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URBAN CRISIS: STATE REFORM AND POPULAR REACTION  
A Case Study of Alexandra

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## INTRODUCTION

This study examines state reform policy and popular township response from 1976 to 1987 in Alexandra, a black township bordering Johannesburg and Sandton's richest white suburbs.

Reform, resistance and repression have become bywords of South African political terrain. Their simplicity describes broad parameters of state activity. But often these elements are juxtaposed as distinct areas of research so evading the complexity arising from the interaction between state policy and popular reaction.

The general political, economic and ideological crisis which emerged in South Africa in the mid-1970s had particular repercussions in the urban realm. Apartheid state intervention regulated control and allocation of labour through influx control and restricted provision of housing and infrastructural services. By the end of the 1970s influx control had proved inefficient and incompatible with the demands of capital for a settled, skilled labour force. Lack of housing and infrastructure had reached crisis proportions. Rapid unionisation from 1973 followed by the 1976 uprising demonstrated the government's economic and political tightrope. Administration

boards' attempts to right the crisis, or even maintain their management and control functions, were hampered by a growing fiscal crisis.

Against the backdrop of the urban crisis, three shifts in the relation between state reform and township reaction can be identified.

The first phase corresponds with the 1979 Riekert Commission, the first coherent state reformist strategy to counter urban crisis. It hoped to solve influx control problems by recognising the existence of a permanent urban population and creating a clear divide between 'insiders' and 'outsiders'. Insider's privileges arose from relaxation of influx control, participation in local government and access to homeownership through 99-year leasehold. It stressed the necessity of creating a black middle-class as a political stabiliser. The housing shortage, Riekert suggested, could be resolved by lifting the prohibition on urban family residential accommodation and shifting the responsibility for financing and constructing homes from the state to the employer and the individual. Solution to the fiscal crisis, he proposed, lay in making local government economically self-sufficient by increasing rent and service tariffs to economic levels.



This general strategy, still premised on separation between white South Africa and bantustans, was applied nationally. But not all the recommendations came to fruition. Influx control adaptations were never legislated, and administration boards resorted to bureaucratic delays and blockages to hinder implementation of new policies. Community and town council elections were characterised by low polls. Township civics and national political organisations criticised the councils for their powerlessness and lack of legitimacy. Local government's policy of financial self-sufficiency proved a catalyst to township political organisation. Dramatic rent increases were an extra burden a recession-pressed working class could ill afford. Civic organisations mobilised residents against the increases. Though they denied councils' legitimacy, they were willing to bargain and negotiate with councillors. But their overtures and demands usually fell on deaf ears. Residents felt they were paying more for ever worsening township conditions.

As the crisis deepened and councils and administration boards maintained their unsympathetic stance, popular organisation began to assume an increasingly radical tone and intent. This marks the second phase. It culminated in a period of ungovernability between 1985 and 1986. The council system collapsed and councillors were hounded out of townships. In its place, activists created 'organs of people's power' - street committees and people's courts. They were no longer concerned with solving local grievances but with establishing embryonic revolutionary

popular power. Born on the terrain of violent conflict with the state, people's power was never able to consolidate itself by building a politically educated and democratic base. Open resistance was crushed as the South African Defence Force invaded townships, arrested cadres and the government declared a national state of emergency.

By 1986 the state faced an urban crisis of similar dimensions but greater magnitude compared to 1976. Influx control had failed to stem the tide of workseekers. The effect of the housing shortage was demonstrated by growing shack settlements. Black local government was financially and politically bankrupt. Intensified crisis sets the tone for the third phase: the state's reappraisal of urban management strategy when resistance had been crushed.

This reappraisal does not signify a return to the premises of the Riekert Commission. The 1985 President's Council report on urbanisation strategy views South Africa and bantustans in regional, functionally-integrated terms. Insider/outsider strategy has been replaced by subtle differentiation between metropolitan township populations and within such populations through fiscal policy and differing standards of accommodation and infrastructure. Homeownership is now more broadly and cheaply available.



Regional Services Councils (RSCs) were established as a means to overcome the fiscal and infrastructural crisis. They are reliant on business levies to finance township infrastructure. Black local authorities serve on RSCs. Multi-racial local government is highly centralised to insulate it from popular protest. The introduction of Joint Management Centres (JMCs) signifies the militarisation of state bureaucracy. JMCs are the grassroots level of the National Security Management System and linked to state administration at local and regional levels. They represent a new bureaucracy, within the reformist fold, and far more responsive to township grievances. The state seems to have targetted particular townships as serious security problems and instituted upgrading programmes which follow the dictates of the new urbanisation strategy, are financed by RSCs and administered by JMCs. The intention is to accommodate legitimate grievances about living conditions, and so defuse the foundations of radical protest. Open resistance has all but collapsed while the state redefines the political and social terrain.

