

13 *An unexpected problem*

When the University of South Africa entered the 1960's, the future seemed bright with promise. Student numbers were increasing rapidly, excellent appointments ensured the maintenance of high standards and the university was at last enjoying high prestige both as a teaching institution and as the mother of a new brood of associated colleges. It had not succeeded in gaining full control over all its registered students, but it was already providing tuition for the vast majority of them. It had yet to be treated on an equal footing with the nation's other universities for subsidy purposes, but its finances were reasonably sound. In these respects, however, there seemed every likelihood of early recognition of an enhanced status and Professor Pauw could look back with pride upon great achievements since he had taken office and forward with confidence to the years ahead.

Compulsory enrolment was soon achieved. Ministerial approval, long withheld while the commercial colleges in association were able to carry out a strong rearguard action, was finally given in 1962. From 1964, all students registered for examinations were obliged to receive their tuition through the university. With this amendment to the statute, lecturers were able to bring greater pressure to bear upon candidates for university examinations through the introduction of compulsory assignments of work. Learning could thus be directed to greater purpose and the gulf between student and teacher narrowed. It was a change long overdue.

On the financial side, the University of South Africa had been

forced to make economies after incurring the heavy deficit of more than R50 000 in 1961. The following year showed a surplus and, with the help of increased tuition fees, the situation was further improved in 1963, when revenue exceeded expenditure by more than R30 000. Nevertheless, the university was always in an invidious position in comparison with other South African institutions. However, Professor A. C. Cilliers, reporting in 1963 on the quinquennial revision of subsidies, recommended that the University of South Africa, notwithstanding the special nature of its service, should be treated in the same manner as its sister universities for government assistance. The report received official approval and its recommendations were gradually made applicable to the Pretoria institution. By 1966, it was placed fully under the new formula, with certain modifications which concerned its non-residential character. The immediate result was encouraging, but the formula was a fixed one. Not surprisingly, therefore, in an age of spiralling costs, annual deficits began to reappear in the later sixties and strict economy was necessary once again.

At the beginning of the decade, the university was expanding rapidly and had long since outgrown the modest accommodation it had acquired in the city. By 1962, plans were afoot to construct a new building which, it was hoped, would provide an enduring home. In that year, the City Council of Pretoria offered the University of South Africa a site near Klapperkop, a hill on the south-eastern outskirts of the city overlooking Fountains Valley. It was a generous gesture, but when the news was made public, it provoked a sustained outburst of protest from a number of local residents who feared that the natural beauty of Pretoria's environs would be desecrated if a new university building were to be built on the site suggested. However, before the new year was out and before the necessary fund raising campaign to implement the scheme had been set in motion, another development had arisen which seemed to place the future of the university as a Pretoria institution for external students in jeopardy.

The roots of this new problem lay in the agitation of the

middle fifties for improved higher educational facilities for Afrikaners in Johannesburg and the Reef towns. The first success was achieved with the opening in 1961 of the *Goudstadse Onderwyskollege*, an Afrikaans-medium teacher training college. Those of its students who sought graduate qualifications worked to that end through the University of South Africa, but there was a strong desire for a second university nearer at hand. Although government was not at that time in favour of this, a departmental committee was set up in the course of the following year to investigate the question. It reported in December, 1962 and recommended that the University of South Africa should undertake additional functions for the Afrikaners of the Rand. Even before that date – on 12 September, 1962 – the Minister of Education, Arts and Science, the Hon. J. de Klerk, had tentatively suggested to the Principal that the university might move to Johannesburg to begin residential courses there. This was agreed to, on the understanding that such a departure would not encroach upon the University of South Africa's existing and future obligations to its external students. It had to be remembered that a fine reputation in a specialized field had been built up since 1946; moreover, any change of policy such as that contemplated by the Minister would infringe the gentleman's agreement that the institution would never seek to enter the teaching fields of sister universities of the traditional kind.

