ALTERNATIVE STRUCTURES FOR
RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN LESOTHO

BY

CHRIS GOLDMAN

DEPARTMENT OF
POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE STUDIES

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IN THE LIBRARY CONFERENCE ROOM
"Half a million jobs a must by 2000."


"In the 1980s an increasing number of Basotho, both in absolute and in relative terms, will join the ranks of the structurally unemployed, unable to obtain employment either at home or abroad and unable to eke out a livelihood at home. The consequences of this are likely to be devastating."


Lesotho is moving inexorably toward a major crisis. The continuing stability of this country rests almost totally on the position of its migrant workers. They provide the bulk of the income of the rural population, as well as a sizeable proportion of governmental funds. It is difficult to dispute the contention that, if the Republic of South Africa sent home all Basotho labourers tomorrow, the result would be catastrophic for Lesotho. While many other Third World nations find themselves in a vulnerable economic position, few would seem to have so little control over their own economic destiny.

How did Lesotho get into this uneviable situation? From being a surplus producer of basic foodstuffs a mere hundred years ago—from being, in fact, a granary for all of Southern Africa—this nation has seen its agricultural sector deteriorate to the point where, for the majority of rural households, wage labour rather than farming is the primary source of income. Working the
land is increasingly viewed as a supplemental, secondary means of earning a living. Each year, Lesotho becomes less able to feed itself, becomes more dependant on imported goods; in other words, Lesotho's involvement in the South African capitalist system is increasing at an alarming rate.

Traditional explanations for the decline in agriculture center, as Murray points out, on the contention that the social system of the Basotho is not able to adapt to the demands of modern farming. Writers such as Williams and Wallman suggest that traditional beliefs (which are not conducive to utilizing advanced techniques, or to assuming the necessary value system) combined with a preference for migrant labour are among the major causes for the general poverty in rural Lesotho. However, as Murray goes on to elucidate, the root cause of the current state of affairs lies with the nature of the South African system. Indeed, he states that "There is now much evidence to demonstrate that there was a widespread and vigorous response by Africans to new market opportunities in the late nineteenth century; but that those opportunities were increasingly circumscribed by instruments of discrimination such as the Land Act of 1913. . ." Clearly, the expropriation of much of Lesotho's best land by the Boers, in conjunction with the machinations of the South African state, are mainly responsible for the subsequent collapse of agriculture in Lesotho (and, of course, for the decline of agriculture among Africans.
throughout the region—Bundy's work, *The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry*, is particularly enlightening on this point).

The consequences of these events for Lesotho, aside from the obvious deprivation of large tracts of fertile land, have been numerous and severe. One of the most serious—and certainly the most visible—of these negative results has been the disappearance of much of this country's valuable top soil, in the form of erosion, which "carries away an estimated 2 per cent of the arable area each year" (Government of Lesotho, 1980, p. 27).

Linked to the erosion problem is the high incidence of overgrazing. One source estimates that, on a nation-wide basis,

"For reasonable rates of fertility, weight gain, and productivity, and for reasonable levels of draft power and also for any attempt to arrest the rapid rates of erosion and land degradation caused by overstocking, current estimates are that the overall stocking rate should be cut out by half." (ILO Report, p. 1157)

A third outcome of South Africa's activities has been population pressure (which is, naturally, a prime reason for the erosion and grazing difficulties). Population growth in Lesotho is in the vicinity of 2.2% per annum—not very high by African standards, but very serious for a country with such limited resources. Zambia, for example, has a land area twenty times as large as Lesotho's (290,967 sq. miles as opposed to 11,720 sq. miles), but has only three or four times the population (5,500,000 versus 1,500,000).

