

“HOMELAND CONSOLIDATION”

“The Western world was very sensitive to the large scale removal of people merely because someone wanted them moved. In South Africa as well there was growing sensitivity in this regard which the government had to heed,” P.W. Botha blandly announced at the Cape Congress of the Nationalist Party in September. This statement was part of the explanation of the government’s decision to abolish the coloured preference labour policy and to grant 99 year leasehold to some black residents in the Western Cape.

Does this statement give some hope to the half million people threatened with removal in Natal in terms of the 1975 Consolidation plan?

The continuing activity by the department of Co-operation and Development in the area between Ezakheni and Ekuvukeni, earmarked for the 100 000 people from the Lady-smith freehold areas presently threatened with removal, gives a clear answer. The long term presence of Africans in the Western Cape was negotiable. The government has already reconciled itself to the people of Soweto remaining there for the foreseeable future. Why not in the Western Cape?

However removals of black freehold areas, ‘black spots’ and ‘badly situated areas’ for purposes of consolidation are intrinsic to Pretoria’s new constitution. Africans must find their political destiny in their designated ‘bantustans’ and for the world to take this idea seriously, these bantustans must be fashioned into geographical entities.

Most of the consolidation is complete. But KwaZulu provides a huge problem for Pretoria. For at the present moment KwaZulu consists of 48 large pieces and another 157 small pieces. The 1975 Consolidation plan envisaged a KwaZulu of 10 pieces. This would necessitate the removal of half a million people.

In 1975 consolidation plans for the entire country were released. However in 1979 Mr. Botha announced that an exhaustive investigation into consolidation was necessary. The investigation would be conducted by the Commission of Co-operation and Development headed by Hennie van der Walt. In July 1982 van der Walt handed over his commission’s recommendations to the cabinet and in that same year Pretoria announced that consolidation would be completed within four years. However final consolidation plans for KwaZulu have still not been released. This year Pretoria announced that the release of final consolidation plans would have to be postponed because of the Rumpf Commission’s continuing inquiry into the Ingwavuma question. This was clearly a delaying tactic.

PRESSURES

New political developments and pressure from different groupings within Natal have made the consolidation of KwaZulu increasingly difficult.

*The Natal Agricultural Union has constantly requested the government to finalise consolidation plans so that uncertainty can end. White farming interests have made it clear that they are reluctant for highly productive farms to be handed over to KwaZulu. This is especially true of the sugar-cane farming lobby.

*White farmers are opposed to having boundaries redrawn in such a way that their farms now border on KwaZulu. As the Weenen farmers have discovered, when white farms border on overcrowded and impoverished reserves like Msinga, the result is cutting of fences, stealing of cattle, attempting to graze cattle illegally and poaching. In 1977 the fence which marks the boundary between the Weenen white farms and the Msinga reserve was renewed, paid for on a 50/50 basis by the farmers and the KwaZulu government after the farmers had exerted pressure through their local Member of Parliament. However the Weenen farmers discovered that fences cannot keep out the hungry.

*Generally white farmers are eager to see black freehold areas and reserves which border on their farms moved — as often they do not draw any labour from these areas. However sometimes removals of African people jeopardise white economic interests. Ndaleni Mission Reserve (population 30 000) was earmarked for removal in the 1975 consolidation plans. However the small town of Richmond which borders on the reserve is heavily dependent on the buying power of the Ndaleni people. Whites in Richmond are therefore strongly opposed to the removal of the Ndaleni people.

*Increasing publicity around removals both locally and internationally has forced Pretoria to describe removals as a ‘development process’.

