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SECTION V : DOCUMENTATION

PAPER DELIVERED AT THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF DIAKONIA ON MARCH 25, 1980, BY BISHOP DESMOND TUTU, GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES ON POPULATION REMOVALS AND THE URBAN CHURCH  
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I Introduction

A few preliminary points. I think we should excise the adjective 'urban' from the title and simply speak of the Church. This is for at least two reasons. The church in the urban area is likely to command resources not available elsewhere, which it should deploy for the benefit of our total population because the church is in God's intention and purpose one, whatever its geographical position.

The second reason is that I am worried that we may be falling into the trap set by certain people who in speaking about a new socio-political dispensation are beginning to say they are prepared to consider the inclusion of those they call urban blacks. We could so easily carry over our urban/rural divide from the church to our consideration of the black community and thus be involved in the old divide and rule syndrome. So let us think of the church as such and of the black community as one whole. We will return to this fragmentation of the black community a little later.

I want to agree too with Dr Margaret Nash in her new book about population removals entitled "BLACK UPROOTING FROM WHITE SA" that we tend to use refined language about what are really harsh realities and somehow lull our consciences to some extent because things dont sound quite so bad.

Resettlement is a term she particularly objects to because it seems to imply an orderly and indeed reasonable scheme for moving persons from one locality to another as when you move displaced persons such as refugees from a refugee camp perhaps back to their home environs. What we are going to consider is nothing nearly so innocuous. It is a cruel and most distressing exercise in which human beings who are God's children are heartlessly uprooted from somewhere they used to call home and dumped in another place, usually more bleak and inhospitable than their erstwhile home. Language is not merely descriptive of but creates the reality we may perceive.

And this is especially the case because Government spokesmen now try to justify these inhumane removals by calling them slum clearance. That is what Mr Marais Steyn, former opponent of apartheid as a UP Member of Parliament, and now Minister of Community Development, did in Parliament last week, leading one Parliamentary pressman to speculate that we might be in for a great deal more of this kind of 'reasonable' action - so much was this a good thing, the Minister went on to say, that those who had a first opposed their own removal had come back to the authorities filled with gratitude and appreciation.

/I do not wish .....

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I do not wish to question Ministerial veracity and I am sure that there are many instances when slum clearance could be fairly used to describe some of the removals. And yet even when this is the case, one is surprised that perfectly good houses are also demolished and the occupants rendered homeless long before they are provided with the alternative housing of an equivalent standard.

I point you to what happened in Sophiatown where blacks had built some very good houses which were destroyed together with their freehold title and the former Sophiatown became a white area retaining the old Sophiatown street names and sensitively renamed Triomf.

If the removal of District Six was part of a slum clearance scheme purely and simply perhaps so-called Coloureds would have been allowed to rebuild in what used to be their slum, instead of being burdened with huge house repayment obligations and extra transport costs.

I just wish to caution us in listening to Ministerial assurances that they come from a group who are adepts at using language - not e.g. legislation called "The Extension of Universities' Act" which normal people could understand to mean increasing facilities for blacks to obtain university education. You need a special dictionary to explain our English here - that act in fact stopped blacks going to so-called white universities except with that abomination in our lives, a permit. Make language mean what you want it to mean is the motto around here it seems.

Finally, amongst our preliminary points - we shall confine ourselves almost exclusively to considering African rather than black uprooting. Black here means what we have usually called Coloured, Indian and African/Bantu/Native et al. There have been population removal schemes involving race groups other than African. We need to think only of District Six, Cato Manor (which I think has been reprieved) under the Group Areas Act to know that there has been a massive demographic shake-up to fulfil ideological blueprints where we see a political chess game being played with human beings as the pawns.