Operating together, these factors, along with Lesotho's frequent exposure to natural disasters (drought, hail, frost), create a downward spiral in rural productivity. Flots of land
are being subdivided into ever less viable pieces; these few acres are then planted with ever increasing intensity, with poorer harvests being the inevitable result. Meanwhile, ownership of livestock—especially cattle and sheep—still plays a significant (though declining) role within the culture, especially as a means of accumulation of wealth; thus, the number of animals remains high, while their quality goes down. Nothing illustrates the enormity of the problem more starkly than do the estimated figures on landlessness. As Murray reports:

"the proportion of landless households reported in three agricultural censuses increased from 7 per cent in 1950 to 9 per cent in 1960 and 13 per cent in 1970. . . . Other surveys conducted during the 1970's have revealed even higher proportions of landless households—19 per cent in Qacha's Nek, . . . and 23 per cent in a small national sample." (MURRAY, 1981, p. 897)

It would not be unreasonable to assume that the current number of landless families is at least 15 per cent, and probably more than 20 per cent, of the total population.

We return now to the note sounded on the first page of this article: that of impending crisis. In spite of the deterioration in the agricultural sector, Lesotho could probably carry on for quite a number of years without seeing an appreciable decrease in the standard of living, so long as migrant remittances remain high. Unfortunately, the outlook on the part of South Africa for hiring Homeland workers ahead of
Basotho, along with increasing mechanization and the declining price of gold, among other factors, suggest that a steady decrease in the number of men being allowed into the Republic is very likely. The two main conclusions of a recent study were that, first, "the most probable outcome is a reduction of Basotho migrants to approximately 50 percent of present numbers by the year 2000," and second, that "one must admit the possibility that most of the necessary adjustment will be made during the 1980's."

ECKERT and WYKSTRA, 1979, p. 18/ For Lesotho to absorb tens of thousands of returning migrants, while still finding a place for fifteen or twenty thousand new entrants into the labour force each year, is an awesome task.

The essential question is, then, where do we find a place of productive employment for so many people? The industrial sector in Lesotho, as we all know, is weak. Only 7,500 men and women were employed in manufacturing in Lesotho in 1980. LESOTHO, 1980, p. 83. Furthermore, as long as Lesotho is in direct competition with South African industries, the chances for major advances in terms of industrialization are negligible. Cottage industries may continue to grow, but the number of jobs provided in this sector is low—in the hundreds, not in the thousands that are so urgently needed. Barring unexpected discoveries, mining will also continue to be an insubstantial factor in the domestic economy. Recent developments in Maseru—the Hilton Hotel and the LNDC Centre
among others—testify to the rapid expansion of the service and tourist sectors. Government employment is also rising, a fact largely attributable to two other events. Customs Union revenues shot up from 15.5 million Maloti in 1975/76 to 32.9 million in 1977/78; at the same time, foreign aid money has also more than doubled, going from 12.9 million Maloti in 1975/76 to 29.4 million Maloti in 1979/80 [LESOTHO, 1980, p. 16 and p. 37]. In spite of these increases in external funding, neither the bureaucracy nor the service and tourist areas would experience much growth if migrant remittances were to decline. More important, however, is the fact that these sectors are not directly productive (i.e. they are not supplying any value), and cannot be expected to expand much further.

We are left, then, with agriculture, which has already been shown to be deteriorating. Still, it is the largest single contributor to the Gross Domestic Product, although at a declining rate. In 1974 agriculture accounted for 49.5 percent of GDP; by 1978 it made up only 36.3 percent of GDP. Most of this decrease was at the expense of construction work (up to 9.4% from 2.6%), although government and service shares of the total also increased considerably. Sadly, the manufacturing sector actually went down—from 2.7% to a mere 1.9% in 1978 [LESOTHO, 1980, pp. 8-9]. In the final analysis, it is difficult to dispute the contention that "Agriculture is a key sector, in fact the only sector that can have a significant impact on the employment and poverty problem." [GRAY et al, 1980, p. 76]. In the remainder of this paper I will attempt, first, to give an overview of the various efforts that have been, and continue to be, made by the Lesotho government in order to
increase agricultural productivity; and second, I will make some suggestions as to alternate approaches which might be tried so as to achieve better results.

