

ALEXANDRA TOWNSHIP: a brief history

alexandra
your sons are exiled
to boxhouses
of diepkloof
meadowlands
tembisa
but always
they return
to your guttered streets
to your squeezed yards...
(from 'Back to Mama' by M Gwala)

ALEXANDRA was originally conceived as a 'European' township, but in 1912 the Alexandra Township Company Ltd decided to resurvey the land and lay it out for Africans and Coloureds. It was established as a 'Non-European' township where blacks could acquire freehold. During the next 75 years blacks lost all their rights as urban dwellers and so by 1963 Alexandra was the only township in the so-called white areas where blacks could acquire land in freehold.

The first attempt to abolish Alexandra came in the form of a resolution of the Johannesburg City Council, passed in January, 1943. They regarded Alexandra as a slum, as a refuge for criminals and a menace to health. Besides, Alexandra was rather close to some white areas. However, the City Council did not have the power to remove Alexandra.

Until 1958, Alexandra had been administered by an Alexandra Health Committee, which put it in a rather unique position of self-

government. This Committee was an agency of the Transvaal Provincial Council and had, at one stage, as its chairman, Abraham Fisher, the Communist Party leader. But in 1958 the Peri-Urban Health Board took over.

By 1958 Alexandra had a population of 98 000. The Peri-Urban Health Board planned to create a township of 30 000 families and 15 000 (mainly males) living in hostels. There was no suggestion of interference with the rights of standholders.

After 1958, however, pass and influx control laws were strictly enforced. A census was taken - people who had lived in Alexandra since 1950 or before were given permits to remain. Those who came after 1950 were allowed to remain for as long as they were employed. People who were temporarily away, lost their rights to live in Alexandra. Many however continued to live in Alexandra illegally.

The world of Alexandra came crashing down in March, 1962, when the state announced that family accommodation was to be eliminated and 8 hostels housing 2 500 people each were to be built. 'Single' men and women living in Randburg, Sandton, and in the 'locations in the sky' (servants' quarters on top of blocks of flats) would be accommodated in the hostels. Families were rehoused in Meadowlands, Diepkloof, and Tembisa as well as being endorsed out if they were unemployed. During 1963 and 1964 more than half the population of Alexandra was moved out.

The announcement by the state to change Alexandra into a hostel town immediately preceded the passage of the Better Administration of Designated Areas Act of 1962. This

Act, which was first applied to Alexandra, gave greater powers of control to the state to administer the township.¹ Gone was the autonomy of the 1940s and 1950s (as we have seen recently in the case of Crossroads, a community free from restricting Acts is able to develop strong local organisation capable of resisting the authorities).

After the initial spate of removals, fewer removals occurred in Alexandra in the next decade. The 'illegal' population continued to increase as life was made progressively more difficult for them in other Rand townships.

RESISTANCE

WHEN considering the removals in Alexandra there are two questions which have to be asked. Firstly, why were the removals not as systematic and conclusive as for example, in Sophiatown, and, secondly, what kind of resistance did the people of Alexandra offer to the removals and how effective was this resistance?

Successful bus boycotts and active participation in ANC political activity in the 1940s and 1950s, and the PAC in the later period, give us some indication that Alexandra had been a strong and united community. The bus boycotts were able to elicit support from all classes in the community and were true models of community political action. The power of the boycott movements can be explained by the complexity of the community and the absence of outside control. Like the bus boycotts the threat of removals also provided an area of collaboration between different classes within the black community. Thus it was important for the state, if the removals were not to be

resisted, that local organisation be inhibited and control increased.

When the removals began in 1962 the major black political organisations, the ANC and the PAC, had been banned and their leaders detained or silenced. The state had shown its power and intolerance to opposition at Sharpeville and subsequently. This would partly explain why a campaign similar to that organised by the ANC to oppose the Sophiatown removals did not occur.

In other ways too, the capacity for Alexandra as a community to resist state action was declining. Control was increasing and the cohesiveness of the community was on the decrease. Some pointers are given: In 1958, Alexandra was taken over by the Alexandra Peri-Urban Health Board, who had greater powers than did its predecessor, and by 1962 control had increased even more. The passage of the Better Administration of Designated Areas Act introduced Alexandra to all the features of control that characterised other black townships.