Transformations in state policy and popular reaction are traced through their application and development in Alexandra.

Chapter one examines the legacy of apartheid in Alexandra. In the 1960s the government decided to convert the freehold township into a hostel city. Residents' homes were expropriated and demolished. Families were removed to other townships. But growing political pressure and state financial constraints,

linked to the general urban crisis, forced the state to reconsider its policy. As a result Alexandra was reprieved and rezoned as a family township in 1979.

The second chapter describes the urban crisis and reformist solutions put forward by the Riekert Commission on a national level.

Chapter three examines problems arising from implementation of a masterplan, drawn up in 1980, to redevelop Alexandra as a model insider's township. The constraints of working through local government also led to the demise of the party which had spearheaded protest to Alexandra's demolition in the 1970s. A working class, grassroots-oriented civic organised residents' resistance to dramatic rent increases.

The fourth chapter reviews the transition to radical mass politics, ungovernability and the creation of people's power. By 1985, the civic, which was willing to bargain with the council, had been superseded by a radical youth movement which denied any legitimacy to the town council.

I conclude in chapter five by probing the relation between a new strategy for urbanisation, as evidenced in an updated urban renewal programme for Alexandra, and the militarisation of the local state through the intervention of Joint Management Centres.



Sources consulted include a range of documentary evidence. Commercial newspaper clippings, the Alexandra town council newspaper, recent Bureau for Information newsletters distributed among Alexandra residents, and West Rand Administration Board letters, meeting minutes and internal memos proved a mine of information about implementation of state policy and state ideological offensive. Secondary sources and government commissions offered a national perspective for the same period.

It is more difficult to trace the activities and motivation of popular organisations. Their campaigns and policy statements are infrequently and confusingly reported in commercial papers. And their history is often lost to personal memory which rewrites the past to justify the future. Of course, popular newspapers, bulletins and pamphlets are helpful, when they can be found, and state court indictments also help flesh out a story. But otherwise I have relied on interviews with Alexandra activists. This too was hindered for political reasons: key cadre, particularly those who were active in 1985 and 1986 are either facing trial for treason, in detention, in exile or died in Alexandra's uprising in early 1986. It is difficult to trace people and given the state of emergency, one can only hope for a limited insight into the events of the past few years.

## CHAPTER 1: FROM FREEHOLD TO HOSTEL CITY

In 1963 the government decided to raze freehold Alexandra to the ground and rebuild a hostel city for urban workers. Residents were expropriated, and their homes were demolished. They were moved to other townships or dumped in bantustans. During the 1970s the plan began to lag. Financial restrictions limited hostel development.

On 7 May 1979 during the Department of Plural Relations and Development's budget vote, the Deputy-Minister announced, quite unexpectedly

'In the future Alexandra will be replanned for the accommodation of landowners and other qualified families in Alexandra ... We found that there was no alternative. Soweto cannot take those people and neither can Tembisa' (1).

The reprieve marked a turning point for Alexandra as government reformists took charge of its future. Behind this change in heart was the recognition that the hostel city was unrealisable: the plan had been dogged by financial constraints, delayed hostel construction and popular political pressure.



## 1.1 The Freehold Legacy

Alexandra was established as a Native Township with freehold land title in 1912. As existing townships were exempt from the provisions of the 1913 Native Land Act, the access to freehold and relative lack of administrative and influx controls made the township peculiarly attractive to urban workers and workseekers (2).

Yet this was also the source of its appalling poverty-stricken and overcrowded living conditions. Alexandra was in township idiom, 'Nobody's Baby'. Since it lay 2,5km outside Johannesburg's municipal boundary, the municipality refused to accept responsibility for township administration or infrastructure. And lacking statutory power and finance, the nominated Health Committee could never progress towards partly-elected town council or municipal status. The township was wracked by gangster wars, manipulated by racketeering landlords, notorious for a belligerent political culture and a health hazard. Alexandra was particularly well-known for its anti-pass campaign of 1943-6, the 1954 bantu education boycott, and the battle cry 'Asikwelwa' - 'we will not ride' - was borne in the bus boycotts of 1940, 1942, 1943, 1944, and 1957.

