

# Political shocks, not economics, stir emigration

STAR 1/08/88

By Michael Chester

Records of migration patterns in and out of South Africa prove that the series of setbacks that have now caused the brain-drain dilemma have always been linked to swift reactions to political events.

In the pushes and pulls that turn an influx into an exodus, or the reverse, political affairs have over-powered economics as an influence ever since the gush of immigration at the end of World War 2, when veterans of shell-shocked Europe trekked southward in their tens of thousands.

Even gold booms and economic up-swings and temptations of rich living have wilted in importance when new political shock waves have reverberated around the world.

## 1948 a turn off

The first check to the immigration tide followed the election of the Nationalist Party to power in 1948.

Concern about the political route South Africa had chosen, especially in the UK, traditionally the main source of SA immigrants, caused the inflow of newcomers to plummet from 36 000 a year to below 16 000.

The next major check to the flow came in 1960 when the world was stunned by the Sharpeville tragedy.

It also marked the dramatic moment when the number of new immigrants dropped to below the number of South Africans packing their bags.

Momentarily, the travel brochure attractions — plus what then looked like an escape route from high taxation — made South Africa a magnet.

The inflow of immigrants resumed at a stronger pace than ever. It was running at above 40 000 a year until the early 1970s, when the future of Rhodesia was uncertain.

Again, hesitations were overpowered temporarily by all the glamour of a

new high in gold prices. The number of immigrants soared to a record 50 464 in the 1975 count.

The Soweto riots in 1976 caused the flow to freeze.

In 1977, the stream of immigrants shrank by more than half to below 25 000, while, in reverse order, emigrants outnumbered immigrants.

As the gold stampede carried world prices to a staggering 850 dollars an ounce and better, South Africa glittered — and in 1981 and again in 1982 the immigrants came in droves.

South Africans themselves basked in the sun — and stayed.

It was the acrid smoke of simmering political unrest that next tarnished the glitter. Sanctions and threats of economic isolations disturbed may.

If many potential migrants needed a final shove, it was provided with the imposition of a State of Emergency.

## Lowest in memory

The annual inflow of immigrants, above 45 000 in 1982, wilted to below 18 000 in 1985 and below even 7 000 in 1986 — the lowest in living memory.

Equally alarming, the out-flow was again higher than the inflow. The number of emigrants was back above 11 000 in 1985 and swelled to 14 000 in 1986.

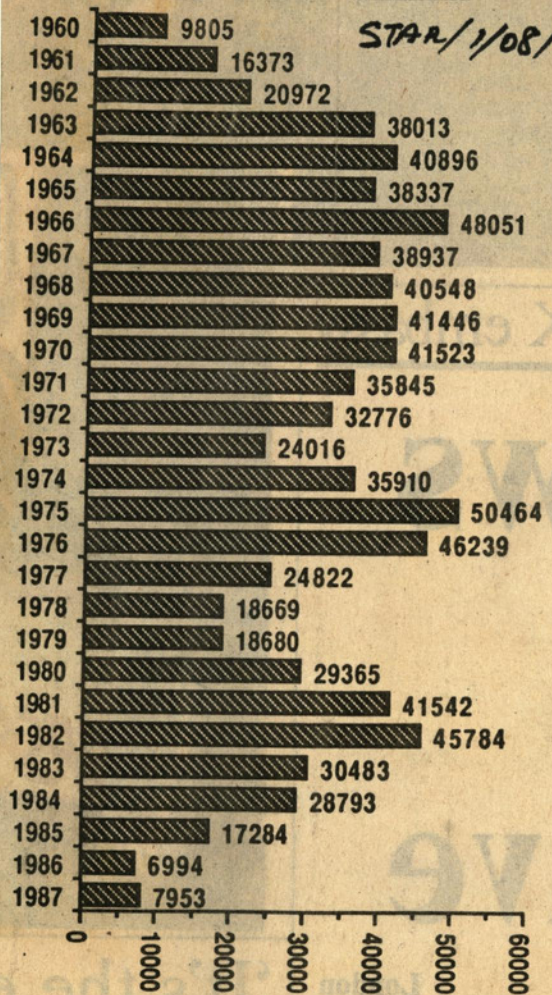
A marginal improvement last year and the first few months of 1988 was spurred by signals of an economic up-turn and in part by perceptions of a return to relative political calm — helped along, according to many observers, by strict government restrictions that blanked out a lot of the acrid side of political news.