The number of migrants relative to the number of families living in Alexandra was also increasing every year. Migrants were not only housed in hostels but also in rooms in and among family housing. Probably regarding themselves as temporary sojourners, they were relatively unconcerned about the future of Alexandra, and acted at least as a non-unifying factor, and at worst as a source of friction. Furthermore, especially after 1965, the families living there were mostly 'illegals'. Some did, perhaps, not regard themselves as permanent residents, but rather

regarded Alexandra as a stop-off place until they could find alternative accommodation.

However, many did not move on.

When the Resettlement Board demolished houses they did it in such a way that it could have made mass resistance difficult to organise. They did not demolish houses, or remove people, block by block or within a specified time period. Because of incompetence, shortage of funds, and lack of alternative accommodation, the complete demolition of Alexandra was constantly delayed and, instead, the township became more and more overcrowded. The insecurity felt by some of the inhabitants must have been immense and so probably little hope or determination, necessary for resistance, existed. This insecurity was perpetuated through frequent raids. In addition, since basic services were not carried out and since many families lived in one or two rooms, some people would probably have preferred to have been moved to a three or four roomed house in another area.

However, this did not mean that resistance did not occur. The newspapers reported numerous incidents of individuals or families who fought the authorities for the right to live where they choose. Many more incidents were probably not regarded as newsworthy by the press,²

Individual acts of resistance may have stalled removals to an extent, but there were other factors that help to explain the delay in implementation. Firstly, there were reports of inadequate funds for compensation landowners as well as to finance the demolition and transportation of the people. Secondly, one must look at the demand for labour from Alexandra.

Industry had expanded rapidly in the last 15 to 20 years in Wynberg, precisely because of the close proximity of cheap labour. Workers did not have to undertake long and expensive bus or train journeys. So while people in the nearby white residential areas may have been resentful towards the 'black spot', there was little determined pressure from them to get Alexandra removed. Industrial interest favoured the idea of their workers living in Alexandra, as did the expanding commercial world in the northern suburbs of Johannesburg. Thirdly, ever since the 1960s, there has been an acute housing shortage for Africans on the Witwatersrand, and while this factor may not have worried the authorities very much, it did not make the task of removing people easier. Alexandra was like a permanent squatter camp - within each yard illegal tin shanties had been erected which only made things more complicated for the authorities.

HOSTELS

THE original plan for Alexandra, mooted in 1962, was to demolish all family housing and to build 12 single-sex hostels having a total of 32 000 beds. Seven of the hostels would be for men and five for women. Each hostel would house 2 500 people. Hostels were not a new idea in the history of government thinking on how to house their labour force, but a whole city of hostels was.

The first two hostels opened on the 1st August, 1972. The men's hostel had 2 600 beds and the women's 2 800.³ In 1966 the state had passed policy to get rid of the 'locations in the sky'. Those south of the Houghton Ridge were removed to Diepkloof Hostel and those

north of the Ridge were expected to fill the Alexandra hostels.⁴

Hostels are repressive institutions designed specifically to house workers at the lowest cost and with the highest possible control. They hardly take into account the needs of the 'inmates' and so it goes without saying that dissatisfaction and discontent existed. Resistance to hostel accommodation and conditions was manifested in at least two ways.

Firstly, women, especially, were reluctant to become hostel dwellers. They tried by every means possible to find alternative accommodation in other townships, illegally in Alexandra, or in white Johannesburg. Consequently the women's hostel was never filled. Women were less prepared to enter the hostels than men since they often had children to support in Johannesburg and so were not necessarily temporary sojourners in the urban areas. Some women who did enter the hostel would frequent the shebeens in Alexandra in an attempt to pick up non-hostel males to escape hostel life. So desperate were some women for a roof over their heads together with their children (children could not stay at the hostels) that they would stay illegally in Alexandra and repeatedly pay admission of guilt fines when raided by the police. Others remained in houses about to be demolished and would move on again and again when the bulldozers came.

Secondly, in March, 1973, the hostel women sent a deputation to Dr Browde (City Councillor in Johannesburg) to complain about hostel conditions.⁵

The removals to the hostels did not go

without a public outcry, especially as many of the people affected were domestic servants. A Citizen Hostel Action Committee, which had originally been formed to fight the removal of domestic servants from white Johannesburg, was resuscitated and held a public meeting. Its members consisted of people from the churches, the Progressive Party and from the Black Sash. The Committee tried to inform the public about the disasters of hostel living and seemed to have caused enough of a public outcry to evoke government promises about heating and recreational facilities. They also organised a petition and a deputation to the Minister of Bantu Affairs and Development.