## II Historical Preamble

Blacks have been victims of being pushed around really from the time whites first set foot on South African soil. Those who came initially to establish a halfway station to provide fresh supplies for the ships plying the lucrative Eastern trade, had among them those who wished to be more than just temporary sojourners. They decided to settle and to build castles and to take over large tracks of land with not so much as a by your leave and they resented the indigenous people whom they had found in possession when they arrived and had now displaced. When these first settlers found British rule irksome, they ventured into the interior capturing vast pieces of land through conquest because of their superior firing power the constitutions of the Boer Republics which they founded relegated the native peoples to a position of inferiority in State and Church.

/This was hardly .....

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This was hardly altered when Union came about in 1910 because what was previously done by means of the barrel of the gun now happened through the more sophisticated way of legislation passed through democratic processes. The effect was and has been the same - a progressive loss of land rights to the Blacks as the Whites have amassed more for themselves until to reach the position we find today entrenched in the 1913 and 1936 Land Laws which decreed that nearly 80% of the population would be confined to only 13% of the land surface of the country of their birth.

#### 1948 And After

When the Nationalists came to power in 1948 they resurrected their ideal of the Boer Republics of the late 19th Century and early 20th Century. They developed discriminatory legislation that was to hand and initiated their own with amazing creativity - the Race Classification, the Job Reservation, Mixed Marriages, Immorality and other Racist Laws.

But the apex of their achievement (or the nadir of black deprivation) occurred with their Bantustan policy. Basically, the South African crisis is one that hinges on political power for it is this if you have it, which commands access to other kinds of power - economic well-being, social amenities and facilities. That is why it is such a charade to talk about improving the quality of life of blacks in their own areas, in talking about the so-called changes which have been wrought in the matter of sport, the creation of International hotels and restaurants, in the removal of discriminatory signs. It is a charade because no matter how wonderful the improvements in the black person's lot may be (and I don't doubt that there will be very significant improvements) these will always be mere concessions that are always at risk and vulnerable because they depend on the whim of those who have political power. When they deem it convenient for themselves they will withhold these privileges and when they think otherwise they will dole them out lavishly or not from their bounty.

Basically it is a question of how you can maintain political power in the hands of a white oligarchy. Perhaps there is a preliminary stage - how do you as a white minority outnumbered 5 to 1 survive in a Continent that has on the whole shown itself hostile to a white presence? And the answer which the imperialistic Europeans decided upon with almost uncanny unanimity was to subjugate the native peoples and to retain most power in white hands. And so Africa in particular but much of the so-called Third World in general, found itself ruled by these white foreigners. In time most of this Colonial empire came to throw off the yoke of oppression. Southern Africa has been tardy in joining the liberation movement, but the waves of freedom have now washed away most white minority rule even in this sub-continent, the latest to fall being that in Zimbabwe where we had famous last words from Mr Ian Smith such as that it would not happen during his lifetime or only over his dead body and not in a thousand years.

During our period it has been quite clear that the Whites were determined to keep political power in their hands exclusively. It did not strike them as at all odd (the majority of them) that the way they were going about things was totally at variance with the accepted meaning of that democracy whose virtues they extolled so much as they vilified Communism and Marxism.

/On accession .....

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On accession to power the Nationalist Party made no bones about their determination to maintain White Baaskap with policies that were nakedly racist. They had stepped into the corridors of political power on the waves of white apprehension of the so-called black peril, the swart gevaar. ("Do you want your daughter to marry this man?") And they did not conceal this from anybody. They used blatantly and deliberately discourteous terms when referring to all of us blacks to the extent of saying they would not call us Mr. etc., and no 'Dear Sirs' but Greetings - Koelies, Hotnots and Kaffirs were very much the order of the day. Even our English newspapers were had and were part of this denigratory process.

For instance, they would describe an accident in these words: "3 persons and a native were injured". We read these things and they were etched in our memories. I remember being warned seriously that I should not be abroad on what was then still called Dingaan's Day and we learned that Afrikaners used to chop off the beards of blacks. (I can't vouch for the truth of this, but such stories were current in the black community and were burned into our consciousness. Yah, South Africa, you really have an awful lot to answer for.)

