The Story of South Africa’s White Exodus

The New Great Trek

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The title of this book is partially derived from a formative event which shaped South African history during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Great Trek. In response to conditions that were regarded as unbearable, thousands of disaffected early-Afrikaners in the Eastern Cape moved to territories to the north and in the process overcame considerable obstacles in the form of a hostile colonial government, wild animals, disease, virtually impenetrable mountain ranges and antagonistic indigenous tribes. Today, a century and a half later, emigrants participating in the New Great Trek might want to argue that they too are trying to escape from obstacles very similar to those faced by their forbears, albeit in different guises. The title is also an adaptation of the title of the autobiography of the last white South African president, F W de Klerk: *The last trek - A new beginning*. In his book De Klerk suggested that the transition to democracy in 1994 represented the final trek by Afrikaners and whites away from apartheid to an inclusive democracy. Sadly, however, for the tens of thousands of mainly white South Africans it signalled merely the beginning of yet another trek, and for the many who had left South Africa after 1994 the only ‘New Beginning’ would be on the shores of Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Britain the USA and elsewhere.

This book is not a guide on how to emigrate, but follows a holistic discussion and analysis of the major aspects of South African emigration, particularly in so far as no book on this topic has yet been published. The idea behind the book was to take the concept of migration and the flow of people across borders and continents, which is a fundamental part of human history and society today, and apply it to South Africa. The reasons that people move around the world are universal and can be summarised broadly as the search for better material conditions and the avoidance of physical danger. The thousands of South Africans participating in the current emigration wave are no different, and their motivation for leaving is founded on the desire to escape from violent crime and to ensure that their quality of life and living standards are not affected by rapidly changing socioeconomic and political conditions.

The author has attempted to discuss these conditions as objectively as possible and to steer away from overly negative or politically subjective views. However, the scourge of violent crime, even when viewed objectively, is South Africa’s Achilles’
heel – and the author has attempted to expose it in no uncertain terms – not only is crime the principal reason that South Africans are emigrating, but it is damaging the country and destroying lives in a similar fashion to 46 years of apartheid – from this perspective the New Great Trek is a discussion of emigration with reference to its main cause, violent crime.
Lengthy lists of Afrikaans-sounding surnames in the telephone directories of Sydney, Toronto, Atlanta and many other major cities all over the industrialised English-speaking world are testimony to the New Great Trek. In 1998 Sydney was the home of 16 families with the surname ‘Van Dyk’, nine ‘Van Niekers’, seven ‘Van Rooyens’ and 16 ‘Van Wyks’; the Perth directory has 19 entries under ‘Van der Merwe’, seven under ‘Van der Westhuizen’, eight under ‘Van Niekerk’, and 15 under ‘Van Rooyen’. Cities such as Vancouver and Atlanta now have exclusive South African ‘Yellow Pages’ directories with the names of South African doctors, engineers, butchers, pharmacists and others. They are part of the one to one-and-a-half million predominantly white South Africans who since 1945 have exchanged their homes in Pretoria, Durban, Johannesburg and Cape Town for places such as Perth, Sydney, Toronto and Vancouver, New York and Los Angeles, Auckland and Wellington, London and elsewhere, and have become the New Trekkers.

The New Great Trek is a highly disturbing element of the relatively successful transition to democracy of a country that faced a racial conflagration of frightening proportions during the period up to 1994. Although hundreds of thousands of black and white South Africans left the country under apartheid rule, millions more, including more than four million whites, remained in the country to experience the miracle of liberation from apartheid and the transition to democracy in 1994. However, five years later, many of those who shared in the spirit of reconciliation and supported nation-building feel unable to cope with the aftermath and consequences of this monumental change.

Most South African emigrants love South Africa dearly, but violent crime and the perpetual fear of crime that follows them daily like a shadow has forced them to look at other alternatives. Many emigrants leave South Africa with great reluctance – their main goal is to provide their families with the opportunity to live normal lives unencumbered by endemic crime and violence, and to give them access to quality education and healthcare. However, many never say goodbye to South Africa, and when they are in their adopted countries, cling to their sense of ‘South Africanness’. Emigration is not an easy decision and is hardly an easy way out – the wholesale disruption, personal and financial sacrifices, and loss of identity which so many emigrants put up with, together with the emotional trauma of splitting families, are testimony to this.
The departure of thousands of South Africa's brightest and most productive citizens raises many questions, the most pressing being the REASONS that white South Africans are leaving their country of birth in increasing numbers, a country that is held up by the world as an example of racial harmony and reconciliation, and remains one of the most physically beautiful and blessed countries in the world. The author attempts to answer this apparent inconsistency and also addresses questions such as WHO the typical emigrants are, WHERE they settle and HOW they cope within their new environments.

Chapter 1 covers some theoretical insights and definitions of the topic of emigration and its place in the world history, particularly in the twentieth century. Special reference is made to the colonial African experience where close to two million white colonists fled Africa for the safety of their European homelands in the aftermath of liberation wars in countries such as Algeria, Angola, Mozambique, Kenya, Namibia and Zimbabwe. This chapter also provides a brief overview of emigration/immigration in South African history, and examines the related concept of internal or domestic migration in South Africa, which includes migration from the northern part of the country to the southern areas as tens of thousands of mostly white South Africans from Gauteng flee the crime and violence for what they perceive as a safer alternative in the Cape. Similarly, many of those in rightwing circles believe that ‘migration’ to a white volkstaat (homeland) in the Northern Cape is the solution to escaping from South Africa’s problems. Other South Africans, having also reached the upper limits of their crime tolerance levels, do not even leave their cities or provinces and opt instead for a localised ‘pseudo emigration’ towards safer neighbourhoods with high walls and patrolled gates, almost like medieval villages – and this is often accompanied by a psychological withdrawal from South African society and the structures of the new dispensation, its problems and challenges. This chapter concludes with a look at the flow of people into the country, both legal and illegal immigrants and emigrants who opt to return after being overseas for a period.

Chapter 2 deals with the scope of South Africa’s emigration phenomenon. An estimated one to one and a half million South Africans have left over the past few decades and hundreds of thousands more are contemplating such a move. Official statistics totally underestimate the scope of the emigration phenomenon, as only between one third and one half of people leaving the country indicate their intention to emigrate or relocate on their departure forms. A more accurate account of numbers can be obtained from the embassies of Western countries in Pretoria – in most cases the number of people receiving immigration visas to places such as Australia and Canada is more than double (and likely triple) the number provided by
Statistics South Africa (the latter a record of official departure forms at airports). This chapter also examines other relevant issues such as WHO are leaving and what the profile of the typical emigrant is. Is the stereotyped image of emigrants as predominantly white English-speaking professional people in their mid-thirties or elderly expatriate-British passport holders returning to the UK still relevant? If so, how then does one explain the large number of Afrikaner and smaller number of black emigrants and the many non-professionals who fill the planes to New Zealand and elsewhere? I point out that emigration leads to a massive departure of skills, the so-called brain drain, with 75% of professionals in South Africa having considered emigration. I also examine the growing list of notables and well-known people who have emigrated. The chapter concludes with the phenomenon of company and financial emigration – apart from the multitude of South African companies seeking foreign primary and secondary listings on overseas stock markets, South African individuals can legally let their money do the emigration while they remain behind or follow later.

Chapter 3 deals with the logistics of emigration, in other words what emigration entails. There are numerous obstacles, not least being the psychological trauma of broken families, new and often alien environments, a decline in status and, sometimes, lower financial expectations. It also looks at the multitude of financial, bureaucratic and legal rules, regulations and requirements which stand between a decision to emigrate and final clearance from authorities, both local and foreign, to settle in another country as a landed emigrant.

