

ELSEWHERE

In spite of language, cultural and climatic differences, quite a number of South Africans choose the Middle East as a work or emigration destination. For instance, about 2 000 South Africans are living in the United Arab Emirates and there are sufficient numbers of South Africans in Dubai to enable them to have a social club, while the few hundred South Africans in Bahrain have their own website at <http://www.homestead.com/Gulfing/index.html>. They arrange frequent social gatherings such as an indoor cricket tournament, a 'ladies morning', an 'Oktoberfest', a beach braai and an annual SA golf day.

Israel is another popular destination, because of the mobility of the large South African Jewish community. About 18 000 South Africans were living in Israel by 1995, but significantly, this figure represents only about half of the 45 000 Jews who are estimated to have left South Africa – presumably many others prefer to not to move from one country fraught with risk to another, and find Australia or the US more attractive options.

A considerable number of South African emigrants are leaving for other African countries, although they often came to South Africa from these countries in the first place and are merely returning to their roots. Namibia is the main African destination and it has become the sixth-largest emigration destination for South African residents, many who are dual citizens anyway. Even Mozambique, one of the world's poorest countries, has attracted a number of South African emigrants – these are mostly people in the tourism industry who want to develop the country's enormous tourism potential, especially in the region south of Maputu, but they also include some farmers who are interested in making a living on the fertile Mozambiquan soil. In 1996, 15 farming families went to live in the north-western region and most made a success of their farms. Although five returned later, a further 17 farmers are strongly considering going to Mozambique.¹⁰⁵ A few hundred South Africans have made their homes in Gaborone, capital of Botswana. Attracted by a booming economy and low crime rates, many South African families have settled in a suburb called Phakalane (nicknamed 'Little Sandton'), and enjoy a middle-class lifestyle where they play bridge, and frequent casinos and game lodges.¹⁰⁶



Portugal is the European destination of choice for many South Africans. This is partly because thousands of Portuguese residents in South Africa who have dual citizenship moved to Portugal because of crime and related issues. However, many non-Portuguese South Africans also settle in Portugal – it used to be possible

for South Africans to 'buy' residency in Portugal by investing a considerable amount of money in the country. South Africans choose Portugal because of the sunny climate, beaches, and because it is a gateway to the European Union. In addition the rand exchange rate is not as poor against the Portuguese escudo as it is elsewhere in Western Europe. South Africans tend to congregate outside Lisbon near places such as Estoril and Cascais, as well as in the southern province of the Algarve. One emigrant who ended up in the Algarve is Alan Frank from Springs, who moved to Quarteira and owns his own butchery which specialises in boerewors and biltong and had a turnover of almost R5 million in 1998. Frank reports that the Portuguese do not really like these African delicacies, but expatriate South Africans are eager buyers.¹⁰⁷ While most emigrants adapt quickly by learning the local language and customs, others comment on how isolated they feel in Portugal:

We were born in SA and have now been living in Portugal for four years. We are terribly homesick and miss many of the little things that we took for granted back home. We make our own boeries, my wife's rusks don't quite taste like Ouma's – Alberto Capela¹⁰⁸

Elsewhere in Europe, Switzerland and Germany both have sizeable South African expatriate communities, with about 2 000 living in Switzerland. As in the UK, South Africans in Europe complain that the climate is cold and there are so few South African residents, making it difficult to form clubs and to arrange social gatherings. Of course, they also miss everything identified with South Africa, typical examples being:

I am a homesick South African living just outside of Zurich. I dream of the good-old-days constantly and live from one holiday in Umhlanga Rocks to the next – Leigh-Anne Coonan in Switzerland¹⁰⁹

Been in Denmark since 1976 and miss Cape Town, braais, Castle Lager and biltong – Michael Stilborg in Copenhagen¹¹⁰

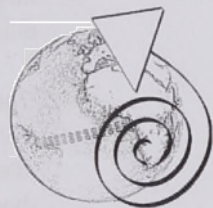
I came to Germany in 1988 . . . and I must say I do miss the South African humour, sunshine and of course the beautiful outdoors – Dieter Pistol in Berlin¹¹¹

Does anyone know of a shop (in or near Brussels) where I can buy South African food stuffs, specifically Chocolate Pronutro! – Gordon Roy in Brussels¹¹²

Despite its size, relative proximity and temperate climate, only about 400 South Africans live on the entire continent of South America, of whom about 120 live in Paraguay.¹¹³ A few Afrikaner families emigrated to Patagonia in Argentina in the late-1800s and early 1900s. They founded small communities in the agricultural region of the Pampas, where they still live today and some are still able to speak Afrikaans.