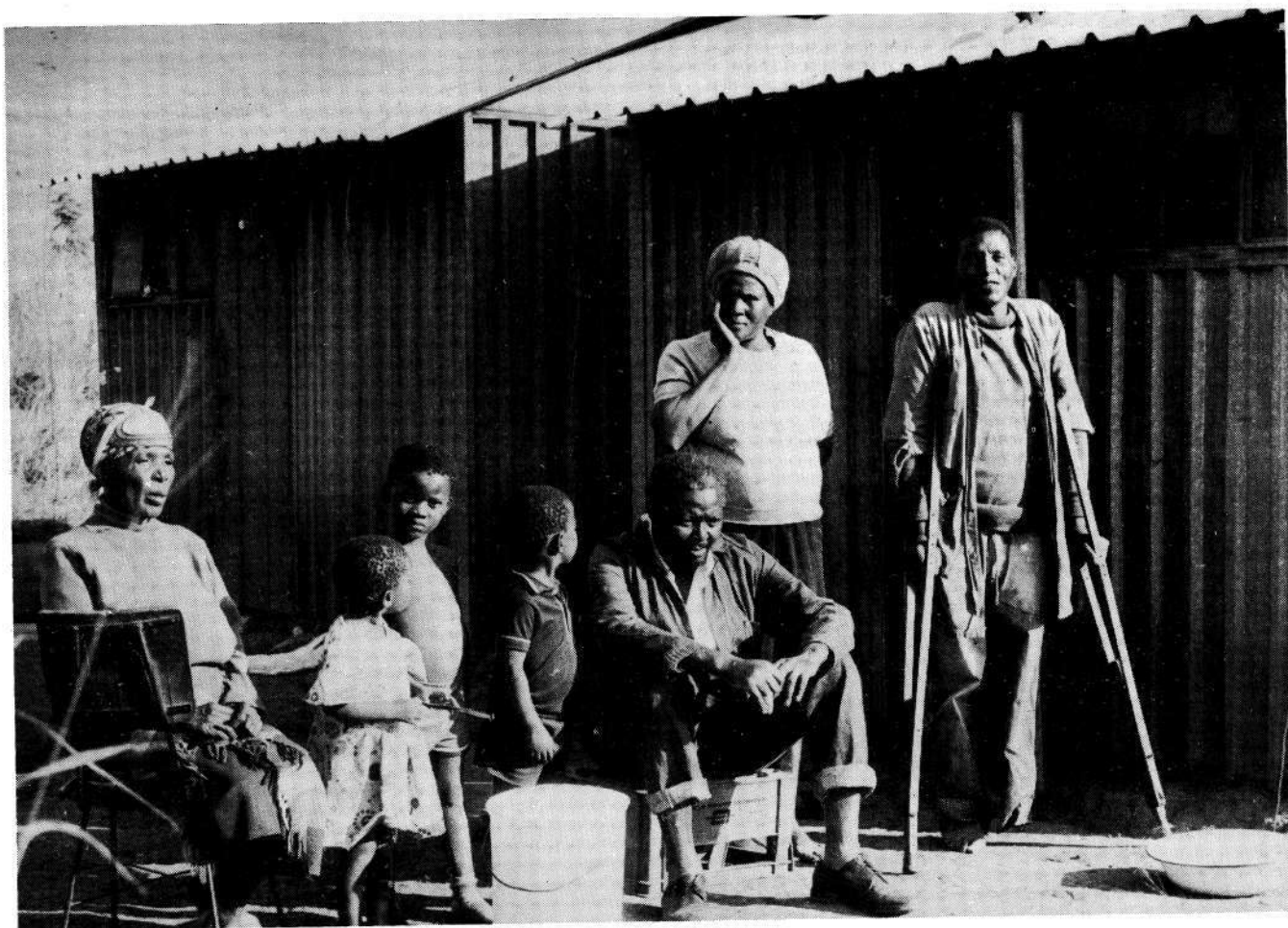
In 1976 the Government was confident that it would easily move the 20 000 people of Reserve 4. After little resistance from the people of Reserve 6 they assumed that the same would be true of Reserve 4. However, resistance in the area halted the state’s plan of dumping the Reserve 4 people at Ntambanana.

Now, having loudly proclaimed removals as ‘a development process’ it will be increasingly difficult to move the people of Reserve 4, a fertile area with an abundance of water and one of the highest potentials for forestry in Natal.

*In 1981 Dr. Koornhof stated that one of the major obstacles to consolidation was the ‘unwillingness of the Zulu people to be moved’. This problem for Pretoria, continues. The case of the Upper Tugela Location illustrates this point.

UPPER TUGELA

In June 1984 a delegation from the Upper Tugela Location went to Ulundi. They were hoping to hear if there were any new developments concerning their fate.



In the 1975 Consolidation proposals the 80 000 people of the Upper Tugela Location were marked for removal. This was not the first time that the people of the Upper Tugela Location had been threatened with removal.

In the early 1970's Farmers' Associations in Natal began to lobby for the removal of the people from the Upper Tugela location as well as the people from Location No. 1 and 2 in the Drakensberg foothills further to the south. They argued that these were the catchment areas for the Tugela and their badly eroded condition was leading to uncontrolled run-off. In a memorandum submitted to the minister the Estcourt Farmer's Association used strong language, "our children will curse us for having left to posterity a festering sore in their midst." They pointed out that if the Upper Tugela Location and Locations No. 1 and 2 were consolidated into KwaZulu "the Republic could be put in the highly invidious and embarrassing position by having the greater bulk of its water resources controlled by some foreign power."

Although agreed that these people should be moved, the different farmers' associations couldn't agree where they should be moved to. The Mount Moriah farmer's association believed the Weenen area, which borders on the already overcrowded and eroded Msinga area, was suitable. The Weenen Farmers Association was not enthusiastic. They submitted their own memorandum to the Minister. Allegations were that members of the police force, dip inspectors and telephone operators joined the Weenen Farmers Association to give it greater membership and therefore lobbying power.