This was just a part of the South African way of life - you knew that to walk on the pavements of our cities meant you were sure to be elbowed out of the way by your white masters. It was part of this whole system of keeping the native in his place.

Dr Verwoerd at least had the virtue of honesty. When he introduced Bantu Education he did not try to sell us all this high faluting stuff that we are getting from the apologists for the system. He was clear in his own mind that blacks should not be educated above certain levels which would enable them to be good servants of the whites. And they should not be misled into thinking that the green pastures on the white side would ever be accessible to them.

They enforced the 1913 and 1936 Land allocation provisions vigorously. Blacks had never had any illusions about their position and status in South Africa. They were third class inhabitants, not citizens in the land of their forefathers. The laws at every turn proved this. But before 1948 blacks had been lulled into a false expectancy. You see, their fathers and brothers had died in the 1914-18 war against Nazism and Facism and they believed that a new era of justice, righteousness and peace was about to dawn for them and their children too. Black africans had lost their franchise in the Cape and could no longer be directly represented in Parliament. But they still noted that so-called Coloureds were still on the common voters roll and perhaps this right-privilege would be extended to other blacks in time.

And to demonstrate their law abiding nature and their desire to participate in the decision-making processes of their land, they were willing to serve on dummy bodies such as the Location Advisory Boards, the Natives' Representative Council, etc. They protested peacefully, they drew up petitions, they were on delegations, they boycotted, they engaged in passive resistance campaigns - all to no avail.

The Nationalists in the first flush of electoral success, did not mince their words nor were they gentle in their actions. They moved the people of Sophiatown and raped them of their freehold title rights. They killed a lively community.

/I know for I .....



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I know for I lived in Sophiatown in Meyer Street where the Community of the Resurrection had their house, headed by Trevor Huddleston. I remember that on the eve of my ordination to the priesthood, the then Bishop of Johannesburg, Leslie Stradling, took some of us to a confirmation service in the Old Christ the King Church which stood like a sentinel on a knoll towering over all of Sophiatown. But it was not the Sophiatown I had known - this was now a devastated area, with many houses razed to the ground and weeds growing rampant all over. It was so like a bombed out area, that had been done to maintain white supremacy.

In those early days of unadulterated apartheid Dr Verwoerd found that Mr Hofmeyer, as Minister of Education, had introduced school feeding into black schools. I recall as a small boy in the Afrikaner dorpje of Ventersdorp seeing white children throw what they were given for school feeding - perfectly good sandwiches and fruit - into the dustbins. They preferred the lunches their mothers had prepared them. And I remember also another sight - that of black children from the Location (as they were called in those days) scavenging in the white school dustbins. I used to wonder how it was the children from the relatively well-off sector should be the ones who were fed, whilst those whose parents could least afford it financially and the children who could least afford it physically were not fed. (I know some would say their parents paid taxes. I thought that our parents paid too and at a lower level of income and in any case it wasn't their fault that they were paid low wages and so could not afford to pay high taxes).

Well, when Dr Verwoerd found there was a school feeding for most black school children, he decided to put an end to it all. They have done some quite breathtaking things in their time, these Nationalists, but I think Dr Verwoerd's reason for stopping school feeding in black schools still takes the cake. He said since we could feed only some and not all, we must not feed even those we could. The cynicism of this statement is quite horrendous. Because you can't cure all TB patients don't cure those you can - would that be acceptable?

I quote all of this only to point out that the Nationalists at one time were not concerned to hide the fact that they were looking after the interests of only one group in this country - and that group wasn't the blacks. And they did not hide this behind high-faluting convoluted statements or arguments. The white man was the top dog and the black was the underdog, and they were jolly well going to see that it stayed that way.

They could not, however, pretend that they did not belong to a wider, a world community. Mr Eric Louw tended to find his sorties at the UN somewhat uncomfortable and the criticism from the world was strident. The Nationalists decided that they would have to make their obviously racist and immoral policies appear less so to make them more acceptable in order also to help salve the consciences of those countries overseas which were investing in South Africa and profiting from cheap black labour, from migratory labour, from benefitting so openly from black misery.