But trends have been nowhere strong enough to dispel longer term worries about the ultimate impact of shortages of skilled manpower at a moment it has never been in more demand to handle a critical phase in economic development.

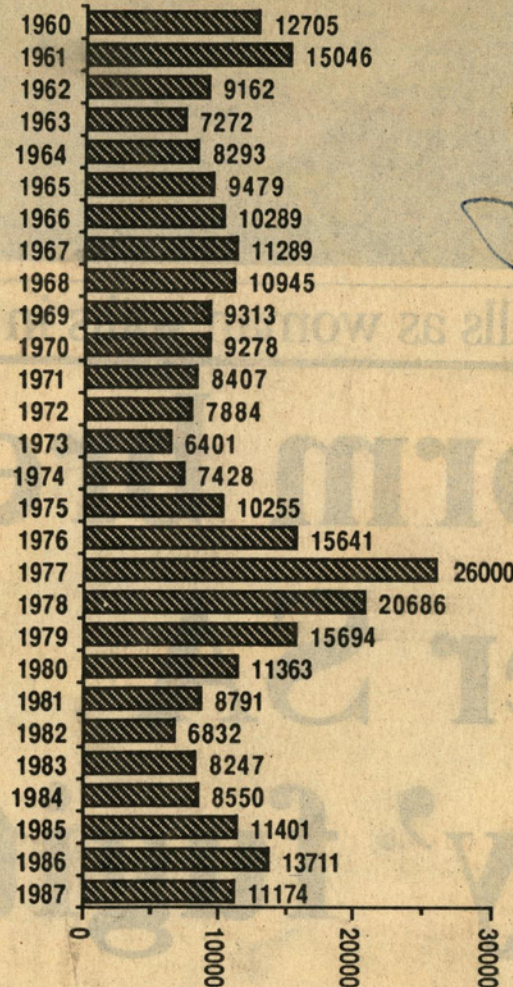


## IMMIGRATION

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## EMIGRATION



# Aussie overtakes Britain as home for SA emigrants

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By Michael Chester

The migrants — where do they come from, where do they go?

In 1980, much of the immigration traffic was from Rhodesia during the big transformation into Zimbabwe — accounting for more than 12 500 of the overall influx of 30 000 newcomers of all ages.

The Rhodes even out-numbered the immigrants coming in from Britain — for years top of the list. And the south-bound trekkers across the Limpopo grew to more than 15 000 in 1982 and again in 1983.

The UK resumed its role as the principal source of immigrants for no more than a brief spell — until a dramatic cutback from over 20 000 in 1982 down to under 11 000 the next year.

In 1982, incidentally, compared with 20 347 immigrants from Britain and 15 156 from Zimbabwe, new arrivals from West Germany, the next largest single source, was trailing behind at 1 662, from the whole of Asia at 705 and from the United States and Canada combined at 678.

### INFLOW FROM ZIMBABWE DROPS

By 1985, the inflow from Zimbabwe had stemmed to less than 5 500 — and the number of new Brits coming in was even lower. When the total inflow dropped to below 7 000 in 1986, the intake from both the UK and Zimbabwe was down to only about 2 000, with dramatic cuts in other inflows.

So where have emigrants headed?

When the exodus from South Africa reached its peak in the wake of 1976 Soweto riots, the favourite destination — by a long shot — was Britain.

Out of 26 000 emigrants, almost 10 000 landed in the UK from the 16 000 bound for Europe as a whole; 1 300 set off to the US, 1 200 to Canada — and more than 2 000 to Australia. Only about 1 600 chose to stay on in Africa beyond the SA borders, 900 of them settling next door in Rhodesia.

