

POQO AND RURAL RESISTANCE IN THE TRANSKEI, 1960-1965

by

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I.

During the early 1960s there were two related black political struggles in South Africa. In the towns the mainly urban-based nationalist and left-wing groups had adopted violent strategies which varied from controlled, selective sabotage to schemes for a general uprising. In the reserves, and in particular in the Transkei, there had developed a deep-rooted antagonism to government institutions and administrative measures as well as towards the Bantustan authorities which implemented them. The rural opposition was sometimes expressed in comparatively well organized and politically articulate mass movements, as in Pondoland in 1960. But sometimes the uprisings were less co-ordinated, plots and conspiracies were not linked by one organization and the opposition was more fragmentary, with the result that it has received less attention from historians. This has been the case with Tembuland during the period 1960-1965. Yet the Tembu disturbances are interesting: there was at least one nationalist movement concerned; they provide a good example of the links between rural and urban resistance against authority; there is enough evidence to suggest the social forces involved and the reasons for their actions. This paper will first attempt to put the Tembu revolt into its social and historical context and then, by using material drawn from trial records and reports, it will examine the unrest in some detail. The historiography of black South African politics has often been based on records concerning urban groups which were led by well educated and politically sophisticated men. The struggles of peasants and migrant workers are not so well recorded and their effectiveness can be underestimated. This paper is an attempt to fit the Tembuland resistance into the general pattern of South African black opposition during the early 1960s.

II.

In 1960, the Tembu inhabited the Elliotdale, Mqanduli, Umtata and Engcobo districts of the Transkei, and a related sub-group, the Emigrant Tembu, lived in the Cala and St Marks districts as well as the adjoining Glen Grey, which was administered as part of the Ciskei. The districts form one block of territory running for 250 miles across the southern portion of the Transkei. Like the rest of the Transkei, it is a hilly and mountainous region; it has been calculated that only 11 per cent of the Transkei is flat (1) and the land rises from a narrow coastal belt to highlands of between 4,000 and 5,000 feet. As might be expected, communications are poor: it was pointed out at one trial that the distance between two locations could vary between eight and fifty miles, depending on whether one used the circuitous road of the shorter but steeper mountain paths. (2) The landscape, which is typically grass covered, was found in 1966 to be 30 per cent badly eroded and 44 per cent moderately eroded.

The Transkei is densely populated; in 1960 it had an average of 92 people per square mile and an overall total of 1,400,000 inhabitants. Of these, approximately 160,000 were recruited annually to work on the mines, in industry and in agriculture. (4) In 1960, 61,237 men were employed as mineworkers. (5) It seems reasonable to assume that c.25,000 people were employed in agriculture (the 1971 figure of 22,383 was after a decade of reducing the number of black farm workers in the Western Cape). (6) The rest would mainly have been recruited by labour bureaux for industries and services in the urban areas. Francis Wilson reports that in 1972 69 per cent of the men recruited worked in the Cape Town area, 18 per cent in the Transvaal, and small proportions elsewhere: the proportions would not have changed greatly over ten years. (7) Those who worked in the mines were restricted by the compound system, but the men and women who worked in industry were more exposed to urban political influences, and it is therefore worth emphasizing that the majority of this sector were migrants between the Transkei and the Western Cape.

With the exception of a small number of government servants, the population (including migrant workers' families) either depended to a lesser or greater extent on wages remitted by migrants or were able to produce enough food from farms to subsist. Evidence from a survey conducted in the 1970s and cited by Innes and O'Meara suggests that the proportion of the Transkei population which never or only seldom depended on migrant labour is very small: it is unlikely that it would have been much greater in the 1960s. (8) The government had then only recently begun to concentrate holdings so as to create a class of self-sufficient peasant farmers. This measure, while creating a class that could prosper without migrant earnings, also necessitated depriving 113,000 Transkeian families of land altogether, making them wholly dependent on the urban labour market. (9)

Until 1955 the Transkei was governed through a conciliar system which, as the African National Congress' activist, Govan Mbeki, pointed out, depended on a degree of popular participation. The Glen Grey Act had set up the Bunga system in which 26 district councils sent representatives to a general council or Bunga in Umtata. The district councils each had six members: in the districts which had paramount chiefs (which included Tembuland and Pondoland) two were elected and four were nominees of the chief and the district commissioner. Of the representatives sent to the Bunga, one was elected and the others were nominees. (10) Most Bunga members were chiefs or headmen but over half of them were elected: chiefs under the Bunga system derived some of their authority from popular support. (11)