/And that is the .....

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And that is the rationale for the new thrust in the developing of the Bantustans and in trying to encourage the use of separate development to describe their policy rather than apartheid which had entered the world's vocabulary as something no decent person wanted to be seen dead with.

They really believed and still believe what they say. The blacks (who were not consulted at all in any meaningful way about a policy that was shoved down our throats) would be able to exercise their political and other rights and freedoms in their own areas arbitrarily carved up for them by the all-righty white Government who always, of course, had the interests of blacks at heart.

The Bantu (Pluralis, Cooperatives, Blacks) did not form one single community. They were a conglomerate of several nations - Zulu, Xhosa, Tswana, etc., who could each be given their own Bantustan homeland and the intention was that they would ultimately all end up as autonomous sovereign nation states. Never mind, that the Xhosas presented us with the extraordinary phenomenon of being split into two groups or nations - the Transkeians and the Ciskeians. Never mind, that nobody had explained or has yet explained how the white community with such diverse elements in it, but that four or five of these (Greeks, Swedes, English, Afrikaners) coalesced to form one nation. Never mind that apart from the Transkei none of these creations had territorial integrity or any hope of economic viability.

That was not the point - the point was how you could give a semblance of morality to something that had been condemned as evil. And that is the solution white South Africa has decided on for the vexed question of political power and coexistence in this part of the sub-continent.

They have decided that it will happen only with power firmly in their grasp and it will be coexistence only on the terms dictated by them. This means that there is to be a white South Africa, about whose precise delimitation the whites alone will decide; and only whites will be citizens of this part of South Africa which could well be the most prosperous and most developed parts of our common fatherland. That might just be coincidental, but most of the cities, the mines and the ports will be part of this affluent section. Coloureds and Indians will almost certainly be coopted to swell the numbers against the black hordes.

And the total strategy is a developing one. Some very specially blessed blacks (urban blacks) will also be part of this gravy train. Their quality of life will be significantly enhanced, their children are likely to go to good white schools, they will get very good salaries etc., etc. and they will be coopted into the system as a black middle class to be a buffer between the have whites and the have not blacks and being so greatly privileged they will be some of the best defenders of the status quo you can ever hope to find anywhere. „

That is the new strategy of the Nationalist government. The bitter pill is very significantly coated with sugar. Those who will belong to this core economy and society (see Francis Wilson's paper to the SAIRR Conference) will be numerically insignificant and will pose hardly any threat to the power-wielding white group. But what of the rest - the hapless *hoi polloi*? They will be and are being relegated to the other darkness, the limbo of the forgotten.

/They must get out .....

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They must get out. The Riekert Commission has recommended and it is a recommendation accepted with some alacrity that 'illegals' those who do not qualify must be endorsed out on pain of a R500 maximum fine for those who should want to employ them.

Nobody has repudiated Dr Mulder when he pointed out in Parliament that the logical conclusion of apartheid was that there could be no black South Africans.

And to get to that conclusion, they have with very little compunction moved nearly 2 million blacks. They have moved them often from places where they had reasonably adequate housing, where they were able to work - some in the informal sector, as casual labourers, within walking or reasonable distance of their places of work. They have moved them, dumped them as if they were potatoes in largely inhospitable areas often with no alternative accommodation (the Makgatho people were moved just before Christmas from their perfectly satisfactory homes to their new home to live in tents, just before Christmas, a family feast in Christian South Africa. Even if it was absolutely vital that these people should be moved why just before Christmas, and making it almost impossible for the children to write their year-end examinations?)

