Chapter 1

Key events

1910  South Africa becomes a Union
      Africans excluded from the vote everywhere except in the Cape

1912  South African Native National Congress (SANNC) formed
      Natives’ Land Bill introduced

1913  Natives’ Land Act passed
      SANNC delegation to England to protest against the Act

1916  Beaumont Commission reports

1918  African miners strike. An anti-pass campaign is launched

1922  The Stallard Commission recommends, “natives should only be permitted in
      municipal areas for as long as their presence is required by whites.”

1923  Native (Urban Areas) Act passed

1927  Native Administration Act passed

1930  The South African Communist Party launches its pass-burning campaign

1934  National Party and South African Party form the United Party. A splinter group
      becomes the Purified National Party, which later becomes the National Party
      Workers’ Party splits from the Non-European Unity Movement over the issue of
      land
      Slums Clearance Act passed

1936  Native Trust and Land Act passed

1937  Native Laws Amendment Act passed

1939  South Africa enters World War Two

1943  ANC adopts *African claims in South Africa* - a statement of the aspirations of
      the African people

1945  Black (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act passed

1948  NP comes to power
A history of land issues from 1913 to 1948

Awakening on Friday morning, June 20, 1913, the South African native found himself, not actually a slave, but a pariah in the land of his birth.

*Plaatje, 1916, p.21*

The 1913 Land Act

The 1913 Act had, of course, been preceded by a vast number of land laws in the British colonies and the Boer republics before 1910: laws controlling squatting, regulating tenancies, imposing taxes and rents, and escalating the penalties and punishments for their transgression. But the 1913 law - while it echoed details from earlier legislation - went much further.

*Bundy, 1990, p.5*

In 1913 the Natives’ Land Act was passed. It was a powerful piece of legislation which formed the basis on which South Africa was and is divided. When the Bill was brought to Parliament, it was opposed by various ministers who felt that as it had such important implications for the future, it needed to be discussed and debated more fully. Since South Africa was a dominion within the British Empire, it was required that the Governor-General and the King assented to any Bills passed by the Union Parliament. But Jacobus Sauer, the Minister of Native Affairs, announced before the Bill was even introduced that the Governor-General had given his assurance of the King’s assent. This was unprecedented. Sir William Berry, from Queenstown, referred to the second reading debate in which

he had ventured to say that there was no call for a bill of that nature at all; there was no need for a bill revolutionizing the attitude of the Union with respect to the natives generally...the only justification that had been offered for this Bill was that a large amount of land had been transferred from Europeans to natives. An analysis of the return, however, showed that only sixteen farms in the Transvaal had been so transferred during the last three years...the whole tendency of the Bill, as it stood at the second reading, and more especially as it stood with the amendments by the Minister on the notice paper, was to drive the native peasant off the land. The only refuge that the native had was the town.

*Berry quoted in Plaatje, 1916, pp.48-50*

Outside Parliament the Bill was opposed by various organisations, such as the newly formed South African Native National Congress (later the ANC), and concerned individuals and groups who realised that the Act would entrench the principle of territorial segregation. Despite such concerns the Bill was passed in Parliament after the third reading and then sent to the Governor-General for signature.
The Act divided South Africa into areas where black people could own land (called ‘reserves’) and the rest of the country, where they could not. Only 7% of the total land surface of South Africa was set aside for ‘Native Reserves’ throughout South Africa. The schedule of land accompanying the Act was based on existing reserves and locations established during the colonial period. In Natal, 15% of the province’s land was set aside. This higher proportion was because of the higher amount of land set aside by the colonial government. In effect, the Act legislated the principle of territorial segregation.

But the Act went further than this. It also regulated exactly who could live on white-owned farms, and under what circumstances. It did not immediately affect labour tenants for it treated them as farm labourers who had permission to reside on white farms. In fact, the Act actually swelled the numbers of labour tenants for it forced many cash tenants and sharecroppers into labour tenancy.
What were the intentions of the Act?

