

Church Agricultural Project

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1. Origin of CAP and its activities at Maria Ratschitz: 1965-1975

The Church Agricultural Project (CAP) was established in March 1965 at Maria Ratschitz Mission farm near Wasbank in northern Natal under the management of Neil Alcock. It was a joint venture by the Catholic, Anglican and Lutheran Churches in order to utilize the Mission farms more effectively and by so doing to provide its African residents with training and skills in agriculture. At first it was run on several mission-owned farms in Natal and Eastern Transvaal, but soon their centre of operations were concentrated on Maria Ratschitz farm and Springvale near Ixopo.

Organisationally it was supported by prominent church leaders such as Archbishop Denis Hurley who was a chairman of the Board of Directors, and it was fully blessed by prominent KwaZulu leaders, Chief MG Buthelezi being one of its directors. Several white liberals and former black members of the Liberal Party such as Hyacinth (Bill) Bhengu and Elliot Mngadi sat on the Board, while Duchesne Grice of South African Institution of Race Relations was a chairman of advisory committee.¹ Major financial supports to the CAP came from donations of the Chairman's Fund of the Anglo American Corporation and Misereor, German-based charity organisation.²

The central project of CAP at Maria Ratschitz was a cattle co-operative and dairy industry³. The cattle co-op was organised solely around 700 cattle owned by Africans. Alcock explains how it started:

The first Africans handed over their cattle as 'loans' for the development of the farm. The cattle were valued and the value credited to each owner. He has since been able to get annual interest on his loan, and can also withdraw either cash or cattle, depending on his needs, from his loan amount.⁴

Africans who thus sold their cattle to CAP on credit were counted as shareholders of CAP.

On that loan they will be paid 8% each year until the company makes a profit and then they will receive a proportionate share of the profits instead of fixed interest. ... Each year the members have a 'shareholders' meeting where they elect their representative farm committee and receive an annual report from the Chairman of that Committee.⁵

Until Limehill removals in 1968, all those who pooled their cattle in the CAP herd and became members also worked for CAP. However, because of removals of these original members of CAP, most "shareholders" were forced to stop working for CAP and live at Limehill. Others who did not go to

¹ CAP, "Memorandum prepared for consideration by the honourable the chief MG Buthelezi, chief executive councillor of KwaZulu, and director of Church Agricultural Projects", n.d. [1974?], PC 16/1/1/1

² "Proposal to buy Maria Ratschitz mission farm" (continuation of the agricultural work of CAP), n.d. [1974?] (prepared by Neil Alcock?)

³ Other projects which were run by CAP at Maria Ratschitz were a basket-making industry which chiefly employed the aged, the blind and the widows on the farm and educational scheme. In Springvale, CAP ran home industries projects. ([Neil Alcock?], "Memorandum on Government schemes for the removal of Africans from 'white' to 'black' areas", n.d. [1967?], PC 14/5/1/7, p.8)

⁴ Neil Alcock, "Thoughts on KwaZulu's Agricultural Future", n.d. [1973?], PC 16/1/1/1, p.19

⁵ Letter from Douglas Blausten, to Professor van Niekerk, 15/10/1975, PC 16/1/1/1, p.8

Limehill left the farm and went to live in cities. However, they retained their loan to CAP and received their 8% interest. A newly employed worker for CAP received “his wage in the form of a cash sum, and a deferred sum. This deferred sum is credited to each worker’s name and he [received] 8% interest on his loan.” In this way the worker was allowed to become a shareholder and member of the CAP co-op.⁶

For Alcock, CAP was an experimental project to demonstrate that Africans could be progressive and environmentally-conscious farmers, provided that they were taught grass management and given proper governmental supports such as subsidies for culling of cattle which were only available to white farmers. Agricultural training given to Africans at schools in South Africa also had to be redirected, as schools trained agricultural demonstrators rather than farmers.⁷ CAP’s Jersey cows kept by the dairy project produced milk “to sell cream at a good price on the White market, while selling skim milk at cost on the African market.”⁸

In spite of the disruptions caused by removals of residents on the farm, the Project kept on going and it made significant achievements in developing the farm in general, combating soil erosion and progressing reclaiming veld. CAP’s work on Maria Ratschitz was highly commended in 1974 in a report written by professor J.D. Scott who was an official of the Department of Agriculture in charge of research stations in Natal.

Nine years ago, he wrote, the farm was “grossly over populated and overstocked and no attention was paid to the deterioration of the land.”⁹

When he visited the farm again in 1974, he was so much impressed with the improvements – there were still many dongas, but many of them had “been stabilised by the policy of non-burning” and there was very little sign of active erosion. The recovery of veld was remarkable and visibly different from neighbouring farms which were invariably scarcely grassed. He went on to praise the way it was achieved and its unique, unconventional method of veld reclamation.

There has been no burning of the veld for nine years and although this is contrary to accepted local practice, it has paid dividends. I ... found that with the method of veld management with high concentrations of stock for short periods to trample the old grass, [deterioration of grass due to non-burning] has not taken place to any marked extent. Another factor that has also assisted greatly is the extremely clever manner in which the livestock has been managed on a co-operative basis so that it all falls under one system of management and no individual kraal ownership. This has reduced trampling and made good veld management possible.¹⁰

However, unsolvable rows between Neil Alcock and the Franciscan priests in charge of the mission had developed by 1974. Although the nature of conflicts between them is not clear, the Franciscan priests demanded the Alcock’s resignation as a condition of continuation of CAP at Maria Ratschitz at the meeting of the Board of Directors and landlords (the Council and the Prefect of the Volksrust) in August 1974. Archbishop Hurley felt that unless Alcock was present, CAP would be closed.¹¹

⁶ Letter from Douglas Blausten, to Professor van Niekerk, 15/10/1975, PC 16/1/1/1, p.2

⁷ Neil Alcock, “Thoughts on KwaZulu’s Agricultural Future”, n.d. [1973?], PC 16/1/1/1

⁸ In its poultry project, CAP purchased day-old chicks and sold them at a month old. (NL Alcock, “Plans for CAP scheme on new farm, Emdukatshani,” May 1975, PC 16/1/1/1, p.19, 21)

⁹ J.D. Scott , “Report on the mission farm Boschklouf visited on 10th July, 1974,” PC 16/1/1/1

¹⁰ J.D. Scott , “Report on the mission farm Boschklouf visited on 10th July, 1974,” PC 16/1/1/1

¹¹ Archbishop Hurley explained this view in a letter to Chief Buthelezi. (“Minutes of meetings” by African

The problem existed not only between the manager and resident Franciscan priests over the control of CAP. Africans were also divided between anti-CAP and pro-CAP groups. The former was headed by Kunene who used to be the chairman of CAP farm committee before he was sacked by Alcock.¹² He also represented old residents on the farm who were against the new families employed by CAP to run the project on the farm.¹³ After Kunene was sacked by Alcock, he refused to hand over the Minute Book of CAP farm committee, which gave the impression to directors that his allegations against Alcock were wrong.¹⁴ Tension triggered arson and violence. One day in August 1974 “a fire which raged all afternoon and all night, which was started by a Catholic boy whose parents were squatters, destroyed all the remainder of the farm leaving only 600 acres of the 6,000 free from destruction. Thirty of the thirty four haystacks were set on fire and destroyed in the conflagration.”¹⁵

By November 1974 the Board of Directors decided to close the scheme by terminating the contract of lease of the farm to CAP, mid-1975. In the meantime the Board set up the advisory committee in order to determine the future of CAP operations including the possibility of the continuation of its major scheme at different place¹⁶.

2. Move to Mdukatshani and settling down: 1975

While the advisory committee was considering options, Alcock found a place in Weenen district, at its boundary adjoining Msinga district of KwaZulu.¹⁷ Alcock and other CAP staff went to investigate in January 1975, at which they were joined by several members of the advisory committee. The place consisted of three farms (Lorraine, the Spring and Koornspruit), 6, 000 acres in extent, owned by a single farmer, and the condition of sale was to buy three farms altogether. It lies about 30 km from the village of Weenen on the road between Nkasini and Tugela Ferry. The price of farm was estimated between R 90,000 and R 120,000.

The condition of the farm at the time of purchase by CAP was really appalling with “an overgrazing rate of 80% [which had] trampled away the grasslands, storms [had] laid bare the underlying rock, and succulents [were] the only plants thriving in this semi-desert.”¹⁸ CAP personnel who went to investigate the place before the purchase of it named the place, “emDukatshani” – the place of lost grasses.¹⁹ The condition of the farm was not ideal but could serve the CAP’s aim to demonstrate its effectiveness. Peter Brown, who sat in the advisory committee, described the pros and cons of proposed new site, to Douglas Blausten, who worked as an English volunteer for CAP for sometime at Maria Ratschitz and, on his return to England, set

residents on Maria Ratschitz to discuss the future of CAP, to which representatives of KwaZulu government – Mr Dladla, KwaZulu Minister of Community Development and Mr Sithole, KwaZulu Minister of Agriculture -- attended, 12/02/1974, PC 16/1/1/1)

¹² “Minutes of meetings”, 12/02/1974, PC 16/1/1/1

¹³ “Draft prepared for application for donors” (Anglo American Fund) [untitled documents, n.d. 1975?], PC 16/1/1/1

¹⁴ D.C. Grice, “Report by advisory committee to the director of CAP,” n.d., PC 16/1/1/1

¹⁵ CAP, “Memorandum prepared for consideration by the honourable the chief MG Buthelezi, chief executive councillor of KwaZulu, and director of Church Agricultural Projects”, n.d. [1974?], PC 16/1/1/1, p.6

¹⁶ Letter from Archbishop Denis Hurley, to Peter Brown, re: Church Agricultural Projects future developments advisory committee, 01/11/1974, PC 16/1/1/1

¹⁷ Letter from Peter Brown, to Douglas Blausten, 19/01/1975; Peter Brown, “Report on a visit to the farms Lorraine, Spring & ?,” n.d. [January 1975?]

¹⁸ “Proposed purchase of 6,000 acres of farmland,” n.d., PC 16/1/1/1

¹⁹ NL Alcock, “Proposal that CAP purchase of a farm,” 24/1/1975, PC 16/1/1/1

up a charity organisation in London to raise funds for development projects in Africa, in particular, for CAP.