"This Second Plan restates and reaffirms the Nation's aspirations... Its basic philosophy is to enhance the quality of life for our rural agricultural communities through a process of transformation in farming techniques" /LFSOTHC, 1975, xi7.

The leaders of Lesotho are by no means unaware of the significance of agriculture for the future of the country, as this statement, taken from the Prime Minister's introduction to the Second National Development Plan, amply illustrates. While, as we shall shortly see, there are many different efforts being undertaken to achieve rural transformation, these efforts can be divided into three main categories. The most notable of these means has come in the form of large-scale, area-based projects such as Thaba Bosiu, Thaba Tseka, and Khomokhoana. Although these projects exemplify the approach toward rural development in the 1970s, a shift has been taking place in the last few years in the direction of the second category, which is the provision of inputs and services to farmers. BASF (Basic Agricultural Services Programme) is the focal point of this approach. Finally, overall development of rural communities has mainly been concerned with the improvement of village water supplies. Naturally, there are numerous, usually smaller, projects that are not covered by any of these three categories. The recently published document, Agricultural Development: A Blueprint for Action, lists over one hundred different projects that the government is either currently undertaking, or hopes to begin in the near future.
Agricultural research and planning, the woodlot project, the establishment of mohair industries, and land conservation efforts are among the most ambitious of those projects which do not fall into the aforementioned categories. In this paper, however, I would like to concentrate largely on two of the major categories—large projects and the supply of services.

Perhaps the most candid assessment of the large-scale undertakings can be found in the Third National Development Plan, when it states that "The area-based projects, supported by strong expatriate components and substantial resources, operated in a largely autonomous manner without adequate coordination" (Lesotho, 1980, p. 166). The various Ministries in Maseru, in other words, were hardly involved at all in either the planning or the implementation of these projects. As a result, the long term usefulness of the projects was jeopardized. Taking the Thaba Bosiu project as an example, it would most definitely be wrong to suggest that it was a failure; the project was, nonetheless, plagued by some very considerable difficulties. Staff shortages, delays, insufficient prior planning, and poor execution were among the more serious of the problems. As one of the yearly reports noted, "the project tried to do too much too soon" (Thaba Bosiu, 1975, p. 29). In fact, the funding, supplied (along with equipment and experts) by the United States Agency for International Development, was exhausted a full two years before the scheduled end of the project. On the positive side of things, Thaba Bosiu did lay the groundwork for BASP, it also commenced a successful experiment in the growing of asparagus, and did lead to a general increase in
the standard of living of the farmers in the project area.

Another large-scale programme, at Thaba Tseka, carries on to the present moment, but it too has had numerous difficulties.

As van de Geer noted, the goals of Phase I of the project differ substantially from what was actually achieved. Whereas agricultural objectives (range management, soil conservation etc) were supposed to have been of primary importance during the first phase, almost all of the money was spent instead on the construction of a road to Thaba Tseka and the erection of a modern town, meant almost exclusively for administrators. (Van de Geer, 1979, p. 67)

This (unauthorized) reallocation of funds did, however, suit Lesotho's, needs. The government has been able to establish Thaba Tseka as the headquarters for a new district; the penetration, especially on the political level, of the horticultural areas has been substantially facilitated. Unfortunately, there is no evidence that the people of the region have benefitted economically from the programme, which was its original purpose.

