

The Crisis over the Land*

John Kane-Berman

We newspapermen like to think of ourselves as hard-bitten men of the world, professional sceptics, eternally vigilant, who cannot be fooled by anyone or anything. Some journalists, as a *number* of people recently found to their acute discomfort, possess these qualities in abundance.

But it is also astonishing the extent to which the English-language press takes ministers' statements on racial issues at face value, and comes out with screaming headlines about yet another "new deal for urban blacks".

In the past few years blacks — and particularly urban blacks — have been getting new deals at the rate of about one a week. In thus sensationalising, even the minutest policy adjustments made by the government, the English-language press, in my opinion, is misleading its readers, causing unwarranted expectations among black people and playing cruel havoc with their hopes.

Perhaps one of its motives is to try and keep blacks quiescent by holding out to them the expectation of some real improvement in their situation. Perhaps the press also believes that by exaggerating and headlining every ministerial promise, it can advance the cause of the so-called *verligtes* in the Nationalist Party. It has of course failed utterly to do this. Bishop John William Colenso preached a famous sermon a hundred years ago, after Isandlwana, in which he pleaded for justice for the Zulu people.

The occasion of Isandlwana was, of course, the British invasion of Zululand, and that itself was an expression more of colonial greed than of anything else. Tragically, the Zulus were defeated and the Zulu state dismembered.

It was not long before large areas of the Zulu kingdom were opened up to exclusive white ownership and the Zulus were eventually left with only about a third of their land.

This was one of the origins of the crisis over the land. Signs of the crisis were not slow in manifesting themselves: 'faction fights', population pressure, the failure of subsistence farming, migratory labour with all its attendant evils, were — and still are — among those signs.

The Zulus, of course, were not the *only* people to be dispossessed of their land. As you know, the Land Acts of 1913 and 1936 appropriated most of the land of South Africa for the Whites. We can better see the enormity of this if we revert to terminology that has now fallen into disuse: 86 percent of the land on the southern tip of Africa was appropriated by Europeans and the natives of the continent were barred from acquiring it.

*An address given by Mr John Kane-Berman of the *Financial Mail* at the Annual General Meeting of the Ecumenical Agency, Diakonia, Durban, on 27 February 1979.

Terminological victory

The crisis over the land revolves around the Bantustans and the role they play in relation to the so-called 'White' areas. I use the word 'Bantustan', rather than 'homeland', deliberately, for to use the term 'homeland' is to concede a terminological victory to the ideologues of *separate development*.

Although this may seem a small point at first, it does in fact go to the heart of our politics. For when the government says that the 'homeland' of the Zulus is KwaZulu, or that of the Tswanas Bophutha-Tswana, what it really means is that *only* these areas are their 'homelands' and that the rest of South Africa is not.

Thus, *insidiously*, with the term 'homeland' gaining general currency, does language help to shape political thought.

But if you believe, as I do, that the *whole* of South Africa is the common homeland of both black and white, then it seems to me that the term 'homeland' should not be used in a sense which implies that blacks are entitled to only 13 percent or 14 percent of their country.

One of the major functions of the Bantustans, as you know, is to supply cheap migrant labour to the mines, farms, and industries of the Republic's central economy. According to official statistics recently published, KwaZulu in 1975 supplied 269 000 migrant workers to the Republic, and all the Bantustans together (including the Transkei and Bophutha-Tswana) one million.

Private researchers have put the figure even higher. Moreover, since the war the number of migrant workers in South Africa has increased faster than the *work-force* itself, i.e. the proportion of workers who are migrants has increased, and the central economy has thus become more, not less, dependent on migrants.

Although several development corporations have been established in the Bantustans, the question which arises in my mind is not so much whether the Bantustans have the resources to become economically viable, but whether they will be *allowed* to do so.

If, for example, the Transkei were to develop to a stage where it could provide all its people with jobs, where would the Natal sugar-farmers get their labour? Or the Transvaal and Free State mines theirs?

It seems to me that the *inescapable logic* of the migratory labour system is that the Bantustans must remain what they always have been — labour reservoirs on which the industries of the Republic can draw at will.

The aspect of the Bantustans on which I want to focus particular attention is what I am going to call their 'disposal' function, i.e. their role as disposal areas to which black

people, not wanted in the so-called white areas, can be sent.

Mr Punt Janson in a 1972 speech said that one of the main functions of the new Bantu Affairs Administration Boards, which were then just being established, was to try to bring about the removal to the Bantustans of "unproductive people — those who because of old age, weak health or other reasons are no longer able to work".