Expanding white residential areas wanted the eyesore slum removed. But municipal attempts to do so in 1939, 1943 and 1950 all failed (3).

The Mentz Regional Planning Committee, which formalised plans for establishing Soweto, recommended in 1952 that Alexandra remain as a labour pool for Johannesburg's northern suburbs. The township's presence would be tolerated on condition that its population be reduced to 30 000 people, and buffer areas be created to separate it from white areas. This was accepted. By 1958 the Peri-Urban Health Board had assumed control of the township. With a government loan of R200 000, granted the previous year, it intended to remove residents who worked in areas other than the northern suburbs, end unlawful influx, impose higher local taxes and purchase freehold titles (4).

The physical, moral and political 'clean up' of Alexandra now began in earnest. After conducting a census, the Board introduced a permit system to control residence in the township and non-qualifiers were resettled, initially quite willingly, in Meadowlands and Diepkloof. The census pinned the population at 87 000, of which 60 000 were expected to move to Meadowlands where the Native Resettlement Board planned to build 6 000 to 8 000 houses a year (5).



By the end of 1960 the Board had resettled 25 000 people and bought 99 properties (6). Two years later the tally stood at 44 196 removals and 337 property purchases. Construction began on sewerage, drain and sanitation facilities, a clinic and improvements to the lighting and electricity supply (7).

The redevelopment was short-lived. Alexandra's demise was announced by the Minister of Bantu Administration and Development on 25 March 1963. In its place would rise a hostel city for 20 000 single african men and women. Families would be resettled in Tembisa, Diepkloof and Meadowlands. Freehold would gradually disappear through voluntary sale of property (8).

Almost immediately afterwards, the debate on the Better Administration of Designated Areas Bill began. In the name of 'development', the bill sought to extend apartheid laws from controlled to freehold townships. This would facilitate resettlement, relocation and destroying remaining freehold rights. The provisions were to be applied to Alexandra immediately and later to other areas. Explained one National Party MP

'this legislation aims at proper control and administration of areas such as Alexandra. If the government does not intervene in controlling areas such as Alexandra chaos will develop there' (9).

The bill was passed in February 1964.

## 1.2 Creating a Hostel City

Local developments in Alexandra reflected national changes in urbanisation strategy as apartheid policy was introduced (10). Rezoning Alexandra for hostel accommodation and expropriation of freehold rights was in line with government policy which viewed africans as temporary sojourners in white towns.

The 1947 Sauer Report, the framework for subsequent Nationalist policy, had recommended freezing the number of 'detrribalised natives' in towns while reserving their preferential access to urban jobs. In the long term, they were to be regarded as visitors who temporarily offered their services. Africans would only be officially accommodated in cities if employment was available. Bantustans were now their primary place of residence, employment and political expression.

From the 1960s even permanent urban residence rights were attacked through mass removals and intensified influx control over women and children. Migrant labour was rapidly proletarianised and long distance commuting began to replace temporary migration from rural to urban areas. Bantustans became dumping grounds for surplus population.



Urbanisation policy was implemented by primarily coercive measures: pass laws, labour bureaux, and forced resettlement from 'black spots'. Housing and land allocation were tools to control those with rights to remain in white areas and implement influx control.

Within cities, the government razed squatter camps, removed freehold areas such as Sophiatown and Martindale (though it was ultimately less successful in Alexandra's case), and relocated people to controlled townships where the level of political activity and influx could be more easily monitored. Formal township establishment was a means to siphon out illegal residents and relocate sections of the urban african population at a greater distance from white urban areas.

The policy favoured white farm owners, who could now draw from a wider labour pool; the urban white working class, which was protected from competition with black workers; and sections of business profited from cheap migrant labour or exploited the insecurity of illegal workers.

By the end of August 9 139 Alexandra families had been resettled in Diepkloof and Meadowlands and 924 properties purchased. Two years later the Bantu Administration manager of the Peri-Urban Board announced that since 1959 it had removed 10 000 families

and bought 1 145 properties (11). The rationale behind the construction of a hostel city was clearly explained by the chairman of the Peri-Urban Board, Coen Kotze:

'The non-productive families are of no use on the labour market and they can live just as well, in fact cheaper in the homelands, as they do in the white areas' (12).

The Board planned that demolition of housing and construction of eight hostels would be complete by 1970. But by 1970 the Board had permission to build only one male and one female hostel and still sought approval for a further four male hostels (13). The first hostel was only finished in 1971 and the third ten years later (14).