On 14 February, 1963 the Principal was given to understand that a Cabinet decision had been reached which endorsed the project, but which seemingly ignored the important proviso made by Professor Pauw that external work must continue as in the past. The university felt constrained to reiterate its commitment to the external student. This was done by the Chairman of Council, Professor Boshoff, at the official opening of the academic year on 21 February. He stressed that the university's function of catering for the needs of external students was of "paramount importance and must in no way be prejudiced", since "no additional residential function could be more important than its training of external students". The Cabinet apparently took

STEPHANUS PETRUS ERASMUS BOSHOFF was born on 14 July, 1891 in the Senekal district of the Orange Free State. After matriculating at Paarl in 1908, he obtained a Thomas Robertson bursary for further study and graduated in 1911 with distinction at Grey University College, winning the Chancellor's Gold Medal and a Queen Victoria Scholarship. An M.A. in 1913, he continued his studies in Amsterdam.

The outbreak of war brought him back to South Africa, where he took part in the rebellion and was captured. He forfeited his bursary as a result of his involvement in this affair.

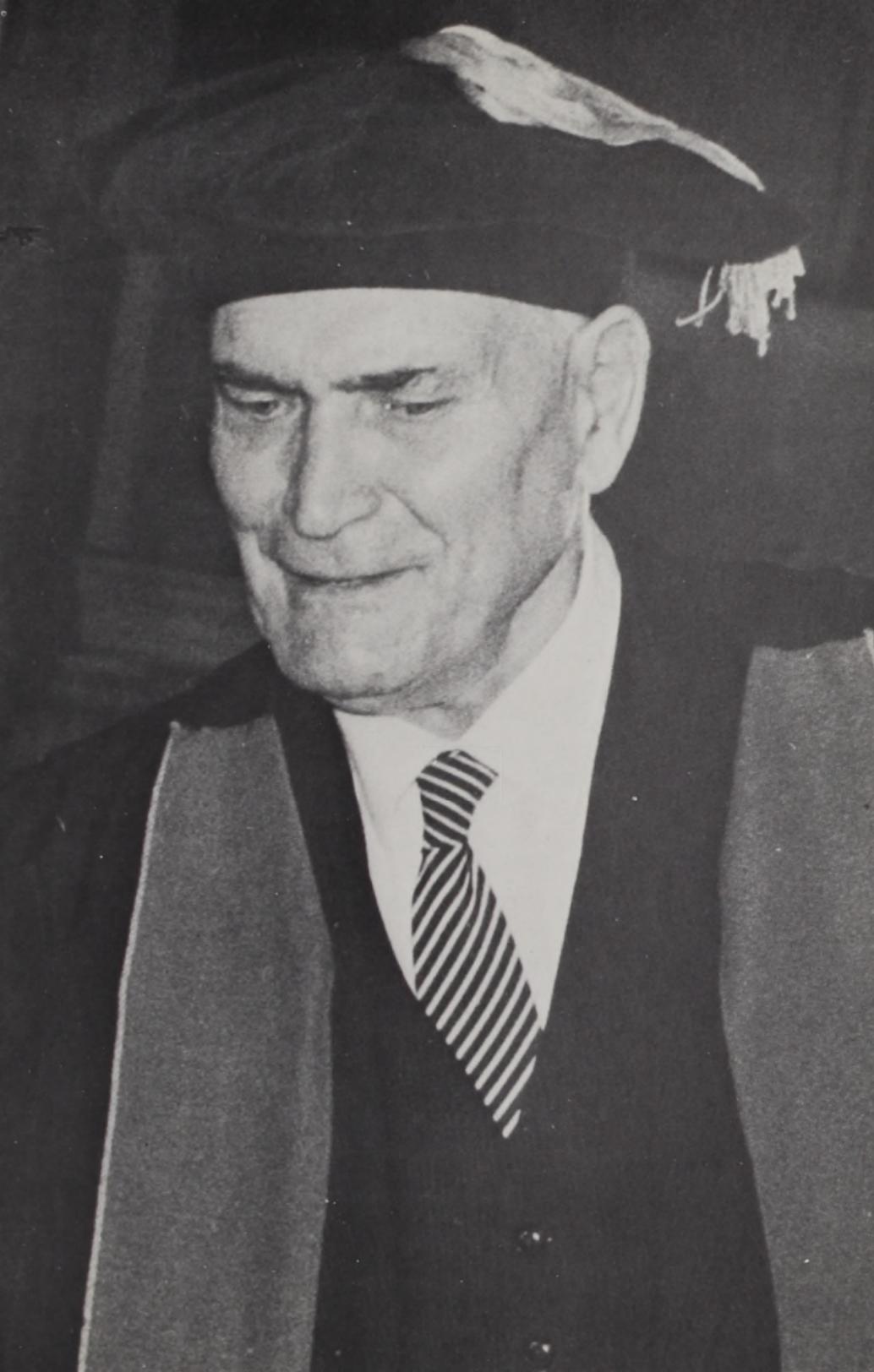
After working in an attorney's office, he joined the staff of the Arts Department of the theological school in Potchefstroom, where he became a professor in 1917. He was also able to complete his doctoral studies with distinction in Amsterdam. He became Professor of Afrikaans at the University of Cape Town in 1930 and from 1932 to 1934 was Director of Education for the Transval.

