

Tranquillizers — Use With Caution

By DR. ELLEN HELLMAN

*Keep apartheid blues at bay,
Have your BaNtu always handy.
BaNtu keeps your pecker up,
Tells you all is fine and dandy.*

Many years ago I chanced across this poetic gem, and have faithfully followed its injunction ever since. *BaNtu* is indeed the morale-booster the anonymous bard claims. Published by the Department of Information, glossy and attractive in appearance, well laid out with many fine blocks, it has the additional advantage of being free. As its succinct title implies, it concerns itself with the Bantu, keeps its pulse on a host of Bantu affairs within the homelands and outside. The only subject which I cannot recall receiving its due measure of attention is that of Bantu workers on White farms — apart of course from disagreeable subjects like pass laws and influx control. *BaNtu* is an exuberant publication, a glowing account of Bantu progress and the remarkable success attending the application of the official policy of separate development.

I, being so urban-centred that I can barely distinguish a pumpkin from a water-melon, particularly like the articles dealing with agricultural progress in the homelands, the reports of meetings of Regional Authorities suitably adorned with photos of the dignitaries present, White and Black, all appropriately solemn and impressive. It's all so immensely reassuring — the new crops, like fibre, being developed, the new irrigation schemes, the new buildings for new tribal and regional authorities. Mr. Blaar Coetzee, the Deputy Minister of Bantu Administration and Education, made the inaugural speech at the sixth session of the Tswana Regional Authority at Mafeking. "He also assured the Tswana", says the January issue of *BaNtu* "that they had the full support of the government on the path of separate development they had taken". I wondered, when I read this, if the Tswana were very surprised at this full measure of government support for their decision to follow the path of self-development. I felt that while possibly they might not be surprised, they would undoubtedly be re-assured. Just as I am when I read *BaNtu*.

Unfortunately I find that the closer *BaNtu* moves to subjects with which I have some familiarity, the more likely is this happy tranquility of mind to be disturbed. Its treatment of Alexandra Township is a case in point.

"The New Alexandra . . . light, air, space" is the one-inch large heading across two pages in last year's May issue. There's an enticing reproduction of an architect's drawing of "the new flat dwellings to be erected in Alexandra" with a happily jiving Bantu couple in front — no

doubt, one would think, future occupants of one of these new "flats". This impression is strengthened by a large photo of squalid slum dwellings which "are being demolished to make way for modern flat buildings". There are pictures of the Health Centre and University Clinic where "thousands of mothers and babies are treated yearly", of some of the "thousands of food parcels sent every week to convalescent tuberculosis patients and families" and so on.

The history of Alexandra, as is well known, is one of close on a half-century of neglect. Johannesburg, on whose doorstep Alexandra sat, was not prepared to be saddled with it, neither was the Province. From its beginning in 1912 Alexandra was the rejected claimant for provincial care until 1958, when the Peri-Urban Areas Health Board took over this congested square mile of more than 100,000 inhabitants and brought at long last hope of planned progress and rehabilitation. True, it meant that the population would have to be reduced to about 30,000 but this seemed inevitable in terms of the slum-clearance programme the Board proposed.

BaNtu's story of "The New Alexandra" rightly enough emphasises the results of the years of neglect — the growth of slums, lack of services, crime. It then says, "The reconstruction of this township area is one of the most remarkable renovation schemes ever executed in South Africa — so far-reaching, in fact, that the differences between the Alexandra of today and the Alexandra of tomorrow will be comparable to the difference between light and darkness, day and night . . ." Fine stuff this . . . buoyantly hopeful. But what is this remarkable renova-

tion scheme? When you read on, you will find a sentence tucked away in all this fine talk telling you that "it was decided to rebuild Alexandra as a residential area for single Bantu who work in the proximity."

