

Notes on Albre Sachs essay on the Land Question
(But thanks for the other essays as well).

If my remarks seem ill-conceived or mis-informed please disregard them. I am working on the assumption that over-critical is better than under-

The essay is very powerful in parts and the humaneness of the vision in it comes through with a clarity which itself is as persuasive as argument. This is in my mind vitiated somewhat by a messy organization of parts of the arguments themselves. The division of the essay into "dimensions," as it stands, is confusing and the sections overlap heavily in content. Because all of the broad ideals, motivations and hopes, of a future land policy, are not placed at the beginning, there is sometimes a sense of retreat in the argument: specific suggestions are advanced and then, instead of simply saying specifics will be worked out later, there are phrases like "a common constitution is the basis of finding a common humanity," p. 21. This threatens, because of its placement, to make the most dearly held ideals look like retreats into platitude, obviously not your intention. I am hindered in saying ~~more~~ ^{in this regard because} ~~more~~ ^{because} I did not see clearly who the intended audience was - to stick to p. 21: "People will at last begin to talk to each other as equals, not as master and servant..." is this a precondition for constitutional success, or a forecast? a manifesto? How much is the writer speaking (as an analyst - ?) and how much is he articulating wider policy?

I have only two substantive questions about your arguments.

There is an important policy statement spread around unevenly through the text, and that is, that workers on large, productive white-owned farms would not be given land to own where they work — ie large productive white farms would, one supposes, be left relatively intact. Perhaps I have misunderstood, but the fault is partially in the timidity of the phrasing. One first sees it on bottom p. 11 — p. 12; then on p. 15 there is a good case against race-proportional redistribution; p. 16 offers that the main thing is to recognize farm-workers' "human rights as people" as a framework for the future; p. 18 more explicitly explains that white owners whose rights are recognized in "both African and African culture" would keep land or be remunerated (although this is only made more explicit on page 34). P. 18: The fourth and "possibly largest" group: "their claim is not to rights in relation to this or that plot, but [simply] to have access to land... the most deserving [should have] first place in the queues. Appropriate criteria will have to be brought..." No one could disagree — but what criteria, is the issue. Finally on p. 22 para 3: You imply contracts negotiated under the Land Act and land laws of 1930s etc. could be in many cases "free entered into." "This is an aspect of legality that has great meaning to many black farmers." Again on page 36.

The assumption I suspect is weakest in this is that the demands of the dispossessed under apartheid will equate with post-apartheid society. I mean, certainly

a correlary to this is, the black demands to keep Section 10 inviolable in Soweto: this is not ~~really~~ ^{necessarily} a demand to live on their plots in Soweto after apartheid ends, but to have this now, given the Group Areas Act, etc... contracts for land-use being defended now may quickly give way later... If in fact these are merely initial steps, as you seem to say on p. 33, ^{para 2} why not state this early and clearly (unless the desire is not to frighten some readers?) And the largest group of dispossessed: "I would suspect that many of them do have claims to 'this or that plot.'" Is there not still bitterness over the Caledon valley, grazing lands around Bophuthatswana, etc? Do not people recall their ancestral lands? Not most people, perhaps.. but some?

Small points: editing (proofreading errors, P. 23 "kraals" no longer a word "favored"—why not the more neutral "homes and farms" or "hamlets." P. 24 (inter alia) "Patrimony" a loaded word (gender-wise), and reads very oddly esp. when you attack "patriarchy" below on same page. Why not use "inheritance".

On Botswana: I do not think land-use in Botswana is an instructive parallel, since it is still "tribal" lands, just now (these days) going thru the first stages of an enclosure movement. Those with fences and white skin, or else chiefs, or else the small class of mineral-^{production} wealthy Batswana (ie Nchindo) own a large proportion of all cattle.

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- Thank you!