Superfluous people

Here, half a century later, was the Stallard doctrine all over again. In 1922 and 1923 as you know, the Transvaal Local Government Commission under Colonel Stallard had said that Africans were welcome in the towns only for as long as they were required to "minister" to the needs of whites, and should "depart" when their services were no longer required. The new administration boards were *not* slow in acknowledging their responsibilities in the direction Mr Janson had outlined.

The chairman of the board on the East Rand said that one of his greatest aims was to cause the 300 000 "economically inactive" Africans in his area to disappear from 'White' South Africa; and the chairman of the Cape Midlands Board said that he had "room for productive elements, but *not* for superfluous people who are parasitic on us and especially on their own friends and relations". These people too would presumably "disappear" to the Bantustans.

In 1967, a circular from Pretoria instructed Bantu Affairs Commissioners round the country that "no stone is to be left unturned to achieve the settlement in the homelands of non-productive Bantu at present residing in the European areas".

Apart from the categories of "unproductive" people already mentioned — the old and the sick — the circular said that "Bantu squatters from Mission stations and black spots" were also to be resettled. And it added that the resettlement from the 'White' areas to the Bantustans of what it called "hundreds of thousands of superfluous Bantu families had to enjoy the highest priority.

How many "superfluous" people have been removed to the Bantustans is impossible to say. But here and there one does get a glimpse of the almost Stalin-like scale of the operation.

According to the South African Institute of Race Relations, 996 000 labour tenants and squatters and their families were moved between 1960 and 1970. How many more have been moved since then I have no idea. Between 1948 and 1976, according to figures given in Parliament, 259 000 Africans were removed from 'black spots', i.e. African farms in 'White' areas. Again according to parliamentary figures, 203 000 Africans had

been deported from 'White' urban areas by February 1968. Between then and mid-1975 according to two researchers at the University of Pretoria, another 171 000 Africans from 'White' urban areas were resettled. My total so far is 1,6m. But it excludes another one million people scheduled for removal in terms of the 1975 Bantustan consolidation proposals.

That would bring it up to 2,6m — without even beginning to count the people of Modderdam, Werkgenot, and the other "squatter" camps in Cape Town that have already been demolished, let alone the people of Crossroads and other communities over whom the sword of Damocles still hangs — among them 200 000 scheduled for removal from Grahamstown and other parts of the Eastern Cape.

Crossroads

We have all at least *heard* about Crossroads, but I wonder how many other places there are that we do *not* know about which have simply been bulldozed. Many of us are also aware, however dimly, of the "white area" end of some of the removals. But we know much less about what happens at the other end.

Father Cosmos Desmond's pioneering book *The Discarded People* gave us a rather horrifying picture of the "homeland" end, but that was ten years ago.

Can we be sure that the situation in the Bantustans has not steadily worsened since then — particularly in the last few years, which have seen this country plunged into the worst economic recession since the war? In 1970 the Bantustans were already much more densely populated than the rest of the Republic: the "white areas" had 35 people per square mile, while the Bantustans had 119, with KwaZulu being the worst case of overcrowding.

After the scandal of Limehill, Dimbaza, and other similar places, the government claimed — and it still claims — that people are not resettled without proper provision being made for them first. Is this true?

In 1976 the Bureau for Economic Research, Co-operation and Development (formerly known as Benbo, now as Benso), which is an official agency in Pretoria, published a book in which it referred to the one million people — 175 000 families — due for resettlement under the 1975 consolidation plan.

One-fifth of these people were to be resettled in what Benso described as "planned towns in houses constructed by the State"; one-third "according to the site-and-service scheme" (ie. without houses) "in planned villages"; and the remainder, nearly 90 000 families or half-a-million people, on what Benso described as "a rudimentary basis", ie. without housing or even site-and-service facilities. I want to give three glimpses of what sometimes happens at the receiving end of resettlement.

The first is the Winterveldt area, about 20 miles north of Pretoria in that archipelago calling itself the state of Bophutha-Tswana.

The population is generally given as between 200 000 and 250 000.

Many of the Wintervelders moved to this vast squatter camp when "white area" townships like Sophiatown in Johannesburg and Lady Selborne in Pretoria were dis-established.

Citizenship

Having been compelled to give up their homes once, tens of thousands of these people are now facing a demand from Chief Mangope that they either take out Bophutha-Tswana citizenship (and ipso facto lose their South African citizenship) or get out.

Where do they go this time? Do they dump themselves in another squatter settlement in some other overpopulated homeland?