About 30 South African families have emigrated to Paraguay in the past two decades following an invitation by former president Alfredo Stroessner in 1978. Stroessner, a close friend of the NP regime, wanted South African farmers to settle in remote and harsh regions of his country to help develop it. The South Africans, mostly Afrikaners, settled predominantly in an area called Caaguazu in eastern Paraguay. Some continued farming in their new countries, with various degrees of success, while others opened stores and a small hotel. They even founded an Afrikaans Protestant Church. Among the Afrikaner emigrants are Johan Strauss, owner of a cheap hotel (he failed to get into Canada), Heinie Zietsman, an unsuccessful store owner and now a dairy farmer, and Johan Spannenberg, a furniture exporter. Most of these emigrants have learned some Spanish and the local Indian language. They thrive on the peace, tranquillity and low crime rates, and even if telephones don't always work, they are content in a country described by some as the 'poor man's option'¹¹⁴

To conclude this chapter, it is worthwhile reviewing the experiences and sentiments of the South African diaspora in the context of the experiences of other diasporas. Robert Cohen lists nine common features of such diasporas¹¹⁵:



- *'Dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically, to two or more foreign regions* – the million-plus South African diaspora are spread over predominantly five countries and most recent emigrants give crime and violence as the reason for their emigrating.
- *Leaving 'a homeland in search of work'* – certainly many South African emigrants leave the country in search for jobs or better paying jobs, and often because of affirmative action.
- *'A collective memory and myth about the homeland'* – from this chapter is evident that most emigrants share such a collective memory of South Africa.
- *'An idealization of the putative ancestral home and a collective commitment to its maintenance, restoration, safety and prosperity'* – South African emigrants frequently express their glowing views of how good certain aspects of life were

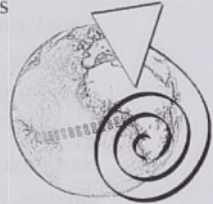
in South Africa and many professionals have offered their services to assist the South African economy through for example the South African network of Skills Abroad (SANSA), which has 1800 emigrant members.

- *'A strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time and based on a sense of distinctiveness'* – this is probably more applicable with regard to Afrikaner emigrants, who now constitute close to half of white emigrants – their language, culture and religious ties tend to bind them together as a group more so than English-speaking emigrants, but even so, the myriad South African social clubs overseas transcend such language divisions.
- *'A troubled relationship with host societies suggesting a lack of acceptance'* – this is not really applicable to South African emigrants, who tend to adapt relatively quickly to the cultures of the host countries because of the familiarity of language, values and sporting traditions, especially in Australasia and the UK.
- *'A sense of empathy and solidarity with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement'* – the growing influence of the Internet as a communication medium, to a degree, assists to draw elements of the South African diaspora in different countries together.
- *'The possibility of a distinctive yet creative life in host countries'* – there is strong evidence that many members of the South African diaspora continue to live a 'distinctive' way of life by clustering in certain neighbourhoods, frequenting shops which sell imported South African foods and other items, and by organising social clubs. At the same time they contribute to the cultures and economies of their host countries through for example ethnic cuisine and culture, and by dispersing South African-honed professional skills and values in the host countries.

7 CONCLUSION

In this book the author examined emigration and immigration as universal phenomena and part of the global flow of people that has been an ongoing process since humankind began moving across continents and, later, political borders. Today millions are moving between countries in search of better jobs, higher standards of living or to escape from war and other threats to their personal security. South Africa is part of this global phenomenon and experiences its own in- and outflows of people, but the problem for South Africa is that the country is experiencing a net loss of skilled emigrants and a massive inflow of poor, unskilled and illegal immigrants.

The author addressed the issues central to emigration in a holistic way and with reference to the broader debilitating problems of South African society. It was contended that emigration in South Africa cannot be explained in isolation, but only in conjunction with, or as a reflection of, the socio-economic and political issues of the time, whether these be apartheid and political uncertainty in the 1980s or crime, unemployment, poverty, affirmative action, racial quotas and declining standards in the 1990s. For this reason criticism of emigration and attempts to limit it through legislation or financial controls will only be addressing one of the symptoms rather than the causes of the fundamental problems of South Africa today.



Together with unemployment and Aids, the most pressing challenge facing the country is violent crime, which in turn is linked to socio-economic problems such as poverty and a culture of brutality which has turned the country into one of the most dangerous places in the world. This is the single most important reason that South Africans are leaving the country in droves, although emigration in itself is accompanied by a high level of psychological stress, physical upheaval and sacrifices. Unlike the thousands of their counterparts in Canada and Australia who emigrate in search of better salaries and lower taxes, South African emigrants are motivated primarily by their quest for personal safety and a more secure future for their children. Other issues, such as falling standards in education, healthcare and public service, are viewed as less compelling reasons to leave the country.

Emigration in South Africa is largely a preoccupation of whites, particularly the more educated and skilled whites. This results in a brain drain of major proportions and

costs the country billions of rand in lost tax revenue, capital outflows, the loss of knowledge, experience and job creation skills and, on another level, results in a loss of part of the rainbow nation's culture and soul. In chapter 2 the spotlight fell on the phenomenon that most emigrants leave the country unofficially without notifying the authorities. This results in an underestimation of the number of emigrants by between one half and two thirds. Although official statistics suggest that close to 10 000 emigrants left South Africa in 1998, in reality this figure is between 20 000 and 30 000. In total, more than one million people have left South Africa since 1945, but emigration has not yet taken on the form of the mass exodus of whites that has occurred in other parts of Africa or in countries which suffered under civil war or genocide. This does not mean it cannot happen, should the wave of violent crime continue unabated or become a full-scale violent revolution between the 'have' and 'have-not' categories, or as Thabo Mbeki argues, between the 'rich white' and 'poor black' nations of South Africa.

