

# AFRA

## NO CAUSE TO CELEBRATE

### Report No.17 June 1982

#### NO MORE BLACK SPOT REMOVALS?

In late April 1982 Natal newspapers carried a number of prominent reports which suggested that the government was abandoning its policy of black spot removals. Optimistic reporters pointed to the following signs of change:

- an announcement by the government that it was abandoning a major relocation project in Lebowa;
- a speech by Hennie van der Walt, chairman of the Commission for Cooperation and Development, in which he said that 'in the light of the new Government policy of economic development it was necessary to review whether it was necessary to remove some of the "Black spots"' (Natal Witness 23.4.82);
- a speech by Val Volker, Nationalist MP for Klip River, in which he suggested that black landowners living in "white areas" who were farming their land economically should not be moved. (Natal Mercury, 22.4.82)

In addition, some observers argue that there are less publicised but compelling economic pressures forcing the government to adopt a change of tack, if not of heart: the ever-increasing cost of the war in Namibia, coupled with the falling price of gold, means that there is less and less money around for grandiose removals schemes. They argue further that one should not be misled by government statements appearing to confirm that particular removals will be carried out as scheduled - such talk is merely talk, propaganda aimed at the far-right dissidents within Afrikanerdom, and not a serious statement of intent.

AFRA would like to believe that the vicious programme of forced population removals is lumbering to a halt. Undoubtedly the enormous cost of removals has forced a slowdown in recent years. Hennie van der Walt himself once estimated that "meaningful consolidation" could cost R6 000 million and admitted that was impossibly high. (Sunday Tribune, 1.2.81) The removal of the tiny black spot of Kwapitela alone cost R54 153.86 (Hansard, Question 390. 2.4.82) - i.e. R785 for every one of the 69 families removed to Compensation in July 1981. If, as AFRA Report 16 calculated, there are still some 189 African freehold properties to be removed in Natal, with a total population estimated at 230 000, then using the Kwapitela figures as a measure, eliminating them all could amount to a terrifying R180 550 000. Undoubtedly too, opposition in Natal to both consolidation and removals, as well as the threat of serious resistance in a number of communities earmarked for removal has forced Pretoria to become more cautious in its approach and will continue to demand careful handling by the state.

However, despite these considerations, the available evidence suggests that far from stopping further removals, the central government is still determined to push ahead with a programme that necessarily involves the forced relocation of thousands of blacks in Natal (and elsewhere). Strategic adjustments in the programme when absolutely unavoidable, even reprieves in certain well publicised cases, perhaps; a halt to further removals at this stage, no.

#### EVIDENCE FOR CONTINUED REMOVALS

The following is a very brief outline of some of the developments against which vague hints of a reassessment of the official policy should be measured.

1. Confirmation that particular black spots will be moved: Less than a week after newspapers had reported so hopefully on the change in policy, Dr. Koornhof confirmed that a number of specified black spots in Natal were to be removed, including all the African freehold properties in Val Volker's

own constituency of Klip River. All these places have been under a threat for a long time and have not yet been moved, and it is still possible that if sufficient pressure can be brought to bear against their removal, from both the threatened communities and outside support groups, they may yet be left alone (at least for the time being). Nevertheless, developments in these places make it clear that at this stage the government is still determined to move them.

Thus Matiwane's Kop, one of the threatened communities, has already been expropriated by the state (in 1978) and despite various appeals, Pretoria has consistently refused to reinstate the landowners with their title deeds. Landowners and tenants (over 12 000 of them) are thus living on land to which they no longer have any legal claim - they are there entirely at the discretion of the state.

Jonono's Kop, adjoining Matiwane's Kop, has also been expropriated. Earlier this year the local magistrate told tenants they need no longer pay rent to their landlords since the land now belongs to the state: clearly a preliminary to removal. The magistrate's announcement, predictably, caused a furore in the community, fanning a demoralising sense of insecurity and setting landowners against tenants. Fortunately the community has since rallied together and are trying to prepare themselves for the next attack.

A further sobering reminder of removals in this area, the large removals depot on the road between Ezakheni and Helpmekeer has not been dismantled. Piles of fletcraft pieces and toilet blocks stacked in the yard, a fleet of GG trucks and buses, a large crew of workers (the removals squad) are still there, to be drawn upon as needed.

2. Confirmation that four areas have been excised from KwaZulu: In April of this year Dr. Koomhof confirmed that four areas had been excised from KwaZulu and that the people living on this land would be removed. (Hansard, Question 465, 23.4.82). The four areas were in fact excised by proclamation in January 1981 (Proclamation R 19/1981); there has been no suggestion that now, in the light of a new "review" of policy, they be restored to KwaZulu. Thus before the van der Walt Commission's report on consolidation has been tabled in parliament - yet claiming legitimacy for its action by virtue of a debate in parliament in 1975 on the very consolidation proposals that the van der Walt Commission was directed in 1979 to reconsider - Pretoria has redrawn the boundaries of KwaZulu and authorised the relocation of some 112 000 people. The four areas in question are:

- a triangle of land north of Sodwana Bay, with a population estimated at 700 (Sunday Times, 17.5.81), scheduled land (i.e. set aside as an African reserve by the Land Act of 1913) with which the Natal Parks Board wants to expand the white fishing camp at Sodwana Bay;
- Reserve Four, with a population put officially at about 3 000 families (Hansard, col. 286, 4.9.81), also scheduled land - agriculturally one of the most favoured areas in KwaZulu; (see AFRA Report 13)
- Trust land to the east of Paulpietersburg, actually bought up by the state as "quota land" to be added to KwaZulu and, as such, used as a relocation point for thousands of labour tenants who were being evicted off white farms in northern Natal in the early 1970s; there are perhaps 20 000 people living there now, about 9 000 of them in the relocation township of Bilanyoni which was established in about 1970 - all facing a second removal;
- Driefontein, a large block of freehold farms near Ladysmith which was also incorporated into KwaZulu and has a population put officially at 70 980 in 1981 (Hansard, 26.2.81); residents were only notified by Pretoria in February 1982, a year after the event, of their excision.

3. Preparations for further relocation at Qudeni: Qudeni, 60 km north of Kranskop, consists of a series of relocation sites that were established in the early 1970s. At one site, Mzimhlophe, on a bare, high hillside, about 20 new fletcraft have recently been installed and there are reliable reports that a further 800 households are to be brought there soon. At this stage it is not known from where the people will be brought, but the fact of their coming does not seem to be in doubt.

4. Finally, and perhaps most ominous of all, is the new legislation providing for "the preservation of secrecy" in the dealings of the Commission for Cooperation and Development including, as was made clear in the parliamentary debate, the issue of consolidation - and hence removals. (Hansard, 28.4.82) In the light of these developments AFRA sees no cause to celebrate a change in policy yet.