It is much too early to evaluate BASP in terms of success or failure. The project got underway in 1979, and is slated to last through the 1980s. The first phase, which involved providing an adequate infrastructure so that services could be effectively extended to lowland farmers, is just now being completed. It is possible, however, to assess the programme on the basis of its philosophy and objectives. The ILO report examines at length the intentions of BASP, and reaches some highly critical conclusions. The key criticism is that the various government interventions proposed in BASP—marketing, credit, fertilizer, mechanization—
will not lead to increased productivity. More specifically, the writers of the ILO paper argue that BASF encourages

"the substitution of bureaucratized, inefficient, and unreliable marketing systems for commercial, low cost and financially self-sustaining systems... the substitution of fertilizer for improved land and crop husbandry, without which the returns to fertilizer are unlikely to cover its costs... the substitution of high cost (and probably subsidised) credit from official agencies for careful savings and investment from more indigenous and traditional systems... the substitution of tractors... for lower cost and more appropriate forms of power"  [ILO REPORT, 1979, p. 117]

It may be that the implementers of BASF in the Ministry of Agriculture will overcome these obstacles; given past experiences with similar endeavors in Lesotho, a fair amount of scepticism is certainly warranted.

The foregoing discussion is by no means intended to be an all-inclusive survey of agricultural projects in Lesotho. The intention, rather, is to use these few examples to illustrate some important observations about past and present governmental endeavors in the rural sector. First, the overarching role of foreign donors should be clear. According to the recent Blueprint for Action, of the forty-three projects currently underway in agriculture, only seven involve any expenditure of funds by the Government of Lesotho; of these seven only one, the LCCUL (Lesotho Co-operative Credit Union League) is being entirely funded by Lesotho (and in the "Remarks" column for this particular project is the statement that "Additional funds are required from interested donors") [LESOTHO, 1981, pp. 34-35]. It is not necessary, at this
juncture, to be drawn into a debate about the relative merits and demerits of foreign aid. The point being made here is simply that the planning and execution of rural development in Lesotho is not under local control. In fact, the Blueprint for Action itself came about as a result of the 1979 Donor's Conference. At that Conference a draft of the Agricultural Chapter of the Third Five Year Development Plan was presented, and was found to be so unsatisfactory that the Blueprint was commissioned as a replacement. The ill-fated Plan chapter on agriculture was officially superseded before it ever came into print (although it was nonetheless published with the rest of the plan). [LESOTHO, 1981, preface]

A second observation, related to the first, concerns the general lack of direction with regard to rural development. It would be futile to try to use any of the first three development plans as a guide as to what Lesotho hopes to accomplish in terms of the transformation of its rural sector. One is merely confronted with lists of unconnected projects in a variety of fields. The Blueprint for Action represents a more realistic effort to grapple with the complex issues of rural development, and is therefore worth considering at some length. The paper consists of a statement of objectives and priorities, a summary of the various programmes meant to achieve these ends, and finally, a list of the numerous projects—present and future—being carried out under the different programmes. One is initially struck by the fact that nowhere in this document can there be found a discussion of what kind of rural society the planners would like to see—there is
in short, no overall vision. It is interesting to note that the officially proclaimed goal of self-sufficiency in basic foodstuffs by 1985 is not to be found in the Blueprint. The objectives that are listed are unconnected, and sometimes even contradictory. For example, there is an excellent chance that achievement of the goal of altering the land tenure system in the direction of individual holdings in commercially viable sizes will actually thwart attainment of the objective of increased employment in agriculture. Another deficiency with the objectives is that the prioritizing is confusing. The priorities are in the following categories: continuing priorities, absolute priorities, high priorities, and very high priorities; a guide as to how one should go about distinguishing among these priorities is not included in the document.

With regard to the projects themselves, one wishes that the planners had made a greater effort to relate the projects to the objectives and programmes for action. Future projects are barely broached at all, other than to list them with the notation TBF (to be funded). The largest single future proposed expenditure (the Livestock Mountain Development Centres, at an estimated cost of M25,000,000) is not discussed at all in the text. The reason behind all these shortcomings goes back, I believe, to the area of foreign aid. At bottom, the Blueprint for Action, as with the plans themselves, is little more than a shopping list. "Here are some projects," the Ministry of Agriculture is saying to the donors, "if you fund them, we'll have them; if you don't, we won't." Of course, the projects are drawn up in the first place by expatriate
personnel, so the projects are usually accepted (but with
substantial foreign control). If the government of Lesotho does
truly believe that agriculture can be made "viable and prosperous,"
then it should also believe that the people of Lesotho can bring
about this change themselves.