Another issue was whether emigration in the South African context can justifiably be criticised on moral grounds and whether the concepts of racism, patriotism and loyalty can be used as measures with which to judge emigrants. While no one can deny that emigration is costing the country dearly in terms of the outflow of capital and skills, emigration is a constitutionally protected right and is a response to existing social problems such as violent crime. It can therefore be argued that criticism directed at emigrants should be redirected at the root causes of emigration and the government's inability to combat these. While South Africa may be defined as a country at war with itself, with 25 000 violent deaths each year, the harsh terminology used currently in South Africa to condemn emigrants as unworthy citizens is unproductive. Many emigrants counter these virulent emotional anti-emigration sentiments with equally harsh condemnation of the government's disregard for the safety of its citizens.

The book concluded with a look at the diaspora of over one million South Africans living abroad. It was evident from the research that many South African emigrants view their departure as a final step and have little intention of ever returning, except perhaps for the odd holiday. These are mostly the emigrants who will assimilate faster and more easily into the local culture and become an indistinguishable part of the culture of the country to which they have chosen to emigrate. For them and their children, South Africa soon becomes but a distant and often bittersweet memory. However, for many other emigrants South Africa will always remain 'home'. They tend to cling tenaciously to their culture and traditions and, for Afrikaners, their language. As a result 'Little South Africas' are being formed all over the world and are becoming part of the suburban life of many larger cities – these small South African

enclaves are in essence very similar to countless other ethnic suburbs, and soon places like 'Doringkop' and 'St Ivesfontein' will become as established as 'Little Italy', 'Little Greece', 'Little Portugal' and 'Chinatown' in cities such as Toronto, London, Sydney and Auckland.

The white exodus, once a trickle, has turned into a steady stream and has the potential to become a flood. The departure of these emigrants has made and is making South Africa poorer in every conceivable way and the onus is on the South African government to urgently address the fundamental problems that are forcing emigrants out of the country, and are driving those who cannot or do not want to leave, into a state of despair. Flippant comments such as 'it's best if they go' simply will not suffice, not when emigration, its root causes and its consequences so negatively affect the lives of all South Africans and, ultimately, together with unemployment and Aids, endanger the survival of the South African state in the twenty-first century.



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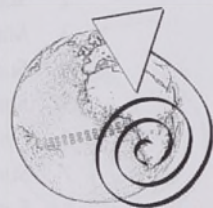


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In *The New Great Trek* Johann van Rooyen holistically explores aspects of South Africa's growing white exodus with reference to its origins, the reasons why people are leaving, who is leaving, the numbers, the destinations and the socio-political

sentiment towards emigration. The author argues that emigration cannot be seen in isolation to the broader debilitating forces that are shaping the post-apartheid society. He argues that the growing brain drain and its root cause, violent crime, together with the daunting problems of massive unemployment, the AIDS pandemic, corruption and declining standards of health care and education, pose a direct challenge to the medium and long-term viability and survival of the South African state.

Emigration from South Africa is a very topical issue which, despite its extent and far-reaching consequences, has not elicited as much public debate as one would have expected. This wide-ranging survey may change this state of affairs.

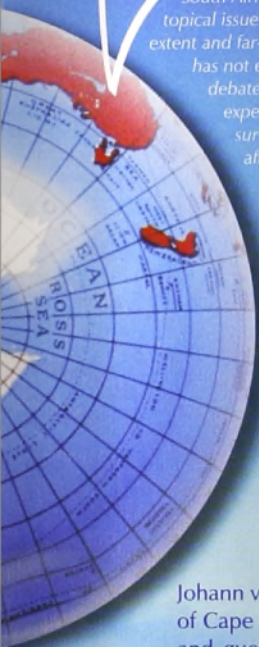
– Johann du Bruyn,
Professor of History,
University of South Africa

Johann van Rooyen has given us the first proper account of a sad but vital subject, the great trek away from the new South Africa. Throughout the apartheid period South Africa recurrently lost its best and brightest to emigration and exile and many hoped that liberation would bring a return of the diaspora. It is now clear that the opposite has happened – with dire consequences for the future. Van Rooyen is the best and most complete guide to this sensitive and crucial matter

– R W Johnson, Director of the Helen Suzman Foundation.

This is excellent and high-class journalism as much as academic work ... good and trenchant and full of interesting references and striking statistical material.

– Dr Lester Crook, commissioning editor, I B Tauris Publishers



Johann van Rooyen completed his PhD in 1992 at the University of Cape Town specialising in South African politics. He lectured and guest-lectured at Rhodes University and UCT in political studies and was appointed communications director at a listed company in 1996. He is the author of *Hard Right: South Africa's New White Power* (1994) and contributed chapters in *Democratic nation-building* (1994) and *Election 1994 South Africa* (1994). Born in South Africa, he relocated to Canada in 1992 and returned to Cape Town four years later. His interest in the emigration phenomenon stems from his own experiences abroad and from his deep interest in South African politics and society.



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