomable to people not of his mindset. Are those in charge of South Africa of the same turn of thought? Let us hope not.

Journalist Stephen Mulholland wrote in 2001 that “the greedy rob the wealthy”. There is a ratio of 11:1 of voters to taxpayers. In the USA the ratio is approximately 2: 1. (*Sunday Times* 23 September 2001) In February 2002, journalist Matthew Lester reported that there were 3,4 million individual taxpayers in South

Africa who take on the burden of R90 billion of individual taxes out of a total tax collection of R233 billion. (*Business Times* February 10, 2002).

This statistic excludes the substantial additional taxes that are paid by individual taxpayers by way of VAT. These individual taxpayers represent only 9% of the population, but they are the people with some real power, and they should be heard. They should speak out for this country's agricultural sector. Business should also be up in arms, because dozens if not scores of towns throughout South Africa will disappear if agriculture fails. Businesses will then be taxed further to make up the shortfall.

A well-known media commentator was recently heard to say that what is happening on South Africa's farms "is a small price to pay for stability in South Africa". Well, it is not a small price, and stability will not be guaranteed if famine stares us in the face.

It is time to act, South Africa. Reject farm expropriations, and demand that those farms already destroyed be resuscitated. In the end, we are all in this together.

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- 15,16,17,18. *Mail & Guardian 12.10.01*
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- 3,4. *Sunday Times 11.8.02*
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- 6,7. *Sunday Times 10.11.02*
- 8,9,10. *Farmer's Weekly 18.4.03*
- 11,12. *Noseweek. November 2003*
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- 2,3. *Mail & Guardian 22.2.02*
- 4,5,6,7,8,9. *Mail & Guardian 6.6.03*
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- 14,15,16. *Business Report 29.6.03*
- 17,18,19. *Business Report 20.7.03*
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2. *The Citizen 7.7.01*
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- 4,5. *Farmer's Weekly 11.10.02*
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- 10,11. *Rapport 5.10.03*
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- 3,4,5. *Business Day* 26.5.03
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