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# IMMIGRATION

## SOME JUST NEVER USE RETURN TICKETS

When the exodus reached a new peak at almost 14 000 in 1986, it was Australia that was increasingly regarded as the new Promised Land. While Britain flagged in popularity, nearly 4 000 emigrants quit South Africa to move off to Australia.

In the process of changes to migration patterns, jokes about it all have shifted emphasis too.

Significantly, snide remarks about the "Chicken run" and the "When-we brigade" have slipped out of fashion. Nowadays one talks about the new "Bruces and Sheilas".

The United States and Canada may also be more popular destination points than suggested in official statistics, especially among the younger generation, who, rather than announce a permanent departure, often set out to "look around" — and in fact never do use their return tickets.



# Winnie had a hand in setting house on fire, claims pamphlet

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By Kaizer Nyatumba

A pamphlet purportedly issued by the restricted Azanian People's Organisation (Azapo) and distributed in Johannesburg and Soweto on Friday accused Mrs Winnie Mandela of having had a hand in the burning of her Orlando West home last week because she was "fed-up with living in poverty and to fight for the cause of the people".

The pamphlet, entitled "Mandela's home arsoned", said Mrs Mandela could not wait to move into her new house "and surround herself with luxuries".

Signed "issued by Azapo, Jhb", the pamphlet said: "When she was fed-up of living in a boring rural town like Brandfort, her comfortable home conveniently caught fire and she moved to the vibrant, live city with its shebeens, dancing and *stokvels*."

The Azanian Co-ordinating Committee (Azacco), which is not restricted, immediately issued a statement strongly condemning the burning of Mrs Mandela's home and the "spurious" pamphlet which, Azacco claimed, could not have been issued by Azapo.

"No right-thinking black person can condone the burning of Mrs Winnie Mandela's home. We have always condemned the irrationality of black-on-black confrontation," Azacco said.

Authors of the pamphlet could only have been people "trying to sow seeds of mistrust and division within the ranks of the oppressed".

"The pamphlet can never (have) originate(d) from Azapo, (judging) from the style and manner in which it is written," said the Azacco statement.

During the past three weeks Azapo members had received "threatening letters purportedly from the UDF and its affiliates" but these letters had been ignored "because it was obvious again as to what the intentions of the perpetrators are".

Azacco said: "These acts have to be linked to the attempt on (the Rev) Frank Chikane's mother's life last week. We urge black people to be vigilant and not find themselves victims of disinformation and division authored by apostles of darkness."

Mrs Mandela could not be reached for comment.



**S**OUTH AFRICA is changing so rapidly — for good and ill — that it becomes difficult to preserve a framework of assumptions in which to judge events. Or, to put it colloquially, this place is crazy.

Here is a paradox: the political rhetoric from the black townships consists overwhelmingly of dreary socialist clichés, offered at precisely the moment in history when socialism is failing worldwide, while the reality of the townships is a bustling urbanism and a soaring entrepreneurial spirit.

Everybody knows about the taverners — the shebeen keepers — whose importance to the liquor trade makes them respected customers, courted by suppliers. Everybody knows, too, that the taxi-owners have the muscle to bargain for fleet sales, and for bulk fuel supplies.

But it goes beyond this. Every day brings fresh evidence that a breed of urban black man and woman, shrewd and tough and ambitious, is beginning to take hold of the future. The retreat of apartheid, with its destructive bureaucrats and its restrictive regulations, is opening new gaps by the day.

**N**obody measures the informal economy (the free economy, I like to call it) but some economists say it may account for 30%-40% of our economic output. Indeed, excessive taxes are driving even "white" enterprises into what the British, untroubled by the double meaning, call the "black" economy. Anybody who has hired a bricklayer for cash knows what I mean.

In any event, the informal sector offers the only visible explanation — or partial explanation — for one of the puzzles of current political debate: where are the millions of utterly poor people who stand at the centre of that debate?