Chapter 4 examines the reasons that make people become emigrants and focuses on the direct link between emigration and violent crime. Former President Nelson Mandela grudgingly admitted that some South Africans may be leaving the country because of crime – this is possibly the understatement of the post-1994 era. South Africans are collectively brutalised by a wave of crime that borders on anarchy and by one of the highest murder rates in the world. The reality is that emigrants are overwhelmingly leaving South Africa because of crime ... not only fear of crime, but because most of them have been personally touched by crime – by having had their car stolen or hijacked, their houses broken into, and perhaps family and friends killed in a criminal war waged against innocent people and property. This chapter also examines other issues that motivate people to emigrate, such as falling standards of education, healthcare and in the public service in particular endemic corruption, and what the Democratic Party referred to as the ‘re-racialisation’ of the country – the latter concept referring to the perception that the government adheres to policies that actively discriminate against whites when it comes to employment practices, and that racial quotas guide university entry
requirements, the selection of sports teams and other aspects of society. This chapter concludes with a view of the global village. Thousands of young South Africans are lured abroad to ‘see the world’ and to earn foreign exchange by taking up temporary employment overseas – unfortunately many view this as the key to a longer-term stay and do not return.

Former President Nelson Mandela stirred up a hornets’ nest when he suggested in 1998 that emigrants are not ‘real’ South Africans and that they are racist because they cannot live with the reality of a black government ruling the country. In chapter 5 this proposition is scrutinised and forms the crux of the debate between those viewing emigration as a basic human right and those viewing it as disloyalty. Ironically, whereas Afrikaner nationalists used to be the harshest critics of English-speaking emigrants in the 1970s and 1980s and were lethal opponents of blacks who fled to join the ANC abroad, of late it has become a status symbol for many Afrikaners to have sons and daughters in Sydney, Toronto and elsewhere. The term ‘chicken-run’ has taken on a different resonance in the 1990s. English-speakers, Afrikaners and even black emigrants all insist on exercising their right to emigrate and become citizens of the world, but soundly denounce the accusation that they are disloyal, unpatriotic and racist. This chapter attempts to provide a more balanced perspective of both sides of the debate. A crucial part of it is an analysis of the impact of emigration on South Africa and, in particular, the economy. The statistics that are provided here paint a shocking picture of declining long-term economic prospects and growing unemployment because of the departure of the country’s most capable job-creators, scientists and other professionals.

Like many other cultures dispersed over the world, enclaves of South Africans can now be found in colonies in the suburbs of most large cities of the English-speaking part of the developed world. In chapter 6 the structure and nature of this diaspora are examined, with the focus on where they found themselves, why they chose a particular country, how they are coping there, what their achievements are, how they found jobs, and how they adapted to new cultures and customs.

While a sizeable proportion of emigrants quickly adopt the new culture, many others cling to their South Africanness with a tenacity that almost defies comprehension – this is evident from their insatiable demand for apparently trivial symbols of South Africa such as foods and wines and other items that they were used to in South Africa and that identify them as being from South Africa – the way they keep on supporting South African sports teams, read South African newspapers, and form expatriate clubs to enable them to continue to socialise in Afrikaans or South African English, and the way they relate to others like themselves who share the sense of isolation.
and emotional turmoil of having to search for a new identity in an alien environment.

Chapter 6 also examines the other side of the typical emigrant story, namely that of emigrants gradually assimilating into their new environments and culture, picking up local dialects, changing their surnames to sound more American or Australian, revelling in the freedom from crime, and enjoying the First World standards that were sometimes regarded as luxuries in South Africa. Most South African emigrants comment on the sense of freedom in their adopted countries, of not having to be obsessive about locking up houses and cars, not getting panicky if their wives or children are ten minutes late in returning from an outing, not experiencing the revulsion and anxiety of reading about another child brutally raped and murdered. Economically active skilled white emigrants feel that they are considered for a job on merit and that the taxes they pay come back to them in some way or another in the form of decent free healthcare, good education for their children, a form of social security, and a high level of personal safety because of efficient police forces.

The author attempts to illustrate that emigration cannot be seen in isolation from the wider social forces that are shaping South Africa. Apart from the loss of skills that South Africa can ill afford, that people are leaving the country in large numbers is an indictment of the government’s inability to control the social forces that accompany the transformation process, and indeed it questions the viability of the democratic state structure. With South Africa well into the Mbeki era, it is obvious that the forces accompanying transformation are becoming so destructive that they actually threaten the success of transformation, as the hopes and confidence of South Africans are slowly being strangulated by an anarchic society with unacceptably high levels of crime and corruption, declining standards of healthcare, education and morality, growing authoritarianism and an obsession with race.
Historical origins

[Migration] is, as it always has been, the great adventure of human life. [It] helped create humans, drove us to conquer the planet, shaped our societies, and promises to reshape them again.¹

Migration across continents and regions has been a part of human existence for thousands of years as a result of humans exploring or fleeing their enemies or natural disasters. It continued to be a natural occurrence even after the advent of states and political borders in recent centuries as nationalities moved freely from the ‘Old’ world to the ‘New’ world, that is from Europe to the Americas, Australasia and even to Africa.

Emigration can be defined as the departure of a person from the country of which he or she has citizenship to another with the intention of acquiring permanent residence abroad and usually, but not always, with the intention of relinquishing the rights and duties of the former home country’s citizenship.² A term that has more extreme connotations but can be quite similar in meaning is exile, especially in the South African context. While exile in the old Soviet Union authoritarian way of thinking implied forced confinement in an inhospitable place, voluntarily exile is defined as ‘a prolonged and perhaps permanent absence from one’s country of origin where what is sought is not primarily the advantages of the place to which one goes, but essentially the freedom from whatever disadvantage prevailed at home’.³

In this context ‘exile’ then refers to people who left their country of birth to escape persecution – examples are Lenin’s exile in Switzerland to escape the Tsarist security forces before he returned to foster the Marxist revolution in Russia and Trotsky’s exile to Mexico.

The term refugee is not unrelated to the previous terms insofar as it refers to the movement of people over political borders, but it differs in that it places emphasis on an en masse and mostly involuntary migration of people to escape persecution. The UN’s definition of refugee reads as follows:

... any person ... who owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside of the country of his nationality ... and is unable or unwilling to return to it.⁴
Later in the book I point out that many South Africans abroad are reluctant emigrants and that their prime motivation for emigrating is that social conditions in South Africa, in their view, have become intolerable. These include the second- or third-highest murder rate in the world and the process of restructuring/ transformation that, by its nature, implies a legally acceptable form of racial ‘discrimination’ against whites. In this context and measured against the UN’s definition it is not all that improbable that some South African emigrants would view themselves as exiles. Not surprisingly, many desperate would-be emigrants saw a window of opportunity in such a broad definition of the term ‘exile’ and more than 100 South Africans applied for asylum in the UK in 1999 on grounds of ‘unfair discrimination’ and affirmative action in South Africa. Also, if one compares these modern-day ‘refugees’ from violent crime with the thousands of black South Africans who went into exile in the 1970s and 1980s to escape the ravages of apartheid, it can be argued that in life-or-death terms, there is only an academic difference between the goals of those South Africans who fled for their lives from the Botha-era security forces and those who are literally fleeing for their lives from a crime-infested country where 25 000 innocent victims are murdered each year.

Traditionally the term ‘diaspora’ was used in the biblical context and referred to the scattering of the Jewish people to other lands and to a lesser extent to the Greeks, Armenians and Irish, and to African slaves, but today at least 30 ethnic groups claim to be or are deemed to be in diaspora. The term in essence refers to the dispersal of a people from a homeland, often traumatically, to two or more foreign territories, and it has been broadened to include people seeking work in foreign countries and is also used as a ‘metaphoric designation to describe expatriates, expellees, political refugees, alien residents, immigrants’ and others.

However, according to Robin Cohen, the concept of a ‘victim diaspora’ is regarded by most scholars as being the essence of the definition of diaspora – in other words, traumatic experiences that force people out of their traditional homelands. If one broadens the definition of the terms ‘refugee’ and ‘exile’ to include South African emigrants who leave because of life-threatening crime, a clear link can be established with the notion of a ‘victim diaspora’.