The farm has very real advantages. It isn't too far from Maria Ratschitz, it is unoccupied, it adjoins KwaZulu, and it is run down. It also should be cheap. The trouble is that it is in a grim part of the world and I have some reservations about rainfall, water generally, and agricultural potential. However, these are also advantages. It is probably in as difficult an area as any that KwaZulu itself has to offer and if it can be made to look like something fairly productive by the Maria Ratschitz community the educative and development impact on adjoining people could be immense.²⁰

The farm looked empty, as it had been used as a labour farm for another farm owned by the same owner. When labour tenancy known as the "six-month system" or "draai" was abolished in Weenen district in 1969, considerable numbers of African families who had resided on farms and provided six months service elsewhere for the owners were kicked out and resettled in the nearby KwaZulu territories. Some African families were not prepared to work fulltime for the farmers at the wages offered.²¹

Overall, CAP staff saw positive sides of challenges and went for it. The directors of CAP eventually decided to purchase Mdukatshani farm in Weenen district in January 1975. In order to raise capital for the purchase of farm, CAP sold its chief assets – about 800 cattle – at auctions in the early 1975.²² However, due to the "unexpected decline" in the price of cattle in early 1975, the sale of CAP cattle did not raise as much money as it expected. CAP still had around 500 head of cattle, but directors thought that they were indispensable in building-up beef and dairy herd at Mdukatshani in order to make the project financially viable in five years time and therefore the sale of further cattle would be "self defeating."²³

Meanwhile, the Alcock family and about eight African members decided to move to Mdukatshani with CAP and started to build their own houses on the new farm²⁴. Equally important for CAP to settle down on the farm was to be accepted by neighbouring local African communities. CAP opted to work with local chiefs and as a sign of respect and courtesy African farm committee invited them to Maria Ratschitz to show their project. From the day CAP set on foot on Mdukatshani, local people continued to visit their camp to ask for maas (sour milk), to look for work, and to buy cattle or chickens which CAP might be selling. In spite of the formidable challenges ahead, the spirits of CAP was high, as expressed in the first newsletter written by Creina Alcock, wife of Neil Alcock:

Are we scared? Of course. We look at our bare hills, our dried-up streams. We look across the river at all those kraals. We look at the crowd of people already waiting, and we wonder if the odds against success are too great, if the need will not overwhelm us. But we believe it is right to

²⁰ Letter from Peter Brown, to Douglas Blausten, 19/01/1975

²¹ NL Alcock, "Proposal that CAP purchase of a farm," 24/1/1975, PC 16/1/1/1

²² Advisory committee resolved that with the move of CAP to Weenen, "the anti-CAP's who remain at Ratschitz should only receive the amount standing to their credit, plus 8% on this sum", unless another basis was established upon the production of the original Minute Book. However, it is not clear whether the anti-CAP's received this amount at all. (Draft prepared for application for donors (Anglo American Fund) [untitled documents, n.d. 1975?], PC 16/1/1/1)

²³ Draft prepared for application for donors (Anglo American Fund) [untitled documents, n.d. 1975?], p.2; NL Alcock, "Proposal that CAP purchase of a farm," 24/1/1975, PC 16/1/1/1, p.4

²⁴ In May 1975, CAP had 8 African workers and 1 white worker who was responsible for literacy and mathematics course for CAP workers. (NL Alcock, "Plans for CAP scheme on new farm, Emdukatshani," May 1975, PC 16/1/1/1, p.12)

try, and we keep our panics private. Most of all, however, we are happy. We feel as if, for the first time, we are living in Africa.²⁵

However, CAP quickly learnt that they were not welcomed by everyone. As the previous owner of the farm was not staying on the farm, it had provided local Africans with free grazing and water for their cattle and goats, natural resources such as wood, wild fruits, herbal medicines, and building poles for huts. The arrival of CAP and fencing of the farm ended their access to free resources. For the time being CAP decided to turn a blind eye and deal with problems as they emerged. First incident concerned straying donkeys. CAP's white neighbours advised them to shoot the donkey immediately without consulting the owner. The way CAP handled the issue was totally unconventional from the local point of view. They called a meeting of local donkey owners and talked with them. When a wealthy old cattle owner brought his livestock to small dam on the farm, which had been reserved for human use for a while, CAP complained to a local induna who punished the cattle owner with a tribal reprimand. By showing CAP's determination to live in a similar way local Africans lived through the type of housing they constructed, by showing that CAP did not intend to fence off people from the farm, and by appreciating and intermingling with local custom and hierarchies, CAP tried to be accepted by local people and seemed to have a good start in doing so.²⁶

By the time CAP's lease of Maria Ratshitz officially ended, it was financially broke, owing more than R51,000 to the bank, including outstanding amount of R33,800 due to the farm purchase. Some members of the Advisory Board, like Roger Lamb who was responsible for finance, felt that it was essential for CAP to sell more cattle in order to reduce its debt to the bank. For him, CAP should not be a charity, but a viable farming operation based on "a capitalistic foundation." He thought that all meaningful running expenses of farm including wages and inputs, but excluding educational and teaching components of the CAP, should be borne by the farming operation.²⁷

Alcock's views of CAP was slightly different. First of all, he was aware that it took time to see the result of reclamation. It took 10 years for CAP to rehabilitate land at Maria Ratschitz. At least for an initial few years, CAP could not survive in its new location without outside financial support. Secondly, he believed that the success of CAP depended on the involvement of local Africans over the long-term as its main farming project was going to be based on cattle co-op running in an environmentally friendly manner²⁸.

²⁵ "Newsletter from Neil and Creina Alcock," March 1975, PC 16/1/2/1. It seems that high demand for cattle from local Africans surprised Neil Alcock. He wrote to Peter Brown, "We are being besieged daily by vast numbers of Msinga people wanting to swap or buy cattle. I have been refusing to sell until the would-be buyers have no-objection permits. However, despite this, they have been thrusting large sums of money at me. One old chap had R900 in R10 notes, which he refused to take home." (Letter from Neil Alcock to Peter Brown, 10/06/1975, PC 16/1/1/1)

²⁶ According to Alcock, donkeys are important "cash crop" for people in Msinga. "They survive the droughts, multiply rapidly and sell at R5 a piece to the Basuthos who come down from the Drakensberg on annual buying trips." Initially CAP allowed local cattle and goats using parts of Mdukatshani, but not donkeys, as the latter was considered particularly destructive of grass. Another service CAP started to offer to local people was literacy and numeracy class which had been offered at Maria Ratschitz by a white staff of CAP. ("CAP Newsletter from Neil and Creina Alcock," April 1975, PC 16/1/2/1)

²⁷ RR Lamb, "CAP: Memorandum for advisory committee: the future – quo vadis!," 29/07/1975; RR Lamb, "CAP: Memorandum for meeting to be held on 18/08/1975, Umdukatsani – Quo Vadis!," 10/08/1975, PC 16/1/1/1

²⁸ Alcock emphasised the importance of livestock for Africans in KwaZulu. He believed that an agricultural future of KwaZulu was based on livestock rather than crops, due to its physical conditions, most notably, its rocky hills. He did not close the room for vegetable production in a garden, but they were only supplementary, given the small patch of land available for each family. Again, the hilly environment in Msinga was not favourable for vegetable production, as it invariably required constant watering. Another requirement for vegetable production, namely manure, can be obtained from livestock. Livestock was also important for other

CAP still had about 500 cattle, mostly calves and young stock. He believed that CAP could increase their herd by opening the co-op to local Africans in Msinga, as its reclamation work progressed. CAP also envisaged offering free agricultural training courses for various local audiences from children to those who planned to be future farmers.²⁹ From the start, CAP was not meant to be an isolated agricultural and reclamation project. Rather its success depended on the involvement of local Africans and provision of education to them.

It is morally right that the people go on having access to water on Emdukatshani. Grazing can also be offered in part payment of services rendered – for example ploughing done for CAP. This is the initial step in building up the trust a man needs to eventually join the co-op.³⁰

Eventually, financial crisis of CAP was solved by the promise of financial support from the Chairman's Fund of the Anglo American Corporation, which approved R190,000 for CAP for five years period starting from 1976.³¹ Cleared from financial difficulty, CAP seemed to be ready for re-establishing its foundational projects of reclamation, education, and cattle farming in Mdukatshani.

3. Stock theft, violence, heartwater and change of direction: 1976

CAP's main farming project was planned as a cattle co-op in the environmentally friendly way of rehabilitating grass. From the first year in Mdukatshani, CAP was forced to re-think its priority due to the continued experiences of stock theft. The first annual report of the CAP at Mdukatshani was filled with stories of fence-cutting and missing cattle, and their discovery of the ways things were handled in Msinga. The emphasis was put on how to build trust between CAP and local people in Msinga in order "to grow grass, and to teach others to grow grass" with them, for they believed that "only grass [would] give KwaZulu a future."³²

By building a relationship of trust with the local community in Msinga, CAP hoped to provide security for CAP's livestock. There seemed very long way to go, given the fact that CAP lost more than half livestock by May 1976. It looked impossible to stick to the agreement with Anglo American, CAP's major donor. For CAP was supposed to become self-supporting farm based on an initial cattle herd of about 500 head over five years. By this time, it was obvious "that nothing like the anticipated income from cattle [could] be expected, unless the stealing [stopped] and some kind soul [contributed] towards building up the herd again."³³ Adding to this man-made calamity was another problem caused by unexpected stock disease. CAP lost as many cattle to heartwater as to thieves. This stock disease caused by ticks, did not exist in Maria Ratshitz but was prevalent in Weenen/Msinga border area. CAP's plan of operations had to be

social and domestic purposes including payment of lobola and cattle dung for polishing floor. (NL Alcock, "Plans for CAP scheme on new farm, Emdukatshani," May 1975, PC 16/1/1/1, pp.4-5)

²⁹ CAP's training programmes included (a) literacy and numeracy for CAP workers and local people, (b) a series of talks by Neil Alcock on stock farming for local stock farmers, (c) meeting to discuss matters concerning 'backyard' farming for local women, and (d) vegetable gardens for women. (NL Alcock, "Plans for CAP scheme on new farm, Emdukatshani," May 1975, PC 16/1/1/1, pp.10-11)

³⁰ NL Alcock, "Plans for CAP scheme on new farm, Emdukatshani," May 1975, PC 16/1/1/1, p.10

³¹ Letter from Anglo American Corporation of SA, Ltd, to DC Grice, re: CAP, 12/11/1975, PC 16/1/1/1

³² Newsletter, "March 1975: An annual report", PC 16/1/1/2, p.4. It should be noted that CAP newsletters are written by Creina Alcock for most of the time except when she took a sabbatical leave later in late 1980s. Creina Alcock (nee Bond) was a journalist of local newspaper, *Daily News*, when she met Neil Alcock in early 1960s through her research on Kupugani. After she married Alcock and moved to settle down at Maria Ratschitz, she continued her job as an editor of wildlife magazine (*South African Wild Life*).

³³ Letter from Peter Brown, to Doug Blausten, 20/05/1976, PC 16/1/1/3.

re-considered. In his report to Anglo American's Chairman's Fund, Alcock explained the situation surrounding farm.