There have been many different explanations for why the 1913 Natives’ Land Act was passed. The three main reasons that have been given include the principle of territorial segregation, the increase of the provision of cheap African labour and the reduction of competition from African peasant farmers. For Jacobus Sauer, the Minister of Native Affairs who introduced the Bill, it was a means of solving ‘the Native problem’ through territorial segregation.

Second Reading

* The MINISTER OF NATIVE AFFAIRS, amid rising cheers, said that, in moving the second reading of the Natives Land Bill, he hoped he would say nothing to detract from the importance of the matter dealt with. The problems arising out of the relations between Europeans and natives were so complex and so difficult that one often despaired. The Bill only dealt with a phase of that large question and he hoped the object aimed at would be attained, and that the bulk of the people affected by it would consider it as reasonable. That could not be done unless they had the interests of a large class at heart, and acted in a spirit of fairness (Hear, hear.) Recently there had been a good deal of discussion on the question of segregation. Personally, he had never been able quite to understand what that meant. If it meant that there must be a complete separation between Europeans and natives, so that they would not come into daily contact with each other, then it was an impossible proposal. The provisions proposed under the Bill were far less drastic than what some people meant by segregation, and, he hoped, far more feasible. He proposed in this Bill that the bulk of the two races, the European and the native should live in the main in separate areas - (hear, hear) - that was, that they should occupy and acquire land in separate areas.

Debates of the House of Assembly, 9 May 1913, col. 2270

But this ideological rationale was also economically expedient. A Farmers’ Weekly of 1912 shows that white farmers saw segregation as a way of increasing land and labour for white agriculture.

The scarcity of land and the want of labour is being more heavily felt, and with the land of the European reserves occupied by natives, it is the Europeans and not the natives who are, and will continue to be, sufferers. I fail to see how the difficulty is to be overcome unless we segregate the races and confine each to his own reserve.

_Farmers’ Weekly quoted in Letsoalo, 1987, p.35_

Historians Merle Lipton and Colin Bundy agree that increasing the supply of African labour was one of the main intentions of the Act.

One of the major objects of the Land Act...was to swell the supply of African labour, which would obviously be increased by restricting their opportunities as independent producers. The restrictions on tenancy (i.e. hiring of land to Africans) were explicitly connected with this.

_Lipton, 1985, pp.88-9_
What the 1913 Act attempted was to legislate out of existence the more independent forms of tenure and to perpetuate instead the most dependent. Its intention was to outlaw cash-paying tenants. The Act intended to reduce cash tenants and sharecroppers to the status of labour tenants or wage labourers.

*Bundy, 1990, p.6*

The words of Senator Munnik, who gave evidence to the 1916 Beaumont Commission, confirm this.

The object of the government should be, as far as possible, to force the natives, of course peacefully, into agriculture. The great object therefore should be to get him to work for the white men on the farms at a wage.

*Munnik quoted in Bundy, 1990, p.3*

Essy Letsoalo argues that the 1913 Act was also an attempt to try to reduce competition from peasant producers and force peasants into wage labour.

The 1913 Native Land Act has been seen by many as being an attempt to reduce competition by peasant producers. The loss of land by Blacks through this Act was a severe blow for the Black peasantry - the tribal economy and traditional mode of production could not survive without a land base and access to resources.

*Letsoalo, 1987, p.36*

The Act was very successful in achieving these goals but at considerable human cost. The Beaumont Commission of Enquiry, appointed by the government in 1913 to report on the allocation of land to the reserves, heard evidence from different people about the effect of the Act on the lives of black farmers, sharecroppers and cash tenants.

A Reverend Mtinkuli said:

There are many natives who have already been removed from the farms on account of this Act. There are some being removed from the farms today. There are others who have farms but titles are refused them by the Government...This Act therefore, seems to us like a one-edged knife - it cuts a big piece off the native and is very gentle with the European. The white man is told: ‘If the natives do not carry out the landlord’s wishes, chase them off the farm’ but the natives are not told where to go to... When the white man threatens to remove us from off his farm we have nowhere to run to; we would be obliged to stay and work for him at 2s 6d a month as we have to accept his conditions.

