

2. THE BOP SHOW

Any hopes Bophuthatswana might have had of anyone ever taking its claims to independence seriously must have vanished with its government's rescue by South African forces from February's farcical coup.

Add that farce to the pantomime which has been going on in the Transkei for the past year and it would seem to be a good time for a sensible government to be beating a tactical retreat from the policies which spawned both places. Unfortunately that isn't the kind of government we have here. President Mangope hadn't been rescued a week and Dr Gerrit Viljoen, Minister of Development Aid, and commonly believed to be one of South Africa's **more** sensible Ministers, was announcing the addition of more land to KwaNdebele, a place whose pretensions to viability of any sort are non-existent. And this follows soon after the incorporation of Botshabelo into the "homeland" of QwaQwa. What was previously one resettlement camp, at QwaQwa, has now become two. Situated 330 kilometres apart, they are all that QwaQwa is.

That there has to be a redistribution of land between white and black in South Africa, there can be no question. The criteria on which that redistribution takes place should be fairness and future productivity, not the discredited fantasies of Dr Verwoerd.□

3. BOTHAS ECONOMICS

The State President's announcement at the opening of Parliament of his economic plans for our future — a new tax system, privatisation of some of the most important state enterprises, and a freeze on civil services wages — was greeted with everything from applause to outrage.

On one count, at least, he deserves credit, and that is his decision to peg the salaries of government employees. It took some courage to do this when the people concerned probably provide the Conservative Party with one of its most fertile recruiting grounds. What a pity that Mr Botha didn't have the courage to challenge the same people by making an announcement in the same speech of some real political reforms, instead of pandering to them a few weeks later by placing new muzzles on the extra-parliamentary forces with whom he will one day have to negotiate. He must surely know that our economic problems will only be properly resolved when the political ones start to be properly addressed.□

4. DOING THEIR DAMNEDEST

The South African Government seems to have been overtaken by a galloping madness.

What other explanation can there be for its army's continuing presence deep in Angola; for the mass banning of many of its most vigorous opponents; for its proclaimed intention to emasculate most others by cutting off their access to overseas funds; for its blasting with water-cannon the peaceful attempt by leading churchmen to present it with a petition; or, finally, for its petulant challenge to the United Nations, in the face of all this provocation, to "do its damndest" about it?

Each of these crass actions presents a grave threat to our prospects for a relatively peaceful resolution of our problems, but the UN challenge could prove to be the most lunatic of all. It can only isolate South Africa even further from the world, make its increasingly half-hearted friends even less anxious to seem friendly, and make the possibility of outside mediation in helping to resolve our growing crisis even less likely than the Government's aborting of the Eminent Persons mission has already done.

The United Nations has no need to 'do its damndest' to destroy South Africa. Our own Government is doing the job for it.□

SPECIAL SERIES ON LOCAL POLITICS

CONTRIBUTORS

Guest editor: Chris Heymans lectures in the Department of Political Studies, Rhodes University, Grahamstown.

Authors:

Cheryl Hendricks lectures in the Political Science Department, University of Western Cape, Bellville.

Steven Friedman is manager of the policy research unit at the South African Institute of Race Relations, Johannesburg.

Melissa de Villiers is a researcher for the Albany Black Sash and based at the Institute for Social and Economic Research, Rhodes University, Grahamstown.

Fanie Cloete is chief director, planning, in the Department of Constitutional Development and Planning, Pretoria.

Mark Swilling is a researcher at the Centre for Policy Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

Alison Todes lectures in the Department of Town and Regional Planning University of Natal, Durban.

OTHER CONTRIBUTORS:

Terence Beard is Professor of Political Studies at Rhodes University.

Mary de Haas is in the Department of African Studies, University of Natal, Durban.

Tony Voss is Professor of English at the University of Natal, Durban.