In fact, what is to happen is that the whole of Alexandra is to be evacuated, that all families are to be moved elsewhere, that property-owners (Alexandra was a freehold township) will lose their freehold rights, and that in place of the existing family settlement, and that first proposed by the Board, there will be put up 12 hostels accommodating 2,500 persons each, ten for single Bantu men and two for single Bantu women. The projected "gigantic" soccer stadium, 22 soccer fields, 20 tennis courts, three swimming baths, the golf course, the recreation halls, libraries and clinics about which *BaNtu* waxes positively lyrical are going to serve 30,000 "single" Bantu.

The T.B. Settlement which was established there has had to close down. All other existing institutions — schools, churches, welfare centre, clinic — know they are living on borrowed time. For how long they know not, nor do they know what then. The families will be scattered in the process of resettlement, the bonds of community broken. It is, in truth, a most "remarkable renovation scheme".

Among my favourite articles, are those relating individual success stories, the achievements of artists, of manufacturers, businessmen. In January and February of this year *BaNtu* tells of Mr. Pooe's supermarket in Soweto which has become too small and will soon be enlarged and of Mr. Ephraim Tshabalala's fantastic success. Mr. Tshabalala, "Bantu millionaire of Soweto" is the "owner of a chain of butcheries, restaurants, and dry-cleaning establishments, owner also of one of the biggest garage businesses in the country". These are fine human interest stories. Both men started from humble beginnings, came up the hard way by dint of great effort, initiative and perseverance, and both men play important roles within the community.

So what's the flaw? The flaw is that the impression is given that careers of this nature are open to any Bantu of the requisite ability. But this simply is not true. The truth is that a circular minute issued to local authorities by the Department of Bantu Administration and Development in 1963 laid down that trading by Bantu in white areas (and please note that anything outside the Bantu Reserves are technically white areas, even if, as in Soweto, a half million Bantu live there) "is not an inherent primary opportunity for them", that trading by Bantu should be confined to daily essential domestic commodities, that no new licences for dry cleaners, garages and petrol filling stations should be given, that traders must in future be restricted to one trading stand each in the urban area, and that under no circumstances should traders in future be allowed to erect their own buildings.

The purpose of this directive is to ensure that Bantu businessmen will establish themselves in the Bantu homelands and more particularly in the new towns being developed in the homelands; and therefore, the imposition of these onerous restrictions on Bantu traders in existing Bantu townships where the most favourable opportunities are found and where the subjects of *BaNtu*'s eulogies made their own way.

Predictably enough, Bantu education and its enormous expansion find favoured mention in *BaNtu*. The figures are dizzying — more than 9,000 Bantu schools and 30,000 Bantu teachers, new schools being added at the rate of practically one a day throughout the year, school attendance increasing by 125,000 per year. It seems almost dastardly to recall (for *BaNtu* doesn't make a feature of this) that with all this spectacular progress, secondary and high school enrolment still stands at not quite 3½ per cent of the total and that last year, which happened to be a year when matric. results were better than usual, the total number of Bantu pupils in the Republic (but excluding the Transkei) who passed matric. at the university entrance level was 411 and that of them 109 passed in mathematics. An educational system that produces, out of a total enrolment of some 1½ million, this small number of university entrance passes needs some measure of explanation in addition to the praise bestowed on it.

It's exhilarating to read that "four out of every five Bantu in South Africa between the ages of seven and 21 are literate" till you stop with a start in the realisation that this percentage is obtained by the simple process of equating school attendance with literacy. Because 81 per cent of all Bantu children of school-going age of seven to 14 years are at school, therefore four-fifths are literate, Q.E.D. But it is far from being as simple as all that. Reference to the figures shows that in 1965, nearly three-quarters of all Bantu school-children were in the lower primary schools which go to Standard 2 only (1,184,852: 71.58 per cent) and that of them only 193,678, that is 11.7 per cent of total enrolment, were actually in Std. 2. This shows a large drop-out rate, many children not reaching even Std. 2. To regard the children who passed Std. 2 as literate is questionable, for it has been widely observed that this literacy is a very tenuous thing indeed and that the tendency to relapse into illiteracy is ever present unless these new literates are sustained and nurtured by follow-up work. To regard children who drop out earlier as literate is unwarranted.