*Mtinkuli quoted in Bundy, 1990, p.3*
The magistrate from Heilbron said, “This Act is one by which a man is reduced from being a farmer in his own account to being a servant at one stroke” (Bundy, 1990, p.6).

A spokesperson for the Transvaal branch of the South African Native National Congress told the Commission:

> It causes our people to be derelict and helpless... Another reason why this Act oppresses is that the farmer refuses to engage the average native who is in possession of his livestock as he says the native is a baas himself. In the latter case the native is compelled to sell his stock for whatever he can get in order that he may obtain employment as he has no place of refuge. There is winter in the Natives Land Act. In winter the trees are stripped and lifeless.
>  
> *Bundy, 1990, p.6*

Gail Gerhart highlights some of the major consequences of the Act for sharecroppers.

> The Act, besides abolishing the right of Africans to buy land outside limited and already crowded reserve areas, stripped many Africans outside of the reserves of their right to own livestock, and abolished the various systems of sharecropping which had enabled large numbers of African squatters on white-owned farms to live a relatively independent and prosperous life. The result over time was a large-scale movement of Africans off the land, either into a state of permanent urbanization, or into a migrant pattern of repeated shifts between rural reserves and contract employment in “white” towns.
>  
> *Gerhart, 1978, pp.22-3*

Thus, the push of Africans off ‘white’ land into the reserves led to overcrowding and the inability of people to derive a living from the land. As an alternative, people sought wage labour on white farms or moved to towns in search of employment. But settlement in urban areas resulted in more overcrowded conditions. This led to urban slums and increasing control measures. For people living on white farms as sharecroppers and cash tenants, their future was threatened by the provisions of the Act which had the intention of restricting these systems. This meant that many people could no longer keep their livestock on white-owned farms, and they left these farms for the reserves and black freehold farms. However, freehold land held only limited security.

> A further outcome of the 1913 Land Act...was that two classes of african freehold land were bing created - those included in the reserves, with their prospects for security of tenure reasonably assured ... and those not included, their status and future prospects unclear: future black spots.
>  
> *SPP, 1983, p.34*
History has judged the 1913 Land Act harshly as this editorial from the Sunday Tribune of 19 June 1983 shows.

**A lifetime of folly**

TOMORROW it will be 70 years since the first Union Government passed the Natives Land Act. Sometimes it is forgotten that the depredations of racialism are not solely the responsibility of the Nationalist government.

The Act etched on the face of this country a picture of injustice and devastation: black access to the land was restricted and the migrant labour system was entrenched. Endorsed and expanded by successive governments, the Act was ultimately responsible for one of the most extensive forced removals of people since Hitler’s Germany.

It gave purpose to the African National Congress, which tried in vain to counter the measure with petitions, lobbies, pleas and delegations. Today, 70 years later, a banned ANC is regearing its machinery for violent onslaught on the structures of this society.

In all, the 70 years since the passing of the Land Act are a chronicle of missed opportunities.

It has been described as the most suicidal piece of legislation any government has put on the statute book. If only the present government would mark this anniversary as a turning point away from the idiocies of racialism; the forced removals; the razing of squatter camps and abhorrent legislation like the influx control laws.

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**Resistance to the Act**

The harsh effects of the Act, and its implications for the future, meant it met with considerable resistance. This resistance took a variety of forms, from political opposition by the newly formed South African Native National Congress (SANNC), to the rise of African independent churches.