In the South African context the concept of a ‘victim diaspora’ is essential to understand the essence of South African emigration. In subsequent chapters it becomes evident that most emigrants leave reluctantly because of crime and that they, in this sense, are being ‘victimised’ by rampant violent crime. In addition, while many of these emigrants settle down in their host countries with relative ease, many others experience all the negative symptoms of other ‘victim diasporas’, namely a
sense of isolation, insecurity and a deep longing for the people and land that they have left behind.

1.1 A COMPARATIVE VIEW

The South African emigration phenomenon is not unique in world history. Since the birth of humankind men and women have been migrating from place to place, region to region and even across continents. Their goals sometimes were to explore and discover, at other times to escape wars, persecution, genocide or famine. Whole continents such as North and South America and Australia were populated by early emigrants during these past two millennia, while newer emigrants arrived over the past few centuries as the traders and peasants of Europe streamed across the Atlantic in search of opportunities and a better life. About 60 million Europeans left the continent for the New World between the sixteenth and twentieth centuries. Even the earlier tribes who ironically refer to themselves today as the ‘indigenous peoples’ were emigrants from Asia*. The overwhelming bulk of the population of the United States were emigrants from Europe and later Asia and the Hispanic countries. A similar pattern followed in Australia and New Zealand, while millions of Portuguese and Spanish emigrants populated South America and, in the process, alternatively exterminated or assimilated with those who had arrived hundreds and thousands of years earlier.

In the twentieth century two World Wars and genocide resulted in the concept of emigration being superseded by large-scale refugee movements, of tens of millions of people fleeing for their lives across borders or being forcibly expelled from their home countries because of ethnic or other differences. Shortly after World War II close to 15 million Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims were forced from their homes as India and Pakistan settled their differences through war and secession. Europe in particular suffered badly from the politics of ethnic/nationalist upheavals and the persecution of whole segments of minority peoples. During World War II 60 million people were forced to move, while immediately after the war a further 20 million people, mostly ethnic Germans, were expelled, transferred or exchanged. Today, over 120 million people worldwide are either emigrants or refugees, insofar as they live in countries other than those in which they were born. A further 20–30 million people join them every year, although many of these are refugees who would return to their home countries as the level of conflict which forced them to flee subsides. The United Nations

* A more apt description would be the term ‘First Nations’, as Canada’s aboriginal people refer to themselves, meaning that they came to Canada before the European settlers.
found that by 1999 between 130 and 145 million people were legally registered as migrants and were living outside their home countries.\textsuperscript{11}

By definition the term migration implies that a movement of people would be across borders and this could be in both directions; in other words, for every emigrant there might be a reciprocatory immigrant and vice versa. However, the flow of humanity has always been stronger from poverty, disaster- or war-stricken areas to those areas regarded as safer, wealthier and more stable. This has been the case throughout history, as illustrated by the example of Ireland – the country lost two-thirds of its population in the nineteenth century through starvation and emigration to the New World because of a potato famine.

More recently there has been a constant flow of refugees and illegal immigrants from south-eastern Europe and the former Soviet bloc to Germany, from north Africa to France, from the Balkans to Italy and Greece, from Mexico to the USA, and from the rest of Africa to South Africa. In the developed world the one-way flow of poor and desperate emigrants has become a serious problem and a dominant feature in the politics of those countries overrun by illegal aliens. As a result, anti-immigration sentiments have grown rapidly and rightwing parties have become an integral and mushrooming element of the political scene in Western Europe. The most recent example was the election in February 2000 of the rightwing Austrian Freedom Party into a centre-right coalition government in Austria – the Party, under its leader, George Haider, is fiercely anti-emigrant and has been accused of harbouring new-Nazi ideals. The response by Western governments to the flood of immigrants, and the accompanying social strains and growth of anti-immigrant politics, is to strictly control the legal flow of immigrants and refugees, but it is not always possible to control the illegal influx. Today only a handful of countries (mostly outside Europe) still officially regard themselves as ‘countries of immigration’, and pursue well-off and skilled emigrants on a limited scale – they include the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and a few others.

\section*{1.2 African experiences}

[It] graphically documents the endemic corruption of Africa: the tin-pot dictators who salt away their country’s wealth in Swiss bank accounts; the brutality of mob rule; the collapse of most basic services and mass starvation – a review of Keith Richburg’s book, \textit{Out of America}.\textsuperscript{12}

Richburg, an African-American, describes his travels through Africa in horrific detail and provides an unambiguous picture of the worst of the continent. His view
confirms the perception held by many whites in South Africa and by large parts of the Western World – namely that Africa north of the Limpopo River is a lost cause, as evident from a recent article in the *Economist* titled ‘Hopeless Africa’. This view is in strong contrast to the vision of an ‘African Renaissance’ propagated by South African President Thabo Mbeki, who believes that the twenty-first century will belong to Africa and that the continent is on the dawn of an economic, political and cultural resurrection.

Few share Mbeki’s optimism, and the perception that the international world has of Africa is further clouded by ongoing African disasters such as the Aids pandemic, economic suicide by Zimbabwe’s rulers, the ongoing and wasteful civil war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Angola and Sierra Leone, and violent overthrows of governments such as those in the Ivory Coast and Liberia, and large-scale ethnocide such as in Rwanda. This perception of Africa is shared by many whites in South Africa, and while it is related to their political orientation and prejudices in the South African context, it is also reinforced by the history of a continent in which colonial wars led to wholesale slaughter and the subsequent departure of several million whites.

This view of Africa has long been part of the white South African psyche and has not only helped to shape the policies and the philosophy of previous white governments in South Africa, but has also had a profound effect on the psyche of many white people and their view of their long-term presence on the continent. Many white South Africans see the plight of the white populations of the former European colonies of Africa, especially in the twentieth century, as related to their own situation and prospects in South Africa today – the recent expropriation of white land and anti-white sentiments in Zimbabwe again strongly reinforced this perception.

For many decades whites in South Africa were looking at the decolonisation of Africa with a sense of trepidation, always fearing the prospects of it eventually spreading to South Africa. They saw war, followed by liberation from colonial rule and the sweeping from power of generations of white settlers, a phenomenon which made its way further and further south until it reached the Orange and Limpopo Rivers in the 1980s. Anxiety among South African whites that they would become another endangered white ‘settler’ group developed into a powerful political tool with which the National Party and the rightwing parties could mobilise electoral support in the 1970s and 1980s. Time and time again reference was made to the thousands of Europeans who had to flee for their lives before the black hordes of Africa. The *Swart Gevaar* (scaremongering) tactics won the NP many a vote, and later the Conservative Party as well. While
perceptions were often more powerful than reality, the excesses that occurred in the 1950s–1960s had a powerful effect on the collective psyche of white South Africans and led to sporadic increases in emigration which coincided with rises in the levels of violent black resistance against the apartheid state, for instance the surge in emigration following the 1976 Soweto uprising.

The specific examples discussed in this context include the French *Pied Noir* in Algeria, the Belgians in the Belgian Congo, the Portuguese in Angola and Mozambique, English settlers in Kenya, the whites in Zimbabwe and the white Afrikaans and German speakers in Namibia.