The Peri-Urban Board's plans were reconsidered in early 1972 by a new planning committee led by the Manager of Bantu Administration. The committee suggested replanning Alexandra to accommodate 60 000 single people (of which 10 000 would be female) in 25 hostels. Accommodation would be allocated according to employer categories: domestic workers in flats were awarded 20% of the space and commercial and industrial workers would occupy the remainder (15). The committee promised:

'The whole town will consist only of such hostels. There will be no houses and also no families' (16).



Each hostel would house 2 500 people but be divided into sections of 100 to 150 people (17) separated by electrically operated steel doors to prevent unrest spreading and 'for the protection of the inmates themselves' (18). Rooms would be provided with a bed, mattress and cupboard, but no central heating or electricity outlets. Inhabitants would share 112 washing tubs and 32 electricity points, one bath for every 25 residents, one shower for every 35, one hand basin and toilet for every 20 and, in the kitchen, one gas burner for every five people. Each hostel would have 40 single rooms, 98 double rooms and 412 four-bed rooms (19).

The committee was concerned that hostel lifestyle would break down 'family and ethnic' ties which created stability in a community. To compensate, some members suggested dividing hostels along ethnic lines, decorating the buildings with 'bantu motifs' and giving them 'bantu names' (20). Other more pragmatic minded members argued that ethnic identity was not quite so significant; people should be housed according to work areas to facilitate transportation (21).

To the planning committee, a town of single people suggested vistas of unsavoury leisure activities. While the women's hostels could be situated some distance from the men's (22), the committee stressed time and time again the necessity for 'active participation in healthy creative activities by the residents' (23) in their leisure time. It recommended provision of

grandiose social facilities for hostel dwellers: 37 soccer fields for 450 teams; three swimming pools, 16 tennis courts, facilities for weightlifting, boxing, choir and first aid training classes (especially for women), an amphitheatre, sports stadium, cinema, dance areas in each hostel and an 18-hole golf course.

### 1.3 The Dream Begins to Fade

#### 1.3.1 Logistical problems

The population of Alexandra had been reduced to 40 000 by 1973. The Board had resettled 56 574 people consisting of 10 685 families and 38 000 single people in Soweto and 15 089 people including 2 668 families in Tembisa. It had demolished 396 houses but another 2 100 stood awaiting destruction. Only 950 properties still remained in residents' hands (24).

Resettlement continued but more slowly. Population dropped to 35 695 by 1977 and lived predominately in family housing. Hostels accommodated 6 767 men and women compared to 28 928 men, women and children in family housing (25).



Resettlement was the excuse the Board needed to weed out people in urban areas without requisite section 10 rights which determined the right of an african to reside and work in 'white' South Africa. Only where both husband and wife had section 10 rights, could they qualify for family housing in Soweto or Tembisa. The remainder were sent back to the bantustans (26). The Black Sash alleged that husbands and wives were issued with single permits to prevent them from applying for family housing and officials often refused to put children's names on their mothers' permits (27). Kotze put the matter clearly:

'We are giving them the choice: they must send their children back to the homelands and move into the hostels or they must go back to the homelands themselves. This is the policy and we will enforce it' (28).

Officials warned that from 1975 children who were not on their parents permits would not be allowed to attend school (29).

Officials began to express serious doubts about the hostel plan. The West Rand Administration Board (WRAB) took control of township administration from 1 July 1973. That month an executive WRAB member announced an investigation into future planning of Alexandra. Conditions, he said, had changed since the original decision to convert Alexandra into hostel town: Soweto and Tembisa lacked alternative family housing; funds for removal, expropriation and construction were limited; and the scheme had

met with widespread public condemnation. The expansion of Sandton and Randburg justified considering provision of family housing (30).

The following year, in August, WRAB announced that the completion date of the hostel project had been extended by ten years to 1984, subject to funds being made available by the government. Purchasing the remaining 887 freehold titles would cost an estimated R6 209 000 (31).

Building a hostel city had proved a costly burden, but nevertheless continued in a halting fashion. Again in December 1977, WRAB announced that all expropriations, evictions and removals would cease until March the following year due to lack of finance (32). Pleas for financial aid continued until March 1979.