The inadequacy of heating facilities was a major complaint that featured every winter for about three years. In 1974 Dr Browde formed a 'Friends of Alexandra Hostel Fund' which campaigned for heaters and money from the public, as well as asking the authorities to supply heaters. In response to noises made by the public, P Janson, Deputy Minister of Bantu Administration and Development, acknowledged that mistakes had been made in the establishment of the Alexandra hostels. However, a month earlier he had also said that hostels were a 1 500 % improvement on the Alexandra slum..

While it is admirable that the citizens of Johannesburg formed a Citizen Action Committee or contributed to the Friends of Alexandra Hostel Fund, a word should be said about the effect on political action or resistance when liberal groups pick up worker issues. These groups focussed on issues such as insufficient heating or the lack of

recreational facilities in isolation, instead of posing first and foremost a challenge to the whole hostel system. Because of this they were implicitly accepting the hostels as acceptable institution and would regard their cause as won if heating was provided or the Minister had ceded a point or two. They functioned not to challenge the existing structure of labour supply, but rather to iron out difficulties between employers and the government. After all, worker productivity can only be low if they froze the night before, and there is no way of knowing what mischievous activities workers could get involved in if recreational facilities were not provided. So hostel dweller resistance was co-opted to become a secondary conflict between employers and the state, rather than a fundamental conflict between workers and the state as representative of the interests of capital in general.

REMOVALS IN THE 1970s

DURING 1973, the now renamed Board for the Development of Peri-Urban Areas started once more to move families out of Alexandra and to demolish their houses. Only families who 'qualified' legally were being rehoused.⁶ However, many families did not qualify. Many husbands and wives held single permits instead of family permits, while others were not registered at all. The Black Sash have alleged that the authorities issued wives and husbands with single permits as a device to prevent them from qualifying for family housing. If a child's name was not included on his/her mother's permit, he/she had no official existence. The authorities would

also refuse to include the child's name.

If both husband and wife were in legal employment but were holding single permits, they were told to separate and stay in sexually segregated hostels. To wives who were unemployed, with or without dependents, the state ultimatum was - go to the homelands and take your dependents with you. To a woman who did have employment but did not qualify for a house (eg, single women, widows and divorcees) the state said, 'live singly in the hostels in Alexandra and send your children to the homelands or go with your children to the homelands'. Three quarters of so-called 'single women' in the Alexandra hostel had children. Many of the women no longer had ties with the 'homeland' areas, and there was no official reply to the women's question: 'Where must we send our kids?'.⁷ When the children were sent away they lost their rights as urban dwellers and would become migrant labourers. If they remained in Alexandra or moved to another urban township they would be regarded as 'illegal' or 'undesirable' when they grew up and would experience immense difficulties in getting jobs. They would also be subject to constant police harassment when they turned 16 since they would not be able to get a reference book.

FREEHOLD title owners have always been a minority in Alexandra but at one time there were 2 500 freehold title owners. Since 1963 the number has been decreasing due to expropriation by the state. However, expropriation was slow until 1974. The authorities (now the West Rand Administration Board - WRAB) ordered all stand owners to

vacate their properties by the beginning of 1975. They were allowed to remain tenants until WRAB could find them alternative accommodation. WRAB made little attempt to do so. There were many complaints from landowners that they had to wait months for compensation and that when compensation was paid it was insufficient. WRAB officials also raided houses and deposited furniture on the street, but after an appeal to the Supreme Court this was halted. With the tactic of eviction denied to them, WRAB began to demand that rentals from sub-tenants be paid not to the owners but to them. They also moved people out of rooms let by standowners. By doing this they deprived owners of their livelihood and they were forced, through economic necessity, to sell their land to the WRAB.

1976

PLANS for a reconstructed Alexandra were again 'formalized' in August, 1976. This had become a necessity because the shortage of accommodation for migrant labourers was becoming acute and even employers were being affected. In 1975, WRAB had given permission to at least 16 private companies to erect prefab hostels in Alexandra. The conditions in these prefabs were as bad or worse than in the WRAB hostels. They were regarded as temporary constructions until new hostels were built.