**Algeria**

One of the worst cases of racial conflict between a settler population and an indigenous people occurred in Algeria during the liberation struggle between 1954 and 1962, a conflict so brutal that at its conclusion it led to the mass emigration of more than one million French Algerians back to France and the demise of a thriving and historical French colony on the African coast of the Mediterranean – a civil war between, on the one side, the French military units and the *Pied Noirs* (French settlers comprising about 12% of the population) and, on the other, the Algerian Arabic population. From 1955 the Arab organisation *Front de Liberation Nationale* (FLN) adopted a policy of deliberately killing all French without distinction of age or sex. Massacre after massacre followed, with Arab fighters slaughtering innocent civilians in brutal fashion and the French colonial forces responding in kind – people had their arms and legs cut off, children had their brains dashed out and women were disembowelled.¹³ The bitter and savage civil war ended with the independence of Algeria in 1962 and the mass exodus of close to 1.4 million predominantly French settlers, leaving only 30 000 (less than 3%) of this historic European community behind within one year. At the time books such as Alister Horn’s *A savage war of peace: Algeria 1954–1962* evoked a sense of foreboding and confirmed the suspicions of whites in South Africa that Africa was a continent of ferocious fanatics and that such violence could easily spill over to South Africa. While many British and other foreign passport holders resident in South Africa at the time probably checked the validity of their travel documents, events in Algeria and elsewhere in Africa reinforced the feeling among Afrikaners that they had no symbolic ‘France’ to flee to in the event of a black take-over of South Africa and it strengthened their support of the NP’s policies of apartheid and white domination. As will be pointed out in a later chapter, young mobile Afrikaners thirty years later do not share their parents’ sense of isolation and of having ‘no France to flee to’ – for them any English-speaking Western country constitutes a ‘France’ and a safe haven from the problems of South Africa.
Belgian Congo (DRC) and Kenya

Another African example where whites had to flee their African homeland was in the Belgian Congo in the 1960s in that colony’s liberation war. Following Belgium’s withdrawal from the Congo, black guerrillas and a black garrison went on a rampage of looting, rape, and murder and killed many innocent Belgian civilians. In Kenya too the Mau Mau rebellion led to an exodus of most of the country’s white population of 70,000 (of whom 2,000 were Afrikaans-speaking whites).

The Kenyan rebellion had an enduring impact on the psyche of white South Africans for it evoked images of isolated farms, lonely little groups of whites being crept up on by black figures, a theme repeated over and over during the civil war in the former Rhodesia and currently in the spate of relentless attacks on predominantly white South African farmers, during which more than 800 have been brutally murdered on their farms since 1994. The image today of a typical farm is one of farmhouses surrounded by electric fences, spotlights, packs of angry watchdogs, security guards, farmers and their families armed to the teeth with semi-automatic weapons, and high fences which are not intended to keep their livestock in, but to keep criminals out.

Angola and Mozambique

In the former Portuguese colonies of Angola and Mozambique there was also a mass exodus of Portuguese settlers in the mid-seventies following the wars of independence and Portugal’s withdrawal from these territories. Although these guerrilla wars were bloody (over 11,000 Portuguese soldiers and civilians died and 30,000 were wounded and disabled during the colonial wars in Africa) the transfer of power to the Marxist Frelimo organisation (Frente de Libertacao de Mocambique) in Mozambique and the equally Marxist MPLA (Movimento Popular de Libertacao de Angola) occurred relatively peacefully. Still, close to 300,000 Portuguese were airlifted out of Angola in 1975 amid scenes of panic and hysteria, and a sizeable number of the settlers from these two colonies emigrated to South Africa. They, together with their cousins from Madeira, constitute most of the 600,000-strong Portuguese community in South Africa, a country in which their resentment over their bitter colonial experiences found an outlet, and made many of them passionate supporters of the former NP’s racist policies.14

Zimbabwe (Rhodesia)

Next in the long list of reluctant white African emigrants were the white Rhodesians. After decades of British-sanctioned white rule in Rhodesia and a unilateral declaration
of independence in 1965, black opposition to the Smith regime became violent as the forces of Robert Mugabe’s Zanu organisation and Joshua Nkomo’s Zapu waged a full-scale guerrilla war against the Smith government, and from 1979 against Smith’s surrogate, Abel Muzorewa. The war of liberation for Zimbabwe lasted for 14 years and became more brutal as it went on, resulting in massacres and cross-border revenge attacks from both sides. Particularly brutal was the shooting down of two Rhodesian passenger aircraft and the massacre of the crash survivors of one of them. Zanu and Zapu forces gradually infiltrated large parts of Rhodesia. Although Ian Smith’s forces remained in control of certain parts of the country, the white-controlled government of Smith-Muzorewa finally agreed to a cease-fire and negotiations with their enemies in 1980 after the South African government threatened to withdraw all support and cut off oil supplies. Although the subsequent elections were supervised by international monitors and there was a relatively peaceful transfer of power, fear of revenge and retaliation led to the large-scale emigration of whites, reducing the white population from its peak of 280 000 to less than 100 000 in a short space of time between 1978 and 1980. It has since dwindled to about 70 000. Of these about 20 000 have British passports and an estimated 20 000 more can lay claim to a British passport. During the Zimbabwean crisis early in 2000 when thousands of former liberation-struggle soldiers occupied white farms and when whites were assaulted by blacks in the streets of Harare, long lines of concerned whites reappeared at the British High Commission in Harare and it seemed that the white exodus of 20 years earlier would resume. Apart from the offer by Britain and the European Union to evacuate the more than 20 000 Zimbabweans with access to EU citizenship from Zimbabwe should the crisis worsen, Australia and New Zealand both indicated their willingness to open their doors to white Zimbabwean farmers and to accept them as refugees. The South African government did not make a similar offer, nor did it publicly condemn the Mugabe regime.

Although many settled in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the UK, a large portion of Rhodesians came to South Africa and settled in KwaZulu-Natal, especially the Pietermaritzburg area. The ‘Rhodies’, as they were referred to, formed influential pockets wherever they settled. Even today their impact on South African society is evident for example in broadcasting and in sports teams – the former Springbok captain Gary Teichman and other Springboks such as Adrian Garvey and Ray Mordt are former Rhodesians. However, many other ex-Rhodesians were battle-hardened and bitter, and many brought with them racist attitudes shaped by the Rhodesian experience – they were determined to ensure that their adoptive country did not go the same way as Rhodesia.

Today ex-Rhodesians can be found all over the world and, like South African expatriates, they stay in touch through social clubs and organisations and through the
Internet. One such website can be found at http://bluering.cowan.edu.au/~rwebb/docs/resource.html where online books on Rhodesian history and other forms of nostalgic ‘Rhodesiana’ can be accessed. Another site lists the e-mail addresses of over 2 000 of expatriate Rhodesians all over the world at http://scorpion.cowan.edu.au/~rwebb/emailadd.html. Even though these websites are really just social clubs for those with nostalgia, in 1999 the authoritarian and increasingly paranoiac president of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe, accused these expatriates of being an ‘enemy’, of trying to undermine his government and of being in cahoots with his opposition in the ailing country.

**Namibia (South West Africa)**

Namibian whites consisted mostly of Afrikaners who settled there during the six decades of largely illegal South African rule when South West Africa was regarded as a fifth province, and German speakers who settled there when it was a German colony until World War I. After a decade or so of relatively unsuccessful insurgency warfare by Swapo (South West African People’s Organisation), South Africa finally withdrew from the territory under international pressure and after drawn-out negotiations. Namibia became independent under the presidency of Sam Nujoma in 1990. In spite of the peaceful transition and Nujoma’s benign and reconciliatory rule, a large-scale exodus of whites occurred, mainly to South Africa – the Western Cape and in particular towns on the False Bay coast were popular destinations.

Of the 100 000-strong white population in Namibia only approximately 30 000 remain after independence. Because of the high levels of violent crime in South Africa and the relative lack of it in Namibia, increasing numbers of whites who left for South Africa many years ago are now returning to Namibia. What began as a trickle a few years ago by 1999 had become a steady flow, making Namibia one of the top six emigration destinations for South Africans.

1.3 **South Africa: Immigrants, Emigrants and Migrants**

**A country founded by immigrants**

South Africa was occupied by forebears of the Bushman and Khoisan tribes hundreds and possibly thousands of years before the Europeans arrived. Large numbers of blacks also migrated from central Africa to the northern, central and eastern parts of the country before the first white settlers landed in 1652. All of these
groups were the first true immigrants to South Africa, but following the wars between black and white and the large-scale inter-tribal genocide called the Difaqane, South Africa came firmly under white control. For the remainder of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries the only immigrants were a steady trickle of Europeans, Malay slaves and Indians* imported to work on sugar farms in Natal. Afrikaners themselves were an ethnic concoction of Dutch and German emigrants, French Huguenot refugees and an assortment of other ethnic groups and races present in South Africa.

