

## South Africa Part II

heavy burdens balanced on their heads. Many had children slung on their backs — the shoeless children were everywhere.

I got out to take some pictures, staying close to the car in case a patrol should stop us. As I turned, another sharp, nose-piercing smell came over me; a lady was roasting goat heads over a discarded oil drum. She smiled and posed, brandishing a hatchet in one hand and a head in the other.

People who had been watching from a distance now began to move toward us. Chris ordered me back in the car. "If they didn't know who we were, if they thought we were a threat, we'd be done for," he said, smiling and shaking hands with the passing crowd.

Greg asked what I thought of it all. I told him I had not yet seen anything as bad as Crossroads, people at their lowest ebb: uninterrupted poverty, daily deterioration, not even knowing how long they would stay in these miserable camps before being forced to move again.

"That's a good reaction. Not many people here see the horror in it," said Greg.

There were no demonstrations in Crossroads that day, only a few church meetings, but they were broken up immediately by the police.

Before Chris dropped me off I asked him what he thought was going to happen now with the State of Emergency reinstated for another year.

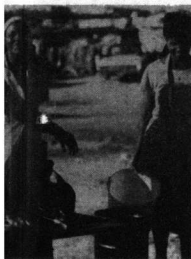
"The government is so powerful nothing can get off the ground... the struggle won't die but the wheels of the revolution are falling off. It will be a long time before it comes around again."

June 15

I left Capetown a few days later, taking the train to Johannesburg. When I arrived, I immediately contacted Michael Gavshon at the CBS News bureau. As he had promised, Michael arranged a tour of Soweto for the next day.

Johannesburg could be mistaken for any North American city. The concrete and glass buildings rise in every direction, the traffic is congested, the city even has glittering shopping mall, the Carlton Center. I found there were few public phone booths mostly because they made perfect places to hide a bomb.

The older part of Johannesburg is run down and faded. Shops, predominantly East Indian, line the streets, where goods



gads

of every possible description are sold. The modern, ice-blue Stock Exchange building, with its marble fountain and entrance, is set grotesquely in the middle of it all.

Many of the Sangoma or "witch doctor" shops are located here. These spiritual leaders still play an important role in the African culture.

It did not take long to find one, they seemed to be on every block. As I entered the dimly lit shop, I bumped into an outstretched baboon skeleton nailed to a post, breaking off its finger. The baskets of ground roots, barks, and animal bones were piled on top of each other and rodent carcasses hung from the ceiling leaving a low, narrow path to walk through.

The Indian proprietor took an immediate interest in me, recognizing an out of place foreigner who perhaps wanted to buy. Much to his disappointment, I was not. He went on to explain, however, what a good business it was for him and added his general distaste for blacks. Coloreds he didn't mind, but "blacks are different. Have you seen how they live?"

I said I had and asked that since the Indians, like all minorities, are governed by Apartheid, why is it that they identify with the white people more?

"We can own businesses and property, and we have better places to live. The blacks here are more uncivilized. If you let them live in the city it would be a disaster."

Michael told me later that the whites treat the Indians with an equal, if not greater, disdain than they do the blacks. Unfortunately, the East Indians have had a hard time of it throughout eastern and southern Africa.

June 19

Even from the hills that rise just outside the main security gate, there is no way to judge the size of the sprawling township of Soweto. There are 2.5 to 3 million people there, outpopulating Johannesburg itself, making Soweto the largest city in southern Africa.

There are only two things that stand out in my memory of Soweto, so much has become hazy: one scene of stolid figures blending into the next, moving in any perceptible way.

The first place we drove through was Deskopfontein. The neighborhood was beautifully designed, with tended gardens and lawns, bordered with low brick or wrought iron gates. The houses were large and comfortable and so unbelievably out of place.

I was told that these blacks had money but had received some highly questionable "loans" to build there. As we left, we passed the government bus that comes in to give tourists a glimpse of the Soweto. The tourists pressed their cameras to the bus windows, pointing and shooting, degrading the entire neighborhood on film; all looking as if the great secrets of some lost pharaoh's tomb had just been revealed to them.

We drove nearly five kms in the opposite direction to what had been a garbage dump six months before. Now the field was lined with tin shacks and every other means of shelter possible. It was nearly 4:30 pm. The coal stoves had been working for a half-hour already, and the choking cloud of smoke that descends on Soweto everyday began to settle in.



South Africa's black future

In front of the first rows of shacks sat the rusted shell of a Volkswagen van propped up on cement blocks. A little girl motioned me forward and I followed her to the other side of the van. The inside had been gutted and filled with rags to sit on. Eight children huddled around a large pot heating on an open fire, blankly staring at me. The mother waved me off with a wooden spoon and then tried to swat me with it; I had interrupted a meal in their home.

The ride back was silent, even the radio didn't work.

June 25

I had had enough, it was time to leave. The last town I stayed in was a place called Louis Trichardt. It is in the Northern Transvaal, very conservative and widely supportive of the AWB, the extreme right wing party whose insignia is a three-pronged swastika.

I was given an address from a ride I had taken earlier in the day who assured me that it would be his friend Tom's pleasure to put me up for the night. He warned me of one thing: Tom was an AWB member and I should not mention politics in any way.

When I introduced myself and explained how I'd received his address, Tom invited me in with a less than pleased reception. Things eased quite a bit after a short conversation, until Tom's son came into the dining room. He said hello for himself and his pet monkey which was

noticeably unhealthy and remained in one corner of his cage. The boy taunted his pet for a while until he became bored and then turned to the black and white television. There are two stations in South Africa: one African, one white. The white station has half of its programming in dutch-based Afrikaans, half in English. Unknowingly, the boy had turned to the black station and, reaching for his father, enthusiastically said, "Look, dad, an Afrikaans show!"

Tom grabbed the child away and nearly beat him senseless, screaming, "That's a kaffir show! You never watch a kaffir show! You never listen to kaffir language again!" I sat motionless as Tom excused himself and took the boy by his arm out of the room.

I left South Africa the next day through Beitbridge, the same border I had come through a month before.

I probably could have waited all day for a ride if it were not for some help from an old lady and her grandson.

In this part of Africa, the distrust between blacks and whites is a difficult barrier to break. Standing on the side of the road waiting for a ride usually leaves you waiting for a long time if you are white.

Story by Daniel Aarons  
Photos by Daniel Aarons

**ATTENTION: PHI GAMMA DELTA**  
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