Unknown to us, we had arrived in the worst cattle rustling and gun running area of South Africa. The cattle dip had been filled with rocks and the kraals hauled off for firewood by disgruntled ejectees [from neighbouring white farms]. The tick population had had a free reign and as a result hearwater did as much damage as the rustlers.³⁴

Apart from re-building of the cattle co-op, CAP's other smaller projects such as vegetable gardening mainly for women, welfare services such as assistance in obtaining a pension, and agricultural education talks had taken place.³⁵ However, the slow progress of CAP brought a row between people on the farm (farm committee) and people on the Advisory Board of the CAP who were outside supporters of the project. The latter's concern also lay in the fact that CAP lacked a way of effective book-keeping and had a tendency to over-spend or make unaccounted expenditures.

People like Grice and Lamb who were on the Advisory Board of the CAP were concerned about the direction of the CAP and its lack of future viability as a self-supporting agricultural project. They were grateful for money given by Anglo-American's Chairman's Fund, and wanted to be responsible for its use.³⁶ They were also very aware of strong and forceful personality of Neil Alcock and suspected that the whole business of the CAP was his one man show.³⁷ They were not happy that Alcock was often away from farm for his "diplomatic works" -- attending meetings with local chiefs and indunas as well as KwaZulu officials.

African staff on the farm felt that their work was not fully appreciated and their ability to run the project was being questioned by very people who were supposed to be great supporters of the CAP. Bokide Mzolo, a farm manager of CAP, wrote several letters to express his dissatisfaction to Doug Blausten, one time volunteer at CAP, in England. Blausten then wrote to Grice.

[Mzolo] feels totally let down by the Directors; he feels that you all do not trust his ability to run the farms; that you feel he is wasting money and virtually going on a spending spree. He says that your lack of faith in him and his colleagues is manifest to the extent that you are virtually demanding that Neil must stay on the farm and take the responsibility on his shoulders. He feels that they are struggling desperately hard to achieve something out of very little so that as many of their people can become involved in as many numbers as possible, and that you do not really appreciate this -- or if you do it is only superficial praise. Bokide says that he and his colleagues are literally in the firing line and the constant violent threats to their lives puts intolerable pressures on them when this is coupled with the lack of moral, physical and active

³⁴ Neil Alcock, "Report to Chairman's Fund," May 1976, PC 16/1/1/2

³⁵ Neil Alcock and Janet Wilhelm, "Report to Chairman's Fund," May 1976, PC 16/1/1/2

³⁶ Letter from DC Grice, Shepstone & Wylie, to NL Alcock, 13/10/1976, PC 16/1/1/2

³⁷ Draft letter from DC Grice to Neil Alcock, sent to Peter Brown for comments, n.d., PC 16/1/1/3. It is not clear whether the letter was actually sent to Alcock or not. Peter Brown was not so cynical about the role of African staffs of CAP at farm committee. He explained the situation to Doug Blausten in England. "I don't think Roger is right about the Blacks on the farm just being Neil's tea-boys. ... Anton [Hlongwane, CAP's book-keeper] implied that the farm committee did operate as a democratic body and that Neil's views didn't always prevail. ... I do think a kind of consensus is arrived at on the farm but whether this is the consensus of exhaustion, everyone having been beaten to their knees by the interminability of Neil's rhetoric, I just don't know." (Letter from Peter Brown, to Doug Blausten, 20/05/1976, PC 16/1/1/3)

support of the Board.³⁸

For African staff on the farm, CAP was “not simply a farming operation. ...the training of an ox, the success of a meeting with local elders; the willingness of local people to come to the farm to talk about their problems – all these and more [were] vastly more important than providing to businessmen that the books [were] neat and budgets [were] met.”³⁹

Alcock was also furious about the “remote control” of the Advisory Board over the day-to-day management of the farm and quick to defend his colleagues on the farm.

Organisation such as Anglo, Miserero, Oxfam or anyone else are not doing me a favour by granting development aid. Neither are they doing Mzolo and Co. a favour. Both Mzolo and I and probably most Black people are willing to help South Africa and ourselves by trying out a new look at agriculture. We are willing to make considerable sacrifices but only if we get help. So far I have never had help but plenty of destructive criticism and suspicion.⁴⁰

Before the end of 1976, Mzolo resigned as chairman of the farm committee and left the farm after the incident of the hold-up. With the anticipation of further troubles over livestock on the expecting “mass return of Johannesburg workers to the area for Christmas”, CAP decided to sell off another 100 cattle. It was thought that the number of livestock should be kept at lower, manageable level.⁴¹ Thus CAP was left with some 100 animals. African staff of the CAP who moved to Mdukatshani feared for their lives. The level of insecurity was much higher for African staff than their white counterpart on the farm. On their experience of the first December at Mdukatshani, Creina Alcock wrote that:

We woke on Christmas morning to a burst of gunfire and lay very still in the darkness waiting for more. ... Gunfire echoed across the river. ... Afraid of hut burnings women have evacuated, hiding their possessions in the bush and praying it won't rain. ... Children have scattered and disappeared. ... ‘You needn't worry,’ Black friends assured us. ‘Whites are royal game. Nobody will touch you.’⁴²

Another key figure of African staff, Anton Hlongwane, CAP's bookkeeper, stayed for another year but eventually left the farm fearing his life in 1978.

4. Working with local communities: 1977-1978

By 1977, CAP projects had gradually changed direction. The greatest achievements by CAP during the initial two years at Mdukatshani was “some of the recruits Neil [Alcock had] drawn into subsistence

³⁸ Letter from Doug Blausten, to DC Grice, 24/10/1976, PC 16/1/1/2

³⁹ Letter from Doug Blausten, to DC Grice, 24/10/1976, PC 16/1/1/2

⁴⁰ Neil Alcock, “Decision to be made by CAP,” n.d. [1976?], PC 16/1/1/2, p.4

⁴¹ The decision to leave CAP by Bokide Mzolo was made due to him seeing threats to his life real, rather than conflicts between farm committee and advisory committee. After Mzolo sending his letters of complaints to Doug Blausten in England, meeting was held between farm committee members and some of the advisory committee members including D.C. Grice and Peter Brown on the farm, and to certain extent reconciliation was achieved. Apparently the threats to his life was caused due to his job as guarding CAP's cattle as manager of farm committee and therefore being instrumental in having several cattle thieves convicted. (Letter from Peter Brown, to Doug Blausten, 07/12/1976, PC 16/1/1/2, p.3)

⁴² CAP Newsletter, “December 1975: More of the same”, PC 16/1/2/1, P.4

agriculture among the neighbouring communities.”⁴³ They were drawn to CAP through taking agricultural course offered by CAP, joining vegetable gardens projects for women on Mdukatshani, and grazing their own cattle on the farm in return for their labour.

The idea of re-building the cattle co-op and producing the main income from cattle farming was abandoned. However it seems that CAP did not change the idea that stock farming would occupy main target of CAP’s scheme. It decided to open the farm officially to cattle owned by the adjoining KwaZulu people. By the beginning of 1977, some 260 head of cattle were grazing on Mdukatshani from KwaZulu. The owners of cattle were allowed to dip their cattle on the farm. CAP also provided them with veterinary and culling advice.⁴⁴ They were asked to pay for their grazing in the form of work on the farm such as building fences, making firebreaks or patrolling.⁴⁵

Part of the farm was used as commonage for grazing, part of it was opened for vegetable gardens for women, and another part of the farm was planned to develop as field to grow wheat and/or lucerne for dairy cows. Several of the local men trained oxen for the purpose of ploughing. Another group of local men cooperatively worked “to divert the Skehlenge (the stream on the farm) and dig a big dam for irrigating the CAP lands.” CAP also began to set a water-wheel to pump water from Tugela river to the lower part of the farm under the instruction of new white volunteer. At this time CAP got five new white young volunteers who were willing to work for CAP at the same wages as its African workers. The presence of white voluntary workers brought additional advantage to CAP -- security on the farm. As Whites were considered “taboo” for killing, the mere presence of white person on the top farm meant relatively better security to African workers there as well.⁴⁶

Another part of the farm was used as a school site for children. The school was registered with KwaZulu government⁴⁷, and had 140 pupils in 1977. The curriculum of school was unique in a sense that children were not only taught usual subjects of Zulu, maths and so forth, but also they had to work on building, fencing, terracing, and gardening. They were paid for collecting and carrying building stones to the school. Part of school premises was developed as a school farm where children were supposed to have their cows, chickens and vegetables, which would be used for school-feeding scheme. CAP justified the use of children’s labour and paying for them at school that if they did not pay, local children simply stopped coming to school. Children’s labour was much needed at home, and in order to give incentive not only to children but also to their parents to coming to school, CAP thought that giving an opportunity to earn money as well as learn practical skills were good idea. CAP also thought it as an alternative to white farms, as some parents complained that some children were deserting school and home to go to white farms to

⁴³ Letter from Peter Brown, to Doug Blausten, 07/12/1976, PC 16/1/1/2, p.4

⁴⁴ Neil Alcock, “Directors and Anglo report,” 15/02/1977, PC 16/1/1/3. Alcock wrote that the reason why CAP had been accepted so soon by local Africans who were “extremely suspicious and antagonistic to strangers” was exactly because of the fact that CAP fell as “victims of gangs.” (Neil Alcock, “Report on the Church Agricultural Project – May 1977,”)

⁴⁵ By May 1977, the number of locally-owned cattle grazing on Mdukatshani rose to 350. (Neil Alcock, “Report on the Church Agricultural Project – May 1977,” p.4)

⁴⁶ Neil Alcock, “Report on the Church Agricultural Project – May 1977,” pp.4-6. Mdukatshani was filled with other experimental projects in order to achieve self-sufficiency with minimum cost, which included methane gas digester project and solar cooker project. Most of white voluntary workers did not stay at CAP for long, and out of five workers who were mentioned in Alcock’s May 1977 report, only one was still working there a year later. (NL Alcock, “A report of three years at Mdukatshani,” May 1978, PC 16/1/1/3, pp.8-9, 16-17)

⁴⁷ However, CAP was not satisfied with teachers and principal for the school allocated by KwaZulu Department of Education. CAP’s complaints about them was not taken seriously by the Department, and eventually CAP decided to turn the school to a private learning centre instead of a government school. (CAP, “Monthly Report – September 1978,” PC 16/1/2/3)

earn money for food and clothes.⁴⁸

CAP also started to offer a loan to African smallholders who completed CAP's weekly agricultural course (lectures and demonstrations) at Mdukatshani for nine months. These people were allowed to borrow money from CAP in order to fence their plot and buy seeds. Fencing the plot was extremely important. Before they used thorn bushes to enclose their plots, but "hungry KwaZulu goats, donkeys and cattle found weak places and destroyed gardens repeatedly." Later the opportunity to borrow money from CAP was extended to people who came to be involved in the community water and garden projects in neighbouring villages, and by May 1978 a sum of R1,890 was loaned to 92 people from African Small Farmers Trust set up by CAP "to act as a Land Bank for local African peasant farmers."⁴⁹