However, for more hostels to be built, more people would have to be moved. In September, 1976, WRAB announced that about 3 000 single permit holders would have to move to City Deep Hostels. Their present accommodation would be demolished and new hostels

would be built for them. The move would be for about two years. All family permit holders would be moved to Soweto and coloured families to Evaton. About 2 500 families would be affected. Removals began again in November.

Two major problems arose for the people affected by the forced removals. Firstly, most worked near Alexandra and were no longer able to get to their places of work cheaply and quickly. Secondly, it had been official policy for the last decade not to issue family permits. Married couples who applied for family permits were issued with single permits. In addition, due to the housing shortage, many married couples lived in single quarters. Consequently many married men were moved to City Deep Hostel. While the authorities continually denied that the removals were disturbing family life, when Rev S Buti and the Alexandra Students' League opened a bureau they had soon tabled 1 000 cases of affected families. After a meeting on the 12th December, between Buti and WRAB officials, all removals and demolitions were suspended for one month. During this period families were given the opportunity to establish their status with the necessary documentation.

The situation worsened when the conditions at City Deep Hostel were exposed. The City Health Department declared this accommodation unfit for human habitation, and WRAB moved the men to Lefaleng Hostel in Soweto. This was even further away from their place of work. Many men went back to their families or went to live illegally in the white suburbs.

Removals and demolitions were planned to start again in January, 1977, and WRAB promised that no more families would be split.

However, one wonders how many families could provide the necessary documentation to prove that they were married. 'Illegal' families were still told to split and the unemployed women told to return to the 'homelands'.

When a house was vacated it was demolished. However, at the end of February, it was reported that WRAB had started repairing partly demolished houses to accommodate families who had been left homeless, ie those who had been registered on single permits although they could prove they were families. This rather absurd, but also tragic act, can perhaps be understood by a look at the contradictions that WRAB was faced with. Government policy said demolish, remove and create a hostel town. Yet there was nowhere on the else on the Rand that the residents of Alexandra could move to. Houses were no longer being built at a rapid rate in Soweto and Tembisa, and the waiting lists in these areas were also lengthy. The same situation existed in the Alexandra coloured community. After floods in 1976, coloured people from the flooded Kliptown moved into houses in Evaton which had been earmarked for Alexandra families.

The dogmatic removals of people who already have houses is a feature of the more irrational quality of apartheid. However, in recent years there have been attempts made to streamline the apartheid policy, and it was only to be a matter of time before Alexandra too would be reconsidered.

1979

THE year 1979 seemed to be the year of doom for Alexandra. In March, Vosloo, Deputy Minister of Plural Relations, announced

that the remaining 4 000 families in Alexandra would be moved as soon as funds became available.⁹

Since 1976 there had been an increase in political activity in the townships. Initiated by the students during the 1976 uprisings, some of the initiative had been taken over by churchmen and other leaders in the community. However, students remained active - for example, in 1977 the Alexandra Students' League, together with Sam Buti, set up a bureau to help people affected by removals, and also ran a survey. The involvement of students on issues such as housing points to the importance of material issues for all sectors of a particularly deprived population. In October, 1978, an Alexandra Residents' Liaison Committee was set up. Prominent on the committee was Rev Sam Buti.¹⁰ Understandably, the first issue to concern the Liaison Committee was housing; they appealed for family housing and suggested that flats, similar to those at Mitchell's Plain in the Cape, be built.

The Alexandra Residents' Liaison Committee (ARLC) had talks with Vosloo in February and he agreed that the committee should become formalized. He also agreed to elections in April, which would be similar to those for the Soweto Community Council. They had more meetings with Vosloo, and even submitted plans for the redevelopment of Alexandra together with the results of the socio-economic survey they had conducted in the township.¹¹

On the 7th May, 1979, it was announced that elections would be held on the 16th of that month. However, a more important announcement was made the following day in

Parliament. Vosloo announced that Alexandra families would not be moved out and that the township would become an urban area for families. WRAB would be instructed to conduct a survey of all residents to establish which families would qualify to stay in the redeveloped township - the ominous implications of this will be discussed later.

There was, according to the press, general jubilation. There was talk of a R200-million plan of turning the area into a high-density suburb with duplex flats, shopping centres and a giant sport stadium. Organisations such as the Urban Foundation promised financial assistance.