Before the entire welfare lobby goes into hysterics, let me say that I don't doubt the existence of gruelling poverty in South Africa, especially in the drought-shattered rural areas. I know that TB is an index of endemic

and growing poverty in some classes of people, and I am sure that diseases like kwashiorkor and gastro-enteritis are deadly indicators of deprivation.

I know the Eastern Cape has been crushed by unemployment, and that young matriculants, lacking work, hang around in dangerous gangs. I know, too, that lack of housing creates intolerable conditions of crowding and stress. And I have been inspecting shanty settlements for 30 years.

Still, the visible poverty does not, in its extent or its depth, seem to me to match the political rhetoric that infuses our national debate (To suffer poverty by proxy is, of course, proof of moral superiority; I don't knock it, but I do question the proportions.)

At least, let us say, there exists another reality: the customers of the mini-buses, and of the retail supermarkets; the purchasers of houses who put down R3 000 in cash deposits; the families who can afford (as they could not 25 years ago) to keep children at school for 12 years; the bustling middle-class women — high heels and mock leather skirts — who

crowd downtown Johannesburg.

We are dealing not only with racial oppression, though that is part of it, but with a three-way class split in the black community: the new entrepreneurs, the unionised workers and the impoverished unemployed or under-employed.

It may, therefore, be time to consider differentiated policies to deal with the different classes. The welfare statism demanded by utter deprivation is likely to be wholly inappropriate for a unionised working class, and downright destructive towards the entrepreneurial class.

**T**hree things seem to me to be self-evident about the coming decade:

Firstly, the population of the cities will double, from natural growth and from migration, and the multitudes will overwhelm all urban facilities;

Secondly, there is no possibility at all that government will "provide" — even if it tries — the 400 000 houses a year that will be needed until the end of the century.

Private enterprise is now building, perhaps, 35 000 houses a year. If black people do not house themselves, they will end up homeless;

Thirdly, government cannot, by any policies known to man, create enough work for the new urban multitudes who, if they do not create work for themselves, will remain unemployed.

Even socialist remedies, which would require huge disruption of economic patterns, would be at best as inadequate as Zimbabwe's or Tanzania's, and at worst as brutal as Stalin's. Even socialist states must accumulate capital, and they often do so by brutish methods.

For a supposedly capitalist government, the best course of action is not to try to build houses or create jobs, but to devise policies that exploit the huge natural resources of human creativity and resourcefulness.

To break down a home which any person has built for himself and his family, no matter how humble, has always seemed to me to be an intolerable wickedness. For some years I have advocated a register of the names of all officials who have been guilty of that practice so that, sooner

# Nothing makes sense in this crazy country

KEN OWEN

or later, they might be brought to trial for crimes against humanity.

However, there is now a much more practical reason to stop the demolition of homes: if we continue, the new urban hordes will take up residence under bridges, on golf courses, in concrete pipes, on construction sites and on sidewalks. We shall turn out cities into Calcuttas.

The best housing policy is simply to identify land for squatters, to help them settle and to encourage them to upgrade their homes over time. Nothing else will work.

Similarly, it is futile to think in terms of "providing jobs". The best government can do is to stop "preventing jobs". Except for some essential health regulations, a bit of zoning, and strict enforcement of laws against mugging, theft and other common law offences, the sensible course of action is, more or less, to let it happen.

After all, this great surge of urbanisation — not government policy, and certainly not the patronising goodwill of the whites — is the force that is changing South Africa, and smashing apartheid.

**S**o far as I know, only a few organisations are thinking seriously along these lines — the Institute of Race Relations, the Urban Foundation and Small Business Development Corporation, and some private groups.

It would be nice if our academic sociologists put aside their obsession with the accumulation of capital, and stopped trying to teach economics, and tried instead to describe the real South Africa. If, instead of asking inane questions ("Would you support sanctions if they cost you your job?"), they told us who, among the bustling millions, is doing what, and why, they might help to break the South African deadlock.

Anyway, it would spare us some of the ritual condemnation of apartheid, which is something most of us do in safety and comfort, and it might just show us how to encourage the forces of change instead of hampering them.