

Catalogue of shame

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Every White person who voted this Government back into power in April must stand condemned and acknowledge his complicity in the cold-blooded cruelty which has been committed on the Bapedis — the latest victims of the “grand design”.

For many years now it has been the practice of this Government to move people and remove them; to uproot people and to dump them; irrespective of how or when they acquired their land, irrespective of the promises made to them, irrespective of ancestral graves, irrespective of distance from employment facilities or basic amenities.

Every resettlement village, every tent-town and transit camp; every Morsgat, Dimbaza, Illinge, Sada, Limehill, Klipgat, Stinkwater, Mondhlo, Mnxesha, Sophiatown and George Goch will be for ever an indictment of those who by their silence, consented.

The Prime Minister, in his post-election broadcast to the nation in April, stressed what many of us actually, in sincerity believe, that “we must do justice to all the interests and aspirations of all our peoples and groups, that we must promote the happiness and dignity of every person,” and “the feelings of others must be considered . . .”

Laudable sentiments indeed but the credibility has long since widened into an impassable chasm. We in the Black Sash have consistently condemned the diabolical practice of moving people as social violence and the legalised destruction of communities.

Twelve thousand Bapedis in the Eastern Transvaal were recently moved from a farm sold to them in 1905. Their homes were bulldozed and they were taken 200 km to tin shacks in Bothashoek.

But now, as if to add insult to unspeakable injury, some are to be allowed back as farm labour. Mr. Punt Janson, who is very sensitive to any criticism, angrily declares that the removal was in the interests of South Africa . . . White South Africa of course!

Imminent also is the removal of 800 families, some 8 000 Black people, from near Ventersdorp. Fifty-two families who have already

been moved to Strydfontein, claim that they were given no notice, that the trucks simply arrived and that their furniture and belongings were damaged in the haste of the move. Strydfontein is without a clinic, the nearest being 60 km away.

In May 400 families of the Banogeng tribe were moved from their farms near Lichtenburg to De Hoop inside BaphutaTswana. Typical of the merciless greed which robs the poor, they were refused permission to harvest their crops first.

When did all this start, this endless catalogue of shame? There was Sophiatown in 1958; there was Limehill in 1968. In August 1971 Dr. Piet Koornhof, the then Deputy Minister of Bantu Administration, visited Sada and was apparently deeply shocked at the conditions.

“Something must be done, and done soon,” he vowed. He is now Minister of Sport and the removals have gone on and resettlement camps like Sada have increased in number and size.

On January 1, 1972, the total adult population of Illinge was 4 070, of Sada 15 116 and of Dimbaza 4 871 (Hansard No. 2; col. 103, February 16, 1973). On June 30, 1973, the figures read Illinge 10 098, Sada 14 682 and Dimbaza 8 486 (Hansard No. 4, col. 193 and 194, February 27, 1974).

Witzieshoek, “homeland” of the South Sotho in the Free State, is another area where hopelessness, hunger and unemployment are a way of life and into which people from surrounding “Black Spots” are being packed by the thousand (Rand Daily Mail, November 20, 1971).

In July 1971 the 40 families of Machavie-stad finally lost their 20-year battle with the Town Council of Potchefstroom. They were not permitted to keep the land which Paul Kruger had given them some 70 years previously. They were moved to Rooigrond near Mafeking (Star, August 4, 1971).

In the winter of 1972 despair reigned at the farm Ruigtefontein near Waschbank as about 500 families watched their homes being

destroyed by Government bulldozers and they were moved 29 km to a barren hillside near Ladysmith called Ekuvukeni. One man, a Mr. Edgar Hlatswayo who, with his three brothers had inherited 44 acres at Ruigtefontein, was left with a 30 m x 15 m plot at Ekuvukeni (Rand Daily Mail, July 31, 1972).

Also in June 1972, about 2 000 Black people were moved from the outskirts of Komatipoort, 35 km to Naas Township. Even the police expressed concern at the lack of facilities at Naas (Rand Daily Mail, August 14, 1972).

Last year, in September, the police had to use tear gas to force the removal of an angry tribe of more than 300 families who were unwilling to move from the home they had known for generations, about 30 km south of Groblersdal to a site in Sekhukhuland (Rand Daily Mail, September 7, 1973).

Between July 1973 and February 1974, 93 Black families were moved from Riemvasmaak in the Northern Cape to an area in Damaraland north of Windhoek and to the Ciskei (Hansard No. 4, February 27, 1974).

Then right on our doorstep, and in these days of critical housing shortage, 64 families of George Goch have vehemently objected to, and have so far withstood, their removal from their well-built homes of the Eastern Bantu Residential Area, to semi-detached dwellings at Malapo Extension in Soweto.

George Goch, as it is commonly known, is not a slum, it was a respectable happy little village community within walking distance of factories and other employment, but on October 19, 1973, it was declared abolished and the spirited residents who remained automatically became illegal squatters. Those who now live at Malapo Extension have to endure the daily commuting on the overcrowded trains.

In November last year, Chief Mahura of the Batlhaping tribe paid a visit to Johannesburg and returned home to Ditakwaneng, near Vryburg to find that home was no longer there.

His family had been moved and his house demolished. Together with people from about eight kraals they had been moved about 200 km, from fertile pastoral land to a desert-like area near Kuruman; so that the land

could be taken over by the Department of Agricultural Credit and Land Tenure (Star, November 16, 1973).

Besides the removal of African people there has also been the removal and resettlement of thousands of Indians. Under the Group Areas Act, 29 230 Indian families had been resettled in group areas by the end of 1973 (Hansard No. 3, col. 104, February 18, 1974); and in terms of the Group Areas Act, 4 239 Indian traders have still to be resettled (Hansard No. 2, col. 71, February 12, 1974).

There are for example, the Indian traders in Pretoria's Prinsloo Street; in Vrededorp, Johannesburg, and in District Six in Cape Town.

The Indians of Ermelo were "resettled" to Cassim Park. There were 200 Indian small-farmers, representing about 2 000 Indians in Stockville Valley near Gillitts, Natal, who were moved when the area was proclaimed for occupation by Coloured people (Hansard No. 16, col. 1091, May 26, 1972).

The Indians at Wyebank near Kloof, Natal, have faced uncertainty for the last 20 years because the Government has not proclaimed their area for any specific race group yet (Sunday Tribune, May 12, 1974).

There are also the Coloured people — 49 145 Coloured families had been resettled in other group areas by the end of 1973 (Hansard No. 3, col. 104, February 18, 1974); 24 613 Coloured families remain to be resettled. There are the Coloured people who are being squeezed out of the Transkei; there are the Coloured people of District Six in Cape Town. In April about 400 poor shanty dwellers in a settlement in Tiervlei near Belville were evicted.

It is well-nigh impossible to believe that there are still White South Africans who are blandly willing to sell their souls and compromise their integrity in order to justify those means of furthering the aims of apartheid, when year after year we are informed of the callous uprooting of people from their homes.

Whether or not it is euphemistically called slum clearance, "Black spot removal" or the consolidation of the homelands, it most certainly is engineered to satisfy the unsatiable tentacles of White greed, to appease the paranoid delusion of an evil and hopeless ideology, or is it perhaps motivated by naked animal fear?