Similar problems were evident even in the late 1960s, though the planning committee had chosen to ignore them. Early in its inception, the removal scheme was hampered by a shortage of houses in other urban locations. Already in 1961 the Soweto waiting list stood at a conservatively estimated 18 000 (33). The Johannesburg municipal Non-European Affairs Committee complained that severe shortage of funds hindered provision of 2 000 houses necessary for Soweto's natural population increase. It estimated a backlog of 13 000 houses in 1973 (34).



Alexandra itself was overcrowded. Employers whose workers were zoned for Alexandra were dissatisfied with the shortage of housing for their employees. The town manager complained to his superior in Pretoria of a waiting list of housing requests from employers. He said he had urged employers to erect housing for their own employees, but only one had done so. The rest expressed little interest in such an undertaking (35). The reply was prompt: a concentration of 'Bantus' in white areas was not 'desirable' (36).

Ambitious plans are also expensive. In 1967 when the Peri-Urban Board considered building only five hostels, it estimated total construction costs at R4 517 625. In addition, services, shops and beerhalls in each hostel were expected to cost R647 300 and leisure facilities R510 000. The board hoped to pay for construction with loans it sought from the Departments of Community Development and Bantu Administration and Development, as well as the Levy Fund (37).

The Board intended the hostel city to be financially self-sufficient. Thus although rents would be kept low, the loan amortisements would be paid from rent collected, the Alexandra Bantu Revenue Account and Bantu Beer Account. Monthly rents ranged from R4.20 for a person living in an eight-bed room to R5.10 for a single room. Each hostel was expected to generate R147 219 every year. (38). When two hostels were officially opened in July 1972 male residents were charged between R5,40 and

R7,00 depending on the size of the room and women R5,00 and R7,50 every month (39). In 1973 the women's hostel was reportedly running at a loss (40).

Buying up and expropriating property was also expensive. The purchase of 40 plots for the sites of the first two hostels cost R88 584 in 1967. The same year a further R702 101 was spent on purchasing another 217 plots, totalling R790 685. By 31 August 1967, the Board had already bought up 1 206 plots at a cost of R2 909 057 (41).

In early 1968 the Board began to express concern at the slowing rate of property buyouts. Until then it had only bought from those who were 'willing'. Now 'the problem lies with owners who refuse' (42). The Board resorted to expropriation. In June the following year it appointed an arbitrator to adjudicate property values (43). By 30 June 1972 the Board had paid out R4 210 044 for 2 539 plots. It had its eye on another 1 025 (44).

Financial constriction did not deter the Board altogether. If it could not buy people out their houses, it could simply force them to pay to live there. Towards the end of December that year, WRAB notified residents to vacate their properties or start paying rent by January 1975. Residential permits were withdrawn. Tenants were ordered to pay rent to their new landlord, WRAB.



Standholders ignored the January deadline. WRAB tried calling owners to their offices and instructing them to sign documents acknowledging expropriation. They refused. It tried strong-arm tactics, evicting tenants, rehousing them in WRAB-owned rooms, and depriving landlords of their income.

### 1.3.2 Political temperatures rise

WRAB's task was not made any easier by the gradual groundswell in political protest. White liberal groups condemned forced removals and the destruction of family life on moral grounds. They warned against social problems which would emerge in a town catering only for single people. A Citizens Hostel Action Committee formed at a public meeting attended by 1 500 in 1970 sent a petition to the Minister of Bantu Administration protesting against removals and hostel development. He replied that only the welfare of Alexandra's inhabitants lay at the heart of the policy (45).

A liason committee was established by Rev Sam Buti in 1974 to save Alexandra (46). It held general meetings and listened to complaints about permits, lighting, sanitation, water, schools and police raids. Buti says the committee operated initially under the aegis of the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Afrika, of which he was General Secretary. The committee met regularly at Buti's house.

'We preached resistance tactics first through the church and then at the schools. We were trying to get the residents to believe that they shouldn't go, that they should stay and fight' (47).

The liason committee was able easily to gather residents' support for their demand to redevelop the township as a family residential area. 'Renew, Don't Destroy' was a chord which struck many hearts. The Save Alexandra Party followed an active public information policy which probably also accounts for its legitimacy: it organised house visits to muster support and used loudhailers to announce public meetings (48).

The committee made representations to WRAB and various ministers of Bantu Administration and Development: MC Botha, his successor WA Cruywagen, and Connie Mulder who renamed his kingdom Department of Plural Relations. When Piet Koornhof was appointed minister of the newly-baptised Department of Cooperation and Development, the committee gained a more sympathetic audience.