When the Natives’ Land Bill was before Parliament, meetings were held in many villages and locations in protest against the ministerial surrender to the Republicans, of which the Bill was the outcome. At the end of March 1913, the Native National Congress met in Johannesburg, and there a deputation was appointed to go to Cape Town and point out to the Government some, at least, of the harm that would follow legislation of the character mapped out in Parliament on February 28 when the Land Act was first announced. They were to urge that such a measure would be exploitation of the cruellest kind, that it would not only interfere with the economic independence of the natives, but would reduce them forever to a state of serfdom, and degrade them as nothing has done since slavery was abolished at the Cape. Missionaries also, and European friends of the natives, did not sit still. Resolution after resolution, telegraphic and other representations, were made to Mr Sauer, from meetings in various parts of the country, counselling prudence. Even such societies as the Transvaal Landowners, who had long been crying for a measure to separate whites from blacks and *vice versa*, urged that the Bill should not be passed during the same session in which it was introduced, that the country should be given an opportunity to digest it, in order, if necessary, to suggest amendments. The missionary bodies, too, represent a following of natives numbering hundreds and thousands of souls, on whose behalf they pleaded for justice. These bodies urged that before passing a law, prohibiting the sale and lease of land to natives, and expelling squatters from their homes, the Government should provide locations to which the evicted natives could go.

*Plaatje, 1916, pp.72-3*
Indeed, the South African Native National Congress was founded primarily in response to the Bill.

the establishment of the Union under the anti-African Smuts-Botha government, and its first major onslaught on the Africans’ remaining land rights, the Native Land Bill of 1912, brought home to Africans throughout the country the imperative need for an effective national organisation which could unite the people, regardless of tribal origin or language, for an effective struggle against white minority domination. A clarion call for unity was issued by Dr. Seme:

‘The demon of racialism, the aberrations of the Xhosa-Fingo raids, the animosity that exists between Zulus and the Tsongas, the Basotho and every other Native, must be buried and forgotten...We are one people.’

The call met with an overwhelmingly favourable response. The African Congresses which had been formed in the Transvaal, Natal and Free State, the pioneer African movements in the Cape and the traditional rulers of many African peoples approved the planned formation of a single organisation to represent their interests.

It was this spirit of African unity that inspired the foundation on 8 January 1912 of the African National Congress.

Lerumo, undated

The SANNC protested against the Bill in a variety of ways, both during the parliamentary readings and after the Bill was passed. It organised protest meetings against the Bill.

After Parliament had passed the Bill, the Congress wrote to the Governor General asking him to withhold his assent to the Bill until they had made known their concerns to the King. The Governor General replied that this was not possible and so the Act was passed.

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**NATIVES AND NATIVE LAND BILL**

**PROTEST AT CAPE-TOWN MEETING**

CAPE TOWN, May 5

A mass meeting held under the auspices of the Cape Peninsula Native Association and the Local Branch of the South African National Native Congress, was held at the Masonic Hall yesterday afternoon, at which delegates were present from the Natal Congress.

Speeches were delivered by Dr Haggar, M.L.A., and several natives, all of which strongly condemned the proposed Native Land Bill.

A resolution was passed urging the Government to withdraw the Bill. - Reuter

**DEPUTATION TO MINISTER**

CAPE TOWN, May 5

A deputation representing the South African Native National Congress, including the Revs. J.L.Dulee, Manguna and Sol Tlaatye, waited upon the Minister for Native Affairs this morning and discussed the Native Lands Bill. The proceedings were private. - Reuter

*The Natal Witness, 10 May 1913*
The SANNC then organised a delegation to go to England to protest about the Act. This was well-documented by Sol Plaatje, the General Secretary of the South African Native National Congress, in his book *Native Life in South Africa*, written in response to the Act.

Opposition to the Act entered into African culture in the form of a song.

**The Land Act Song**

We are the children of Africa  
We cry for our land  
Zulu, Xhosa, Sotho  
Zulu, Xhosa, Sotho unite  
We are mad over the Land Act  
A terrible law that allows sojourners  
To deny us our land  
Crying that we the people  
Should pay to get our land back  
We cry for the children of our fathers  
Who roam around the world without a home  
Even in the land of their forefathers.