An educationist of note and a writer of distinction, he received honorary doctorates from the University of South Africa and the University of the Orange Free State.

A Council member from 1932 until 1934 and again from 1944 until 1969, he was chosen as Vice-Chancellor from 1952 to 1955. When the Principal was made Vice-Chancellor under new legislation, he became Chairman of Council, a post which he held until his resignation from the governing body.

Professor Boshoff died at Potgietersrus on 30 April, 1973.

*Professor Stephanus Petrus Erasmus Boshoff, M.A.,
Litt.D., D.Litt. (h.c.), D.Litt. et Phil. (h.c.)
Member of Council 1932-1934; 1944-1969
Vice-Chancellor 1952-1955
Chairman of Council 1955-1969*



note of this unequivocal statement and on 15 March, the Minister of Education informed the Principal that plans to move the university to the Witwatersrand had been shelved.

It seemed that development in Pretoria would continue uninterrupted and that any agitation by the Rand Afrikaans University Committee which had been formed to promote the extension of higher education there would no longer involve the University of South Africa. It was not to be. Negotiations were resumed, and on 13 September, 1963, Minister de Klerk wrote at length to the Chairman of Council on the future of the University of South Africa. Taking note of its phenomenal growth and of its plans to inaugurate a vast building programme and to recruit new staff, he intimated that government thinking on the university question might easily lead the institution into financial difficulties if it expanded on too large a scale. Outlining future possibilities, he pointed out that the associated colleges for non-Europeans would probably become full universities in time. They would be encouraged, together with the existing institutions for European students, to follow the example of the University of Pretoria and establish strong extra-mural divisions. This would cause a drop in enrolments with the University of South Africa, since more than 60% of its student body came from regions where extra-mural study courses could be provided. In addition, other universities would no doubt feel disposed to introduce correspondence methods of tuition as well.

Such a fundamental change of approach would undoubtedly have an adverse effect upon the development of the University of South Africa. Nor was this all, for if it should wish to become a conventional type of university, a Pretoria campus would be out of the question. Government was not in favour of either a second university for Afrikaners in the city, or a new university using English as a medium of instruction. Council would therefore be well advised to proceed with caution in order to avoid shouldering commitments for which the necessary subsidy might not be forthcoming.

The Minister's letter led to renewed correspondence and a

series of discussions between him and the Principal in the latter part of September and early October of that year. Professor Pauw held that an extension of correspondence work to other universities would amount to “ ’n verbreking . . . van die lank aanvaarde en eerbiedige ooreenkoms in verband met die funksieverdeling tussen die Universiteit van Suid-Afrika en die residensiële universiteite”. If this agreement no longer held, then the University of South Africa might conceivably be free to enter the residential field. The Minister, however, reiterated his objection to the establishment of a second residential university in Pretoria : the University of South Africa must keep to its existing responsibilities.