Buti relates how he was able to establish a mutual understanding: "My mense," he told Dr Koornhof, "praat van 'die erwe van ons vadere' en vra: Hoe moet ons verstaan?" The reference - in Dutch - to the "inherited land of their fathers" and their failure to understand why it should be taken from them, struck a chord with Dr Koornhof. So did Sam Buti's plaintive personal plea. "Help us," was all he said' (49).



This sycophantic story relies somewhat heavily on the passionate natures of two great men. The decision to reprieve Alexandra was also influenced by the problems of implementing the hostel plan, explained above. But probably, the most significant factor was the uprising beginning on 16 June 1976 and the grievances it brought to light.

Violence erupted in Alexandra on 17 June when youths put up barricades, lasted until mid-August and then gradually declined (50). Youths were particularly active in raids on government buildings and liquor outlets, intimidating and assaulting workers and stoning buildings, buses and cars. Police were attacked, but on one occasion even invited to join the rioters. Thirty-six people died (51).

The government appointed a one-man commission in June 1976 to investigate the causes of the uprising. The commission was led by Justice Cillie. His report revealed that many grievances centred around the implementation and effects of the government's urbanisation policy.

A few witnesses told the Commission that rioters attacked beerhalls because they had been told that profits financed bantustan development (52). Underlying the attacks was extreme

displeasure with the bantustan programme, forced removals, influx control, loss of citizenship and the urban housing shortage it entailed.

Administration boards which implemented urbanisation policy, suffered more damage than any other target group: 114 beer halls, 74 bottle stores, 124 board buildings, and 222 vehicles were destroyed or damaged by fire. The Department of Cooperation and Development estimated the Board's total losses at R29 662 870 (53). Rioters damaged or destroyed four police stations, and 224 police vehicles (54).

Not surprisingly Cillie comments that

'There was so much dissatisfaction with administration boards that many black residents were worked up to the point where they could easily resort to rioting' (55).

Boards were seen as 'offices of oppression', 'which control so many of his [the black resident's] daily activities and so many of his needs' but 'legislates and administers without consulting him' (56). Residents resented officials and police for implementing unpopular laws. They complained about poor and non-existent services, and inefficient and rude treatment by officials which often verged on racism.



Cillie recognised that the Urban Bantu Councils had not satisfied demands for political representation. He concluded that blacks wanted to participate in policy making and in the execution and administrative functions of authoritative bodies (57).

Housing was a source of discontent. Long waiting lists, overcrowding, illegal squatting, high rentals, lodgers fees for children or relatives and lack of services contributed to rising frustration. While the Commission did not wish to speculate, it took note of the argument of many witnesses that if better class housing and middle class suburbs had been allowed to develop, 'the rioting would not have been so extensive' (58).

Popular discontent was possibly more severe in Alexandra given the decades of official neglect and implementation of the hostel plan.

#### 1.4 Descent into Crisis

The grievances that came to the fore in the 1976 uprising were a manifestation of a deep-seated economic and social crisis. The crisis began as the apartheid boom tailed off in the early 1970s. Real growth had averaged 5.7% annually in the 1960s, but reached negative indices in the first half of 1976 and zero by 1977 (59).

Though the South African economic crisis coincided with a world-wide recession, it also indicated endemic structural weaknesses. The transition to monopoly capitalism and resultant concentration and centralisation of capital from the 1960s was accompanied by an acceleration in the rate of inflation and rise in unemployment (60). Increasing mechanisation contributed not only to growing structural unemployment, but also required a larger pool of semi-skilled and skilled labour. Bantu education had created a labour force without literacy, numeracy and technical skills necessary for such work.

The reverse side of the coin, however, was that the growing concentration of workers on the factory floor provided ideal conditions for unionisation. The Durban strikes of 1973 presaged militant union activity as the demand for a living wage took root.

The 1973 strikes, rapidly growing appeal of black consciousness, independence of Angola and Mozambique, and ferment over bantu education contributed to political instability which finally blew up on 16 June 1976.



WRAB's reconsideration of the hostel plan in the early 1970's coincided with the national slide into crisis. The plan's tardy and expensive implementation, and the Board's complaints about lack of finance were also manifestations of a specific crisis in urban management policy, the subject of the following chapter.