The abolition of this system and the introduction in the Transkei of the Bantu Authorities in 1955 reduced the importance of the elected element in the tribal, district, regional, and territorial authorities, and increased the powers of the chiefs within the authorities (to which they belonged *ex officio*) as well as adding to their administrative functions. Chiefs' duties were to include maintaining the law, reporting unrest and implementing any government measures. They were also given increased judicial responsibilities and were allowed to keep part of the revenue raised in fines and fees. (12) Most important of all they were placed in opposition to their people by being made responsible for establishing land rehabilitation measures. These involved the fencing of land, the consolidation (and hence confiscation) of farming plots, contour ploughing, leaving land fallow and stock-culling. African political organizations opposed them from their inception in 1945: they argued that all the measures did was to create a landless peasantry and that the real causes of African rural poverty lay not in overstocking but in the insufficient area of farming land allocated for African use. The measures were naturally unpopular with the individual farmer: even if he did not face the threat of being deprived of his land, the stock-culling could often be arbitrary and inefficient, falling as heavily on the man with a few cows as the owner of a large herd. Dipping tanks were disliked as these were sometimes used to enforce culling and castration as well as a way for the chiefs to collect unofficial levies. (13) Land reclamation schemes which insisted on the provision of fallow land appeared to be another measure aimed at peasant impoverishment. (14) Rewards were given to chiefs who accepted the system, and in the Transkei Territorial Assembly they resolved to allot themselves each an extra portion of arable land "to enable [the chiefs] to provide hospitality". (15)

However, when describing developments in specific regions of the Transkei, it is difficult to generalize about the role of the chiefs. Mbeki says that by 1955 people in the Transkei "had developed to a stage which discards chieftainship". (16) Innes and O'Meara's tentative analysis of Transkeian class formation views chiefs and headmen as a basis of a rich peasantry. To their traditional function in allocating arable land was added the opportunity to avail themselves of larger plots held on a quit rent basis from the state. But this repressive role was not always willingly assumed by the chiefs during the early 1960s. In May 1961 over 1,000 Tembu chiefs condemned the rehabilitation scheme (the "Native Trust") at a meeting called by Sabata Dalindyebo, the paramount chief. Tembuland was almost completely free of rehabilitation at that time. (17) Contact mentions in its report "good" chiefs who had delayed imposing the scheme by insisting that they should act as their people required them to. In contrast to this, in the district of St Marks which was under the authority of the Emigrant Tembu Chief and Chairman of the Transkei Territorial Authority, Kaiser Matanzima, the scheme was "accepted" at meetings held in locations in 1960. The meetings were called by the District Magistrate and he later claimed that the proposals were accepted by everybody at the meetings. Rather inconsistently he also said that after the proposals had been accepted "100 per cent" illegal meetings began to be held all over the district and a number of people belonging to anti-rehabilitation groups were arrested. (18) He also made the interesting admission that compensation was not paid to those who had been removed from the land until the last person had moved "voluntarily". (19) Matanzima's district was to include the site of a large show-piece irrigation scheme. 2,400 consolidated farming plots were to be produced, and from trial evidence we know that people were being displaced from the land from 1962. (20)