The flow of white emigrants from Europe, especially from Britain, continued in the nineteenth century, but South Africa never drew the same numbers of emigrants from Europe as Canada, the USA and even Australia. The reasons were that South Africa was geographically much smaller than the other three, and was viewed essentially as a black country with a white minority as opposed to a white country with a non-white minority, and that even within this white minority there was a majority of Dutch/Afrikaans speakers. In spite of Lord Alfred Milner’s fervent attempts to attract massive numbers of English-speaking immigrants to South Africa and the former Boer Republics after the end of the Anglo-Boer in 1902, their numbers fell well short of the 10,000 settlers he had hoped for within the first year after the war. Ultimately, Milner’s dream of establishing an English-speaking vs Afrikaner ratio of 3:2 never succeeded because of the slow immigration from Britain – the consequence was a permanent 60%-40% ratio in favour of Afrikaners in South Africa’s white community.

Throughout the twentieth century successive South African governments continued to attempt to actively encourage European emigration to South Africa. Prime Minister Jan Smuts succeeded in attracting 60,000 white immigrants over two years through an immigration scheme launched in 1946 to lure skilled European immigrants. Because of Afrikaner Nationalist concerns, this trend was interrupted briefly during the first few years of NP rule after its rise to power in 1948. The NP made an attempt to limit the inflow of British immigrants because it feared that Afrikaners could become a minority within the white population and that they could lose power to English speakers. From a peak in 1948 of close to 37,000, the number of immigrants declined the following year to just over 15,000 and to 14,000 in 1950. However, emigration was permitted to increase again from the mid-1960s as greater numbers of English-speaking whites threw their support behind the NP and its apartheid policies. In 1963 the number of immigrants increased to 38,000 and remained close to 40,000 per annum until a rapid decline in the mid-1970s and onwards (see table 1.1).

* More than 100,000 had arrived in South Africa by 1900.
Throughout the post-World War II period numbers of South Africans looked for a more stable future elsewhere, but the flow of emigrants was erratic and closely followed political upheavals and incidences. The first wave was in 1949–51, when the NP came to power and began implementing apartheid policies. The second wave was in 1960–61, during a period of political unrest and the Sharpeville massacre, the proclamation of a state of emergency and South Africa’s departure from the Commonwealth. The third wave was in 1976–79 when black unrest reached a crescendo with the Soweto uprising and further draconian measures by the state. This period coincided with the large-scale outflow of angry and frustrated black South Africans: thousands went into exile to join the ANC’s and PAC’s military wings and its leaders in exile, among whom were Oliver Tambo, Thabo Mbeki, and many other members of the ANC leadership, and thousands more, mostly coloureds, settled permanently in Australia and Canada. The fourth wave was in 1985–87 when the Botha regime clamped down on black resistance, a period which was characterised by states of emergency, the collapse of the rand and Botha’s disastrous Rubicon speech. Between 1989 and 1992 there was a lull in emigration which corresponded with the first three years of F W de Klerk’s rule, the unbanning of the ANC and the dismantling of apartheid. However, in 1993, one year before the democratic elections of 1994, emigration doubled and after that it remained close to 10 000 per year, according to official figures for the rest of the 1990s. As will be shown in chapter 2, this figure underestimates the actual number of emigrants by about two thirds and the total number of emigrants therefore is closer to 30 000 each year. However, the real significance of the post-1994 period was that the increase of official emigrants was accompanied by a decrease in official immigration, resulting in a net loss, which is even more dramatic if the unofficial emigrants are included. For example, in 1998 a total of 4 371 legal immigrants entered South Africa, and 8 276 emigrants left South Africa, resulting an official net loss of 3 905 – however, considering that the actual number of emigrants was approximately three times more, that is about 24 500, the net loss was more than 20 000 (excluding the tens of thousands of illegal immigrants and refugees).

The nature and scope of the South African emigration phenomenon is discussed later in this book, while the rest of this chapter deals with the peripheral and related aspects of emigration, such as immigration, internal migration and pseudo emigration. Whereas internal migration refers to the physical movement of people across provincial and regional and even municipal boundaries, pseudo emigration is defined as the movement of people to secure enclaves in the suburbs of cities and the psychological withdrawal of people from everyday life in South Africa. Both of these issues are included in this chapter because they are often precursors or
alternatives to emigration. The aspect of immigration, on the other hand, is included here because it puts the phenomenon of emigration into perspective by showing that considerable numbers of people also enter the country with the intention of settling permanently and that migration is not just a one-way flow of people.

The Xhosa migration from Eastern to Western Cape

For decades black South Africans have moved from their homes in the rural parts of South Africa to the cities in search of work and better futures. Their limited presence in cities went against the NP policies of apartheid which were intended to keep cities white, but was tolerated partially only because pressure from business, which needed the manpower in mines and industry. After influx control was scrapped in 1986, the influx of blacks into cities increased dramatically, especially Johannesburg and the Witwatersrand, and also the Western Cape, after laws that made the Western Cape a coloured-preferential area were repealed.

Estimates of the number of Xhosa speakers arriving in Cape Town each month range from 10 000 to 40 000. Estimates suggest that approximately 100 000 Xhosa speakers arrived in Cape Town between 1980 and 1985, another 125 000 between 1985 and 1990 and a further 105 000 between 1990 and 1995. Because of the relatively fast-growing Western Cape economy during the period between 1995 and 2000, the number of Xhosa migrants would have increased again during this period, presumably to a further 125 000, giving a total of close to half a million Xhosa speakers arriving in Cape Town and its environs over the past 20 years. Xhosa speakers currently constitute approximately 25%-30% of the population of the Western Cape, whites approximately 20%-25%, with about 50% being coloured.

The ‘Grape Trek’: migrating from north to south

The Xhosa-speaking residents from the Eastern Cape were not the only people to find the Western Cape an attractive option – in the 1990s thousands of whites from Gauteng made the Cape their home in what Michael Morris of the Argus referred to as the ‘Grape Trek’. Ironically, the Grape Trek is a reversal of the original Great Trek, insofar as disgruntled whites moved back to the south, less than two hundred years after leaving it to settle in the northern part of the country.

The main reason for the move to the Cape is an unrealistic perception of the relative safety of Cape Town and the fact that migrating to Cape Town is a relatively simpler and often more attractive option than emigrating to Australia or Canada – at least the
locals are familiar insofar as they mostly speak Afrikaans, the weather is great, and all the social and cultural activities that migrants were used to in Gauteng are available in the Cape, if at a slightly slower pace. In addition, for those who are more concerned with politics and who fear ‘darkest Africa’, the province is still ruled by a Nationalist ‘non-African’ coalition government and until his retirement in 1998, also had Africa’s last white head of government in Hernus Kriel.* He was replaced by Gerald Morkel, the only non-African premier in South Africa.

Thousands of whites and some blacks left Gauteng for Cape Town in the 1990s, although many of the latter return to Johannesburg, apparently unhappy with a perceived hostility towards blacks in Cape Town. In one case, a professor from Rand Afrikaans University, Helgaard Raubenheimer, moved the entire Inorganic Division of the Chemistry Department to the University of Stellenbosch after he and his staff fell victim of crime once too often.

While many moved everything they had to the Cape from up north, except in frequent cases where they could not sell their houses because of the rapidly declining housing market in Gauteng, others bought houses and moved their families to Cape Town, but kept their jobs in Johannesburg. This is because Johannesburg and Gauteng remain the economic hub of the country, the place where deals are made, and where the really highly paid jobs are.