The range of these responsibilities was however also in doubt. The Minister did indeed admit that the suggestion of allowing other universities to undertake correspondence work was not based upon any predetermined policy decided upon by government, but he could not guarantee that students of all races would continue to benefit from the services provided by the University of South Africa. From the Minister's reply to further representations it appeared that the government stood firm upon a policy of separate development in university education, even by correspondence, and that the University of South Africa would in time lose its non-European students.

It is clear that the question of a university for Afrikaners on the Witwatersrand was not absent from these exchanges on the subject of the University of South Africa's future. The Minister of Education was certainly in favour of such a development, and a possible move to the Witwatersrand was once more a live issue. At a special meeting on 27 and 28 November, 1963, Council decided to appoint a committee to discuss the future of the University of South Africa, to review building plans and to ascertain the sort of help which could be provided for any new Rand university. In addition, Council sought permission to collect development funds to a ceiling of R500 000.

On the committee, which became known by its Afrikaans name, the *Toekomstkomitee*, both Council and Senate were well

FRANÇOIS JEAN DE VILLIERS was born at Paarl on 25 April, 1898. He matriculated in 1917, obtained a B.A. degree at the University of Cape Town and gained further graduate qualifications from the University of California and Cornell University in the United States. He received the D.Sc. degree of the University of South Africa in 1925 and is a Fellow of the British Royal Institute of Chemists. He is also a holder of the Frans du Toit award and the Havenga Prize of the *Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns*.

Chairman of the Communications Association of South Africa, the National Film Board and the Africa Institute, Dr de Villiers has for many years been active in various fields. A Past President of the Associated Scientific and Technical Associations of South Africa, he has been Chairman of a number of national bodies, among them the *Akademie*, the South African Chemical Institute and the Fuel Research Institute of South Africa.

The Chairman of a number of government commissions, he also played a large part in the founding of the Bureau of Standards and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research. For 20 years, he was the Industrial Adviser to the Department of Commerce and Industry and became a director of the South African Industrial Development Corporation.

He has contributed much to the expansion of educational facilities. Long a member of the Council of the University of Pretoria, he promoted the establishment of a Faculty of Engineering and of the Institute for Management and Administration there.

A member of the Council of the University of South Africa from 1954 until 1957, he succeeded Judge President G.J. Maritz as Chancellor in the latter year.

*Dr François Jean de Villiers, B.A., M.Sc.,
Ph.D., D.Sc., F.R.I.C.
Member of Council 1954–1957
Chancellor since April, 1957*



represented. The members of the committee were anxious to find out from the Rand Afrikaans University Committee what that body expected of the University of South Africa. In this matter, the presence of Council member Dr P. J. Meyer on the *Toekomskomitee* was invaluable, since the head of the South African Broadcasting Corporation was also Chairman of the Rand committee. Talks were held with representatives of the Rand committee at which Professor Pauw again explained that whatever role the University of South Africa might play in the founding of the new institution, nothing would be done to affect the important pioneering work for external students. It was, however, a bilingual university, and he intended to maintain that position, both in the existing division and in the proposed residential section, if it were to become a branch of the University of South Africa. The Rand committee accepted the Principal's standpoint, on the understanding that if the University should develop a teaching section for Afrikaners on the Rand, its management must accord with the wishes of the committee. This would necessarily entail a separation of the proposed internal and the existing external divisions of the University of South Africa, and it was along these lines that the *Toekomskomitee* drafted a report which was approved by Council on 11 April 1964. An internal section in Johannesburg was recommended, with the external department remaining in Pretoria.

The proposal, as the *Toekomskomitee* had come to realize, had certain undoubted advantages. The pioneer venture in correspondence teaching was not without value in suggesting new approaches in the work of other universities. Many of the methods of tuition which had been evolved since 1946 could profitably be adapted to meet the needs of internal students. In another way, too, the University of South Africa could prove of immense assistance in controlling a teaching section of the conventional type, designed for Afrikaans-speaking students. Its long tradition of bilingualism could prevent the exclusive use of one language in the new division and at the same time help to foster better understanding between the two language groups.