The idea of community water projects was born out of students who attended CAP agricultural training course. These people originally lived on labour farms in the Weenen district, and many owned large numbers of livestock and had substantial cultivated lands. However, in 1969 all of them were moved into the reserve following the abolition of the labour tenancy in the district. All stock had to be sold before the removals, and the community was reduced to a state of poverty. In the reserve the new comers were given small plots – averaging about half an acre each – in closer settlements villages. Nomoya and Msusanphi were two of these closer settlements villages near Mdukatshani and these were places where some of CAP's first students came from. They asked CAP "to visit their plots to advise them how to put theory into practice so they could become self-sufficient." CAP found that no plot had water readily accessible. As it seemed impossible for CAP to help individual to build gardens due to the distance from a source of water, CAP suggested a community project to dig furrows and put pipes collectively in order to divert and carry water from the stream to their settlements. All the work was done by local community members with technical advice and supervision provided by CAP's white staff whenever necessary. Due to the realisation of poverty of these workers, CAP also decided to offer them a wage (R1 a day per person) and cover the cost of pipe and cement.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Neil Alcock, "Report on the Church Agricultural Project – May 1977," pp.6-7; NL Alcock, "A report of three years at Mdukatshani," May 1978, PC 16/1/1/3, p.14-15. However, it seems that the system of paying money to work done by children had some negative consequences. Children were "learning to claim money for every small thing they [did] and not to do anything without being paid for it. When the veld fires were burning and we were walking towards the site with some children, they were talking excitedly about how they were going to be paid for this, and trying to estimate how much they would get." ("General Comments" n.d. [1977], PC16/1/1/3, p.5. This was the critical review of CAP's projects, in particular, "the unpredictability and whims" of Neil Alcock, voiced by three white workers, Pat Macdonald, Charles Low, and Norman Mankowitz.)

⁴⁹ CAP's weekly lecture course was meant for small-scale farmers who do not have enough capital to introduce chemical fertilisers and mechanisation in farming. Students were paid "R1 per lecture day for forgoing their land for their weekly lecture. CAP also provided free transport. First students of CAP were mostly men except one woman. (Neil Alcock, "Report on the Church Agricultural Project – May 1977," pp.3-4) CAP had 14 students for its first agricultural class, and another 36 for the second. The second class came from three communities in closer settlement villages – Musasamphi, Nomoya and Sahlumba. (NL Alcock, "A report of three years at Mdukatshani," May 1978, PC 16/1/1/3, pp.5-6) By July 1979 there were six Small Farmers Co-ops with 180 members. Between 1977 and 1982, loans worth R20,947.78 was advanced and R10,944.80 of this amount was repaid. At the end of August 1982 R9,871.09 was recorded as the debt still outstanding by 181 of the 221 co-op members. The administration and bookkeeping of loan issued by the African Small Farmers Trust was a big problem to CAP. A CAP bookkeeper was found to have issued receipts to members of the co-ops from a private receipt book, after he left. ("The Small Farmers Trust," September 1982, PC 16/1/2/3, pp.1-3)

⁵⁰ This communal project was a water project to dig furrow or dam to divert water flow to individual gardens near each homestead. Alcock maintained that due to frequent occurrences of theft it was desirable that all gardens should adjoin the actual homestead. (Letter from Neil Alcock, 12/08/1977, PC 16/1/1/3; NL Alcock, "A report of three years at Mdukatshani," May 1978, PC 16/1/1/3, p.5-6) Similar project started in another closer settlement village called Sahlumbe.

The progress of community projects was slow. One reason was difficulty in keeping communities' spirits high in the project. Thus Alcock complained that "every time there was a rumour of a job, work was disrupted as men disappeared to look for work. Some disappeared long enough to earn a bag of mealie meal, and then returned. This had a serious effect on morale and progress." In order to keep these men working for the project, CAP decided to offer loans of mealie meal to certain approved families. Another difficulty lay in the intricate nature of the landholding system in KwaZulu.

The permission of several indunas was required before the communal furrows could be taken over commonage land, and representation had to be made for authority to make further use of the commonage by turning some of it into gardens.⁵¹

The negotiation became time-consuming, part of the reason being that "several local indunas [were] away in Johannesburg and their stand-ins [were] reluctant to act without their instructions."⁵²

Deeper involvements into local community brought another challenge to CAP. Day after day CAP's staff, in particular, white faces were confronted with all sorts of problems local Africans faced. These ranged from assisting old people getting pensions, arranging lifts for critically injured people to the hospital, to calling police to report the incidents of shooting. This welfare work was not part of CAP's original or new scheme, nor its function. Therefore CAP did not have funds, nor staff, nor time to attend "the heartaches and injustices" of local Africans. However, Creina wrote in one of CAP's newsletters in September 1977, titled "The tree with the biggest shade": "when a man is facing you, and you know White intervention will make a difference to his life, then it is hard to turn him away."⁵³ CAP was becoming the biggest shade for local people living in its neighbourhood.

5. Removals in Weenen, drought and escalation of border conflicts: 1979-1983

From around June 1979, CAP began to be approached by several different groups of evicted labour tenants who had nowhere to go. Several Africans were jailed for trespass on farms on which they had lived for many years after the expiry of their eviction notice. Some of them begged CAP to give them temporary accommodation, while others appealed to Chief Simakade Mchunu in Msinga to give them temporary residential sites. Many Weenen farmers impounded the animals of people who had been sacked from their farms.⁵⁴

The revival of massive removals of labour tenants in Weenen district at this time was caused by the change in government's attitude towards the enforcement of the law. When labour tenancy was abolished by proclamation in the district in 1969, a great number of Africans who became "surplus" as a result were forced to move to the reserve. However, not all farmers were obedient to the proclamation, and therefore a significant number of African labour tenants stayed on farms. Subsequently a government committee of the magistrate and representatives of local farmers [the Farm Labour Tenant and Advisory Board?] assessed the

⁵¹ NL Alcock, "A report of three years at Mdukatshani," May 1978, PC 16/1/1/3, p.7

⁵² Another complicating factor here was that "the local chief [was] a young man acting in place of his cousin who [had] been banished, but who [was] still regarded as the real chief [chief Ngoza Mvelase, chief of Mthembu]. Several indunas took advantage of this fact to block developments which [might] confer benefits on the landless newcomers to their areas." (NL Alcock, "A report of three years at Mdukatshani," May 1978, PC 16/1/1/3, p.7)

⁵³ CAP Newsletter, "September 1977: The tree with the biggest shade," PC 16/1/2/1

⁵⁴ According to Alcock, the usual sentence for them was three months or R80. (Letter from Neil Alcock to Chief MG Buthelezi, 22/12/1979. PC 16/1/1/5, p.1)

labour needs on each farm in the district and decided the number of kraals each would be allowed to accommodate.⁵⁵ In 1979, local farmers were told that as from 1st January 1980, any farmer with more labour than had been allocated would be prosecuted.⁵⁶ This resulted in another large-scale removals of African farm residents in Weenen.

Alerted to the significance of problem, CAP became instrumental in enlisting wider support for evicted farm residents.⁵⁷ CAP contacted the press in order to get wider publicity for the predicament of labour tenants who received the eviction notice. It emphasised that evictees would lose not only their jobs, but also their homes, fields and grazing lands on which they had been settled, often for generations. CAP also made contact with various individuals and groups in Pietermaritzburg who seemed to be interested in working on the issue.⁵⁸ A meeting was convened in Pietermaritzburg in September 1979 to which CAP brought several evicted labour tenants to let them tell their stories. Through this meeting, it was decided that a new organisation was to be set up in the city, which would work exclusively on the issue. This new organisation was to be named Association for Rural Advancement (AFRA).

Alcock sought a meeting with the KwaZulu cabinet to encourage some kind of action from them. In particular, he thought the public condemnation of the plight of victims of removals coming from Chief MG Buthelezi might be very effective. Cheryl Walker⁵⁹, who was working for CAP at that time, sent her CAP-commissioned investigation report on Weenen removals to the KwaZulu Minister of Justice, Mr Mthetwa, in order to furnish KwaZulu government with necessary background information. Alcock also sought an interview with the Chief Bantu Commissioner for Natal, Mr Bulmerogg in order to gather information on the government position on the matter.⁶⁰ In addition to its diplomatic and advocacy work, CAP remained as a centre for the displaced farm residents to seek help and advice and it organised several meetings with them. Although CAP could provide them with only limited assistance, it offered access to legal aid, when necessary, as well as transport, temporary grazing for stock and so on.⁶¹

A serious drought in the early 1980s was coinciding with the revival of mass removal on farms in Weenen. Due to the lack of rain, aggravated by unseasonal high temperatures during March and April 1980, “the last pools on the Skehlinge river [on Mdukatshani] dried up, leaving stock a few sips in the sun as watering

⁵⁵ In late 1979 Mdukatshani was also allocated five kraals per farm by the Farm Tenant and Advisory Board [Farm Tenant Control Board?] without any official inspection of the farm. This meant that Mdukatshani was entitled to 15 families. CAP was warned that “in due course an inspection would be made and if [CAP] were found to be harbouring more than the authorised number of kraals, [CAP] would be prosecuted and the fine for an offence is about R500.” (CAP, “Monthly report, November – December, 1979,” PC 16/1/2/3; Neil Alcock, “Confidential report on conflict on the black-white boundary between KwaZulu and the Weenen district,” March 1980, PC 16/1/1/5, p.3)

⁵⁶ Letter from Neil Alcock to Chief MG Buthelezi, 22/12/1979. PC 16/1/1/5, p.2

⁵⁷ “Mdukatshani Monthly Report – June 1979”; “Mdukatshani Monthly Report – July and August 1979,” PC 16/1/2/3

⁵⁸ “Mdukatshani Monthly Report – June 1979”; “Mdukatshani Monthly Report – July and August 1979”; “Mdukatshani Monthly Report – September 1979,” PC 16/1/2/3. In this year, CAP’s application for renewed membership of Weenen farmers association was turned down without explanation. CAP assumed that its “involvement in the removal problems of labour tenants ejected from white farms and the Weenen Town Lands [was] probably the cause of the refusal of membership.” (CAP, “Monthly Report – November and December 1979,” PC 16/1/2/3)

⁵⁹ She worked for CAP in 1979 until the end of the year when she had to take sick leave with infectious hepatitis. On her return to CAP in April 1980, she could not make a contract with CAP and was recruited by AFRA as its first fieldworker. (CAP, “Monthly report, Nov-Dec 1979”; “Monthly report, April 1980”; Interview with Cheryl Walker, July 2002, Durban)