Due partly to the reprieve there was a relatively large amount of interest in the Liaison Committee elections than had been the case in other townships. The election was for 6 seats - another 4 seats would be nominated by the Department of Co-operation and Development. Two parties contested the election - the Save Alexandra Party and the Save Alexandra Residents and Tenants Party. The differences between them did not seem great. The SAR&TP wanted the hostels changed into flats for occupation by families, while the SAP wanted to retain the hostels for the meantime. Perhaps more significant were the personalities involved in the election. Rev Buti, leader of the SAP, and his fellow contestants, were much more well known in the community. Rev Buti had helped people during the 1976 removals. The campaigns included meetings at the stadium, poetry readings, music and modelling shows.

Voting started on the 16th May and according to the press there was a rush to

vote. Residents qualified to vote if they were over 18 and possessed either a residential permit, an ownership permit, a housing certificate, or a hostel certificate, as well as a receipt to prove that he/she was up to date with rent payments. The press said that the elections were well supported by the young. The booths were apparently so crowded that voting was extended by another day.

All the candidates of the SAP were elected by a large majority. The election poll was said to be 46%. However many questions remain to be asked about the election.¹²

WHY?

WHY did it appear so important to the government to destroy the Alexandra community, and which considerations stayed its hand at the last moment? An important function of apartheid is to retain within urban areas only as many africans as are required for the labour needs of white South Africa, and to remove the old, unfit and unemployed to the 13% of the country comprising the 'homelands' or 'independent states'. With this objective in mind, some 2 million people have already been uprooted and relocated, some of this number coming from Alexandra.

In the urban areas the state has attempted to house as large a percentage as possible of the labour force in well controlled hostels. However, unfortunately for the state there were a large number of africans who had lived in the urban areas for so long that they no longer had any rural ties. The government has attempted to make these people as rightless as possible in urban areas, while encouraging them to take out 'homeland' citizenship. And so, in Alexandra freehold

rights were removed. Family housing in urban areas has been provided, but is well controlled and segregated. Alexandra was not particularly conducive to control for reasons we have discussed above - and so the authorities desired its removal.

There were, of course, other reasons given to explain the removal of Alexandra, eg it is a 'black spot' and health hazard. However, we must be careful to distinguish between real reasons and ideological cover-ups. Alexandra was to have become a hostel town and would still have constituted a 'black spot'; in fact this 'black spot' was very desirable for the industries which had developed around the township. But the reasons for Alexandra's removal need not necessarily be explained by economic determinants. Ideology in South Africa has a momentum of its own and there is considerable economic irrationality in the dogmatic pursuit of complete segregation in urban areas. Alexandra was to a certain extent a victim of this ideology. The change of policy in 1979 is perhaps a return to a more rational path.

Why in 1979 did the government reverse its decision concerning Alexandra, especially since they had attempted so hard for so many years to remove the place? While one may answer that it was as result of Sam Buti's appeals and actions, the real reasons go far deeper.

To understand the reason why Alexandra was saved, together with communities like Glenmore and Crossroads, let us look briefly and rather crudely at the South African political economy in 1979. In the last decade or so there has been a structural trans-

formation of the South African economy, and monopoly capitalism has become dominant. This has had a wide range of repercussions on areas such as employment, capital intensity, trade, the division of labour, government and ideology. Unemployment had increased in the 1960s despite a growth in the economy and has become a structural feature, a fact even the government is now coming to terms with. In the labour process, africans are increasingly occupying semi-skilled positions. There is a growing identity of interest between business and the state, and the traditional cleavages along the lines of nationalisms are becoming less significant.

South African capitalism has thrown up a whole series of contradictions and the rather unique capitalist structure is going to have to change to survive. So while there may be some superficial changes being made to apartheid there are also some far reaching, more genuine changes being made to alter South Africa from a race to a more overtly class orientated society.

South Africa's strategy for change, or 'total strategy' as PW Botha has termed it, involves five different areas. Firstly, there is an attempt to mobilize all of South Africa's resources which includes the co-ordination of private and public sector activities, and the civil action programmes of the army in the rural areas. Secondly, there is the building up of a strong military force, going hand in hand with a growing militarization of our society. Thirdly, there is an attempt to give people vested interest in the status quo. There has at last been a recognition of the permanence of the urban black

population, and efforts are being made to make the lives of this group easier and so to create an urban elite. Fourthly, those landless and unemployed that are not incorporated into the power structure are identified as the potential enemy and are tightly controlled. They are dumped into rural areas with no means of escape. It is important to bear in mind that the relative privileges granted to urban africans are at the expense of intensified impoverishment in the rural areas. The urban unemployed are resettled in the rural areas. And fifthly, there is a new flexibility as regards racial domination; so long as class domination remains. For South Africa to maintain essential links with imperialist powers she can no longer afford to have the image of a totalitarian state with deaths in detention, bulldozing of houses and other seemingly irrational actions.