They have increased transport costs to contend with (whereas the Makgatho people were only 50 km from Pietersburg before, now they are 100 km). From being daily commuters they have become weekend commuters. In Glenmore, an old man told me that in his old home he paid little for his fare to go and do some gardening in town. Now he would have to stay in town until Friday otherwise his take home pay would be whittled to nothing. The people of Walmer near Port Elizabeth walk just across the railway line to find work in Walmer town. Nobody wants them to move - not the inhabitants of Walmer, they don't want to move. But they must be moved to Zwijndorp several km from town. They will have to pay busfare. They will have to swell a 12 000 waiting list for houses by another 6 000. Why?

They are starving in most of these resettlement camps. I know for I have seen it. They are starving not because of an accident or a misfortune. No, they are starving because of deliberate Government policy made in the name of white Christian civilisation. They are starving so that a little girl can tell you that when they can't borrow food, they drink water to fill their stomachs. This is the solution the Nationalists have decided upon. Many can't work, not because they won't work but because there is no work available. So they sit listlessly whilst we reap the benefits of a soaring gold price and our boom which makes us want to import skilled labour from overseas. They are there as a reservoir deliberately created of cheap labour. When black labour was needed, the laws forced blacks into town when they were often well to do farmers. They had to become wage earners in order to pay the taxes levied on them. Now they are not really wanted so they are endorsed out. There are probably 2 million blacks unemployed and another million likely to lose their jobs, but they are out of sight and so are out of mind.

/They are being made .....

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They are being made the responsibility willy-nilly of Bantustan Governments that have no resources to cope with such a massive problem. Black poverty and black unemployment which are urban problems and have a fair chance of being solved in the urban setting are transferred to the Bantustans which Dr Nash has called Ghettos of poverty where there is no hope at all of these problems being solved. The menfolk must perforce become migrant labourers. The women, the young and the aged must try to eke out an existence of sorts with little hope of keeping body and soul together. Never mind what even the white D R C has said in condemning the migratory labour system. That is the solution, the final stage of apartheid.

I wrote to the Prime Minister about what I could only call a diabolical policy - this policy of black uprooting. I got back a courteous letter and basically he was saying the removals are legal. Here in South Africa we tend to think that legal and morally right mean the same thing.

#### The Cost

The cost in terms of human suffering is incalculable. Undernourishment and starvation, malnutrition have serious consequences on growing children. They may suffer irreversible brain damage we are told. The Financial Mail last Friday had an article entitled The False Economy of Malnutrition in which it says "no-one can calculate the cost of a generation growing up physically and mentally stunted... Humanitarian consideration apart, the present neglect is false economy which costs the country millions of rands annually in hospitalisation...."

"The underlying cause - poverty, unemployment, the migrant labour system, ignorance and the overcrowded under-developed homelands will take many years to eradicate...."

"But, these byproducts of apartheid will remain a national responsibility". (Financial Mail March 21). And yet it is that very responsibility which the Government wants to shuffle off on to the Bantustans which are too ill-equipped to deal with the problems.

Dr Nash points out the psychological effects of the trauma experienced as a result of any uprooting most of all enforced removal. What is the cost in human beings reduced to total despair so that they can say as they sit listlessly with nothing to do although they are able bodied "We live only to die".

But how do we compute the cost in the legacy of bitterness, anger, frustration and indeed hatred which we are leaving behind for our children? In the body of this paper I have described many things that have happened to us blacks in this country during the several decades of our oppression and exploitation and deprivation. It is, I believe, a miracle of God's grace that blacks still talk to whites, to any whites.

/It is a miracle of God's grace that blacks still .....



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It is a miracle of God's grace that blacks still say we want a non-racial South Africa for all of us black and white together, it is a miracle of God's grace that blacks can still say they are committed to a ministry of justice and reconciliation and that they want to avert the bloodbath which seems more and more inevitable as we see little banding and give on the crucial issue of powersharing. We are told that they Afrikaners have found it very difficult to forgive, certainly difficult to forget what the British did to them in the concentration camps. I want to say that blacks are going to find it difficult very difficult to forgive, certainly difficult to forget what whites have done and are doing to us in this matter of population removals.

