

# The grand design in practice

Joyce Harris

*An extract from an address by Mrs Harris to Cape Western Region on May 2, 1978, for the launching of Barbara Waite's map*

LET us look at the map itself. It doesn't take much more than a glance to begin to understand that the Government embarked on nothing more nor less than a giant redistribution of the population and a major plastic surgery operation on the entire face of South Africa.

It isn't as though it was such an ugly face. It may not have been beautiful, but it was certainly interesting. There appears to have been total disregard for the actual people involved and what they would have to endure. Such a plan could only be conceived in terms of human beings and human habitations stripped of their humanity and reduced to statistics.

Bophutatswana is in seven separate pieces which, we are told, the Government intends reducing to six; Lebowa is in eight pieces, which the Government intends reducing to six! Vendlan is in three pieces; Gazankulu is in four pieces which will be reduced to three; Swazi is in four which will be reduced to one; Kwazulu seems to consist of something like 20 pieces which will be reduced to ten; Transkei consists of three pieces; Basuto Qwa Qwa consists of one tiny piece; and the Ciskei, which looks like nine pieces, is to be reduced to one.

Note, too, the pure white condition of the western side of the map. The Cape Midlands, or the Coloured Labour preference area, is between the Eiselen Line of 1953 (Kimberley, Colesburg, Humansdorp) in the west and the Kat Fish Line (Aliwal North, Sterkstroom, Fish River) in the east. The original plan was to move all the Africans who were living west of the Eiselen Line eastwards, but later it was decided to draw a line much further to the east, the Kat Fish Line, which meant that the African inhabitants of Middelburg, Burgersdorp, Cradock and many other towns were, and are, still to be resettled in the Ciskei and Transkei.

Will this western area be the site for Dr Connie Mulder's white homeland, I wonder, or will this be an escape hatch, if and when things get too hot in the vicinity of the homelands in the eastern areas? However, the white strip on the centre allows the whites to retain the Witwatersrand and the wealthy, industrialised Johannesburg, Pretoria, Vereeniging complex.

The Black areas are largely clustered in a semi-circle, presumably to act as buffer states between white South Africa and her black, or potentially

black neighbours. However, with the cutting of diplomatic ties with South Africa by the Transkei one may well be forgiven for wondering whether these will indeed be buffer states or whether they will be open doors.

## The human cost

Now I should like to tell you a little about Black Sash involvement in the whole policy of removals and something of the history of removals.

For obvious reasons it was never Government policy to publicise removals. The earliest date I can discover in our files is 1963. This was the year that SADA was established, in the Ciskei near Queenstown, to re-settle displaced persons and pensioners, disabled people, those ejected from white farms and those endorsed out of urban areas.

As late as January 20, 1968, the Daily Dispatch said that SADA was 'rotten with TB... dead bodies were left in houses until they could be disposed of... there were no ambulances... no inspection of meat... no provision for pauper burials'

Conditions have, no doubt, improved in SADA since that time, but it is necessary to remember that these were the conditions under which the first and all too many subsequent removals were permitted to take place. The places to which people were moved were all artificial townships, created for derelict people, and very often were not created at all before the people were moved there.

In the same year of 1963, 1 600 people were moved from Besterspruit, a black spot near Vryheid, to Mondlo, where basic amenities such as sanitary facilities, were absent. It was bare veld, with pegs marking sites. Families were dumped with their few belongings to make a home — water came by cart and there was no milk or meat, no fuel, no building sand, no stones, no school, no work and there was an outbreak of typhoid and diphtheria.

In 1963 the Bantu Laws Amendment Act was passed which allowed for the creation of labour bureaux in the homelands through which all labour in the homelands would be funnelled, and for the perpetuation of the migrant labour system. When this Act is seen in relation to the vast removal schemes which were at that time gathering momentum, it all begins to make a crazy kind of

sense — at least in the eyes of the Government ... huge labour reserves to feed the hungry white industrial complex while absolving the whites of responsibility of providing facilities and rights for their workers, who would return to their families at the end of their annual contracts there to live, or starve comfortably out of sight. While the Act was being debated the Black Sash presented a memorandum to and had an interview with the Minister of Bantu Administration and Development. We were one of a number of organisations which registered their protest.

All to no avail, however, as the removals continued unabated. In 1964 we published a paper on the evils of migrant labour, and in 1966 our Memorandum on the Pass Laws and Influx Control, which has since been updated and re-issued. It is now out of print but will again be up-dated. These publications were an attempt to inform and alert the public to what was being done to the African people.

But nothing helped.

It was at this time that we began to hear the names Ilinge, Witzieshoek, De Hoop, where mainly women and children were housed in iron shacks or two or four-roomed wood or concrete structures — some of these 'towns' with food-stores, clinics, doctors, schools, others not.

We heard of the removals of black spots from the Catholic Missions of Maria Ratschitz, Boschoek, Meran and others — 16 in all — and of the beginnings of the notorious Limehill. The removals were speeded up and the Government was empowered to expropriate the land if the tribe resisted and then to prosecute for illegal occupation, despite the fact that African ownership of many of the black spots could be traced back for many years.

The people had been wage-earners in nearby towns, but Limehill and Uitval provided no employment. They lost their livestock and incurred increased transport costs to get to whatever work might have been available. The people of Limehill were given only tents to live in, and it took a year before the tent town finally disappeared. The water supply and sewage disposal were inadequate and resulted in much illness.

The Star of March 22, 1978, reported Sabra as saying in response to Black Sash publicity regarding the map that, 'It seems wrong to talk about "removing" or "uprooting" families, thus creating the impression that millions of people are moved about arbitrarily against their will... The bulk of the movement takes place normally according to economic and urban development trends... People move from rural to urban areas and they move from one place to the next to advance themselves'. One may well be forgiven for wondering where Sabra was when, for instance, the black spots of Natal were liquidated.