FOOTNOTES:

1. RSA: Hansard Debates of Standing Committees, 1979; col 414  
My translation: '...Alexandra [sal] in die toekoms herbeplan  
... word vir herbehuising van die grondeienaars en van ander  
kwalifiserende gesinne van Alexandra ... Ons [het]  
gevind... dat daar nie 'n alternatief was nie. Soweto kan  
nie daardie mense neem nie en Tembisa kan hulle ook nie neem  
nie'
2. Sarakinsky, M: From 'Freehold Township' to 'Model Township'  
- A Political History of Alexandra: 1905 - 1983',  
Development Studies Group, Johannesburg, 1984; p 2
3. Ibid, p 2
4. Ibid, p 7
5. Ibid, pp 23-4
6. Ibid, p 26
7. Ibid, p 27
8. Ibid, p 37
9. quoted in Ibid, p 39
10. Watson, V: 'South African Urbanisation Policy: Past and  
Future', South African Labour Bulletin, 11 (8), Sept/Oct  
1986; pp 77-79; Hindson, D: Pass Controls and the Urban  
African Proletariat, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1987,  
chapter 4
11. Ibid, p 46
12. quoted in Ibid, p 46



13. Transvaalse Raad vir die Ontwikkeling van Buitestedelike Gebiede: 'Verslag betreffend die verdere ontwikkeling van Alexandra', 1970.08.14; File E2/0/211 Vol 5 Sept 1963; Algemeen Alexandra Dorp; Intermediary Archives Depot, Johannesburg
14. Sarakinsky, M: op cit, p 51
15. 'The Replanning of Alexandra Township', undated; File 15/0/0 vol 1: Herbeplanning Alexandra; Intermediary Archives Depot, Johannesburg
16. 'Alexandra Herbeplanningkommittee "Thoughts on Planning"', 1972.04.12; File 15/0/0 vol 1 Herbeplanning Alexandra; Intermediary Archives Depot, Johannesburg  
My translation: 'Die hele dorp sal slegs bestaan uit sulke hostelle. Daar sal geen huise wees nie en ook geen gesinne . nie'.
17. 'Alexandra Herbeplanningkommittee "Thoughts on Planning"', 1972.04.12; File 15/0/0 vol 1: Herbeplanning Alexandra; Intermediary Archives Depot, Johannesburg
18. Sarakinsky, M: op cit, p 49
19. Sarakinsky, M: op cit, p 49
20. 'The Replanning of Alexandra Township', undated; File 15/0/0 vol 1: Herbeplanning Alexandra; Intermediary Archives Depot, Johannesburg
21. 'Alexandra Herbeplanringskommittee Memo "Alexandra Hostel"', 1972.04.12; File 15/0/0 vol 1: Herbeplanning Alexandra; Intermediary Archives Depot, Johannesburg
22. 'Alexandra Herbeplanningskommittee Memo Alexandra Hostel',

- 1972.04.12; File 15/0/0 vol 1: Herbeplanning Alexandra;  
Intermediary Archives Depot, Johannesburg
23. 'Alexandra Herbeplanningskommittee Memo "Alexandra Hostel"',  
1972.04.12; File 15/0/0 vol 1: Herbeplanning Alexandra;  
Intermediary Archives Depot, Johannesburg
24. Sarakinsky, M: op cit, p 50-1
25. Ibid, p 56-7
26. Ibid, p 50
27. Ibid, p 52
28. quoted in Ibid, p 50
29. Ibid, p 52
30. Star, 1974.07.02; Sarakinsky, M: op cit, p 51
31. Sarakinsky, M: op cit, p 51
32. Rand Daily Mail, 1977.12.23; Sarakinsky, M: op cit, p 57
33. Sarakinsky, M: op cit, p 48
34. SAIRR Survey, 1973, p 129
35. Letter No AZ2/2 to Manager of Bantu Administration, Pretoria  
from Alexandra Town Manager; 1968.03.07; File 5/5/27 Bantoe  
woongebied eiendomme: Alexandra 67-70; Intermediary  
Archives depot, Johannesburg
36. Letter 79/28/27 from Manager of Bantu Administration,  
Pretoria to Alexandra town manager, 1968.04.08; File 5/5/27  
Bantoe woongebiedeieendomme: Alexandra 67-70; Intermediary  
Archives depot, Johannesburg
37. Transvaalse Raad vir die Ontwikkeling van Buitestedelike  
Gebiede 'Verslag betreffende die verdere ontwikkeling van  
Alexandra', 1970.08.14; File E2/0/211 Vol 5: Sept 1963