Though the Tembu chiefs seemed in 1962 to have shown enough concern for their popularity to suggest that they still had a following to lose, this did not imply that the Tembu were apathetic politically. It is worth remembering that in 1936 the African vote in Tembuland (as a Cape constituency) was the highest in the Cape Province, being one-third of the total. (21) Organized radical political groups had certainly concentrated their efforts in towns but there was a considerable amount of political activity in the Transkei during the 1940s and 1950s. Tabata's account of the development of the All African Convention surely overstates the case when he says "During this period [1948-1960] the people [of the Transkei] had been fired by the new policy of the Unity Movement" (22), but the nature of the AAC's federal structure could have given it a degree of influence. The AAC was not a party which one could join individually. It was a federation of organizations not all of which were especially political. This rather loose "umbrella" structure was able to absorb special and regional interest groups and yet have a fairly coherent political line. Affiliated to the AAC was the Cape African Teachers' Association which opposed, until its banning, Bantu Education (23), the Transkei Organised Bodies which organized with the African National Congress electoral boycotts of the Native Representative Council (24), and the Kongo movement which affiliated itself to the AAC in 1948 after being started in Pondoland to oppose rehabilitation. (25) The African National Congress was, throughout the 1950s, uninterested in a reserve-based strategy: Mbeki, himself a Transkeian, ruefully noted that it was not until the Pondoland revolt of 1960 that the ANC saw "the vital need for linking up the struggles of the peasants with those of the workers in the urban areas". (26) More information is needed on the various bodies and campaigns Tabata mentions, but their existence indicates a degree of political consciousness in the villages of the Transkei (for AAC organizations were often based on village committees) that was well developed before 1960.

The following factors could have conditioned the violent Tembu resistance after 1960. First, there was the increasing dependence of the Transkeian peasantry on migrant labour earnings. This was coupled with their increasing insecurity on the land as the rehabilitation programme empowered chiefs and officials to remove families from their holdings. In 1960 in Tembuland proper this was still just a threat, but the experience of the Emigrant Tembu would have reinforced fears and the chiefs' stand against rehabilitation probably concentrated anti-government feeling. Organized political opposition to the land reforms had existed in the Transkei for a couple of decades, though the extent to which this affected the response in Tembuland after 1960 is difficult to say. Another important factor must have been the experience of the migrant workers. As I have said, those who were industrial workers (and therefore

most open to urban political influence) mainly migrated to the Western Cape. The Tembu and Emigrant Tembu were likely to have been the majority of these: they were geographically closest and were linked by rail to Cape Town (a large proportion of Pondo migrants worked in Natal). (27) In 1960, the Western Cape and particularly Cape Town saw the most widespread disturbances in the weeks following Sharpeville: a general strike supported by the African labour force for nearly two weeks, and a dramatic march of between fifteen and thirty thousand men from Langa location to the centre of Cape Town. What was noticed by commentators at the time was that migrant workers from "bachelor" quarters in the locations played a leading role. During the crisis the Pan-Africanist Congress provided some political direction, and again contemporary evidence suggests that it was especially influential in the migrant workers' hostels and "zones". With the ANC, the PAC was suppressed but out of its branches developed a violent insurrectionary movement called Pogo. Pogo is a Xhosa word meaning alone or pure. The movement first developed in the locations round Cape Town and smaller towns in the Western Cape and drew most of its support from migrant workers. (28) Though there could have been other political influences affecting migrant reactions (Congress-affiliated trade unions were quite active in the Western Cape in the 1950s), it is probable that PAC/Pogo had the greatest impact on Western Cape Xhosa-speaking migrant workers in the years following Sharpeville.

III.

In outline, the Tembu disturbances were sporadic and disjointed though, like the Pondo revolt, they were sustained over a surprisingly long period. It is important to remember that much of the unrest in Tembu areas occurred under the conditions imposed on the Transkei by Proclamation 400. This, from 30 November 1960, provided for a state of Emergency. The regulations included detention without trial, the banning of virtually all meetings and the extension of the powers of chiefs and headmen. People who challenged chiefs' authority could be fined or imprisoned and have some of their livestock confiscated. The proclamation was published in immediate response to the Pondo uprising.

Before looking at the resistance in any detail, an overall chronology is useful. In 1956, in the Emigrant Tembu districts of Cala and Glen Grey people tried to prevent the installation of pro-government chiefs. (29) This followed the establishment of the Bantu Authorities system the previous year. In Tembuland itself there was considerable opposition to Bantu Authorities. A delegation had been sent to Pretoria to protest against their implementation, and in 1958 four Tembu leaders, including an adviser to the Paramount Chief, Sabata, were exiled. The Tembuland chiefs' attitude to Bantu Authorities and other government measures was to be influenced by the rivalry between the Paramount and Matanzima, the regional chief of the Emigrant Tembu. Matanzima had gained government support through his backing of the Bantu Authorities and he was busy expanding the area of his authority. In 1958 the Ciskeian district of Glen Grey was put under his control. (30)

Really widespread opposition to the government came with the attempt to impose land rehabilitation on the Tembu. As we have seen, illegal committees sprang up in the St Marks district, and these continued to hold their meetings from 1960 until 1963. The St Marks magistrate said that this occurred most often in 1960-1961 and, while there was "a spell of quietness" in 1962, the meetings were revived in 1963. (31) At these meetings rehabilitation measures were denounced; counter-measures decided upon were not always illegal. The men in Qitsi location, St Marks, initially intended to hire an attorney who would help them to oppose the fencing; for this they each paid 25 cents. (32) The anti-rehabilitation groups were usually drawn from a single location.