⁶⁰ Letter from Neil Alcock to Chief MG Buthelezi, 22/12/1979. PC 16/1/1/5

⁶¹ CAP, “Monthly report, March/April 1980,” PC 16/1/2/3

points.” The effect of drought on Africans living at next-door Msinga was a complete disaster, which resulted in the escalation of racial tension and border conflicts between Weenen and Msinga. CAP reported that:

With little or no grazing left in many parts of Msinga, African-owned cattle have started to die. Hundreds of thin animals can be seen strung out against the fences that separate Msinga from white farms. Whenever cattle can get across the boundary, they do. The impounding of African cattle, exorbitant damages claims, and shooting of livestock [by white farmers] have continued.⁶²

Many displaced farm labourers who decided not to go to closer settlement villages in Nkandla and Nqutu districts established by the government got temporary emergency homes on the boundary between Msinga and white farms. This worsened the already overcrowded conditions on the KwaZulu side, resulting in their cattle always straying over the border fences. In case of cattle belonging to ejected people, it was more difficult to stop them going back to white farms for pasture that had been their old home. In this situation, some white farmers along the boundary began to take the law into their hands. Africans started to report to CAP about “numerous cases of whites assaulting blacks, firing guns at them, and shooting their livestock.” Other absentee farmers vigorously impounded animals and it was rumoured that they claimed “their share of the exorbitant pound fees.” Alcock wrote that one farmer deliberately opened “the border fence to encourage the Africans’ livestock back onto his property.”⁶³ Another harassing tactic invented by white farmers adjoining KwaZulu was to deny Africans the use of “public roads and footpaths through their farms.” These footpaths had been sometimes only way to get to the main road and therefore had been functional as “public” roads for many Africans in the area.⁶⁴

The African claim that whites were making money out of impounding African cattle sounded more convincing, given that with the exception of Mdukatshani and one other farm, all of the five white-owned farms on the KwaZulu boundary belonged to absentee landlords. None of them except Mdukatshani were carrying any stock. When a farmer impounded cattle, he was allowed to claim damages to his farms caused by impounded cattle. The receipts issued by Weenen Pound revealed that “the whites claiming and getting damages far in excess of that allowed by the law.” An investigation of the Weenen Pound book by a CAP staff “discovered that during 1979 three white farmers on the Weenen-KwaZulu boundary accumulated at least R6,500 as damages paid by black stockowners.” Another transgression of law by white farmers was the way their inspection of damages was done. It was supposed to be done by two independent assessors. Instead in most of the cases “white neighbours acted as assessors for the landowners making the claims.” Furthermore, more often than not, the farmers refused to negotiate when the stockowners came to beg them “to be given a chance to pay for the release of their stock” before it was driven to the pound. Again, this was violation of the provisions of the Pound Ordinance.⁶⁵

⁶² CAP, “Monthly report, March/April 1980,” PC 16/1/2/3

⁶³ Letter from Neil Alcock to Chief MG Buthelezi, 22/12/1979. pp.2-3; Letter from Neil Alcock to Station Commander, SA Police, Weenen, 03/01/1980, PC 16/1/1/5

⁶⁴ Letter from Neil Alcock to Chief MG Buthelezi, 05/04/1980, PC 16/1/1/3. As the denial of using footpaths had serious implication for so many population in the area, eventually CAP decided to take the case to the court.

⁶⁵ “According to the Pound Ordinance, farmers can claim 60 cents per day damages for large stock trespassing on their land, and 20 cents per day damages for small stock. Damages are paid to the pound, and then transferred to the landowner.” However, CAP found that many Africans were forced to pay much more than that to claim back their stock. The Ordinance also stipulates that “if a landowner is aware of the identity of the owner of impounded stock he is obliged to notify said owner before taking his animals to the pound.” (Neil Alcock, “Confidential report on conflict on the black-white boundary between KwaZulu and the Weenen district,” March 1980, PC 16/1/1/5, pp.2, 8-10) This confidential report was written by Neil Alcock based on interviews with police officers, government officials (both KwaZulu and South Africa), chief Mchunu, attorney, former owner of

One example of the brutal absentee farmer in Weenen-KwaZulu border was called James Christie who called himself “a soldier”. He came to Weenen in 1977 when he bought or rented the farm Leliefontein. Although he had never lived on the farm and run no stock, he visited the farm at weekends or sometimes even made “surprise” visits on weekdays at early hours in the darkness. Several statements made by Africans to CAP contained allegations of assaults by him as well as killing of livestock.⁶⁶ One of Alcock’s informant told him that:

In 1977 in the winter the white soldier shot four of my goats on his property. They were loaded on his van and taken away. I went to the chief to report the matter. I was not the only one with a complaint against this man. The chief took us all to Tugela Ferry and went into the Magistrate’s Court to complain. After some time the chief came out and said the matter was being referred to Ulundi. We were told we would be compensated and the white soldier would be charged, but that was the last we heard of it.⁶⁷

Another told her frightening experience with Christie.

One day last winter I saw that my goats were defeating the small child who herds them and they were through the gate in the white man’s farm. I went to the assistance of the child and went through the gate to stop the goats. I was about from here to that tree into his property (30 metres) when I heard the white man’s jeep stop next to me. He said: “Get into my vehicle.” Inside the jeep there was another white man about the same age as the soldier, as well as a black boy. They drove me to a dam at the foot of Umhlumba mountain. There the soldier stopped and told me to get out. He got out too, with the other white man. He asked me what I was doing on his farm and I said I was throwing stones at my goats to get them out. Then he said to me: “Get into the dam.” I said: “How can you say that to me Nkosaan?” With that he grabbed me and threw me in.⁶⁸

Another notorious white neighbour of CAP was called Mr Agliotti who owned farm Doornvlakte. He cheated on Africans who worked on his farm building an internal road. At first he allowed them to graze their stock while they were working on his road and he paid them wages as agreed. However, after he had been away for a month, he came back with groups of vans and impounded their stock without consulting them at all. As it was a long way, several livestock died on the way to Weenen Pound. In order to claim back their livestock from Pound, African stockowners were asked to pay the exorbitant amount of trespass and damage fees.⁶⁹

Once whites took the law into their hands, it was the matter of time that Africans reacted in a similar way. Alcock cited one incident in his report on border conflict:

farm Doornvlakte and so forth, and statements made by local Africans. List of people whom he spoke to and statements of Africans were attached to the main report. The contents of report was partly distributed to the supporters of CAP through its newsletter. (CAP newsletter, “January/February 1980: Whatever happened to Intondolo Enkulu – the big son of tiny goat?,” PC 16/1/2/2)

⁶⁶ Neil Alcock, “Confidential report on conflict on the black-white boundary between KwaZulu and the Weenen district,” March 1980, PC 16/1/1/5, pp.4, 10-13

⁶⁷ Statement by Makosiwanzwenya Mkize, 23/12/1979, attached to Alcock’s confidential report, PC 16/1/1/5

⁶⁸ Statement by Mrs Xanegele Landa, 23/12/1979, attached to Alcock’s confidential report, PC 16/1/1/5

⁶⁹ Mr Agliotti’s attempts to impound African-owned stock grazing on his farm was done several times. (Neil Alcock, “Confidential report on conflict on the black-white boundary between KwaZulu and the Weenen district,” March 1980, PC 16/1/1/5, p.4-6; Statement from Mshumba Mcunu, 27/03/1980, PC 16/1/1/5)

In January [1980] two members of CAP staff were travelling on a road in the border area, when they saw ahead of them a line of rocks blocking the road. As they slowed down, some blacks ran out of the bush shouting: "Stop, stop. You will crash on the rocks we have used to block the road." As they rolled them away the CAP men asked: "What did you put the rocks there for?" The blacks replied: "This white man [a farmer in the border area] is killing us, so we put stones on the road so that he has to stop his car and we will then stab him and kill him."⁷⁰

By May 1980 the police laid charges against some of the whites who shot African-owned livestock on the border between KwaZulu and Weenen. Nevertheless the impounding of African-owned cattle continued unabated.⁷¹ CAP continued to make complaints about the situation at the Weenen Pound, and as a result the provincial authorities decided to freeze the pound in June pending an investigation. The Weenen Magistrates court started hearing of several cases against whites alleged to have assaulted Africans in connection with cattle trespass on the Weenen-KwaZulu boundary.⁷² In October CAP achieved small legal victory. In one court case "James Christie was ordered to pay R1,000 plus partial costs to Philemon Ximba who suffered a broken jaw after being assaulted by Christie." In another case, "Christie was convicted on three counts of attempted murder and sentenced to a fine R200 or 100 days imprisonment and a further term of 12 months was conditionally suspended for five years."⁷³ In spite of that, some white farmers did not stop shooting African-owned stock, and African stockowners kept coming to CAP to ask for legal procedure.

The ever-worsening condition of drought brought another uneasy problem to CAP. The number of African-owned cattle, goats and donkeys which were illegally grazing on Mdukatshani increased considerably. For the past few years, CAP had allowed about 200 African-owned cattle to graze on the farm in exchange for work.⁷⁴ However, there were 735 cattle grazing on Mdukatshani in August 1980. By the end of September, the number increased to more than 1,000. Many of them were pushed onto Mdukatshani by unknown owners who then just simply disappeared, and due to the resulting over-grazing on Mdukatshani itself a number of cattle died there, too.⁷⁵ The increase in number of illegal grazing of African-owned cattle on Mdukatshani was a clear sign of desperation of African stockowners in neighbouring Msinga caused by prolonged drought. Another sign of gravity of the problem was recorded in the number of death of cattle at dips in Msinga during the year.⁷⁶

In order to mitigate the devastating effects of drought for people in Msinga, in 1980 CAP began to be involved in distribution of mealie meal supplied by the Red Cross to local Africans as a drought relief. Initially CAP distributed drought relief food in the form of free hand-outs to families in need. However, gradually CAP began to feel problems in categorizing the poor. Therefore, instead of giving away food to whoever came for it, CAP decided to organise new community projects to make a dam or canal to divert water from Tugela river in several neighbouring areas and provided them with mealie meal for exchange of

⁷⁰ Neil Alcock, "Confidential report on conflict on the black-white boundary between KwaZulu and the Weenen district," March 1980, PC 16/1/1/5, p.1

⁷¹ CAP, "Monthly report: May 1980," PC 16/1/2/3

⁷² CAP, "Monthly report: June 1980," PC 16/1/2/3

⁷³ CAP, "Monthly report: October 1980"; "Monthly report: November 1980," PC 16/1/2/3; CAP newsletter, "September/October 1980: Open the gate a little wider please," PC 16/1/2/2

⁷⁴ CAP, "Monthly report: June 1980," PC 16/1/2/3

⁷⁵ CAP, "Monthly report: September 1980," PC 16/1/2/3; CAP newsletter, "September/October 1980: Open the gate a little wider please," PC 16/1/2/2

⁷⁶ CAP newsletter, "July 1980: It serves them right," PC 16/1/2/2. Director of Veterinary services in KwaZulu, Dr Osborne, estimated the cattle deaths due to drought at Msinga at about 12,000. (CAP, "Report on drought relief – April to December, 1980," PC 16/1/2/3)

their 30-days labour. Although there was no doubt that to certain extent drought relief alleviated the predicament of Africans, it also brought the problem of unfair distribution in some localities. In September 1980, one of CAP's local directors, Philemon Khoza, was murdered "apparently due to his role in food distribution." Still CAP's involvements in drought relief projects exposed CAP to more and more people in Msinga. Thus Alcock concluded that "because of the drought we had to extend ourselves and expand our activities in a way we would have thought impossible a year ago."⁷⁷

In spite of the good amount of rain in December 1980 and January 1981, the drought condition continued for the rest of 1981. In February 1982 CAP newsletter again reported devastating effects of drought on people in Msinga.