Yet despite state repression, resistance is growing and the state and capital are working hard to undermine it. And so they defuse potential flashpoints such as Crossroads, Glenmore and Alexandra which might become focuses of political mobilisation and struggle. This simultaneously improves South Africa's image abroad. This new flexibility is simply there to undercut resistance and has no effect on the millions of other victims of removals resettled less conspicuously.

It seems that although Alexandra has not received as much prominence as Crossroads or Glenmore it has also become the subject of Koornhofs new 'flexibility'. Once the state is committed to permanent urban residential rights for africans, and is concerned with

creating an urban elite, the old motives for demolishing Alexandra fall away and instead it becomes important to co-opt Alexandra and put it under the same degree of control as other african residential townships. Because Alexandra was always meant to 'be going', the provision of controls such as wide roads, police stations, strategically planned open spots, as well as Urban Bantu Councils or Community Councils did not exist. Many people were able to live illegally and with their families more easily in Alexandra than in other Reef townships. Coloured people, as well as some members of other racial groups were able to live in an integrated community with little racial friction. The 'informal sector' could also thrive.

The strategy for Alexandra is to recognize it as an urban residential area and use it as a powerful instrument in co-opting african support, giving them a stake in the status quo.

One of the first things that Vosloo said when he announced the change in state policy towards Alexandra was that there would be a survey conducted to establish which families would qualify to stay in a redeveloped township. Under the pretext of this survey they would be able to weed out 'illegals' who would then be sent to the 'homelands'. Since the reprieve for employed 'illegals' which gave them permission to register and become 'legal', most of the 'illegals' in the urban areas will be those people who are unemployed. Thus the 'homelands' become the dumping grounds for all those who are not needed in urban areas, who are 'unco-optable' and who could cause unrest. The separation of

the employed and unemployed also destroys the solidarity of the oppressed people.

The migrant workers living in Alexandra have also been 'saved' by Vosloo. They still have to live in hostels, are denied permanent residential rights, and are not allowed to bring their families to the urban areas. Today a new 2 500-bed hostel is being built without any but minor changes to previous models. As long as migrant labour persists the basic structure of exploitation and oppression in South Africa remains.

Who then has Vosloo 'saved'? He has 'saved' those who have the correct permits and who have the potential to have a vested interest in the status quo. In the government's bid to create a 'black middle class' and in commerce and industry's keenness to back up the government, they have become concerned with the provision of satisfactory housing, education and social services. Promises of plans for duplex flats, green belts and shopping centres are on the one hand a way of gaining support from people who aspire to a suburban status, and on the other an indirect call to business and industry to respond and provide assistance. The Urban Foundation has been very forward in offering assistance to an Alexandra development project.

Plans are also in the pipeline to establish an Alexandra Town Council, presumably with more powers than those of Community Councils. The government's announcement that they would 'save' Alexandra just after the announcement of the Alexandra Liaison Committee elections, was a powerful ploy to gain legitimacy for the committee and the elections.

'South Africa is a graveyard of predictions' says Johnson, author of How Long Will South Africa Survive?, and this is probably as true for Alexandra in the future as it has been for Alexandra in the past. The question to be answered is will Alexandra be co-opted and become a model township for those people whom the government wants to provide with some vested interest, or will more powerful social forces overtake these moves.