There were, however, serious disadvantages in inaugurating such a new service. There was always the fear that the external section would in time become no more than a secondary function of the university. Moreover, the administrative problems involved in the control of a twin-campus institution would be enormous. Professor van der Walt, the former Principal, made it clear in a report to the *Toekomstkomitee* that he favoured the eventual unification of the two sections in Johannesburg. The Prime Minister, Dr Verwoerd, shared this view and suggested on 16 April that the Minister of Education sound out the Principal on the possibility of a complete move to the mining city. Early in May, after Professor Pauw had discussed the university's proposals with him in Cape Town, the Minister wrote to the Principal, stressing the disadvantages of a divided university.

Both the Board of Tutors and the University Senate endorsed Council's opinion that the existing function and bilingual character of the University of South Africa must at all costs be maintained, whatever decision was reached on the question of a move to Johannesburg. On 6 May, the Management Committee of Council – the *Dagbestuur* – decided that a Planning Committee, under the chairmanship of Professor Boshoff, should be formed to investigate the position more closely. It consisted in the main of the members of the *Toekomstkomitee*, but included the Registrar and other nominees of the Board of Tutors as well as outside members of the Executive Committee of Senate.

The new committee began its sittings on 14 May, 1964 and in the following weeks made a thorough investigation of the question of the university seat. It was in constant communication with the Rand Afrikaans University Committee and also contacted the City Council of Johannesburg on the subject of a suitable site in the city. The problem of the university's non-European external students had an important bearing on the committee's decisions. It was at length decided that, as government planned eventually to attach them all – either as internal, extra-mural or external students – to the various university colleges, it would be best to retain an office for them in Pretoria

BAREND FREDERIK JANSE VAN RENSBURG was born on 15 December, 1910 on a farm in the Brandfort district of the Orange Free State. He matriculated at Boshof in 1928, joined the staff of a bank and was later appointed to the Natal Provincial Administration. In 1933, he served in the Department of Internal Affairs of the Union government, transferring soon afterwards to the Department of Union Education. He graduated in both arts and commerce, obtaining the B.A. degree in 1937 and the M.Com. in 1952.

Appointed to the staff of the university as Assistant Accountant in 1935, he became Secretary of the Division of External Studies in 1946, sometimes helping with the teaching in the early days on a part-time basis. He acted as Registrar during P.A. Taljaard's absence, succeeding to the permanent post at the beginning of 1955. Like his predecessors since 1918, he also undertook certain other duties, among them the secretaryship of the Joint Matriculation Board.

*Barend Frederik Janse van Rensburg, B.A., M.Com.
Acting Registrar 1 October, 1953 – 31 December, 1954
Registrar since 1 January, 1955*



until the official policy was implemented. For the rest, the committee's final report of September, 1964 recommended that the whole university should move to Johannesburg, but without relinquishing its correspondence function and bilingual character. The only difference of opinion lay in the choice of a site.

The Planning Committee investigated the relative merits of two localities. The first, Emmarentia, in the western part of Johannesburg, was felt to be more suitable for a purely urban university. The second site at Bruma, close to Bedfordview on the opposite side of the city, had decided advantages as the campus for a university which was intended to serve the entire Witwatersrand and adjoining regions of white population. The Rand Afrikaans University Committee was nevertheless strongly in favour of Emmarentia and Council therefore set up a Site Committee to study the problem more closely.

The new committee began its investigation on the basis of certain general principles. In the first place, it was assumed that the university, as a conventional teaching institution, would cater in the main for the Afrikaners of the Witwatersrand, Vanderbijlpark and Vereeniging region. Secondly, no site should be chosen which did not allow for future expansion. In the third place, the campus would have to be easily accessible both as a seat of learning and as a cultural centre. Finally, the housing needs of the existing lecturing and administrative staffs would have to be given special consideration.

After a close study of the two localities, in which Professor J. H. Moolman and his Department of Geography played an important part, the Site Committee strongly recommended the choice of Bruma, a decision which was endorsed by the Director of the Natural Resources Development Council. The City Council of Johannesburg was also in favour and was willing to help the university to acquire the necessary land there. On the other hand, the Rand Afrikaans University Committee remained firmly attached to Emmarentia.