All over Msinga cattle dips were unused because of lack of water. Clothes were left unwashed for months and lice outbreaks were a common complaint. ... For the second successive year no fields were ploughed in our part of Msinga, except on the small area of the government irrigation plots. ... In 1980-81 Msinga lost 12,000 cattle and 35,000 goats due to drought – stock valued at about R 1.5 million.⁷⁸

The effects of drought to members of CAP's small farmers co-ops in Msusanphi, Nomoya, Sahlumbe, and other areas were also devastating. "Streams which had been [dug by them] and irrigating gardens dried up. Furrows and pipes and reservoirs lay empty of water. Gradually the gardens withered to nothing. New schemes were launched to supply water to their various communities – and these became CAP's drought relief schemes. Initially people volunteered their labour. Later CAP was able to offer a mealie ration as payment. Many – but not all – co-op members became drought relief workers." In trying to mitigate the effects of drought on them and as "an emergency measure", CAP opened irrigated plots on Mdukatshani itself to 64 women living in neighbouring communities to make a garden.⁷⁹

Another invention of CAP's drought relief scheme was bone exchange projects which started in October 1980. CAP started to swap mealie meal for bones which were burnt and milled into bonemeal. The bonemeal was used for garden on the farm as "a valuable stocklick and phosphate fertilizer." The bone exchange project was not only for people living nearby, but also for those who could not be involved in CAP's community projects due to their localities. It continued throughout 1981 and thereafter thanks to the arrival of funds for the project.⁸⁰

The tension between white farmers and Africans in the district continued throughout 1981. In May a white farmer shot an African butcher on his farm and killed him. The incident further widened the gulf between

⁷⁷ In 1979-1980 CAP also started two new experimental projects. One was acacia pods exchange, by which CAP exchanged acacia pods with mealie meal. Alcock thought the pods being milled as a possible alternative of high protein stockfeed. Another was bone exchange, by which local people were encouraged to collect bone and bring it to CAP to receive mealie meal in return. The bone exchange project was started as another form of drought relief programme to cover people who cannot be involved in community projects due to their localities. (CAP, "Report on drought relief – April to December, 1980," PC 16/1/2/3)

⁷⁸ Most goat deaths were only indirectly related to the drought. "In some areas so many goats were stolen for food that only tiny remnant flocks remain. ... Other goats were eaten by their owners, or traded for mealie meal. Goat barter was a common form of payment at stores near Mdukatshani." (CAP newsletter, not titled, n.d. [1982], PC 16/1/2/3, p.6-8)

⁷⁹ "The Small Farmers Trust," September 1982, PC 16/1/2/3, p.3, 6

⁸⁰ By this time, CAP was receiving grants from several donors including OXFAM, Diakonia (Durban-based church organisation), Misereor and individual donations. (CAP newsletter, not titled, n.d. [1982], PC 16/1/2/3, p.11-12, 17)

white and black in the district and fuelled black bitterness towards white.⁸¹ Increasing number of victims of arbitrary and merciless conducts by white farmers asked for legal help to CAP, which in turn began to be handled by the Legal Resource Centre in Durban from late 1981. In 1982 CAP and Legal Recourse Centre were delighted to win another court battle, which they thought could be “a milestone” in the district’s history. Mr de Bruin, a Weenen farmer, was ordered to pay R1,700 for damages to Kolome Zungu, for assaulting the latter’s wife and son. Zungu was his ex-labourer who was dismissed and evicted from the farm of de Bruin after an argument between the two concerning the alleged disappearance of one of de Bruin’s cattle. CAP newsletter quoted de Bruin saying that “Ag, men, when I hit that girl I never knew there would be such a fuss. They are used to being hit.” Zungu’s wife was not a young lady, but an elderly woman.⁸²

Due to the continuance of drought into 1982, the problem of trespassing of cattle on Mdukatshani continued throughout the year. CAP found hundreds (about 600) of African-owned cattle had illegally been pushed onto the farm in the middle of the year. Instead of shooting them and/or their owners as most white neighbours of CAP did, CAP decided to bring the matter to the tribal court and lodged complaints with both the Mthembu and Mchunu tribal courts. The process seemed very slow and even after the order by tribal authority was announced, the implementation of it was another issue.⁸³

The intensifying racial conflicts in the area gained another dimension, when a local farmer, Tom Uren, was shot dead at his farm gate on the morning of 29 April 1983. Three weeks later, a neighbouring farmer, Philip de Bruin’s farmhouse was burnt down. Subsequently 15 African huts on de Bruin’s farm were also set alight and burnt down.⁸⁴ Before these incidents, early in the same year, CAP had already arranged several meetings between local African leaders and whites who shared concern about the breakdown of law and order in the area. As a result of this, Douglas Ralfe, an executive member of the Natal Agricultural Union (NAU), organised a meeting between the Minister, officials of his Department, and a delegation of the NAU. He was also instrumental in convening local meetings between Africans, the Weenen magistrate, and representatives of white farmers’ association. Eventually a series of these efforts resulted in an announcement of the appointment of a commission to investigate border tensions between KwaZulu and white farmers in the Msinga area by the Minister of Co-operation and Development, Dr P. Koornhof, in July 1983.⁸⁵

6. Faction fights in Msinga and death of Alcock: 1979-1983

The period which was plagued with removals of Africans from white farms, drought, and intensifying racial tension in Weenen-Msinga border was also the period when increasing numbers of Africans in neighbourhood were fighting against each other. As much as Alcock was concerned the escalating racial conflicts in the region, he also found himself acting or being seen as a mediator in a series of bloody “wars”

⁸¹ CAP newsletter, not titled, n.d. [1982], PC 16/1/2/3, p.9-10

⁸² CAP, “Quarterly report – June, July, August” [1982?], PC 16/1/2/3; Letter from Legal Resource Centre (Durban) to PR de Bruin, re: Kolome Zungu, 15/03/1982; Letter from Legal Resource Centre (Durban) to PR de Bruin, re: Nombalewa Zungu, 20/04/1982, PC 16/1/3/1.

⁸³ CAP, “Quarterly report –September, October, November” [1982?], PC 16/1/2/3

⁸⁴ After having won several assault cases brought against him, Philip de Bruin found himself again a target of retaliation. In November 1983 his wheat fields were set alight and he lost his entire crop. Six of his cattle were shot and more than 50 goats stolen. (Letter from Creina Alcock to Peter Miles, Field representative, Oxfam, 16/01/1984, PC 16/1/3/3)

⁸⁵ CAP, “Quarterly report – March, April, May 1983,” PC 16/1/3/2; CAP, “Quarterly report – June, July, August, 1983,” PC 16/1/2/3. However, it is not clear whether the commission produced a report on the matter.

between Zulu factions, which eventually cost his life.

Faction fights had been recurrent feature of Msinga since as far back as the nineteenth century.⁸⁶ The biggest war in the area in the twentieth century known as the battle of Ngongolo was fought between Mthembu and Mchunu on the farm Koornspruit in 1944 which became part of Mdukatshani in later period. According to a surviving witness, it started one afternoon when a group of armed Mthembus attacked on Mchunus attending a wedding on the farm. Several Mchunus were killed on that day. A few days later more than 6,000 men were fighting each other on the farm. The instigator of the initial attack (a Mthembu man) was not killed, but his kraal was set alight. An official inquiry was held into the battle and 279 men were convicted at a trial and imprisoned.⁸⁷

Even after CAP moved to Mdukatshani, sporadic reports on faction fights in Msinga district were made in newspapers. In 1979 *Sunday Post* reported three quarrels going on in the Msinga – “between Sithole and Zwane tribes, the Mabaso and Mthembu tribes, and between the Madonda and Majola clans of the Mthembu tribe.” Out of these three, the last one was fought among the people resettled on a narrow tract of land on the banks of the Tugela river, about six kilometres long and one kilometre wide after they had been kicked off white farms around Weenen between 1969 and 1972. The number of deaths due to fighting between the two clans amounted to 33 between November 1978 and March 1979. Although the fighting has been common feature in this part of the world, the increasing number of firearms in the district in late twentieth century in the district certainly contributed to the fatality of fighting and aggravated its casualties.⁸⁸

CAP newsletter which summarised events surrounding CAP in 1981 mentioned three fighting in Msinga during that period. On December 15, 1980 Chief Bekabantu Mabaso was shot and killed at his home with three indunas. His death was caused due to the “long-standing feud between the Sdakeni and Mbomvini” wards within Mabaso tribe. A week after another five Mabasos were shot to death as retaliation. Then,

the unexpected happened on January 22, [1981] when *impi*⁸⁹ of the Mthembus, Majozis, Mbomvus attacked the Mabasos ostensibly ‘to chase them out of Msinga for killing their chief.’ The Mabaso men were in hiding – from each other – so only women and children were at home when the armies arrived, leaving 117 homes burnt to the ground. ... After the attack desperate Mabaso women trudged 30 km to ask CAP for help, and emergency supplies of clothes, blankets and mealie meal were distributed to the homeless, with help from the elders of both the Sdakeni and Mbomvini factions.⁹⁰

Fighting between them continued sporadically for about a year until a new chief was named and a truce

⁸⁶ The Act to Provide for Trial of Faction Fights was passed in Natal Colony in 1896. (Creina Alcock, “Impi”, published in some unknown journal, n.d. [1988?], PC 16/1/4/1)

⁸⁷ Apparently this recollection of the battle of Ngongolo narrated in CAP newsletter was told to Alcock by Petrus Majozzi, CAP’s chairman, who was elected to the chief induna of Mchunu tribe in May 1981. (CAP newsletter, “No ordinary farm,” n.d. [1982?], PC 16/1/2/2, p.4)