*R.T. Caluza quoted in Callinicos, 1987*
Communities

Many of the communities which later sought help from AFRA were affected by the 1913 Act, since the land they were living on (and, in some cases, held title to) was excluded from the areas scheduled as reserve areas. The Crimen land was bought in 1912; the KwaPitela land in 1900; the Charlestown land in 1912. The AmaHlubi community and Mooibank labour tenants were settled on their land long before the Act, although they did not hold title to it.

One of the communities most affected by the Act was Cornfields, which was in the process of buying their land when the Act was passed.

Our people bought their land in 1910. It was bought by our grandparents and forefathers who hoped that they would stay, die and be buried on that same land.

*Mr Mabaso (Cornfields resident) quoted in Merrett, 1991, p.50*

Cornfields was bought by a Baptist missionary, Rev. William Wilcox, in 1912. He divided the land into agricultural smallholdings and laid out a township, and then advertised these for sale with the intention of enabling Africans to purchase the land.

However, the 1913 Act excluded Cornfields from the reserves, with potentially disastrous results. Wilcox petitioned the Governor General in June 1913, begging for exemption from the Act. When a decision was delayed he wrote again in February 1914.

If it is the intention of the government to ruin me and the natives who have entrusted their money to me the sooner we know it the better...For my own part if it were not my bounden duty, I would welcome any sort of relief, even a term in gaol, for this anxiety is killing. I am an old man with a family. That I shall lose all the earnings of a life time and that my self and family will be beggared, is something, and yet I do not care so much for that, but that the thousand natives who have trusted me is a calamity that is tertible [sic] for me to face. From the time of my conversion more than 40 years ago I have never knowingly defrauded anyone. But now it is inevitable that many of these suspicious natives to whom I would set an example of honesty and upright dealing, will think I have not been straight with them. Yet My God knows I have tried to be...

*Wilcox quoted in Merrett, 1991, p.58*

The government appears to have decided to treat Cornfields as an anomaly, and allowed Africans to continue to buy land there.
The 1936 Act

The policy of segregation, with the effect of increasing the supply of labour, was reinforced by the Native Trust and Land Act of 1936.

The 1936 Native Trust and Land Act, finally passed by Parliament in 1936, is one of the most significant pieces of legislation in the history of 20th century South Africa. It touched the lives of all African people, giving added shape and content to the reserve policy and establishing new controls over Africans living on white-owned farms.

SPP, 1983, p.31

The 1936 Act added more land to the scheduled reserves of the 1913 Act. It defined this land as “released land”. The Act identified a further 6.2 million hectares of land to be added to the reserves which would potentially increase the size of African land from 7 to 13%. This was in fact considerably less than had been originally envisaged, since white pressure groups had successfully whittled down the various proposals for more land for the reserves from 8 365 774 morgen (Beaumont) to 7 521 273 morgen (1918 committees) to 7 250 000 morgen (1936 quota).

The Act placed an absolute limit on the land that would be made available for African settlement. This, together with African freehold land in non-scheduled areas now being regarded as ‘black spots’, provided the basis for future forced removals.

Land terminology created by the Land Acts

Scheduled areas: This was land scheduled by the 1913 Act for Africans. It included the original reserves and areas traditionally occupied by Africans. Africans could only acquire land within scheduled areas (7% of the total area of South Africa): all other areas were restricted or unscheduled.

Released areas: The 1936 Act made provision for areas to be set aside for African occupation and added to the 1913 scheduled areas. These areas were known as ‘released’ areas. This Act potentially increased the size of African land from 7 to 13%.

Quota: The total amount of land to be set aside for African occupation was referred to as ‘the quota’.

Black spots: This was freehold land, bought by Africans prior to 1913, which were not within the scheduled or released areas. This land was seen as a ‘black spot’ within white areas.
The 1936 Act also created the South African Native Trust (SANT). The SANT was to acquire land for settlement by Africans and to develop this land. However, the acquisition of land happened very slowly, initially because of South Africa’s involvement in World War 2 and, after the war, because of the reluctance of white agriculture to make land available for the Trust. Essy Letsoalo points out that the 13% quota has never been reached.