Though the majority of chiefs in Tembuland were at this stage unwilling to enforce government measures, there were exceptions. Patrick Lawrence mentions the killing of a pro-government chief and eleven other people, as well as the burning down of a census building on an occasion in 1960. (33) More details would be useful, for it is tempting to link the destruction of the census building with the surveys which,

from 1956, consolidated allotments and created large numbers of landless people. (34) In January 1961 a headman was murdered at Rwantsana near Lady Frere. Eventually thirty-five men were charged. The murder was preceded by the killing of three of the headman's sheep. Headmen had recently been given the power to confiscate livestock, under Proclamation 400, and this was fiercely resented by villagers. (35) It was not considered to be a legitimate right. In the 1950s there developed a movement called the Makuluspan (it was started in the Tsolo district, adjacent to Umtata) which was formed to combat stock theft. Hammond Tooke claims that its influence grew when Bantu Authorities were imposed and it increasingly threatened chiefs as it became more politically orientated. (36) In 1962, the police were claiming that tribesmen were "taking the law into their own hands to deal with stock thieves" in the Umtata and Engcobo districts. (37) One can speculate that the Makuluspan was being directed against headmen who confiscated livestock, though there is not enough evidence to prove this. It is surely significant that Poqo was reported as using the Makuluspan movement to "intimidate people". (38) I. B. Tabata said in November 1963 that the AAC had "won over" the Makuluspan in the preceding six months. (39) Though this seems unlikely as it was not the sort of organization which could be formally incorporated, both Snyman's allegation about Poqo and Makuluspan and Tabata's claim do show that one should not regard the small local conspiracies against unpopular individuals in isolation from the more overtly political opposition.

The murder of headmen and chiefs was to be a fairly frequent occurrence during the period. In March 1961 two more headmen were killed in Tembuland (40), and such incidents may have helped to influence some of the thousand chiefs who opposed rehabilitation schemes at Sabata's palace in Bumbane on May 6. (41) Similar large meetings were held in May the following year to condemn the Bantu authorities. (42) As well as the intimidation of chiefs, locations also withheld taxes: an early report of this was in Macibini, Glen Grey, in January 1961, when 100 people were arrested for non-payment of the 1960 poll tax. (43)

Late in 1962 there were three attempts on Matanzima's life. One will be described in detail below. All three were Poqo-inspired. The first attack was on October 14, and in the weeks before there were reports of Poqo "preaching race hate" to the peasantry in Emigrant Tembuland. (44) Trials provide evidence of Poqo organization from 1961 to 1963 in the Engcobo district and the Ngqeleni district (on the coast, north of Mqanduli) as well as Emigrant Tembuland. Forty-eight men were imprisoned for Poqo activities in Ngqeleni (45), and in Engcobo Chief Nkosana Mtirara, a member of the Tembu royal house, was found guilty of leading, in collaboration with the local school-teacher, a Poqo cell of thirty-five men. (46) Poqo activities included the Bashee bridge murders which took place on February 5. A white family were killed in an attack on their caravan by men who, according to the police, came from Mqanduli, Cofimvaba, Kentani and Bityi. The men used petrol bombs and firearms as well as pangas. (47) It was especially brutal: when headmen were attacked, although their kraal would be destroyed, their families were usually left unharmed.