A very noticeable feature in this January 1967 *BaNtu* article on Bantu Education is the ideological contradiction which rends it. One can see whence this contradiction derives. On the one hand *BaNtu*, widely circulated and one of our shop-windows into the world, wants to express its legitimate pride in the immense educa-

tional advance that has been made and to describe in purely educational terms what is being accomplished. So its pictures are of the buildings of Fort Hare University College — the caption reading, "The academic standard is exactly the same as that of White universities" — of students being "capped", of students at work in a well equipped chemistry lab., of students in the library, of pupils in class, of children at a creche absorbed in play with modern "constructive toys". All this bears out the claim that "The South African Bantu peoples have moved out of the shadow of ignorance, illiteracy, and the belief in black magic and witchcraft which have too long plagued them into the light of knowledge and Christian civilisation".

But to leave it at this will obviously never do. This is development but not separate development. Hence, on the other hand, *BaNtu* has to stress separateness, to justify Bantu Education as a separate thing, different from education as such. "No Bantu people", it says, "wish to be recast in a White, European mould. South African Bantu have a natural pride in things that are uniquely African, yet for the best part of a century before 1954 White South Africa, chiefly in the form of missionaries and church missions, had made the mistake (genuinely and without cunning forethought) of persuading the Bantu to reject their own culture in favour of European standards of thought and behaviour . . . With the introduction of the Bantu Education Act, attempts at Westernising individuals made way for a concerted process of educating South Africa's Bantu peoples as entities."

This verbiage, I submit, is part plain nonsense and for the rest untrue. It is nonsense to suggest that with the introduction of the Bantu Education Act in 1954, efforts to westernise the

Disappear Trick

By Bob Connolly



Bantu ceased. The whole formal educational structure in South Africa is a western institution. It was so before 1954 and it is so now, although a good case could be made out for demonstrating its diminished effectiveness under the new dispensation. One of the reasons for the profound mistrust the Bantu evinced of Bantu Education was their suspicion that the principles which had hitherto guided their educationists would not be adhered to, and one of the reasons for their lesser antagonism today is the fact that Bantu Education has not changed the system as much as they had feared. How unwelcome the main change introduced by the Act was, namely instruction through the medium of the mother-tongue to Standard 6, the Transkei demonstrated by reverting as soon as control was transferred to it to the pre-1954 system of gradually substituting English as the medium of instruction from Standard 3 onwards.

Practically every influence to which the Bantu are subject in South Africa (with the obvious exception of governmental attempts to halt inevitable development by, for instance, bolstering the power of hereditary chiefs) is westernising them. The economy is western, employment and the skills and imperatives that go with it are western. Christianity is a powerful westernising force affecting not only belief and ritual, but marriage, family life, initiation. Furthermore, while it may be true that no Bantu wishes to be recast in a White, European mould — whatever this may mean — it is not true to imply, as is obviously intended, that the Bantu reject western culture. South African Bantu have consistently shown and explicitly expressed their desire to enter upon the full heritage of western civilisation.

I shall continue to keep my own copy of *BaNtu* handy because of the fund of useful information it provides, for the moral-uplift it gives by focussing only on the sunny side of the street, and above all for its continuing testimony to the steady advance of westernisation or modernisation — the term is immaterial — of the Bantu. In this it certainly forms an agreeable antidote to the speeches of many Nationalist M.P's insisting on "autogenous education" and "national" Bantu cultures inherently different not only in peripheral nuances but in their basic nature from the general western institutional framework within which all the peoples of South Africa have their being.

Helpful Hint

Mrs. M. C. Botha, wife of the Minister of Bantu Administration and Development, was applauded by mothers here yesterday when she announced that after her husband had joined the A.T.K.V. the family had grown from two to six children.

News report from The Star.