It is generally (and erroneously) said that the Blacks occupy thirteen percent of the land in South Africa. This figure refers to the official land reserved for Blacks in terms of the 1936 Land Act. However to date, the process of buying released lands from White owners has not been completed. Furthermore, trust farms are being used by the government rather than being transferred to the populations trapped in the homelands. Actually, Blacks occupy less than thirteen percent.

Letsoalo, 1987, p.41

‘Native reserves’ set aside in terms of the 1936 Native Trust and Land Act

The government claimed to have reached the quota in Natal but it is unclear whether it did or not (see SPP, 1983, p.36).
As with the 1913 Act, the 1936 Act also dealt specifically with Africans living and working on white-owned farms.

Enacted as a response to state concern about the number of black people congregating on white-owned farmland, chapter IV established an elaborate system for the registration and control of labour tenants and squatters. In terms of section 26, only certain categories of black people were permitted to reside on white-owned farmland, one such category being registered labour tenants and their dependents. Contravention of the section was made a punishable offence. Owners of land were required to register the labour tenants residing on their land and could be called before the labour tenant control board to show cause why the number of tenants on the land should not be reduced. The board could order the landowner to reduce the number within a specific period, and could terminate any contract of labour tenancy that extended beyond that period. Any ‘native’ unlawfully residing on the land could, after an enquiry by the local native commissioner, be summarily ejected by the police, using reasonable force if necessary. These drastic measures provided the basis for the mass farm removals that were later to follow.

_Hathorn and Hutchinson, 1990, p.196_

The Act also forbade the registration of new squatters (a term used by the government to refer to all people living on land they did not own whether or not they had the owner’s permission). It laid down such high fees for the registration of tenants that it had the effect of severely limiting squatting and labour tenancy (Letsoalo, 1987, p.41). This meant that still more people living and working on white-owned farms left, some for the increasingly crowded reserves and black freehold farms, and others for urban areas. The Act inevitably increased the urbanisation that the 1913 Act had begun.

**Urbanisation**

Urbanisation created a new set of problems. Overcrowded urban living conditions created slums, and the government responded with increasing measures to control access to the urban areas and how people could live in these areas. This meant that families could not live together in urban areas. Three years before the National Party came to power, the Black (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act was passed, which created separate areas for African residents and prohibited Africans from acquiring land outside these areas. It also prohibited the entry into an urban area of any African not employed in that area, and provided for the removal and resettlement of all Africans ‘surplus’ to the labour requirements of the urban area.
Resistance to the Act

There was opposition to the Act from many groups, from white farmers and landowners, to political parties and organisations opposed to the government’s segregationist policy, to communities and individuals whose lives were affected by the Act.

In Natal, white farmers and landowners were concerned about losing their land to the released areas as these newspaper headlines from *The Natal Witness* of 1936 show.

**Released Areas Question**

**EAST GRIQUALAND PROTESTS AGAIN**

“Grave Injustice” to Europeans

**GOVERNMENT’S VIEW UNACCEPTABLE**

**MORE LAND FOR UNION NATIVES**

**PROVISION OF NEW BILL CRITICISED IN ASSEMBLY**

Cases of Hardship Will be Considered

**PURCHASES ONLY WITH CONSENT OF OWNERS**

*The Natal Witness, 2 May 1936, 21 May 1936, 5 May 1936*

Africans were also concerned about losing their land, and many African political organisations emphasised the importance of the land issue.
The ANC continued to highlight land as a crucial issue. On 16 December 1943 delegates at the ANC annual conference unanimously adopted a statement of the aspirations of the African people, drafted by a committee of African professionals and intellectuals. The statement included the following points about land:

...LAND
We demand the right to an equal share in all the material resources of the country, and we urge:
1. That the present allocation of 12½ % of the surface area to 7,000,000 Africans as against 87 ½% to about 2,000,000 Europeans is unjust and contrary to the interest of South Africa, and therefore demand a fair redistribution of the land as a prerequisite for a just settlement of the land problem.
2. That the right to own, buy, hire or lease and occupy land individually or collectively, both in rural and in urban areas is a fundamental right of citizenship, and therefore demand the repeal of the Native Land Act, the Natives Laws Amendment Act, and the Natives (Urban Areas) Act in so far as these laws abrogate that right.
3. That African farmers require no less assistance from the State than that which is provided to European farmers, and therefore demand the same Land Bank facilities, State subsidies, and other privileges as are enjoyed by Europeans.