In 1963 the Engcobo and Umtata districts were said by police to be the most violent districts in the Transkei. More Poqo arrests had been made in this area than elsewhere. Police activity was also very intensive and para-military mobile units were created to suppress disturbances. (48) This high level of illegal and violent opposition coincided with the organization of legal political opposition to the government and to Matanzima, who had become chairman of the Transkei Territorial Authority in 1961 and was campaigning to be elected as chief minister. He was opposed by Paramount Chief Victor Poto of West Pondoland, who was supported by Sabata Dalindyebo. Sabata's official candidates in the election formed the basis of the Democratic Party. It has been suggested that the Democratic Party represented a petty bourgeoisie of shopkeepers, owners of services, teachers and bureaucrats who were largely concentrated in the small urban centres. (49) This seems a bit tendentious: the almost complete victory of Sabata candidates throughout Tembuland was surely a symptom of the consciously political character of the unrest that affected the whole rural population. Another political group which played some part in helping to organize the legal Tembu opposition to Matanzima was the multiracial Liberal Party. On the whole, they worked through chiefs and other prominent figures in the community: they did not attempt to build a branch membership in the Transkei. (50)

1963 seems to have been the peak of peasant unrest and Poqo activity in Tembuland. In 1961 the much better organized Pondo struggle had been suppressed by ruthless police action, and by 1964 conditions were less favourable for revolt: previously sympathetic chiefs were being intimidated or induced by Matanzima to switch sides, and a drought began that year, which was to last until 1969 and which was to force 35,000 Transkeians off the land and kill 20 per cent of the cattle. (51) This must have contributed to the demoralization of popular resistance, though there were still occasional outbreaks: in 1964 a chief who had recently decided to support Matanzima was killed in Gcaleka (52), and in 1965 there was Poqo activity in Mqanduli as well as Pondoland. By now, however, the Poqo men seem to have been less concerned with acting on local issues: rather, they were trying to create base areas for a guerrilla movement which was going to be sustained from Lesotho, where the PAC's external leadership could provide some sort of training. (53)

IV.

Before making any generalizations about the unrest, a closer look at two of the incidents helps to give a clearer understanding of what was happening in the Tembu districts. The first is the Poqo attempt to assassinate Matanzima, and the second a much more localized incident concerning the murder of a village headman.

On 12 December 1962, a group of between twenty and thirty Poqo members travelled by train from Cape Town to the Transkei, with the intention of assembling with other groups near Qamata and launching a co-ordinated attack on Christmas Day on Matanzima's palace. According to the trial evidence, similar groups had already left. (54) Most of the twenty men later put on trial had been Poqo members since early 1961, but though there had been several meetings in the previous months the immediate preparations for the attack were only discussed at a meeting in Langa township on December 10. At this and subsequent meetings members were told to contribute £6 for the railway ticket and collect weapons. The attack was going to incorporate the freeing of prisoners in Qamata jail who had been captured in earlier attempts on Matanzima's life. On the night before their departure a herbalist doctored the men by making incisions on their foreheads and rubbing in herbs. (55) Their weapons, which included a revolver carried by the cell's leader, were also treated.

Thus prepared, the men entrained the following morning. Most of them had not had the chance to give their employers any excuse for leaving their jobs and so, as well as forfeiting their pay packets, had come away without getting their pass books signed. Their trains arrived at Queenstown at 7.00 p.m. on the 13th. Here it was obvious that the police had been warned because they ordered everybody off the train and made them line up on the platform, where they began searching the passengers for weapons. On their discovery of a panga, the Poqo men made a concerted attack on the police, killing one of them and wounding several others. After a few minutes of fighting, police reinforcements arrived and the Poqo men retreated and tried to escape to a nearby hillside. Most were captured within the next day or two. Another group who had journeyed from Cape Town a few days earlier had succeeded in reaching Ntlonze mountain, near Cofimvaba, the rallying-point for the attackers (56), but by now large impi and police units were searching the hills and the attack was not made.

The conspirators were all migrant workers; most of them did unskilled work in the construction industry or in various factories. They were mainly Emigrant Tembu and their home villages or districts included Glen Grey, Alice, Cala, St Marks, Qamata and Tsomo. Their wives and families were mentioned in the evidence as living in those places. It is clear that they regarded the Transkei as their home, and the evidence describing the various Poqo meetings in Langa indicates that they shared the same anxieties and preoccupations as the rural Tembu population. One was arrested with a letter from his mother in his pocket which contained a reference to his land being taken away (57); this was a predominating theme at meetings in Langa:

The first thing he [Matanzima] did was to introduce fencing and now he is moving huts and kraals to some

other place. It appears that he has sold the plots where the kraals were to the Europeans because there are huts there.* Now he is assaulting us ... (58)

Chief Matanzima has sold our land; we are going to kill him. (59)

The fencing and the activities of the Native (Rehabilitation) Trust in St Marks began to be discussed at Langa Poqo meetings in July 1962.