The trek of whites from Gauteng to the Cape gave rise to the ‘breakfast run’, that is, the Monday morning rush hour at Cape Town airport when hundreds of the captains of industry fly back to Johannesburg for the week’s work while their families reside in Cape Town. The flood returns, of course, on Friday afternoons, irritating Cape Town residents by making it virtually impossible for locals to get seats at these times and pushing house prices in Cape Town skyhigh. One typical example was the corporate communications director of Transnet, Richard Stevens, who spent five days per week in Johannesburg, but flew to Cape Town over weekends to be with his family. He described Cape Town as a safer, nicer environment and argued that by commuting he could balance the requirements of his family with those of his career.18

* Political correspondent Clive Sawyer argued that many whites saw Kriel’s departure as the demise of the last white buffer of white Western civilisation against the encroaching ‘Dark Continent’, Cape Argus, 21 April 1998.
The exact numbers of Gauteng and other northern migrants are difficult to establish, but the following statistics give an indication of the scope of the trek southwards. In the months of December 1997 and January 1998 42% of houses in Cape Town were bought by South African buyers from outside Cape Town, compared to 12% by local buyers and 46% from overseas. Pam Golding Properties reported that in May 1998 it sold 73 houses to Gauteng buyers in the Cape – this translates to almost 1 000 Cape houses being sold that year to Gauteng families by a single estate agency. Conservatively, this represents about 4 000 people moving to the Cape from Gauteng – also, if Pam Golding represents, say, one quarter of the estate market in the Western Cape, it is possible that at least 16 000 Gauteng residents migrated to the Cape in 1997 and probably similar numbers in subsequent years. In schools all over Cape Town children from Gauteng are enrolled in growing numbers, for example a total of 43 pupils from Gauteng enrolled in the Gordon’s Bay primary school in 1996 alone, while in other schools the average was about 15.

While most Gauteng migrants come to Cape Town believing that the city is still relatively safe from crime compared to Gauteng, this perception has rapidly changed in the second half of the 1990s. Although Gauteng was still leading the nation in car hijackings, Cape Town easily overtook Gauteng and the nation as a whole with regard to murder, attempted murder, rape and residential burglary, while car hijackings increased by 29% in 1998. The violent nature of Cape Town that made it the murder capital of the world is reflected in police statistics for the Western Cape for 1997: a murder rate of 80 per 100 000 people, compared to the national average of between 57 and 65.

The very high murder and rape statistics, increasing inter-gang warfare, battles between gangs and the anti-gangster group, Pagad (People Against Gangsterism and Drugs), shootouts, previously unheard of ‘cash heists’ and brazen robberies in the Waterfront, bomb attacks on police and civilian targets such as the Planet Hollywood and St Elmo’s restaurants, and a spate of car hijackings badly damaged Cape Town’s once-safe reputation – the ‘Cape of Good Hope’ quickly became ‘Cape of Storms’, ‘Cape of No Hope’, ‘Cape of Lost Hope’, ‘Cape of Fear’, ‘Rape Town’, and ‘Cape of Murder’. As a result, the rush to the Cape started to ‘lose steam’ by mid-1998 when there was a noticeable drop in the number of people from Gauteng moving to Cape Town. A further indication of the Grape Trek losing steam was that by mid-1999 the prices of residential property in Johannesburg were rising at a greater rate than in Cape Town, where prices in some cases actually showed a real decline over the previous 12-month period. Moving companies reported declines of between 30% and 50% in the number of Gauteng families moving to the Cape between 1998 and 1999. By early 2000 it was clear that the
Grape Trek had swung in reverse as large numbers of Gautengers began moving back north.

The rightwing alternative: wagons rumbling to Orania

Their language is losing preferential status, their schools and universities are no longer centres of solely Afrikaner excellence, they are victimised in the workplace through affirmative action and many of their children are on a trek out of the country to seek a better future.24

You are already destroying our language, our culture, our traditions and our way of life. Today it is rugby and our schools, tomorrow it will be our universities, then it will be our churches and history. Enough is enough. If the ANC government wants confrontation, so be it. We are ready to take up the challenge – Freedom Front MP, Corné Mulder.24

Migrating away from political dispensations that do not appeal to them is not a new phenomenon to Afrikaners. As with their present-day descendants, the early Afrikaners commenced the Great Trek of the 1830s because they resented the interference of the British colonial government. Their dissatisfaction was rooted mainly in the emancipation of the slaves and colonial government frontier policy and it resulted in a trek to the territories which later became the Free State, Transvaal and Natal – in all, about 15 000 Afrikaners migrated from the Eastern Cape between 1834 and 1840. The Great Trek became an event of great historical importance and helped to shape the national consciousness of Afrikaners and, as such, was used later to mobilise Afrikaner nationalism.25

If it is assumed that the Great Trek played a part in shaping Afrikaner nationalism, it is not surprising that even today the concept of ‘trekking’ away from what they perceive as threats to their nationhood forms part of the Afrikaner philosophy, at least insofar as it is (marginally) represented by the rightwing. In spite of their even weaker position in Parliament after the 1999 election, the basic philosophy of a volkstaat, in whichever form, is still firmly part of the policies of the dominant rightwing party, the Freedom Front (FF). The FF has the support of only about 10% of Afrikaners, with 44% of Afrikaners voting for the more liberal Democratic Party and 28% for the NNP.26 Still, in the view of those to the right of the political spectrum, the volkstaat is the only way to escape from what they perceive as a form of ‘persecution’ of Afrikaners by the black-majority government and as a means of self-determination. They view themselves as an endangered species and regard
transformation and ‘Africanisation’ as concerted efforts to destroy the Afrikaner culture, language, and nationhood.

The volkstaat option is particularly attractive to those Afrikaners who cannot or do not wish to emigrate to a foreign land but, sensing their impotence to effectively challenge the current government, want to isolate themselves from the black majority to the greatest extent possible and under the constraints of the South African Constitution. Their primary goal is to secede and form an Afrikaner state, but as this is clearly not an option at this stage, they are relatively content to pursue Afrikaner interests within the parliamentary system. The FF and its leader, Constant Viljoen, have established a good rapport with the ANC and the party has functioned well within the confines of Parliament.

The exact location of the volkstaat is subject to uncertainty, although the Bushveld area, the Drakensberg North area and parts of the North West Cape have been earmarked. In all these cases it will require a major migration of Afrikaners to establish a viable core with which to pursue self-determination and to be economically self-sustaining. About 600 Afrikaners have so far moved to Orania, the town meant to be the growth point for a volkstaat in the Northern Cape.

It is doubtful that many more Afrikaners will opt for this alternative to emigration – polls indicate that only a small minority of Afrikaners really want independence and few are prepared to move to an exclusive Afrikaner territory – not more than 16% of Afrikaners supported an independent territory, although up to 70% supported an area for Afrikaners with significant autonomy in South Africa. In addition, the country’s second democratic elections in 1999 resulted in an almost-fatal blow for the Freedom Front, whose support declined from an already low 1,9% to 0,75% and its support among Afrikaners declined to 10%.

The relative lack of support for an Afrikaner volkstaat can be ascribed to the degree to which Afrikaners have become integrated in the South African economy and society and have become part of the global economy – few would have the nerve to leave behind luxury homes, domestic servants, access to good schools, private hospitals, international airports, modern shopping centres, and their proximity to all the conveniences of South Africa’s highly developed urban centres. Trekking to the volkstaat means giving up most of these amenities in exchange for being part of an ethnic exclusivity in an isolated territory. When one considers the small number who have made the move to Orania, it is clear that this trek is not an attractive option. However, for those who have moved there, it was the preferred alternative to possibly leaving the country.
Pseudo emigration

The vast majority of whites cannot emigrate or do not wish to do so. A typical response from those who can emigrate but do not wish to do so is provided by the following anecdote from David Lascelles, writing in the Financial Mail:

He wouldn’t leave South Africa for the world, even though his own former business is now in shambles, and he recently spent several days in hospital after being attacked by intruders in his home ... he is well set up: a large house on the outskirts of Johannesburg, with hectares of farmland attached, where he can enjoy fine weather, an outdoor life and high living standards ... What was the alternative, he asked? Selling up and returning to his roots in Ireland, where he might be able to buy a two-bedroom semi-detached house ... and stare out at the ceaseless rain. No thanks ... He was prepared to put up with the risks and uncertainties for the special joys of South Africa.28

So, instead of emigrating, many people are prepared to accept the risks of living in South Africa in order to share in the country’s unique and indisputable ‘joys’. However, putting up with the risks requires a special kind of lifestyle, which often also includes a kind of self-induced emotional detachment from the realities of South Africa, and many people purposefully withdraw from many spheres of South African society, sometimes as a response to crime and sometimes because of a racially based persecution complex. Although they proclaim, rightly, their love for South Africa, they tend to view most aspects of their day-to-day lives and longer-term outlook on life as a ‘them-versus-us’ scenario and in black-versus-white terms.