As one would expect, significant involvement by the
Capitalist countries in rural development in Lesotho has meant
a marked preference for capitalist solutions. Promotion of indi-
vidual land tenure and farming practices, the introduction of
new cash crops, and the provision of services to individual
farmers, are some of the characteristics of the Western approach.
The results of this approach, especially in terms of the rural
class structure, will be taken up later in the paper; for now,
let it simply be noted that a main contention of this paper is
that Lesotho could benefit more by strengthening the mechanisms
for cooperation at all levels: planning, production, credit,
and marketing. In this light, I would like to turn to a
consideration of some socialist proposals; before doing so, however,
a few words of caution should be added. It is highly unlikely that
Lesotho's leadership will turn to socialism at any time in the
near future, nor am I necessarily advocating that path. What is
being put forth here is the proposal that certain successful
components from socialist experiments could be profitably adapted
to the Lesotho setting.

With these provisos in mind, we can proceed to look at some
developments in socialist agriculture in Cuba and the People's
Republic of China. It would not be possible, in this brief paper, to summarize the entire experience in rural development in these two countries. We shall, instead, look at one specific element of socialism in each nation, and try to discern if that element could be applied in Lesotho.

A mere five months after taking power in Cuba, the new revolutionary government promulgated, in May, 1959, its most important piece of legislation, the Agrarian Reform Law. The fundamental purpose of the numerous clauses in the Act was

"the thorough transformation of the institutional structure of agriculture, as a means of accelerating the economic development of the country and the social progress of the ruralworkers." /SEERS, 1964, p. 100/

In other words, land was to be taken away from the wealthy landlords and redistributed to the peasants and workers. The administrative machinery for carrying out this reform was also included in the Law. This new bureaucratic department— INRA (the National Institute of Agrarian Reform)— was staffed almost exclusively by former members of Castro's guerilla army. One major reason for creating a new agency was to circumvent the Ministry of Agriculture, which was staffed with corrupt "Batistianos." Soon enough, INRA "came to be the cornerstone of the new rural economy." /O'CONNOR, 1970, p. 130/ Its authority extended not only to the expropriation and redistribution of land, but also to the establishment of cooperatives and state farms, to control of rural investment and diversification, and even to rural industrialization. INRA was "Transformed into the main agency for a vast development program" /MESA-LA, 1971, p. 151/ answerable only to Castro himself. INRA was more successful at
creating state farms than at forming cooperatives; it was better
at land redistribution than at overall planning. The important
fact is that INRA was able to provide a better way of life for
the peasants and workers of Cuba, in spite of enormous opposition
from both internal and external sources.

Can a case be made for the introduction of an institute
along the lines of INRA in Lesotho? Actually, we are dealing with
two relatively distinct questions here: is an agrarian reform
agency feasible; if so, is it necessary? Before attempting to
answer these questions, some clarifications are in order. Lesotho
is quite a different country from Cuba. There has been no
revolution in Lesotho, there are not great differentials in wealth
here, there are no sugar plantations, no huge cattle ranches.
Furthermore, the Ministry of Agriculture in Lesotho is not
noted for having a high level of corruption, and we also already
have a Ministry of Cooperatives and Rural Development. What
Lesotho is lacking, (and what makes the idea of an agrarian reform
institute worth pursuing) is any organized movement in the
direction of reallocation of the land. If this nation is to
achieve, "through land reform, viable farm units with the
occupiers thereof possessing adequate security of tenure thus
allowing for the provision of farm incomes well beyond the
present subsistence level," /LESOTHO, 1981, p. 77/ then some new
factor must be introduced.