⁸⁸ *Sunday Post*, 08/07/1979

⁸⁹ According to Creina Alcock, “The Zulu word for war is *impi*, which also means ‘hostile person or band; foe or enemy; regiment, army, military force; encounter, fight, engagement, battle.’ ... *impi* implies community backing, and an *impi* death is considered justified. ‘It is all right to kill an *impi*,’ a Msinga induna explains, ‘because you are looking for him and you are ready to die, and he is looking for you and he is ready to die.’”(Creina Alcock, “Impi”, published in some unknown journal, n.d. [1988?], PC 16/1/4/1)

⁹⁰ CAP newsletter, not titled, n.d. [1982], PC 16/1/2/3, p.2

was established by December 1981.⁹¹

The second conflict mentioned in the newsletter was a war between the Zwane and the Sithole which started in late 1970s. Although the area where they lived was not in the immediate neighbourhood of CAP, “CAP established bone collection points in the Zwane-Sithole border area” in early 1981 “after discovering that many of the long-distance bone pedlars who drove their donkeys on two or three day treks to Mdukatshani came from this part of Msinga.” One day in May 1981 African staff of CAP encountered a hold-up at Kumalo’s store on the Zwane-Sithole border when they stayed there overnight for next day’s bone collection. The aim of 13 men with guns was to rob the store, and fortunately no one was harmed. The experience brought CAP staff to conduct “a fact-finding census” among Zwanes and Sitholes on the loss of their animals due to the war. She found that the considerable number of livestock was “stolen to feed the men always hiding in the hills” or to make quick cash to buy ammunition by selling them.⁹²

The third war mentioned in the newsletter took place on CAP’s doorstep, which started in February 1981 and disrupted CAP’s work for three months. The violence between Mathintha and Nqumanthaba, both were two ridges running along Mdukatshani’s eastern fence, claimed nine dead and injured four. There were about 200 families living on the ridges – all of them Mchunu, neighbours who often intermarried. The Chief Simakade Mchunu, the local induna, and parents from both sides tried to intervene the conflict to make a peace in vain. The CAP’s farm gate became the boundary between the two sides. CAP’s chairman, Petrus Majozi, took a leading role in peace negotiations and became a target of *impis*. Due to this he had to go into hiding for four weeks. The ceasefire was achieved at last in April when police investigation into possession of firearms and murders began in the area.⁹³

When Alcock was murdered at 28 September 1983, he had been organising a ceasefire meeting for two ongoing wars – between the Mashunka and Ngubo people, and between the Ndlela and Mhlangane people.⁹⁴ The meeting was arranged together with Warrant Officer van Vuuren of police headquarters. Four *impis* were assembled at the courthouse in Tugela Ferry. Officials present at the meeting were Warrant Officer Jurgen Freese of the Firearm Squard based at Tugela Ferry, van Vuuren, the magistrate, Bethuel Majola, and the Tugela Ferry police station commander, Sergeant Khumalo. As all of these four factions belonged to the Mthembu, Majozi Nxongo, the chief induna of the Mthmebus, also attended. At the meeting every speaker from four *impis* expressed their tiredness of sleeping in the mountain and hardships of losing jobs due to the war and said that they wanted peace. However, it was also exposed that delegates at the meeting would not be able to control young men who were not present and might want otherwise. Eventually it was decided to hold another meeting to which the quarrelling younger men would be brought.⁹⁵

Alcock drove the delegates of Mashunka and Mhlangana back home in a combi. It was ambushed by Ndlela *impi* to kill Mhlangana men. Beside Alcock, five other men, all from Mhlangana – Thabolo Mutwa, Albert Mbata, Vana Mpungose, Mbunzu Sokhela, and Loli Ndladla, were killed. Another five passengers

⁹¹ CAP newsletter, not titled, n.d. [1982], PC 16/1/2/3, p.2

⁹² CAP newsletter, not titled, n.d. [1982], PC 16/1/2/3, p.4

⁹³ CAP newsletter, not titled, n.d. [1982], PC 16/1/2/3, p.5

⁹⁴ The fighting between the Ndlela and Mhlangane people started over the Christmas period in 1982 when men were at home in Msinga for the annual holiday. (CAP, “Quarterly report – December, January, February 1982-1983,” PC 16/1/2/3

⁹⁵ The detailed events of the day was narrated by Creina Alcock in two newsletters. Creina also took delegations of *impis* to the court by CAP’s vehicle with their son, GG, and African staff of CAP called Mphephethe Masondo, attended a meeting as observer and after the meeting brought delegations back home. (CAP newsletter, “A meeting at the courthouse”, 1983, PC 16/1/2/2)

were injured during the ambush.⁹⁶

For some time before the peace meeting, Alcock had been working with Warrant Officer van Vuuren to investigate the allegations of corruption of police officers at Tugela Ferry police in order to bring the law and order in the area. They became convinced that police corruption was one of the significant causes of continued fighting between Africans in Msinga. After the death of Alcock, Creina wrote that “although the unrest at Msinga [was] conventionally blamed on disputes resulting from over-population and shortage of land – it had become increasingly clear to us that the root of most wars lay in the criminal activities of small gangs of young men, numbering anything from 5 to 20,” and police inability or reluctance to catch them.⁹⁷

7. Going back to Mdukatshani and reclamation work: 1984-1986

Neil Alcock was survived by his wife, Creina, and their two teenage sons, Mark and Rauri. At the time of his death, their sons were still at boarding school in nearby Greytown. In spite of concerns of friends and relatives over her security, Creina Alcock was determined to stay at Mdukatshani and keep the CAP going. However, the initial three years after the death of Alcock presented her and CAP with enormous challenges.

In spite of the efforts of South African government and South African Police to bring peace in Msinga after the death of Neil Alcock, the source of trouble was not eradicated completely. Since the Minister of Law and Order, Louis le Grange, visited Msinga on an inspection tour early in June 1984, “51 men have died in conflicts involving three communities on Mdukatshani boundary, some of them in Johannesburg.” Several CAP members were injured and lost their son. Although Mdukatshani was not aligned to any faction in fighting, the woodland on the farm was frequently used as a hiding place by several armed *impis*. The endurance of fighting meant continued interruption of community water and gardening projects in neighbouring communities.⁹⁸ However, several CAP projects such as bone exchange, legal aid for both welfare payments and assault cases, and bead craftwork were carried on throughout 1984.⁹⁹

CAP had established strong rapport in neighbouring communities in Msinga through its work in community water projects and drought relief scheme and its close link with tribal authorities by the time of death of Neil Alcock.¹⁰⁰ But it decided to shift its focus to Mdukatshani itself by the beginning of 1985. The major reason was explained as uncertainty created through the planned implementation of betterment scheme and resultant removals of an estimated 20,000 people in CAP’s neighbourhood in order to create “buffer zone” between white farms and KwaZulu. This shift meant a renewed focus on reclamation work on the farm. Creina Alcock explained the CAP’s aim in coming five years:

⁹⁶ CAP newsletter, “The wind is invisible”, n.d. [1983], PC16/1/2/2; *Natal Mercury*, 30/09/1983;

⁹⁷ Creina Alcock, “Confidential report to donors and CAP trustees,” 17/10/1983, PC 16/1/3/2, p.2

⁹⁸ CAP, “Quarterly report – June, July, August 1984,” PC 16/1/1/3. One of the fighting in Msinga in 1984 ended by the end of the year through intervention for peace by Mchunu tribal leaders. (CAP, “Quarterly report – December, January, February 1985,” PC 16/1/3/3, pp.1-2) After the suspension during the war in 1984, the community dam projects at Msusanphi and Mashunka were resumed by February 1985. (“Report of the directors for the year ended 28 February 1985 to the members of CAPfarms Pty Ltd,” PC 16/1/3/3) During the Christmas of 1985, fighting broke out in three areas within Mchunu territory, and as a result 27 people died and another eight injured. (“CAPfarm trust report – August to May, 1986,” PC 16/1/4/1, pp.2-3)

⁹⁹ CAP, “Quarterly report – December, January, February 1985,” PC 16/1/3/3

¹⁰⁰ CAP reported that “after Neil Alcock died, Chief Simakade Mchunu called a meeting of his people on the boundary of Mdukatshani publicly supporting CAP and warning that future trespass would be a serious offence.” (“CAP’s plan for 1985,” January 1985, PC 16/1/3/3)

In the next 5 years, CAP plans to work towards doubling the farm by doubling its carrying capacity – testing a variety of rehabilitation measures on damaged land while obtaining a sustainable yield of available resources for the people in the location.¹⁰¹

In its quarterly report in mid-1984, CAP wrote:

For the first time in our 10 years here there was so much grass on the farm this winter we had to burn firebreaks. ... According to the government agricultural officer, it is the first time anybody in the Weenen thornveld has asked permission to burn, for ours is the first farm that has had enough grass. ... despite our many difficulties implementing a communal grazing scheme for African stockowners in the location next door, the farm is showing signs of good management. ... Although grass is knee high on our side of the location fence – the red earth is almost bare on the other, showing no signs at all that there was any summer rain.¹⁰²

Although the farm began to show some of the fruits of CAP's efforts on Mdukatshani for past 10 years, CAP was not free of difficulties. Troubles brought to Creina Alcock after the death of her husband were particularly heavy for a white woman staying alone on the farm. The first problem concerned to the staff management of CAP at Mdukatshani. In May 1984 Creina Alcock discovered misuse of CAP vehicles by one long-term African staff member of CAP for his private business. She also found that another CAP employee was charging extra to local people for the use of telephone at CAP to make a call. For her, the sense of betrayal by them was strong. She called a meeting of CAP staff and announced her decision to dismiss the first one, and told the second one to choose whether he wanted to stay or leave. Petrus Majozi, chairperson of CAP, and Elijah Mhlongo, retired police man working for CAP, pleaded for their colleague and asked whether he could stay and pay back what he owed to CAP. However, Creina was not ready to forgive and eventually the first guilty man left on the same day. The second one asked to be forgiven and was allowed to stay.¹⁰³

The second problem was how to negotiate with uninvited residents on the farm. Most CAP staff lived on the lower part of the farm near Tugela River, including the Alcock family. When Weenen farmers evicted many Africans from their farms about five years ago, 12 families came to live on the higher part of the farm, commonly known as the "top farm". According to Creina Alcock, "they arrived uninvited, pretty sure that they would not be chased off, with Neil's reputation for being soft." Subsequently CAP registered them as fulltime employees so that they could stay on the farm legally. As their arrival was not negotiated with CAP, they built their huts in a hidden valley without CAP's permission. In October 1984 CAP decided to ask them to scatter their huts to strategic points so that they could effectively become guards of the farm. However, people on the top farm refused to move, and CAP found itself in predicament whether CAP should evict them or not.¹⁰⁴

The third problem which fell on Creina Alcock was probably most devastating and concerned her personal