Or are they destined to become the modern equivalents of the Flying Dutchman — condemned to wander from pillar to post in the hope of finding a piece of land on which to live?

The second case I went to mention is Msinga, near Tugela Ferry. I recently visited this area, which has become notorious for so-called faction-fighting, to learn that it, too, is desperately overcrowded.

It is said that some 20 000 people have been crammed on to a strip of land five or six miles long and barely a quarter of a mile wide. So overcrowded and overstocked is the area that nearly all the soil has been washed down to the sea.

Parents are reported to vie with one another to get their children employed as casual labour by white farmers in the district.

With the drying-up of the demand for migrant labour because of the economic recession, many people have lost even the meagre incomes that migrants used to bring home. Many appear to have nothing to live on save the charity of their neighbours.

Msinga is not only the receiving end of resettlement — the people there having been cleared off 'White' farms — it is also the reverse end of influx control.

Supporters of the pass laws defend them with the claim that if they were not enforced, tens of thousands of Black people would flock to the cities, causing overcrowding in the townships, growth of slums, and lowering of urban wage-rates because of the over-supply of labour.

But influx control does not prevent overcrowding or the growth of slums. It simply ensures that the slums are not in Johannesburg or Bloemfontein or East London, but out of sight and out of White minds in the Bantustans.

Urban population

Bulldozing Crossroads will thus not get rid of the squatters — it will simply force them to squat somewhere else.

The urban population of the Bantustans has been growing astronomically — according to the two Pretoria University researchers I mentioned earlier, from 33 500 in 1960 to 984 000 in 1972.

But these researchers now estimate that the urban population of the Bantustans is

actually closer to two million, because of the huge squatter settlements which have sprung up there. Many of these people have no doubt flocked together to form large "towns" on the veld for no other reason than that there is no land for them to be resettled on any other basis.

The argument that influx control protects urban wage-rates is also one-sided, in my view. If, by keeping down the number of black work-seekers in the cities, the pass laws prevent wage-rates there from dropping, the reverse must surely be true in the Bantustans, because all that the pass laws are doing is shifting the unemployed from urban township to rural Bantustan, where people are often desperate enough to accept work at much lower wages than would otherwise be the case.

My third example of what happens at the receiving end of resettlement comes from the government itself — from Benso.

Last year Benso produced a report on QwaQwa, the tiny Bantustan in the Free State. Between 1970 and 1977, QwaQwa's population grew from 25 000 to 200 000, largely as a result of resettlement.

One of the biggest problems, says Benso, is that there is not enough land for the resettled people. They have, nevertheless, taken up a third of the area's small acreage of fertile agricultural land, and "formed a dense distribution pattern which is more like urban than rural settlement".

The cattle brought by the resettled people have caused "the trampling and destruction of the natural vegetation". The QwaQwa authorities were finding it "almost impossible" to surmount the problems caused by resettlement and overpopulation, and they could not "keep pace with the provision of housing, job opportunities, social services, and other amenities".

"Overpopulation, the rapid growth of the internal population, (and) incorrect diet . . . contribute towards the inhabitants of QwaQwa having a low resistance to disease, or to their having a limited ability to combat diseases", said Benso's report.

"The most common disease in QwaQwa is tuberculosis, while kwashiorkor and pellagra are still too rife. Gastro-enteritis is assuming fair proportions and cases of venereal disease are on the increase."

Consolidation plans

How many more people are to be removed from the 'White' areas and resettled in QwaQwa and other Bantustans?

There are still a number of 'black spots' to be cleared and homeland consolidation plans to be carried out. Influx control penalties have been tightened up, while the government has taken to itself wider powers to deport "idle and undesirable" people from the urban townships.

In what may prove to be the most ominous and significant step of all, Parliament last year enacted a law which suggests that Section 10 rights of urban residence may be on the way out. The new law provided that children of citizens of independent Bantu-

stans would no longer qualify for residence in an urban area by virtue of birth there. The coming generation of African children will thus not only be foreigners when their homelands become independent, like their parents, but they will not have urban residence rights. They will thus suffer from an additional disability, ie. their presence in the urban areas will be illegal unless they get special permission.

We have recently seen what has happened to illegal people in Cape Town and elsewhere, and it was not so long ago that the police were prosecuting pass offenders at the rate of 1 000 a day — and probably arresting three times that number.

By providing that the coming generation of Tswanas and Xhosas — and presumably of any other so-called ethnic group whose putative homeland becomes independent — will no longer qualify for Section 10 residence rights by birth, it seems to me that the government is opening up a huge new category of Africans for removal to the Bantustans.