Perhaps the strongest argument against the introduction of
a new agency is on practical grounds; it is worth quoting at
"the costs of new departments for rural development have been, and generally are, higher and their effectiveness lower than might be anticipated at first sight... Time and energy have been taken up in establishing the departments and in struggles with rivals. The new departments have tended to be forced into activities or areas which are marginal... a further consideration is the risk of irreversible commitment... to an uneconomic or inappropriate organization" [CHAMBERS, 1977, pp. 132-327].

In view of these, and other, shortcomings involved in establishing a new administrative organ, a more reasonable approach might come in the form of reorganization. One possible approach could take the form of moving the Department of Cooperatives out of the Ministry of Rural Development and establishing it as an independent entity with broadened responsibilities. However, this kind of reshuffle is old hat in Lesotho. The Department of Cooperative, for instance, used to be in the Ministry of Agriculture, moving it around has not markedly improved its generally low level of efficiency. The best approach, I think, would be to center land reform, as well as general rural development, in the Ministry of Agriculture. Decentralization, community development, cooperatives, and improved service provision should all fall under the supervision of this Ministry. What I am suggesting here is, admittedly, a vast increase in the power and responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture; it would, just as INRA has done in Cuba, oversee a coordinated rural development effort. Little progress will occur in Lesotho until such coordination takes place. There is also a deeper reason for making such a proposal. That reason will
even

By most standards, China has less in common with Lesotho than does Cuba. Not only has China undergone a long revolutionary struggle resulting in the triumph of a socialist political party, but also China is an enormous, and enormously varied country, on the verge of being a world superpower. For these, and other, reasons, I am not going to deal with all of China, but only with one village. Dazhai (formerly Tachai) has many similarities with a typical mountain village in Lesotho, as is made clear in the following description:

Tachai. . . is a small village, with only 88 households and a population of 440. . . . The fall of the village's land, lying across seven gullies and the ridges between, with three broader slopes, is steep, and only intensive irrigation has made it suitable for crops."

What makes Dazhai exceptional is that, during and after the Cultural Revolution of the late 1960s, it became THE model village for rural development in China. The people of this village were able, through manual labour and the use of a bulldozer borrowed from the commune of which Dazhai is a member-village, to transform their land in two stages. First, they carried out extensive terracing and irrigation, which brought production levels to a higher plateau. When further growth became difficult, the people leveled the ridges, merging them with the gullies (and destroying the terraces in the process). The end product was a significant increase in the amount of land available for cultivation. At the same time, a more secure water
supply was guaranteed in 50 days in 1967, "when the villagers... laid a small canal to Tachai, only about a metre across and 1.5 metres deep, but stone-lined and 7 km long." [MAXWELL, 1978, p. 427]

In this manner, Dazhai has been able to avoid the ill effects of drought—a development which is of prime importance in China.

"Learn from Dazhai" became a slogan heard again and again throughout China in the 1970s. Millions of people came to witness the success of the village, numerous conferences were held to propagate the Dazhai Way, and villages throughout China were mobilized to emulate Dazhai. [MAXWELL, 1978, pp. 84-86]

Admittedly, the village did receive some outside assistance, but most of the work, and almost all of the organizational efforts came from within the village itself.

In the last couple of years, with the reemergence of capitalist tendencies in the Chinese leadership, Dazhai has faded from the scene. Indeed, attempts have been made to discredit Dazhai. At first, the negative talk simply took the form of suggesting that Dazhai was not the only way for rural development in China to proceed. Within the last year, however, allegations have been made that the whole operation was staged, that Dazhai production figures were inflated, and that most of the work was done by outsiders. We can discount a certain amount of this revisionism as being mere political partisanship; whatever the reality behind it may be, the fact that Dazhai village has been transformed is undeniable.