ANC, 1943

The ANC Youth League took up a somewhat more radical position in their “Basic Policy” of 1948.

Africa was, has been and still is the Blackman’s continent. The Europeans, who have carved up and divided Africa among themselves, dispossessed by force of arms the rightful owners of the land - the children of the soil...Although conquered and subjugated, the Africans have not given up, and they will never give up their claim and title to Africa. The fact that their land has been taken and their rights whittled down does not take away or remove their right to the land of their forefathers.

Gerhart, 1978, p.68

In urban areas, crowded living conditions gave rise to the more direct action of the Sofasonke Party. It was founded by James Sofasonke Mpanza.

The bold idea of a mass move to the open veld, where people simply built their own homes without the permission of the City Council, was the brain-child of James Sofasonke Mpanza, founder of Orlando’s Sofasonke Party and the only member of the Orlando Advisory Board who did not represent the Communist Party.

Mpanza’s call to landless people struck deep-seated feelings and attracted a devout following. In 1935 he founded a local party, the Sofasonke Party. Sofasonke means ‘let us die together’. This idea of collective action and solidarity was expressed more optimistically in the party’s slogan ‘Housing and Shelter for All’.

Callinicos, 1993, p.37
The different emphasis placed on land in the ANC is also reflected in the Communist Party of South Africa. It seems clear that by the late 1930s and 1940s, the Communist Party was primarily an urban-based movement which concentrated on the urban proletariat. In contrast, the Trotskyists and, in particular, the Workers’ Party (which split from the Non-European Unity Movement in 1934), declared the “agrarian question” to be the “alpha and omega” of the revolution.

It argued that the enormity of the land problem, with the white 10 per cent of the population owning 90 per cent of the land, meant that only a socialist revolution could solve it. At a time when black urban workers were beginning to discover their collective identity and demand recognition of it, the Workers Party turned its face to the land and its mind metamorphosed the black working class (both in the towns and on the white-owned farms) into ‘landless peasants’. Since it now saw no possibility of socialism emerging from white workers because of their racism or from black workers because they were really landless peasants, the Workers party thereupon adopted a two stage theory, the first stage of which was the national struggle for land redistribution to the african peasantry, whilst socialist forms of struggle were relegated to a second stage sometime in the future.

*Fine, 1990, p.63*

**Other legislation**

By 1948, there were a number of Acts that, together with the 1913 and 1936 Acts, controlled access to land within and outside the reserves.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1923 Native (Urban Areas) Act</th>
<th>Made provision for the accommodation of Africans in segregated urban locations.</th>
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<tr>
<td>1927 Native Administration Act</td>
<td>Placed the system of tribal government under white control.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1934 Slums Clearance Act (as amended)</td>
<td>Laid down minimum standards for housing and allowed for evictions and the expropriation of properties deemed to be slums.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1937 Native Laws Amendment Act</td>
<td>Prohibited Africans from buying land in urban areas.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1945 Black (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act (as amended)</td>
<td>Consolidated the laws relating to the control of Africans in urban areas and the provision of residence for Africans in these areas.</td>
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*Human Awareness Programme, 1989, C3*
Communities

The 1936 Act meant that any areas owned by Africans not in the quota of scheduled or released areas were now seen as ‘black spots’. This provided the basis for future removals. This was immediately recognised by African freehold landowners as this letter to the The Natal Witness in April 1936 shows.

Natives in North Natal

I think this is an opportunity to query the statements made by Mr. Walter Stein and his fellow farmers at Buffalo Flats on April 17.