- Algemeen Alexandra Dorp; Intermediary Archives depot,  
Johannesburg
38. Transvaalse Raad vir die Ontwikkeling van Buitestedelike Gebiede 'Verslag betreffende die verdere ontwikkeling van Alexandra', 1970.08.14; File E2/0/211 Vol 5: Sept 1963  
Algemeen Alexandra Dorp; Intermediary Archives depot,  
Johannesburg
39. Sarakinsky, M: op cit, p 49
40. SAIRR Survey, 1973, p 130
41. Letter from the Manager of Bantu Administration to the Secretary of the Department of Bantu Administration and Development, 1967.09.22; File 5/5/27 Bantu woongebiede eiendomme, Alexandra 1967-70; Intermediary Archives depot,  
Johannesburg
42. Letter no 71/1/27A from Potgieter to Oosthuizen, Secretary of Community Development, 1968.02.05; File 5/5/27 Bantu woongebiede eiendomme Alexandra 1967-70; Intermediary Archives depot, Johannesburg
43. 'Onteining van eiendomme, Alexandra: Aanstelling van Arbiter Raadsvergadering 18 August 1969', 1969.08.18; File E2/0/211 vol 5 Sept 1963; Algemeen Alexandra Dorp; Intermediary Archives depot, Johannesburg
44. Circular, Transvaalse Raad vir die Ontwikkeling van Buitestedelike Gebiede, 1973.02.13; File 71/1/27 Alexandra LAC Aankoop van Grond; Intermediary Archives depot,  
Johannesburg

Expropriation was expensive even if the Board had the upper hand. The Bantu Resettlement Act entitled black owners to compensation either laid down in the Slums Act or the original price plus 6% yearly interest from the date of acquisition whichever was the lesser. Thus a standholder might be compensated with R4 400 for property he bought at R2 000 twenty years previously. Industrial land in neighbouring Kew and Wynberg was worth R10 per square metre. The stand if sold for industrial purposes would be valued at R130 000 (Sarakinsky, M: op cit, p 54).

45. Sarakinsky, M: op cit, p 48
46. The official version of Alexandra's reprieve, explained in a book published by the Alexandra Town Council, dates the founding of the Committee to 1977 (Dunstan, J (ed): Alexandra, I Love You, Trident Press, Cape Town, 1983). Darky Rametse, a former councillor, maintained however that an Alexandra Township Residents Interim Committee was established in 1974 by Rev Sam Buti and several others. It later changed its name to Alexandra Liason Committee (Interview with Darky Rametse, former councillor, 1987.06.04).
47. Dunstan, J (ed): Alexandra, I Love You, Trident Press, Cape Town, 1983; p 34
48. Interview with Darky Rametse, former councillor, 1987.06.04
49. Dunstan, J (ed): op cit, p 35
50. RSA: Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Riots at Soweto and Elsewhere from the 16th of June 1976 to the 28th



of February 1977, (Chairman: Justice Cillie), RP55/1980,  
p 152-3 (hereafter referred to as the Cillie Commission)

51. Ibid, p 158
52. Ibid, p 589
53. Ibid, p 526
54. Ibid, p 528
55. Ibid, p 600
56. Ibid, p 598
57. Ibid, p 601
58. Ibid, p 605
59. Saul, JS & Gelb, S: The Crisis in South Africa: Class  
Defence Class Revolution, Monthly Review Press, New York &  
London, 1981; p 23
60. Innes, D: 'Monopoly Capitalism in South Africa' in South  
African Research Service (ed): South African Review One,  
Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1983

## CHAPTER 2: URBAN CRISIS AND STATE REFORM: 1976-1983

Popular discontent which fed the flames of 1976, and the problems WRAB faced in trying to implement the Alexandra hostel plan, were manifestations of critical inadequacy in urban policy. Influx control, administration board bankruptcy, urban housing shortages and black local government structures without credibility were central features of the urban management crisis.

Acrimonious debate raged through the late 1970s between 'verkramptes' and 'verligtes' within the Nationalist Party and dominant classes over how best to deal with the crisis. The 1978 Info Scandal ruptured the National Party and opened the way for PW Botha and his 'verlig' coterie. Botha represented Afrikaner monopoly capital which was increasingly openly aligned with diversified 'English' and mining monopoly capital. He was also closely aligned to the military having been Minister of Defence for many years (1).

Botha set about reorganising cabinet, centralising power, drawing in 'experts' from the military and business spheres and consolidating a power base beyond the arena of white electoral politics and the conventional state apparatus. 'Total Strategy', the belief that the general crisis had to be resolved through political, social and economic reforms, rather than the barrel of



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