From the purely physical aspect, it is difficult to deny that
many villages in Lesotho could profit by adopting the techniques utilized in Bazhai. Terracing, irrigation, land reclamation, and community efforts in all fields could make an immense change throughout the country. The two substantive obstacles to the implementation of such a programme in Lesotho are, first, the absence of any commitment to land reform or cooperative production in agriculture on the part of the administration; and second, the lack of any socialist consciousness on the part of the peasantry. Overcoming the first obstacle will be accomplished only through a conscious, deliberate decision of the Cabinet. The second obstacle can only be surmounted through a major administrative effort, combined with a campaign to educate the masses to the benefits of cooperation. If sharing of labour and of the product of labour can be demonstrated to be a profitable alternative, this educative task would be made a great deal easier. Cooperative farming, as Murray shows, is already often undertaken in Lesotho (although he also points out that much of this cooperation is of an unequal, sharecropping nature)\footnote{Murray, 1981, chapter 2}.

Let us try to bring the foregoing discussion together. What is being proposed for Lesotho is the following:

a. An expanded Ministry of Agriculture, with a broadened mandate, especially in the area of land reform.

b. The selection of four of five villages to be modelled along the lines of Bazhai; these villages should be relatively egalitarian in material conditions, with a high level of political support for the government, and a demonstrated willingness and ability to change.
c. Creation of a communal production system in these villages, with as much government intervention as necessary, but with a maximum amount of community effort.

d. A nationwide educational campaign, aimed at spreading this system as much as possible. A primary feature of this campaign should be centred on using the model communal villages.

These proposals are certainly open to the charge of being naive and unrealistic; the difficulties involved in the implementation of this programme are manifold. I have tried to point out some of these difficulties during the course of the paper. Nevertheless, I think that it is imperative that proposals of this kind are at least considered by governmental authorities. To return for a moment to the Blueprint for Action, the objectives for agriculture in Lesotho they are listed in that paper are:

I. To secure the commitment of the people
II. To increase agricultural production
III. To expand gainful employment opportunities in agriculture
IV. To rehabilitate and stabilize the land base
V. To use the land wisely
VI. To provide efficient support services
VII. To mobilize financial resources

I can think of no better way to achieve the first six of these goals than through cooperative production along the lines of Dazhai. As for point number seven, the initial phases of the proposed programme would not involve large expenditures of money, one can only hope that the money would be available (perhaps through increased productivity) to finance a nation-wide
mobilization campaign at a later date. In the meantime, there is no need to disturb any of the ongoing projects; nor do these proposals preclude other simultaneous projects being started in the future. Foreign capitalist donors, in other words, do not need to feel threatened.

I have intentionally postponed discussion of two of the most intractable problems until the end. The political situation in Lesotho—especially the central role played by the chiefs, along with the existence of a destabilizing internal opposition—is one of these problems. The rapid polarization of the class structure is the other. Actually, the two issues can, for present purposes, be restated in the form of one central dilemma facing the leadership. That is, explicit in any move in a socialist direction are increased popular participation and a general redistribution of the wealth. Both of these developments would threaten vested interests in Lesotho. Chiefs will lose the base of their power—control over the land. Those who have accumulated wealth—oftentimes they are leading bureaucrats and politicians—will be called on to share their land and livestock with the poorer segments of the population. The authority of the leadership will certainly be challenged. In the final analysis, the entire social order may well be threatened. As Bardill has observed, "for Lesotho to overcome its present underdeveloped position" there must be

"some form of revolutionary change in the social relations of production; either by the rapid expansion of capitalist relations...or by the establishment of socialist ones." /BARDILL, 1980, pp. 88-89/
It is the contention of this paper that if the current capitalist path is followed, greater instability will result than if a socialist direction is chosen. Lesotho's policymakers, by working together with the people to create village-level cooperatives, may even stand a reasonable chance of retaining power. There would seem to be little to lose in beginning such a socialist experiment on a small scale. A few Dazhai-type villages would not be expensive to create, nor would they involve a great deal of political risk. A healthier, more productive agricultural sector might just ensue.
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