Their isolationist mindset and actions could include abstaining from voting in elections (Why bother?), not reading newspapers (too much bad news), not watching SABC news (propaganda), sending their children only to private schools and going only to private hospitals. They could also include elaborate schemes to avoid paying taxes and arguing that this is morally acceptable because of government corruption and the government’s failure to protect its citizens from crime. They could also include a general withdrawal from other aspects of civil society, such as not attending or participating in sports or cultural events, refraining from making charitable contributions, and so often changing from a liberal outlook on life to uttering the occasional racist remark – quickly and too easily crime takes on a racial connotation. Such hardening attitudes are evident from the standard response which many whites have developed when accosted by beggars, pan-handlers or by people soliciting donations: ‘Go ask Mandela/Mbeki.’
Pseudo emigration then refers to the withdrawal, both physically and psychologically, by certain whites from South African society as another alternative to emigration. Pseudo emigration takes on two forms, the first being the fear-driven migration to secluded and secure environments, and second, a psychological migration in the form of a withdrawal from some of the social, legal and other structures that make up South African society.

For a terrified white and affluent black population the major response to crime has been to flee behind walled high-security housing complexes, electrified fences, private security forces, and guns. The Canadian-based newspaper, Globe and Mail, described the changing 'geography' of South Africa as follows:

Security walls, razor wire barriers, electrified fences, privately patrolled streets and ‘secure’ cluster-housing complexes have redrawn the geography of cities and towns, separating them into anxious enclaves of privilege that serve as refuge from an apparently lawless landscape.29

But, argued Clem Sunter, one of South Africa’s foremost analysts, even high walls have become obsolete in the flight from crime:

So you went to your neighbour and said ‘Let’s build a wall around this neighbourhood and have restricted entry so the thieves cannot lie in wait for us around our houses’. But the thieves clambered over the walls... So you added razor wire on top... Then the thieves grouped themselves into larger gangs and... as soon as you emerged, they grabbed you... So the whole suburb pleaded for a substantial police presence in the vicinity... and demanded that the army should be permanently encamped around the suburb... [But still], sporadic attacks took place.30

So far in Sunter’s narrative all of this is an everyday occurrence in many suburbs in South Africa. But then follows the really frightening part:

Then you stayed home in sheer terror. By this time you and your family were completely under siege... So you decided to resettle on a high koppie way out of town behind yet another wall... Luckily the top of the koppie was fertile and you could grow enough food for everyone... Basically, your life has reverted to that lived in medieval monasteries and castles. The idea of going out anywhere by car had completely disappeared. South Africa outside your fortress was a complete no-go area.31
The frightening reality is that in the four years since Sunter wrote this piece in 1996, most of his predictions, including the inevitable shift to a medieval, self-sustaining 'Mad Max' society, have come into existence in many parts of South Africa. Not only have whole communities settled in walled suburbs outside large cities, but with the growth of the technological society work can be done and income earned from home with the help of a modem, and some 'refugees' are even producing their own food (at least fruit and vegetables) in the more spacious rural walled enclaves.

A typical example is the neighbourhood of Wendywood in Sandton, Johannesburg, where 827 households decided, after several murders, hijackings and armed attacks, to close off their neighbourhood to the outside world by fencing it off, erecting booms across all access roads, and manning these with security guards. By 1999 more than 200 neighbourhoods countrywide have closed themselves off in this way, providing protection for more than 140 000 people. Technically speaking it is illegal to fence off a public road, but as one resident of Wendywood argues, 'There are two ways to survive the crime wave in South Africa – you emigrate or fend for yourself'.

On a more abstract level, many people are making a psychological move away from the anarchic society that South Africa appears to have become. Psychological emigration is a response to the perceptions among many whites that they are being targeted by criminals because they are deemed wealthy, and that because of past apartheid injustices are being viewed as 'fair game'. In addition they feel isolated in the new post-apartheid South Africa and believe that affirmative action and other forms of 'reverse racism' have made them second-class citizens.

Eddie Webster, a professor at the University of the Witwatersrand, describes the psychological emigration as follows:

Whites are experiencing a psychological immigration where they create an artificial and separate world for themselves and with their money ... They've retreated to their suburban homes where they've hired security ... and built taller and taller walls. They've retreated to the private schools, and they've, in a way, retreated inside their own minds, convinced that they have become second-class citizens in their own lands.

These dual options of moving to residential secure havens or psychologically withdrawing from society are the last resort for those who do not wish to emigrate. For thousands of others these are not acceptable options and do not constitute a normal way of living. Instead they choose simply to pack their bags and leave the
country – in Australia, Canada and New Zealand there are no ‘medieval villages’, houses are not ‘fortresses’, and they would not be viewed as ‘second-class citizens’.

The incoming flood: immigrants, illegal aliens and the ‘returnees’

The common perception is that South Africa is losing large numbers of its population through emigration, but although the number of people that are leaving should not be underestimated, it pales into insignificance when measured in pure numerical terms against the illegal aliens and legal immigrants that are streaming into the country. While the Human Sciences Research Council estimates the number of illegal immigrants at between 2.5 and 4.1 million, other estimates place this figure between four and eight million people. They are predominantly from Africa, especially from Nigeria and Mozambique, while most of the legal immigrants come from the UK, Eastern Europe and Asia.

It is estimated that there are between 70 000 and 100 000 illegal Nigerians in Johannesburg alone. To illustrate the scope of the influx, almost 100 000 illegal immigrants from Mozambique were deported during the first ten months of 1998 and a total of 160 000 illegal immigrants for the whole of 1998. Considering these statistics, the extraordinarily high figure of 8 million does not seem so improbable. Most of these immigrants and refugees enter South Africa with the help of false documents or simply slip over the border; others arrive legally on a tourist visa and either ‘disappear’ or obtain false documentation.

What makes immigrants come to South Africa? For illegal immigrants from Africa, it is clearly the perception of South Africa as a wealthy country by African standards and the lure of jobs, informal business opportunities, and in some cases the drug trading and other criminal activities. The South African GDP is larger than that of all of sub-Saharan Africa and its per capita income is about four times the African average. The lucrative nature of having a job in South Africa, relative to African standards, is clearly evident from the position of the 600 Nigerian medical doctors working in South African public hospitals – here they are earning close to R6 000 per month, which is equal to almost a full year’s salary in Nigeria.34

Although South Africa already has an unemployment rate of over 30% (and a further 500 000 jobs have been lost since 1994) and is one of the most violent countries in the world, this does not appear to act as a deterrent to the influx of illegal immigrants. Neither do increasingly violent attacks on illegal aliens by disgruntled South Africans in places such as Alexandria township in Johannesburg, where three men from Senegal were killed in 1998 by an angry mob.
As well as the millions of illegal aliens residing in South Africa, the country also remains an option for many bona fide legal immigrants, although their numbers have been in sharp decline since 1994. South Africa has been a popular destination for immigrants during most of the twentieth century, particularly for Europeans from the UK, Germany, The Netherlands and Greece. Considerable numbers of Portuguese came from Angola and Mozambique after independence and whites from Zimbabwe and Namibia.