Notes:

1. According to an explanatory memorandum issued with the Act, the Act made it possible for the state to declare an area where africans had acquired land, to become an urban location. This meant that provisions of legislation relating to africans in urban areas would now apply to Alexandra. The Group Areas Act now applied to Alexandra and so steps to move more coloured families out began.
2. Incidents reported in the newspapers include: a) the case of 15 landowners who went to court, eventually to the Supreme Court, and appealed for an interdict demanding that no persons be forcefully expropriated. They won this but it was only a partial victory since they still had to leave their homes; b) one elderly man fought the authorities singlehanded in his attempt not to be moved. He went to court and to jail and it was only after his release that he gave up and went to live in Soweto.
3. The hostels cost R1 045 194 and R1 134 763 respectively to build. By 1973 the men's hostel was full and a waiting list existed. However, only 600 out of the 2 600 beds in the women's hostel were occupied, and was therefore a financial loss.
4. This involved the removal of 2 484 women and 200 men from 156 blocks of flats. The state devised a formula for the numbers of servants who could legally stay in flats and people in excess of this number had to go.
5. Their grievances included heating, rent, permits for visitors, bad treatment by

inspectresses, lack of hot water, petty charges and arrests, and a lack of space.

6. This meant that they complied with regulations laid down in 1968, that only a man who is over 21 years of age, who is a South African citizen, who qualifies to be in a prescribed area (in terms of Section 10(1)(a) or (b) of the Urban Areas Consolidation Act) and whose wife is legally in the area and who has dependents may become the registered tenant of a house in a Bantu Residential Area.

7. 79% of the children of women at the hostel managed to find places in the 'homelands' while the other 21% went to live with relatives in other towns or on farms in white areas.

8. The blueprint for the reconstructed hostel town included 8 hostel complexes (6 for men) and recreational facilities. Recreational facilities are often included in hostel plans since recreation channels grievances, dissatisfaction and frustration about work and living conditions into some harmless pursuit.

9. In anticipation of the move of all coloured families all facilities for coloured people (eg the school and graveyard) were switched from Alexandra to other areas. The coloured people have as yet (January, 1980) not been moved.

10. As well as running a parish in Alexandra Rev Buti occupies a leading position in the South African Council of Churches.

11. The plan included flats and new houses but said that the existing hostels should remain.

12. Was there coercion, false promises and misunderstandings that got people to vote? Were the booths really as crowded as the press made out, or was it a tactic to get the people to vote? Or were people genuinely enthusiastic about the elections and prospects of representation? Was there any move to encourage a boycott of the election? Unfortunately I have not been able to find answers to these questions.

Letter from the editor, Star newspaper, launching the Alexandra 'uplift' campaign.

COMMENT

Something YOU can do!

South Africa presents a microcosm of some of the most acute problems of the Twentieth Century.

We deal daily with the problems of international finance, nuclear energy and rapid industrial expansion. We also experience the whole gamut of Third World problems. We have racial and nationalistic antagonisms. Language and cultural differences. A dangerous imbalance between the "Haves" and the "Have-nots." In the face of these universal issues, what on earth can YOU as an individual do?

Men and women, black and white, rich and poor — all are eager to roll up their sleeves and tackle the things that stand in the way of everybody's peace and prosperity. But what can they tackle? The political issues are too diffuse; the socio-economic issues too big for individual effort. Even the problems of Soweto loom too large.

Nevertheless, let's DO something.

Today, The Star invites you—housewife, businessman, labourer, community leader, industrialist — to join us in a campaign. We are going to focus on one clearly defined, manageable area: Alexandra. Let us, together, uplift Alex. Let us make a model community of this depressed zone near the heart of one of the richest, most privileged urban areas in the world. Let us save Alex — and, in doing so, set a pattern

for uplifting every race relationship, every slum, every communal mess in the land.

Alex is a mess. A social, economic, political pollution in a delightful urban area. Yet, there is no reason why it should not rival its neighbours in cleanliness, orderliness and social drive ... so long as all of us co-operate in putting Alex back on its feet.

Its bus boycotts in the 1940s and 1950s, its gangsterism, its drama over evictions, its clinging to freehold tenure, have earned the 75-year-old township a special place in the Rand's history. Today, it lacks almost everything: adequate schools, lights, sewerage, recreational facilities, community spirit and money. But a vision is being created of a new Alex: a new family suburb for city workers.

Join us to make it come true.

During the uplift campaign, The Star will highlight the areas in which organisations, industries, businessmen, individual local residents and YOU — can help. There are many problems, including major political issues, standing in the way. But none is so big that enthusiastic co-operation cannot overcome it.

This is going to be a people-to-people effort. TEACH and CARE, two campaigns which the people of the Rand have helped to forge, will join with community organisations in Alex. So will officials, local residents, and even neighbouring towns.

Let's roll up our sleeves and tackle our "world problems."

Let's start in Alex.

— The Editor