

On 23 January 1981, Government Gazette No.7382 carried an obscure notice, Proclamation R 19 1981: "Amendment of Schedule 1 to Proclamation R 70 as substituted by Proclamation R 222 of 1976". Nobody who read the Proclamation by itself - a tedious list of place names and confusing amendments to previous schedules - would realise that, in effect, it alters the boundaries of KwaZulu. By Proclamation, before the consolidation proposals of the van der Walt Commission have even been tabled in Parliament, this notice places certain small areas under the authority of the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly and excises certain others. All in accordance with a greater consolidation programme.

Reserve 4, just north of Richards Bay, is one of the areas thus excised. No longer part of KwaZulu, it now falls under the direct control of Pretoria - which plans, sooner or later, to remove its people. Up to 20 000 people will be taken from their lush, coastal homes and resettled, most probably in the bleak resettlement area of Ntambanana, 60 to 70 kms away.

History: Reserve 4 stretches up the coast north from Richards Bay for some 25 kms. It is divided into two chiefs' wards - the Mbonambi ward in the south, and the Sokhulu ward in the north. It is land that has been settled by these two tribes for generations. The people of Sokhulu recite an unbroken genealogy of chiefs that goes back for nine generations, from the present Chief Mthiyane to the original Chief Sokhulu at the time of Tshaka. When the white conquerors demarcated the Zululand Reserves in the early 20th century, they allowed this land to remain black and gave it the title Reserve 4. Later its boundaries were entrenched in the 1913 and 1936 Land Acts.

Removals Threat: Now, however, KwaZulu is to be consolidated and Reserve 4 must go. Its people are bitter. "The Sokhulu people originated in this place, During the reign of King Tshaka, Sokhulu people were already here", the Chief declared at a recent meeting with his councillors. "There were no white people here then. When they came, they found us here. We're now to be moved, from this place which was given to us by King Tshaka".

The first hint of removal came with the publication of the 1973 and 1975 consolidation proposals. These deleted both Reserve 4 and the neighbouring Reserve 6 from the KwaZulu map - valuable land, made more valuable by the development of the Richards Bay harbour. White expropriation and removal were rushed through at Reserve 6, Reserve 4 was not immediately affected. Then, in 1978, the local commissioner arrived to warn people that at some stage they too would be moved to Ntambanana. The people protested. They told the commissioner to ask Pretoria to reconsider, to leave them on their land "on which we were planted by God". Representatives also went to Ulundi, to seek help, only to find that the KwaZulu government knew nothing about their impending removal.

In 1979 the people got the inevitable reply from Pretoria - the central government could not meet their request since Reserve 4 is a "badly situated area" and hence it must be moved. After another long silence, the commissioner reappeared in February 1981 to bring the community a copy of the January Gazette and spell out its implications: that they no longer fall under KwaZulu but come directly under Pretoria. At this meeting the people made it clear, once again, that they do not want to move. The commissioner evaded their anger by claiming ignorance. He knew nothing about removals, he said; all he knew was what is stated in the Gazette.

This is where matters stand at the present. The people AFRA has spoken to are angry, confused, apprehensive. No houses have been numbered yet, and nobody knows when they are to be moved. They do not know why their land is being taken or what will become of it once they have gone. They presume the government still intends to move them to Ntambanana but this has not been officially confirmed. All that the people know for sure is that they have lost their land - and that sooner or later the government will send trucks, as it did to Reserve 6 before them, and take them away. They have made it clear that they do not want to go - at their own meetings, to the commissioner, to Ulundi. In July 1981 the Chief and some councillors from Sokhulu travelled to Johannesburg to speak at the annual conference of the Institute of Race Relations and to state publicly their "unequivocal" opposition to removals. Effective opposition is complicated, however, by the fact that there are two chiefs whom Pretoria insists on dealing with separately. The people have yet to build a united opposition.

Conditions at Reserve 4: The government has described Reserve 4 as a "badly situated area". In fact, it is one of the most favourably situated of any region in KwaZulu. Lush, subtropical land in a high rainfall area, it has an agricultural potential that has barely been tapped. Extensive areas are under forestry plantations. Some are privately owned by local people; most belong to the KwaZulu government which rents the land from the tribe. In this way the Sokhulu tribe earns R2 600 a year from their forest land, useful money which goes into the Tribal Fund and is spent on local facilities such as their schools (of which they have four). In the south, Richards Bay Minerals, a sand-mining company owned by South African and North American interests, leases mining rights from the Mbonami tribe, a further source of income for the community there.

The land is flat, well-grassed, without erosion. People fish; there are private and community vegetable gardens and fruit orchards. "Even during the drought, we had food and others brought their cattle here to graze", one of the councillors has reported. Homesteads are widely scattered; most are sturdy, well-built, surrounded by family plantations of bananas, avocados, paw paws. In the south, family roadside stalls line the main road into Richards Bay. Many of the women claim they make a reasonable living out of selling their surplus produce at their front gates.

As with any other homeland area, Reserve 4 is underdeveloped. Roads are poor, transport a problem, its peasant producers seriously under-capitalised. Nevertheless, compared to other parts of KwaZulu, its people are relatively well-off. They know the value of their land and would like to develop it, "but when we are developing it, we are told to move and that discourages us" a councillor has said. Its potential is obvious - a potential that the planners of Pretoria and Pietermaritzburg have earmarked for white control.

Conditions at the Proposed Resettlement Site: The advantages of Reserve 4 become even more marked when compared to their likely resettlement site at Ntambanana. The contrast between what people have now and what they will get if they are moved is grim. "There is nothing there", the Chief comments bitterly. "Only bush and stone. During the dry season there is no water and grass there. Now it is said that we must go and live there, leaving our lovely place where we have no complaints".

All that exists at Ntambanana is a rudimentary closer settlement - the standard tintown, with scant water and township-size plots. Fletcraft huts were assembled about two years ago, next to the Ntambanana police station and about 10 km from the place where the Reserve 6 people were dumped. Most of these huts still stand empty - a ghost town of crude shelters marching across the scrubby hills, latrines in attendance. The police station and store rooms are the only substantial buildings in evidence. The rest is simply these huts, hundreds of them, waiting, the bush beginning to creep back around them.

These huts are the other side of development at Richards Bay, the counterpart to the spreading factories and export warehouses of the harbour. It is a side of its development that few of us who read this Report will see - a side that the people of Reserve 4 have vowed not to see either.