That the Poqo men were closely in touch with local realities is borne out by the second incident, which again arose out of conditions in the St Marks district. As we have seen, discontent with land rehabilitation had led to the formation of secret village committees. In the middle of February 1963 the authorities tried to suppress these groups. In Qitsi the local headman was provided with some police from Qamata, and with these and other men he raided the kraals of leading critics of the land measures. Their houses were destroyed and some of their stock was taken. (60) However, the anti-trust men had already left Qitsi and found shelter in a kraal in Qulugu, Engcobo district, eight miles away across the hills. Quite apart from the headman's action, there was considerable anger in Qitsi because Matanzima had sent a large impi which included fifty policemen to search the area (possibly for Poqo men) and the location had had to provide food for them. There had also been removals. Though the headman was known to be rather reluctant to do so, he had had to organize the fencing: he had thus become "the man who informs the people about the regulations". (61) The bitterness of the feeling against him can be judged from the fact that among the men who killed him were two nephews and a man known to be "a very great friend" of the headman. (62)

These men decided to kill the headman when they were at Qulugu. Rather inexplicably, they sent him a threatening letter which resulted in him being given a bodyguard and a revolver. The group at Qulugu were first treated by a herbalist who made incisions on their arms, foreheads and cheek-bones. Then, on the night of the 26th, they marched to Qitsi, overpowered the bodyguards, dragged the headman out of his kraal and killed him. His family were allowed to leave the hut, which was then burned down. There had been no attempt at secrecy (the bodyguards were allowed to get away) and shortly afterwards the conspirators were arrested.

There is a consistency in the details of these and other incidents during the Tembu unrest. Both conspiracies involved men who were, or had been, migrant workers (the Qitsi men were, with one exception, over thirty, and some of them had spent long periods in Cape Town). In both events there was a certain amount of traditional ritual used in the preparations. In both, the politically inspired Poqo men and the apolitical Qitsi group, the men felt threatened by the land rehabilitation scheme.

The involvement of Poqo in Tembu unrest is an indication of how local discontent could become consciously political. Poqo was not a movement that was brought into the Transkei by outsiders: its chief following was among migrant workers. It could be adapted to local traditions, beliefs and institutions. One man said at his trial that he had joined Poqo and "its sort of church, Qamata" in 1961: Qamata is mentioned by Philip Mayer as a high god or ruler of the spirits that was commonly a feature of Red (traditionalist) Xhosa religious belief. (63) Nationalist politics had not previously gained much of a following among Red Xhosa migrants. The report that Poqo was linked to the Makuluspan and the existence of a Poqo group which was led by an Engcobo chief are further indications of the considerable degree of support it

*Note the Europeans were experts who were there to construct a dam as part of the Qamata irrigation scheme (see p. 3).

must have had in Tembuland and the surrounding districts.*

V.

The Tembu disturbances lacked the coherence, unity and dramatic quality of the Pondo revolt. Unlike the Pondo, they evolved no clear strategy nor did they formulate a series of demands that went beyond the immediate causes of their hardships. Though one should not overestimate the part played in the events by Poqo, this weakness was very much its own: it was an insurrectionary movement which saw politics in the apocalyptic terms of a general uprising. This contrasts with the Pondo store boycott which discriminated between those traders reckoned to be sympathetic and those who openly sided with the government. (64)

One point should be made about the migrant workers. These men were not yet fully proletarianized: they were not completely "free" of access to the means of production. Consciously they still felt that land rehabilitation measures were a threat to their livelihood. Though the men who set out from Cape Town to attack Matanzima would probably have been destined to spend most of their working lives in the Langa hostels, nevertheless they were going to kill Matanzima because he was taking away their land. It has been suggested that different experience of oppression for the worker, on the one hand, and his family in the reserve, on the other, introduces "a structural division in the heart of the proletariat". The worker would focus his opposition on the relations of production in the towns, while rural people would attack chiefs and headmen. (65) But in the 1960s this was not the case; migrants, then, were not so detached from rural consciousness. Today things might be different: when people are forced off the land completely so that their entire subsistence depends on migrant wages, and when the migrant worker does not have the remotest prospect of ceasing to work in the towns and returning to his cattle and land, then perhaps he has become a member of an urban proletariat. In the early 1960s his situation was a transitional one.