EROSION

Last year the President of the Natal Agricultural Union again pointed to the eroded conditions of the Upper Tugela Location. He suggested that Chief Buthelezi should meet with Pretoria to settle this matter. He offered no solution but it is likely that his solution would be the old one of the 1970's, the removal of these people.

The government, susceptible to the farming lobby and aware of this crisis, have also been pointing to the situation in the Upper Tugela location. In Parliament this year, Volker, MP for Ladysmith, described the erosion in the Upper Tugela Location as "prejudicing the entire economy of Southern Africa." This was because "That land and the strategically important water catchment area of the Tugela from which water is at present being pumped to the Transvaal, because the Transvaal is unable to supply sufficient water for its own development, is causing even the pumps that pump the water over the mountains to wear out as a result of the high silt content of the water."

Mr. Volker failed to point out that the crisis was of the government's own making. Through influx control the state has forced people into the rural areas where overpopulation has led to the erosion of places like the Tugela catchment area.

In 1980 construction began on the Woodstock Dam. This dam flooded some of the Upper Tugela Location and Pretoria regarded it as an ideal pretext to move all the people of the Upper Tugela Location. However strong organization and the urgency of completing the dam, forced Pretoria to buy up adjoining white farms for the people affected by the flooding.

The 80 000 people of the Upper Tugela Location are adamant they will not move. The government is caught in an impasse. Its own policy of bantustans and influx control has created a situation which it can no longer control. The strategic Tugela Catchment area is gradually being eroded away as the people of Upper Tugela resist further impoverishment through removal.

The emergence of new black political organization has meant that existing organizations like Inkatha, so as not to lose popular support, will be compelled to take up the issue of removals with ever more vigour. This is bound to make consolidation even more difficult for Pretoria.

The government is thus caught in a difficult situation. Determined to press ahead with consolidation and already having spent vast amounts of money on it, it has to attempt to juggle the numerous pieces of KwaZulu into some sort of geographical unity and at the same time take into account the many pressure groups at work. Inkatha, for instance, must now take a more and more active interest in removals or be discredited. Half a million more people are to be moved in Natal and Pretoria is forced to realise that the discontent engendered by this massive relocation can be used by political organizations for their long term ends. □

by COLIN GARDNER

TWO POETS IN NATAL

In the last fifteen years or so there has been an explosion of lively and varied South African literature in English. Why should this have been so? The answer to such a question is never easy: the causes of any socio-cultural development are complex. Indeed the development itself may have to be viewed with circumspection: a number of the important writers of this period had been at work for some years — Alan Paton, Es'kia Mphahlele, Nadine Gordimer, Richard Rive, Guy Butler, James Matthews, Douglas Livingstone. It seems safe to assert, however, that a crucial fact in our cultural as well as our political history was the rise of corporate black confidence in the early 1970s; this was manifested in the black consciousness movement, in labour activity, and in literature and other arts. All this in turn produced ripple-effects throughout all the alert areas of South Africa's political and cultural life, in such a way that even the writing of white authors whose focus is not primarily political has been subtly affected.

Natal is in many ways a microcosm of South Africa. It happens at the moment to be fairly rich in poets who have brought out work recently: Douglas Livingstone, a poet of great range and depth, a master of many different tones and forms;¹ Mafika Gwala, one of the most notable of the new black 'poets of resistance'; Nkathazo kaMnyayiza, whose quiet voice expresses strong and compassionate views;² Chris Mann, an imaginative and thoughtful observer and analyst; Shabbir Banoobhai, who has produced powerful lyrics on mystical, political and personal themes;³ Peter Strauss, a poet of subtle, almost metaphysical intensity;⁴

Dikobe wa Mogale, painter and poet, who was sent to jail for ten years (under the Terrorism Act) in the same month as his first book of poems appeared;⁵ and several others.

In this article I am going to consider two books of poems, both published in 1982: **No More Lullabies** (Ravan) by Mafika Gwala, and **New Shades** (David Philip) by Chris Mann. A comparison of this sort is bound to be in some ways unfair to both poets — after all, they published their poems so that they would be read and responded to for what they are, not so that they might be compared and contrasted with another set of poems — but I hope that the juxtaposition may prove fruitful and suggestive, that it may indeed provide some insights into two of the most significant impulses in contemporary South African poetry. This is not to say that either Gwala or Mann can be thought of as merely typical. Both seem to me to be fine, important poets.

Mafika Gwala was born in Verulam in 1946. He has worked in a variety of jobs and has had a spell at the University of Zululand, but he has for many years been closely involved in the community life of Mpumalanga, the township adjacent to the so-called 'border industry' area of Hammarsdale, between Durban and Pietermaritzburg. At the moment he is a teacher. He has been engaged in both political and cultural work, and has suffered periods of detention-without-trial. Besides poems he has published short stories and articles of social, political and literary criticism and analysis. His first book of poems, **Jol'iinkomo** (Donker), appeared in 1977.