¹⁰¹ "CAP's plan for 1985," January 1985, PC 16/1/3/3

¹⁰² CAP, "Quarterly report – June, July, August 1984," PC 16/1/3/3, p.2. Creina Alcock proudly wrote to Peter Brown about CAP's achievement in rehabilitation work, and its ironical consequence to African stockowners. "The extension officer told a meeting of Weenen farmers that our farm was the only one in the district that was showing signs of improvement. Being told we are better farmers than they are will hurt far more than wining cases. I have yet to find out the exact nature of the meeting – but the outcome has been a Weenen-wide dismissal of black-owned stock from white farms." (Letter from Creina Alcock to Peter Brown, 12/02/1985, PC 16/1/3/3)

¹⁰³ Letter from Creina Alcock to Peter Brown, 06/06/1984, PC 16/1/3/3

¹⁰⁴ Letter from Creina Alcock to Peter Brown, 13/05/1985, PC 16/1/3/3

security. Creina reported that “in 10 weeks since February [1985] CAP [had] suffered four burglaries.” Apart from material damage and physical injuries caused by assaults, it was so shocking to learn that criminals came from people who had close relationship with CAP. She and the CAP committee was convinced that all the burglaries were linked to a number of local youths, some of whom “at one time worked for CAP as herdboys, and were companions of the Alcock children. Because they had free run of the Alcock home, they [were] not only familiar with our habits, but [were] known to our dogs as friends.”¹⁰⁵ After these incidents, the security of the Alcock family became a serious concern to the city-based directors of CAP. They employed a security consultant to improve security on the farm and the consultant recommended that the Alcocks leave the farm, managing affairs with weekly visits. However, to leave the farm was not acceptable to Creina Alcock, and they decided instead to employ security guards.¹⁰⁶

The general local security condition deteriorated. A CAP report for the period between August 1985 and May 1986 stated that “all vehicles that travel[ed] the local routes on a regular basis, such as the bus, bakery, butchery or storekeepers, suffered hold-ups in recent months.” Several CAP vehicles were stolen, and since October 1985 CAP began to be helped by the armed police guard for its payday. Local white farmers continued to suffer from stock theft, in some cases stock thieves slaughtered animals in the bush, carrying away the meat. Even the tribal authority became victim of thief, when R18,800 of tribal funds were stolen from the safe of the Mchunu people at the end of 1985.¹⁰⁷

By March 1986, CAP found itself in serious crisis and faced closing down the project and dismantling the organisation. The immediate problem was lack of funding coming to the CAP. Part of the difficulty lay in changing priorities of donors. Creina Alcock wrote about her disturbing meeting with two Oxfam representatives.

I was very upset by the discussion [with them] .. for it made it clear that politics, not conservation, will be the guideline for future aid, and that the two are not seen as connected. ... Oxfam is putting its money into projects that will fit in tomorrow with the new ANC government. They can't see how Mdukatshani has any relevance to this tomorrow. They indicated they would be interested in supporting a scheme where we defy the government role on five families per farm, and “give the land back.” I was told the donga jobs were “welfare”. With such divergent opinions on the significance of things, the discussions seemed pointless, while being very disturbing. Oxfam believes that the arrival of ANC-government will also see the end of tribal rule by chiefs, etc, and hinted there that our links with tribal leaders like Majozi and Ngxongo had little weight – their posts would be abolished.¹⁰⁸

The meeting with Oxfam people raised another serious question for Creina, which brought conflict between her and CAP workers. While she believed that CAP belonged to people working for CAP, she was not certain whether African workers on the farm really felt sense of ownership in CAP and resultant responsibility and commitments in CAP's projects – the communal goat herd, garden, stone-packing of dongas, fencing and rotational grazing. She wanted Mdukatshani to be a place where local Africans could become farmers. Instead, she began to think that Mdukatshani was just a “wage factory” and CAP workers were there for their salaries. At one meeting in March 1986, she went on criticising the “carelessness and irresponsibility” of everyone working for the projects. She cited many examples of lack of commitment by

¹⁰⁵ Creina Alcock, “Background report on four burglaries,” 28/05/1985, PC 16/1/3/3

¹⁰⁶ “Minutes of meeting of directors of CAP farm (Pty) Ltd,” 03/12/1985, PC 16/1/3/3; “CAPfarm trust report – August to May, 1986,” PC 16/1/4/1.

¹⁰⁷ “CAPfarm trust report – August to May, 1986,” PC 16/1/4/1, pp.1-2

¹⁰⁸ Letter from Creina Alcock to Peter Brown, 10/03/1986, PC 16/1/4/1

CAP workers in CAP projects.

If the white screams – the [rotational grazing] camp is protected. If there is no white – the farm is a free range area like the location. To make misery worse – just beyond the camp I saw a fence lying on its side. We passed within metres of it. I took note. I was certain nobody else would show any interest in it. I let two weeks pass. It was still lying down.¹⁰⁹

As she was so furious, she even went as far as calling her co-workers “kaffirs who would never learn,” which came to a great shock to Africans on the farm.¹¹⁰

Despite the disturbances, CAP was not closed down. It had to stop several projects such as bone exchange due to lack of fund and 160 reclamation workers were temporary retrenched in April 1986. The number of staff was also cut down to 30, most on half pay. However, the internal turmoil did not last long. The problem of lack of funding was resolved with grants from several donors (the Ford Foundation, the Equal Opportunity Fund, and the US Government) by October the same year, and temporary suspended projects were resumed.¹¹¹

8. Success and failure of CAP and outbreak of another wars: 1987-1989

In applying for a five year grant to the Chairman’s Fund of Anglo American Corporation for the third time in mid-1987, CAP made self-assessment on the success and failure of its projects on Mdukatshani for past 10 years. CAP’s success was listed as follows:

- the improved veld condition of the farm.
- the acquisition of skill to manage CAP operations by local illiterate people who dominated CAP committee and staff.
- the establishment of the tradition of neutrality in the war on the farm.

Its failure was felt mainly in establishing a class of African farmers. Among other things, CAP failed to:

- establish independent small farmers able to live off the land.
- establish the minimum size necessary for a garden to keep a local family self-sufficient in food.
- make agriculture an attractive alternative to the city, especially for the young men.

Based on this self-evaluation, CAP applied to Chairman’s fund in order to continue ongoing projects – reclamation work, communal garden, bones and acacia pods exchange, communal goats herd, natural resource management of the farm, training for staff, and legal aid and welfare.¹¹² With the approval of Chairman’s fund, coupled with grants coming from different organisations, CAP’s financial problem was solved for at least for another five years.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Letter from Creina Alcock to Peter Brown and Elliot Mngadi, 24/03/1986, PC 16/1/4/1

¹¹⁰ Letter from Creina Alcock to Peter Brown, 24/03/1986; “Text of Creina’s speech to CAP workers – March 22,” 25/03/1986, PC 16/1/4/1.

¹¹¹ “CAPfarm trust report – May to November 1986,” PC 16/1/4/1. General administrative cost such as salary for staffs has been covered by grants from chairman’s fund of Anglo American corporation. CAP has applied for grants to several other donors for their individual projects.

¹¹² CAPfarm trust, “Application for a five year grant,” July 1987, PC 16/1/4/1

¹¹³ “Minutes of Annual General Meeting: CAPfarm trust,” 22/04/1988, PC 16/1/4/1

The operation of CAP projects in this period largely depended on the condition of peace in CAP's neighbouring communities. The year 1987 was a difficult year with intra-tribal fighting which erupted between different *isigodis* (tribal wards) among Mthembus and Mchunus near Mdukatshani in early 1987. Although CAP maintained a neutral position, it suffered from murders of three members of the CAP farm committee, and several members of the committee as well as considerable number of workers had to stop working on the farm and went on hiding.¹¹⁴ Petrus Majozi, CAP's farm committee chairman, had to go into hiding in November 1987 when a conflict erupted in his home area, Nqumantaba, and he was only able to come back to resume ordinary duties in May 1988. The following year (1988) "was marked by a lull in faction fights", and CAP started new two community garden projects at Waayhoek and Ncunjane. When floods destroyed homes at Mbulwana in 1987, people of Mbulwana were brought to an emergency tent town at Waayhoek, a government resettlement village in Emnambithi district. CAP worked as an agency to handout emergency mealie meal supplied by Operation Hunger, and subsequently decided to encourage women to develop gardens.¹¹⁵

The lull in Msinga faction fights did not last long and 1989 became "the worst year for conflict in [CAP's] 14 years" at Mdukatshani. This year the farm became literally war-zone. Although CAP staff kept meeting almost daily to discuss the situation, undoubtedly CAP's operation on the farm was severely restricted.

Four *impis* took over the farm so that, apart from the garden area, almost the entire farm was a war zone and out of bounds for us. Standing in the gardens we were sometimes in view of two separate wars. On the hills behind us men with binoculars could be seen at look-out points, while on the far bank of the river in front of us there was daily gunfire, and on several occasions we watched people being killed in ambush, sniping and gun battles. Two *impis* took turns using the old CAP office as a command post and CAP staff learnt to sit on the floors of their homes as stray bullets and incendiaries flew across the river during night raids on the farm bank.¹¹⁶

Several members of CAP farm committee were forced to go into hiding, and even many women gardeners were unable to come to Mdukatshani to tend their gardens. The accidental death of a teenager who belonged to CAP children's gardening group on the farm led to fears of retaliation. As a result many children, who were considered too young to join the *impi* under normal circumstances, were also "withdrawn to the hills to be guarded by the *impis*. The lack of law and order in Msinga coincided with the drought which continued into November 1989, thus further undermined the living conditions of local people.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ CAP newsletter, not titled, June 1987, PC 16/1/4/1. CAP recorded that between 1978 and 1987 there were 12 wars among the communities on the Mdukatshani, with 305 men killed. (CAPfarm trust, "Application for a five year grand, July 1987," PC 16/1/4/1)

¹¹⁵ CAPfarm trust, "Trustees' report for the year ended 28 February 1989," PC 16/1/4/2; CAPfarm "Quarterly report – Last quarter 1988 + first of 1989," PC 16/1/4/1. Creina Alcock took a sabbatical leave for a year to write her book in June 1989. But she stayed on the farm and dealt with correspondence. Newsletter writing was taken over by Barbara Bannister living in Transvaal during Creina's sabbatical year. Waayhoek was also a home of Natty Duma, another committee member of CAP.

¹¹⁶ CAPfarm trust, "Trustees' report for the year ended 28 February 1990," PC 16/1/4/2. This time two separate wars were going on near Mdukatshani – between Mthinta and Mqumkantaba, and between Nomoya and Dimbi. (CAPfarm, "Quarterly newsletter – second quarter 1989," PC 16/1/4/1)

¹¹⁷ CAPfarm trust, "Trustees' report for the year ended 28 February 1990"; Letter from Creina Alcock to Directors, 05/02/1990, PC 16/1/4/2; CAPfarm, "Quarterly newsletter – second quarter 1989," PC 16/1/4/1