In 1968 under the Group Areas Act 75 000 Indians in the Transvaal were removed to Benoni,

Lenasia and Laudium, causing untold hardship. In Simonstown the removals began of approximately 5 000 coloured people from their homes of half a century, in some instances. First they were forbidden the use of the beaches, followed by a loss of their livelihood as fishermen, dock-workers, artisans. For years prior to this, fears of removal had stopped all development, the overcrowding was gross, and the Government could with some justification introduce its rationale of 'urban renewal' — a ploy it has consistently used in many of its group area removals — proclaim a group area... freeze development... frighten the people... wait... wait... wait. And what do you get but a demoralised community living in overcrowded and rundown conditions?

1968 was the year the Black Sash instigated a nation-wide campaign against removals, seeking the co-operation of other organisations, and forming Citizens' Action Committees all over the country. There were sticker campaigns, poster campaigns, cavalcades, stands, culminating in a petition to the State President signed by 2 820 people, which was presented to Parliament by Mrs Helen Suzman.

The Government took not the slightest notice. In 1969 Minister M. C. Botha said that the resettlement areas were not meant to be areas of employment, but to supply points for migratory labour.

In 1972 the Black Sash organised a campaign against the whole system of migrant labour, and Mrs Jean Sinclair joined the pilgrimage from Grahamstown to Cape Town, arranged by clergy of various denominations, to communicate the facts of migrant labour. She marched part of the way with them.

As part of its campaign against migrant labour, the Black Sash organised the Citizens Hostel Action Committee to fight against the demolition of family housing in Alexandra and the building of a soulless city of single-sex hostels to house so-called 'single' migrant workers throughout their working lives, while their wives and children subsist in the homelands.

But demolitions and removals continued unabated. The latest available removal figures for Alexandra are 24 families, 1 475 adult males, 35 adult females and 126 children removed during 1977 and January, 1978. Of these 1 442 males were moved to City Deep Hostel; the 24 families were moved to Soweto; two males were removed to Lesotho, 12 to Gazankulu and 15 to Lebowa. (Minister of Plural Development Hansard No 8, March 23—31, 1978.)

In that same year of 1972 the Reverend David Russell, who has since been banned, lived in the notorious settlement of Dimbaza in the Ciskei on R5 per month, which was the government handout to totally indigent people. He then lived for a month on the Government rations, an alternative to the cash handout. These provided ap-

proximately 66 grammes of protein per day and no vitamins. At that time 3 000 adults and 1 900 children were living on these rations.

During all this period David Russell carried on a regular correspondence with Minister M. C. Botha writing graphically descriptive letters. Since then improvements have apparently been made in Dimbaza and there are fair educational facilities, a shop, a clinic and a bus service.

It may appear carping continually to emphasize the miseries of the early removals, particularly in view of the fact that certain improvements have been made from time to time, but before we allow ourselves to become too euphoric as a result of the Government's insistence on its good intentions, let us take a look at what has happened in Limehill since 1968. Father Cosmos Desmond, who witnessed the early beginnings of Limehill, revisited it. In a working paper on the longer-term effects of African resettlement prepared as part of a research project by the University of Natal and written in January 1978 — this year — he makes some startling statements.

'There is very little improvement at Limehill... there is a general air of dilapidation, desolation and isolation about the place... Water is obtained from taps in the "streets"... one tap to serve 35 families... almost 20 per cent of the children born at Limehill have not survived until the survey date... The mortality rate is excessively high... with a low total number of births... Unemployment in Limehill, particularly among women, is considerably higher than the national average... The vast majority described life at Limehill as a "place of suffering", "a land of sorrows", a bad and difficult place to live in... This survey shows that the long term effects of the Nationalist government's resettlement policy are no less dehumanising and demoralising than the initial suffering and hardship inflicted when people are uprooted from their established homes and dumped in the barren veld.'

I have dealt only with a few areas. There are so many others, like Klipgat, Stinkwater, and the

'If the law is not strong enough for the Press, Parliament will have a look at it.'

*Prime Minister Mr P W Botha*

'It is absurd, but true, that there are many people who blame the Press in general for the whole Information affair.'

*Dr Willem de Klerk, editor of DIE TRANSVALER*

'Mr Kruger said South Africa had paid dearly over the years for its adherence to democratic norms.'

*THE STAR, 13/5/78*

*The Black Sash, February 1979*



*Acknowledgements to CAPE ARGUS*

squatter camp at Winterveld near Pretoria, to mention a few. The whole subject of removals is far too vast for one paper.

However, if all the removal figures are added together just over 2 115 000 people have been removed, all but 7 000 of them black. Still to be moved are 1 727 000 people, all but 1 600 of them are black.

These figures do not include people who are continually being deported from the 'white' areas in terms of the pass laws.

Now we can look back at the map with different eyes, and see how our country has been carved up, at such a cost in human suffering and with only negative returns financially, economically, socially, politically and from the much vaunted point of view of the security of the state. The removals will probably continue unabated and nothing will divert the Government from its chosen path.

Necessity is the plea for every infringement of human freedom. It is the argument of tyrants. It is the creed of slaves.

*William Pitt*

'Isn't this really the essential lesson in the whole business — that when you cast aside the tried and tested mechanism of democratic control in the name of 'State security', you invite abuses far worse than anything that might be threatening the State.

Create a BOSS with unlimited secret powers, and you will create a Frankenstein that will abuse those powers...'

*RAND DAILY MAIL editorial*