It is in this context that his political reactions should be looked at. At a time when the stay-away from work was the chief weapon of the nationalist movement, migrant workers hitherto had been considered apathetic politically, and the scale of their response to the Pan-Africanist Congress pass campaign in 1960 surprised witnesses in Cape Town. Here they were responding to the frustrations of urban conditions: low wages, influx control, separation from their families and police raids. They could also be concerned about agricultural conditions: drought, rain, cattle sickness and the state of the fields. (66) This divided response could have been capitalized on by a well organized political movement. Poqo was not that; it was an expression of a general desperation felt both in the reserves and in the locations, not a vanguard organization. Though it was inspired by the Pan-Africanist leadership, it did not develop an organizational structure: this was scarcely surprising for in some locations whole barracks would join en bloc. (67) There was therefore no central leadership which could be sensitive to local conditions and base a long-term strategy on them.

As well as the state of transition that the migrant worker found himself in during the 1960s, the role of the chiefs was also changing and this ambivalence in their position contributed to the conditions for revolt. The popularity of certain chiefs in Tembuland, the participation of one of their number in Poqo, even the Qitsi headman's lack of enthusiasm for implementing rehabilitation, show that the

*Note though all illegal PAC groups were called Poqo cells, those in the Transvaal seem to have been rather different. They did not have the same degree of participation by migrant workers (I have found no reports of Poqo activities in other Bantustans) and they were far more closely controlled by the external leadership. They were neither as numerous nor as active.

transformation from consensus gatherer to government functionary was not always undertaken willingly. Certainly their change in function seems to have deprived them of some legitimacy: their actions were an offence against tradition and custom. The use of ritual and traditional beliefs by the Poqo movement and the Qitsi villagers was significant.

The Tembu disturbances arose out of specific historical circumstances. It would be a mistake to make any dogmatic assertions from them about the role of peasants and migrants in the liberation struggle; their situation is not a static one. The disturbances, though brutal, were small scale; revolt was intermittent and disorganized; such opposition was easily crushed. For all that, they are worth recording, for they were part of a generalized resistance to authority which usually appears only incidentally in the histories of formal organizations and in the biographies of political leaders. There is the danger that the history of the African opposition in those years might become merely the story of saboteurs, guerrillas and exiled politicians. The very lack of such glamorous qualities in the Tembu disturbances is what makes them interesting: they were spontaneous and popular. As such, they indicate a susceptibility to revolt in rural areas which must be seen as a lost opportunity for the African nationalist leadership.

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Notes

- (1) Randolph Vigne, The Transkei - a South African Tragedy (The Africa Bureau, n.d.) p. 5.
- (2) State v. Nomapolisa Meji and 22 others. Transcript (Butterworth) 21.8.1963, p. 8.
- (3) Vigne, op. cit.
- (4) Govan Mbeki, The Peasants' Revolt (Harmondsworth, 1964), p. 19.
- (5) Francis Wilson, Migrant Labour in South Africa (Johannesburg, 1972), p. 96.
- (6) Ibid., p. 18.
- (7) Ibid., p. 96.
- (8) Innes and O'Meara, "Class Formation and Ideology: the Transkei Region", Review of African Political Economy, Sept.-Dec. 1976, p. 72.
- (9) Mbeki, op. cit., p. 76. Innes and O'Meara, op. cit., p. 74.
- (10) For a full description of the system, see Mbeki's account in The Peasant's Revolt, pp. 34-35.
- (11) Patrick Lawrence, The Transkei (Johannesburg, 1976), p. 31.
- (12) Mbeki, op. cit., p. 101.
- (13) I. B. Tabata, The Awakening of a People (Nottingham, 1974), p. 45.
- (14) Mbeki, op. cit., p. 96.
- (15) Ibid., p. 75.
- (16) Ibid., p. 47.
- (17) Contact, 18.5.1961, p. 5.
- (18) State v. Nomapolisa Meji, p. 74.
- (19) Ibid., p. 70.
- (20) Barbara Rogers, The 'Bantu Homelands' (Defence and Aid, 1973), p. 28.