All blacks live in a constant state of uncertainty. It is not just illegals - every black even a section tanner has no real security of tenure. Even I, a bishop in the Church of God, and General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches, have no security. The Township Manager could, in his wisdom, decide that my continued presence in Soweto was detrimental to its good ordering and peace and by the stroke of his pen could withdraw permission for me to reside there, just like that. We each have such a sword of Damocles hanging over our heads. I don't suppose many whites know this or if they do, care too much about it.

The Rand Daily Mail, in a short editorial of 20 March, 1980, on the Group Areas Act, under whose provisions much uprooting has taken place, referred to the statistics showing that 11 256 families had so far been moved. These statistics meant about 560 000 men, women and children had so far been uprooted. There were 23 021 families still to be moved and the Editorial notes:

"This is human disruption on a staggering scale. Yet, despite the Cillie Commission's finding about the resentment caused by this Act, it remains. Why?" And we echo why?

#### What the Church can do

The solutions are both long term and short term. The short term strategy is to oppose all removals. We suggest that representations are made to the authorities to persuade them to desist forthwith. If we know about any removals likely to happen then let us do all we can to oppose them. If all our efforts to dissuade the authorities fail, then we should be there physically present as the witnessing and caring church. We must use all nonviolent methods to hinder the act of demolition.

We should support those in resettlement camps providing them with as much relief that they will need as possible - food, blankets, etc. And the church should help to rehabilitate these shocked persons by being a serving church keen to develop a community spirit and helping the people help themselves. These are not empty phrases - the Crossroads people showed considerable ability until some of them were subverted by money.

/No doubt, population .....

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No doubt, population removals and the uprooting of people should be a priority concern for it is a part of the total strategy. The church is being fragmented through the implementation of the Bantustan policy. This policy has very serious theological implications about the unity and integrity of the church. How can a church minister faithfully if it is constantly threatened with disabilities if it does not toe a specific political line? The so-called unrab church is involved - the expense of rebuilding church structures and church congregations is quite staggering and the church is being torn asunder. "If one part of the body suffers, then the whole suffers with it .....

In the long term, the solution must be political. There are no two ways about it. Either there is going to be power sharing or not. If not, then we must give up hope of a peaceful settlement in South Africa. If the Government is determined to go ahead with its balkanisation of South Africa on ethnic lines and depriving blacks of their South African citizenship, then we have had it, your ghastly alternative will be upon you. Population removals must stop immediately if we are to work for a new kind of South Africa and the church should be in the forefront to prepare all of us for this new South Africa.

There is still a chance, but if we let it slip then it will be gone forever. Not the most sophisticated arsenal and the best army or police force will give white South Africa true security for that will come and come automatically when all of us, black and white, know we count as of equal worth in the land of our birth which we love with a passionate love. Please God we pray you, let them hear us, let them hear us before it is too late.

White South Africa please know that you are deluding yourselves, or you are allowing yourselves to be deluded if you think that the present ordering of our society can continue. Blacks will be free whatever you do nor dont do. That is not in question. Dont let the when and the how be in doubt. Dont delay our freedom, which is your freedom as well, for freedom is indivisible. Let it be now and let it be reasonably peaceful. As I did to the students at Wits, so I call on all whites to join the liberation struggle on God's side for justice, peace, righteousness, love, joy, laughter, compassion, caring and reconciliation.

This is the vision that upholds me: -

"After this I looked up, and there was an enormous crowd - no one could count all the people! They were from every race, tribe, nation, and language, and they stood in front of the Throne of the Lamb, dressed in white robes and holding palm branches in their hands. They called out in a loud voice: "Salvation comes from our God, who sits on the throne, and from the Lamb! All the angels stood round the throne, the elders, and the four living creatures. Then they threw themselves face downwards in front of the throne and worshipped God, saying 'Amen!' Praise, Glory, Wisdom, Thanksgiving, Honour, Power, and might belong to our God for ever and ever! Amen"

Rev 7:9-12

May it come true for our land.