Could this be a means of enforcing the dream expressed two years ago by Dr Ferdie Hartenberg, Deputy Minister of Bantu Development, when he said that the government hoped to have 72 percent of all Blacks living in the homelands by the year 2 000 (as against only 47 percent in 1970).

According to figures published by the Africa Institute in Pretoria, to achieve this target, given projected population growth-rates, would entail resettling nine million more Africans.

According to some estimates, the level of underemployment and unemployment in South Africa has doubled in the past decade and now stands at about 2,3 million.

Even if the economy grows at 4 percent this year — the most optimistic projection — it will still not be enough to provide jobs for all the youngsters coming on to the labour market, let alone mop up some of the existing unemployed. Whether a 4 percent growth-rate will be achieved, or how long it will be sustained, are still open questions.

Economic recession

Some observers believe that the United States, barely climbing out of one economic recession, is heading for another. That will tend to depress rates of growth in many countries, including South Africa.

It seems to me that it is at least possible that our level of unemployment and underemployment could reach three million by the time the next recession comes around.

Unable to provide enough jobs, is the government embarking on a policy of exporting unemployment to the Bantustans — cramming

more and more “superfluous people” into already overcrowded places like Winterveldt, QwaQwa or Msinga?

How many parts of the Bantustans will then be turned, as these places already have been, into concentrated settlement camps, closely packed with the unemployed, the destitute, and the dispossessed — the people for whom there is no room in ‘White’ South Africa?

It seems to me that there is a great danger in talking about people as being “superfluous”, and devising policies to get rid of them when they are too old or too sick to be “productive”. The danger is that the privileged people of this country will, over the years, become conditioned into not caring what happens to the “superfluous” people, or even whether they live or die.

That process of conditioning has already begun: indeed, it has been under way for some time.

When I think of how easily people can become conditioned, and when I hear talk about other people being “superfluous”, I cannot help but think of another country, not so many years ago, which also became conditioned, and which also decided that some of its people were “superfluous” — six million of them, to be exact.

The South African Council of Churches again - an interview

Bill Chalmers and Peter Storey

This interview, between Mr Bill Chalmers, Head of Broadcasting, English Service of the SABC, and Revd Peter Storey, Vice-President of the SACC, was broadcast by the SABC in early December 1978.

Chalmers. *May I begin by asking you how the SACC is constituted?*

Storey. The SACC is simply what it says — a Council of Churches, constituted of a number of Church bodies. There are 24 member and observer churches, and 10 member or observer organisations.

C *And what is the total membership claimed by the organisation?*

S The SACC hasn't got a membership as such, except through these bodies. The bodies are its members. The bodies themselves have a total constituency of some 13 million people.

C *The SACC has on occasion claimed to speak on behalf of — it may have been 13 million, it may have been 15 million people. When it makes a claim of this nature, it is talking about people who, belong by virtue of being members of their churches. Is that*

right? These aren't people who have joined individually.

S No, they haven't joined individually. We can speak of representing them in the same way, for instance, as the Methodist Church Conference can speak as representative of all its members, although it doesn't necessarily claim that every one of those members goes along with everything it says.

C *Don't you think the percentage who don't go along with the SACC, at grass roots level, might be rather higher than in the case of the Methodist Conference?*

S Not on controversial issues. There are some issues which, of course, are domestic, within the life of the church and people don't feel very strongly one way or the other, or they are issues that don't have a great public impact. But I think on the issues of public impact, the church leadership and its representatives can't claim always that everybody is with it, and seeing that the SACC's policy is laid down in relationship with its member churches, I don't see much difference.

C *Now the SACC is a national council affiliated to the World Council of Churches, and according to the constitution of the*

WCC, such national councils are bound to further, and I quote: "The plans and policies which the Central Committee — that's in Geneva — has laid down". How would you interpret this provision?*

S First of all, let me say I've never heard this provision in my life, and never in my long relationship with the SACC have I ever known an executive committee where we have once had this in any way raised as something which we are bound to do. The SACC acts according to the wisdom it has, and is not dictated to by anybody else, and certainly not the World Council of Churches. We have a relationship with the WCC as an affiliated council — it isn't really quite as close a relationship as a member church has. For instance, member churches have a vote in the WCC — affiliated councils don't. And when it comes to deciding what we are going to do, we certainly don't look anywhere else to decide that.

C *I suppose, at the very least though, there is a constant intercourse between the SACC and the WCC?*

S Quite rightly, there's conversation, yes, because it's another Christian body in the