Providence had made it possible through the advice of missionaries and the efforts of those native purchasers to be owners of so-called “black spots” in Northern Natal.

Mr. Walter Stein in his statement said Buffalo Flats was the only “black spot” in Northern Natal, and he strongly urged that if it were possible the whole of North Natal should be made “white”.

One wonders how these gentlemen think, as this is the land of our birth. When one finds a meeting of Christian farmers suggesting expropriation of land from natives, one asks: Why not elimination by substitution?

Suppose the whole of Northern Natal was made “white”. I would like to get a candid reply from Mr. Stein as to what the means are which he has in mind for the provision of those thousands of natives occupying the 60 farms if expropriation be effected.

It is no use to suggest this or that way of getting rid of a native from his property without saying where he ought to be under the sun of the South African soil, where he is a bona fide member of society.

We pray to the Almighty to enlist in our favour not the pity of our European friends, but their “sympathy,” as creation has made us denizens of South Africa, hence we are and shall ever be the so-called “native problem.”

T.S.KAMBULE

Maritzburg.

The Natal Witness, 23 April 1936
However, even those communities that were included in ‘native’ areas were not guaranteed future security. Cornfields was listed as a ‘released’ area but, as this was never implemented, it came to be seen by the government as a future black spot.

As an area in which black landowners held title deeds, Cornfields became a refuge for labour tenants, their families and livestock, evicted from farms. This resulted in increased pressure on the land and overcrowding.

[There is] considerable evidence of physical deterioration in Cornfields in the 1940s, some of which has been provided by the community itself. In 1942, for instance, four Cornfields residents...wrote to the Minister of Native Affairs, admitting to the influx of evicted farm labourers, the overcrowding and overstocking of the land. [There was also] probably severe overgrazing.

Merrett, 1991, p.66

By the time the National Party came to power in 1948, urban and rural land in South Africa was firmly divided along racial grounds. Freehold communities living outside the areas scheduled as ‘native’ areas were now black spots and in danger of removal, but safety was not even guaranteed to those within scheduled areas. The Land Acts had affected the security of tenure of labour tenants and evictions from farms continued. Some of the evicted tenants sought work in urban areas; others made their way to black freehold areas in the reserves. By the 1940s the influx into the reserves and black freehold areas resulted in overcrowding of the land and the possibility of sustainable agriculture on this land rapidly diminished. Many heads of families turned to migrant labour as a source of income. This meant that women and children, and the elderly and less physically able people in communities, were left to work the land.
Chapter 2

Key events

1948  The National Party is voted into power with a narrow margin
1950  The Suppression of Communism Act, the Population Registration Act, and the Immorality Act are passed
1952  The ANC begins its Defiance Campaign
1954  The Tomlinson Commission reports
1955  The Congress of the People adopts the Freedom Charter in Kliptown
       Coloureds are removed from the voters’ roll and the Black Sash is formed in response
1956  Government releases a White Paper on homelands
1958  Hendrik Verwoerd becomes Prime Minister
1959  PAC is formed under Robert Sobukwe as a breakaway from the ANC
       Progressive Party splits from the United Party over the 1936 Land Act
       Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act passed
1960  Sharpeville
       State of Emergency declared
       The ANC and PAC are banned
1961  Referendum – South Africa leaves the Commonwealth and becomes a Republic
       The ANC launches its armed struggle
1963  Rivonia trial at which Nelson Mandela is imprisoned for life
1964  Bantu Laws Amendment Act passed making it possible to ban labour tenancy by proclamation
1966  Verwoerd is assassinated and B.J. Vorster takes over
1968  Prohibition of Political Interference Act passed. Liberal Party disbanded in response
       Limehill Resettlement Camp established
       Citizens’ Action Committee formed; nationwide petition against removals launched
1970  KwaZulu Territorial Authority established
1975  Government releases its final homelands consolidation proposals
1977  Steve Biko dies in detention
1978  The Info Scandal is revealed
1979  Vorster resigns and is replaced by P.W. Botha