

BLACK SPOTS ARE PEOPLE

By SHEENA DUNCAN

BLACK SPOTS are communities of African people who happen to live in the "wrong" place. Wrong in this case being an area scheduled for occupation by whites.

In 1960 a report of the Department of Bantu Administration and Development stated that there was a total of 469 black spots in the four provinces of South Africa involving 181,758 morgen of land in black spots together with a further 546,779 morgen of additional areas to be cleared consisting of smaller and badly situated Bantu Reserves and parts that jutted out into white farming areas, making a total of 728,537 morgen. By the end of 1963 91,926 morgen had been cleared. 51,123 people had been moved. Mr. G. F. van L. Froneman, deputy chairman of the Bantu Affairs Commission predicted that all South Africa's black spots would be cleared by 1970. (Survey of Race Relations 1965.)

* Figures for the number of people moved so far are not easily discoverable but it is clear that tens of thousands have been, or will be, moved both in rural areas and in the towns.

Settled communities all over South Africa are being uprooted and arbitrarily moved, sometimes many miles away, sometimes a short distance, like so many pawns on a chessboard.

These operations are not always reported in the press because sometimes they take place in remote areas and only the Department and the people concerned know about them but sometimes the facts become known. In January 1968 the attention of the public was drawn to the proposed removal of over 12,000 people from farms and mission stations in the Klip River-Dundee area of Natal to the 'Msinga Reserve. Twelve African-owned or tenanted farms and five white-owned mission stations were involved. The people on the Roman Catholic mission farm, Maria Ratschitz, were to be the first to be moved but an inter-Church committee was formed late in 1967 to appeal against the removals and the hardship which would be caused by them and instead a

Footnote.

* Mr. M. C. Botha, the Minister of Bantu Administration, said that every one of the approximately 21,813 Africans removed from "Black spots" between 1963 and 1967 had moved voluntarily.

He said that at the end of 1967, 276 "Black spots" remained adding: "This figure does not include those Bantu areas which are regarded as being so situated that they should be removed". The number of people in these 276 areas had not yet been determined.

start was made on the African-owned farm, Meran on Monday, 29 January. 2,000 people lived on this farm.

The report of the Department of Bantu Administration mentioned above, says that African plot holders who are moved receive compensation made up of the market value of their land, the value of any improvements and an additional sum amounting to twenty per cent of the total. There have been no reports as yet of the sums actually paid to individuals from Meran; it appears compensation is only paid after the move.

The report goes on to say that those who owned less than 20 morgen can buy a plot in a Bantu area. The plots in Limehill are 50 yards by 50 yards. These are pegged out in advance of the arrival of the new residents and each family is allotted one stand. These people have been farming. They have had to sell their cattle and may only take fowls with them. Willy-nilly they are to become town dwellers. (It has been officially stated that there is not enough room in the homelands for all removed Africans to be accommodated on an agricultural basis.) They have left their crops standing at home but the Bantu Commissioner says they will be allowed to harvest when the crops ripen.

According to the report those who owned more than 20 morgen can buy farming land. All may take usable material (doors, window-frames etc.) from the improvements they have effected and they are given free transport.

On Friday, 26 January the children of Meran were sent home from school with a message to tell their parents that they should be ready to leave on Monday, and that they should attend a meeting called by the Bantu commissioner near the Lyell-Merane school on Saturday. The press reported that the commissioner failed to turn up but sent a local business man to tell them to be ready to move on Monday.

On that Monday morning lorries arrived to begin taking the people and their possessions and such "usable material" from their houses as they had been able to dismantle. After the lorries left on their first journey work was begun on demolishing these houses. 21 miles away at Limehill the lorries were unloaded. It was blazing hot. One family found some shade huddled together under their table. Tents had been provided but were not erected. Archbishop Hurley,

priests and Black Sash women who had come to see conditions for themselves helped to put up the tents. It rained that night.

There is a bore-hole delivering 2,000 gallons of water a day; but pipes from the bore-hole were still being laid. Meanwhile the people were being brought in; they were arriving needing water to quench their thirst, to cook, to wash. Water was distributed in tins; a priest on the spot said that the Inter-Church Aid committee had to provide water late on Monday night because "some of the water which had been distributed was not clean — I saw it. It had some sort of worm in it."

Mealie meal was provided free of charge by the Department. A relief centre was set up by the Aid committee to supply food and other necessities. The committee also tried to organise some kind of medical service.

A school is in the process of being built. The Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner for Natal, Mr. T. F. Coertze, is reported in the Natal Mercury to have said that nine schools would eventually be built in the new areas to cater for the children involved in the move but pupils would

Mr. Coertze said that the removal would not affect African servants or registered labour tenants on European-owned properties or mission farms.

Press report.

continue to attend their present schools until the new ones could be provided — 21 miles away? Another official said school would start immediately in tents.

By Wednesday some families had started to build huts, others found it more difficult to manage. Many of the men are away working in "white" towns as contract labourers. Other men and women have been going to work nearby. These are concerned about transport over the twenty miles now lying between them and their places of employment.

Mr. Coertze said that the removals from this area would take from five to seven months. It would be facile to hope that by the time the last of the 12,000 people are moved a fully organised township would be ready for them with schools, clinics, roads, water, proper drainage, transport and employment outlets near at hand. In an article in the Rand Daily Mail (Saturday, 27 January, 1968) Jill Chisholm reports that at Osizweni, a township 15 miles from Newcastle the first people arrived almost four years ago. There are now approximately 2,000 families living there. The first school was opened in 1965, there

are now two schools, one general dealer's shop, one cafe, no clinics, little nearby employment. Water is piped to taps (at scattered points, not in the houses) but the supply is not adequate and supplementary supplies have to be brought on trucks and distributed. In the November issue of this magazine conditions in some of the resettlement villages have been described. It does not appear that much thought is given to the future welfare of displaced persons once they have been tidied out of the way.

A newspaper headline "Advance guard of 270 leave in cheerful mood" has been contradicted in several eye witness accounts by people on the spot. In a letter to the Natal Mercury, Archbishop Hurley reports a conversation with one householder. "Someone remarked that according to the Department the people were going willingly. His reply was to the effect that going was like dying. There was nothing you could do about it — except pray." Perhaps it is necessary for white South Africa to believe that people, forced to leave their homes, in many cases their birthplace, to leave their crops, and cattle, their way of life, for a bleak piece of South Africa's soil, do so "in cheerful mood."

World's Largest Divot

by Bob Connolly



"Let the people judge if the Roman Catholic Church is trying to usurp the functions of my department."

Mr. Coertze, Chief Bantu Commissioner of Natal.