By the end of 1964, the University of South Africa was pressing government to come to a decision on the question of the move

to Johannesburg. However, the Minister of Education would not proceed until the site question had been finally settled. On that unresolved issue a Department of Education committee rejected Emmarentia, although a minority report gave its support to the Rand Afrikaans University Committee's choice. The Minister also approached Professor A. C. Cilliers, Chairman of the University Advisory Committee, to look into the financial aspects of moving the University of South Africa to Johannesburg. Here, another drawback to any change of seat became apparent. In his report, Professor Cilliers gave his opinion that the scheme would cost even more than the establishment of an independent University of Port Elizabeth on the foundations of the Rhodes University branch which had been operating in the coastal city.

By this time, too, there were increasing demands from Afrikaners in the political and commercial fields on the Rand for an independent, unilingual Johannesburg university to cater for the needs of that community. The newspaper *Dagbreek en Sondag-nuus* stated categorically that the general dissatisfaction on the Rand over the whole issue stemmed from the University of South Africa's insistence on bilingualism if it opened a branch there. It was not, therefore, just the question of a site which was proving a stumbling-block. The *Afrikaanse Sakekamer*, too, wanted to see the creation of a unilingual Johannesburg university for Afrikaners, with a flourishing extra-mural section. It was, however, prepared to accept a bilingual division for external students, but not for non-Europeans.

The tide was running strongly in favour of a separate university when on 19 March, 1965 Professor Pauw wrote again to the Minister, asking for a speedy solution to the problem to dispel the cloud of uncertainty which was hanging over the University of South Africa. He stressed again the university's firm decision to maintain its bilingual character in all departments, even though Afrikaners would certainly form a majority in the proposed new section.

However, the growing demand for a Witwatersrand university where Afrikaans would be the sole medium of instruction weighed

heavily with the Cabinet when it again examined the university question. Finally, on 28 April, 1965, the Minister of Education informed the University of South Africa that if it moved to Johannesburg, it would be compelled to use Afrikaans alone in its internal teaching. Only in its external function, eventually to be restricted to European students only, would the use of both official languages be permitted.

This ran counter to the Pretoria institution's declared policy and on 26 June, Council, on the recommendation of both the Senate and the Board of Tutors, expressed its regret that it could no longer entertain the idea of establishing itself in the neighbouring city. However, if the next move proved to be the founding of an independent university there, the University of South Africa would do everything possible to assist the newcomer.

This was, in fact, to follow. On 4 August the Principal was informed that the Cabinet had decided upon the opening of a second Johannesburg university, in which Afrikaans would be used for instructional purposes. In his letter the Minister thanked the University of South Africa for its offer to help in this connection and added that he could state "duidelik en ondubbelsinnig" that "u toekomstige taak net korresponderend en vir so lank as wat nodig eksaminerend sal bly".

It was the end of a protracted period of strain – "one of the tensest epochs in the annals of the University", as the Principal later described it. Had the move taken place, it might have been, in Professor Pauw's words, "the biggest event in the history of South African higher education". On the other hand, the demand for unilingual instruction might have become too strong to withstand, and the fine traditions built up in twenty years by the University of South Africa might have been lost as the correspondence section became increasingly a secondary function of the university. Most members of staff and students hailed the end of the period of uncertainty with relief, for the proposed move was not generally popular. One former student of the University of South Africa spoke for many when, in March, 1965, he begged the Prime Minister to veto the whole idea of a transfer to Johan-

nesburg. It would be, he argued, an unnecessary tragedy, for the university, as constituted in Pretoria, performed an outstanding service to the entire community.

The Rand Afrikaans University duly came into being and the University of South Africa gave its assistance to the new-comer in generous measure. Professor G. van N. Viljoen of the Department of Classical Languages, who had played no inconspicuous part in the lengthy debate over the proposed move, became the first Rector of the new institution. Those of his colleagues in Pretoria who accompanied him on a permanent or a temporary basis, brought with them to Johannesburg many of the ideals which had contributed to the success of the older university, now free at last to begin a fresh period of expansion in its own field.