Table 1.1 Legal immigrants to South Africa

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<td>1985</td>
<td>6,994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>14,631</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>7,953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>14,701</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>10,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>12,598</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>11,270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>9,805</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>14,499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>16,373</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>12,379</td>
</tr>
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<td>20,972</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>8,686</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>38,013</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>40,896</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>38,337</td>
<td>1994</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>48,051</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>5,407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>38,937</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>4,102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>40,548</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>4,371</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>41,446</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>4,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>41,523</td>
<td>1999 est.</td>
<td>4,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>35,845</td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>1,220,863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>32,776</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>24,016</td>
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In the seventies close to 330 000 immigrants entered South Africa, in the eighties a further 230 000, but during the nineties only approximately 75 000 people immigrated officially to South Africa. The number of immigrants declined rapidly after 1994 and only 29 844 immigrants entered South Africa in the first five years of the post-apartheid era between 1994 and 1999. The total number of official immigrants that settled in South Africa in the post-World War II era between 1945 and 1999 amounted to 1.2 million.

If and when immigrants finally manage to get past the Department of Home Affairs, they rapidly become acquainted with the other scourge of South African society, violent crime. One immigrant family from Britain fell victim to crime on arrival, when robbers stole household items and a wheelchair from their containers as these were being transported from Durban to Johannesburg. The Long family had a further taste of lawlessness when their disabled son’s remaining wheelchair disappeared with their 4x4 after it was hijacked in front of their house in Johannesburg. Their response was that they cannot live like that and they were seriously considering leaving the country.36 Others never make it back to their home country – Alistair Hector, the father of two young boys, who was planning to return to Scotland from South Africa because his wife was terrified by the growing tide of violence, was murdered in 1999 just yards from his home by a gang who stole his pick-up truck.

Other immigrants, probably not yet touched personally by crime, view things differently: Alexander Potplavski left the Ukraine for Cape Town and argues that the crime in his home country is much worse than in South Africa. In addition he has a level of financial security here which he could not find in Odessa.37 Yospon Nanichargorn swapped Thailand for Cape Town and loves the beauty and relatively low traffic congestion and lower levels of pollution of Cape Town. Deborah Herd immigrated from Britain and admits that she is worried about violent crime but she loves the beauty of the country and the ‘sense of optimism’ among the people. Gabby Gramm of Germany argues that even though she is earning less than in Germany, the cost of living is lower – to her, South Africa is the most beautiful country in the world, she finds crime levels bearable, and she would not like to live anywhere else in the world.38 An anonymous immigrant from Australia, ‘Aussie’ from Cape Town, claims that he/she feels ‘incredibly lucky’ to be living in Cape Town and cannot believe that South Africans would like to leave the country – ‘Aussie’ argues that crime is not unique to South Africa but happens everywhere in the world.39

About 5% of emigrants who leave South Africa eventually return to the country. They come back because the conditions in their foreign destination did not meet with
their expectations, because they could not find work, but mostly because they miss their friends and families in South Africa too much. While overseas, many of these emigrants become the notorious ‘whenwes’, that is, those emigrants who are overcritical of their host countries and are never satisfied – citizens from host countries often joke about the tendency of South African emigrants to complain about the conditions in their new countries and to draw unfavourable comparisons.* Some emigrants are extremely happy about their decision to come back, while others find that the problems that drove them away in the first place still exist and have even worsened – they then begin planning to move to another foreign destination, hoping that it would be kinder to them than the previous time – they become perpetual emigrants.

Many of those emigrants who return to South Africa, especially those who came back after the 1994 elections, originally left the country to escape the immorality of apartheid, military conscription, political violence and uncertainty and the siege society that was so prevalent during the 1980s – they tend to fit in immediately on return to South Africa. Others left shortly before the 1994 elections for fear of a racial conflagration or in the subsequent period because of increasing crime, falling standards and First World opportunities available elsewhere – the five per cent of these emigrants who return came to the realisation that the proverbial grass is not always greener on the other side and, all things considered, South Africa with all its problems was not so bad after all.

Among the better-known people who have come back in recent years were Donald Woods, an ex-newspaper editor and friend of Black Consciousness leader Steve Biko. Woods came back in 1996 and regarded returning to South Africa as the ‘natural thing to do’ when Mandela was released. John van Ahlefeldt (a former financial editor of the Sunday Times) came back from England to open a guesthouse in Smithfield, describing the ‘splendour of the landscape of the Upper Karoo’ as a major reason for coming back. The Rom family came back from England after a 15-year stay to settle in Johannesburg, claiming that they would never want to live anywhere else in the world again, even though ‘the country has a Mickey Mouse economy and it is dangerous’. Former television presenter Jani du Plessis-Beltrami returned to South Africa in 1999 after living in Portugal for ten years, following her divorce from her Italian husband. The former chairman and founder of the retail group, Pep Stores, Renier van Rooyen, came back to South Africa in 1996.

* An often-repeated joke is: ‘What is the difference between a jumbo jet and a white South African? The jumbo stops whining at Sydney Airport.’
After an 11-year stint in Europe, Van Rooyen claimed that in his view ‘the country is heaven’, compared to the pre-1994 days and that it is wrong for whites to be leaving the country just as everything seems to be going well. Journalist Howard Donaldson wrote about how he stood in a queue in London in 1994 to cast his vote in South Africa’s first democratic elections – he realised, after speaking to people around him, that he was terribly homesick after many years abroad and simply had to return to South Africa: ‘After too many dreary British winters, I packed for Durban and the “New South Africa”. It is good to be back home.’

Among the many coloured emigrants who made a beeline back to South Africa after the first democratic elections was opera singer and clinical psychologist Fred Martin, who returned to Cape Town in 1997 after close to 30 years overseas, but although he is happy to be back, he is worried about problems such as continuing ‘racism’. Another such person is Graham Falken, who returned to Cape Town after the 1994 elections following a stay in England of more than 30 years – he argues that the high levels of crime are ‘to be expected in a country with a history like that of South Africa’. Colin Howard left South Africa in 1964 and returned to the Cape from the UK in 1997 – he claims to be happy to contribute to the country but is concerned about falling standards of education in the arts. Kay-Robert Volkwijn left for the USA in 1974 but after 25 years returned to Cape Town on a semi-permanent basis – he believes in South Africa’s future, but is concerned about crime and about having to live in a ‘fortress’, and about persistent racism and friction between coloured and black communities in the Cape.

In what must have been one of the briefest-ever cases of emigration, Andre Louw, the former MD of Ocean Diamond Mining, returned from Canada within three months of emigrating there. It is unclear whether the notoriously cold Canadian winter influenced his decision, but Louw returned to South Africa in February 2000 to rejoin the South African diamond mining group Trans Hex, as director in charge of the company’s operations at sea. Another returnee is former rugby Springbok flyhalf De Wet Ras, who came back from New Zealand after completing only eight months of an intended two-year stay – Ras commented that when comparing the two countries, he realised that New Zealand had its own problems and was not necessarily a better place in which to live than South Africa. Ex-Springbok and Canadian international rugby player Christian Steward, who lived in both Canada and Australia, returned to South Africa because his friends and family were ‘very important to him’ and after all, ‘home is home’.

The Ogg family of Durban are examples of disillusioned emigrants who could not adapt to their new environment. The Oggs left for England with the intention of
earning money in the medical profession and of bringing up their children in a First World environment. However, after two years they decided that the British winters were more than they could endure and that the types of accommodation that they were living in were sub-standard (this was to be expected as Dr Ogg spent only R640 of his monthly pay of R30 000 on rent). They found British stores 'old and dirty' and British food unpalatable. 'The English live on pie and chips or sausage and beans,' said Mrs Ogg and 'there were no waiters, except in the most expensive places'. The British landscape and the people were described by the Oggs as 'grey'. However, to be fair, apart from their accurate assessment of the British climate, the Oggs' description of Britain is so far off the mark that the more than 300 000 South Africans who live in the UK would not recognise it. It is obvious that the Ogg family's view of Britain is representative of the small number of South African emigrants who could not adapt overseas, and made the mistake of trying to compare each aspect of their new homelands with what they had in South Africa – these types of emigrant would never really be happy anywhere but in South Africa.