- (21) Mbeki, op. cit., p. 21.
- (22) I. B. Tabata, Imperialist Conspiracy in Africa (Lusaka, 1974), p. 17.
- (23) Tabata, The Awakening of a People, p. 75.
- (24) Ibid., p. 70.
- (25) Baruch Hirson, "Rural Revolt in South Africa" in Collected Seminar Papers on The Societies of Southern Africa in the 19th & 20th Centuries, Volume 8 (ICS, CSP No. 22).
- (26) Mbeki, op. cit., p. 129.
- (27) Natal sugar estates were important labour recruiters. See Wilson, op. cit., p.18.
- (28) I have described this more fully in a paper shortly to appear in Collected Papers, University of York, Vol. III, eds. Hill and Akeroyd.
- (29) Lawrence, op. cit., p. 36.
- (30) Mbeki, op. cit., p. 36.
- (31) State v. Nomapolisa Meji, p. 74.
- (32) Ibid., p. 44.
- (33) Lawrence, op. cit., p. 37.
- (34) Govan Mbeki, "The Transkei Tragedy", Liberation, September 1956, p. 10.
- (36) Hammond-Tooke, Command or Consensus. The Development of Transkei Local Government, p. 106, quoted by Lawrence, op. cit., p. 36.
- (37) Cape Argus, 10 September 1963.
- (38) Commission Report on Events on 20-22 November 1962 at Paarl (Snyman Report), para. 113.
- (39) Tabata, Imperialist Conspiracy in Africa, p. 37.
- (40) Contact, 9 March 1961, p. 5.
- (41) Ibid., 18 May 1961, p. 5.
- (42) Lawrence, op. cit., p. 64.
- (43) Contact, 25 February 1961.
- (44) Ibid., 1 November 1962.
- (45) Cape Times, 17 September 1963.
- (46) Cape Argus, 28 August 1963.
- (47) M. Horrell (ed), Survey of Race Relations (Johannesburg, 1963), p. 19.
- (48) Cape Argus, 10 August 1963.
- (49) Innes and O'Meara, op. cit., p. 79.
- (50) Patrick Duncan Papers (University of York), "Report on Journey Round South Africa, 29 July-20 August 1960", 8.39.1, and "Diary of a Journey to Transkei, April 1962", 8.39.6. Duncan did not join the PAC until he left South Africa. The South African authorities accused him and other Liberals of encouraging Poqo activities in the Transkei, but this seems highly unlikely.
- (51) Vigne, op. cit., p. 21.
- (52) Lawrence, op. cit., p. 73.
- (53) State v. Alex Nikelo and Mamfengu Mzolisa, Grahamstown, 14 June 1967.
- (54) State v. Ngcongolo and 19 others, CC 9/63, p. 579.
- (55) Ibid., p. 581.
- (56) Cape Times, 9 November 1967.
- (57) State v. Ngcongolo, p. 611.
- (58) Ibid., p. 579.
- (59) Ibid., p. 581.
- (60) State v. Nomapolisa Meji, p. 20.

- (61) Ibid., p. 68.
- (62) Ibid., p. 27.
- (63) Philip and Iona Mayer, Townsmen or Tribesmen (Cape Town, 1974), p. 157.
- (64) Anon., "The Mpondo Revolt 1960", seminar paper, n.d., p. 26.

- (65) Innes and O'Meara, op. cit., p. 82.
- (66) Monica Wilson and Archie Mafeje, Langa (Cape Town, 1963), p. 18.
- (67) See Snyman Report for reference to events in Paarl, where a whole barrack was able to be isolated as Poqo members. A trial (State v. Fundele Ellison Maseku, EC 5/66) in Humansdorp in 1966 concerned the formation of a Poqo branch in the small Eastern Province town of Steynsburg. Out of an African male population of 200, 60 were said to be Poqo members.

All trial transcripts are from the Centre for Southern African Studies Documentation Project collection held at the University of York Library.