

# Zanyokwe — for Betterment

## or worse?

By Marian Lacey

**Z**ANYOKWE is a rural location of about 2 000 morgen in the valley of the Zanyokwe stream, which in turn slopes down towards the Keiskamma River. The altitude varies from 500 to 900 metres and the rainfall averages 700 mm a year.

Up until 1939 when it was declared a betterment area (Government notice 791 dated June 9, 1939), it was typical of any tribally-owned communal area except, as in many Ciskeian rural locations, some freeholders had farms within the Zanyokwe location. For the rest, homesteads were scattered throughout the location, each married man being entitled to an arable lot and grazing rights on the large commonage which they shared with the freeholders.

With Mfengu and white settlers buying farms in Keiskammahoek, the Zanyokwe residents found themselves seriously short of arable land. So they became large stock-owners instead, with the landless working as share-croppers or half-share farmers on the lands of the freeholders. But then came taxes and increasing congestion which resulted in landlessness and overgrazing, so that the sons of many villagers had to become migrant workers on the mines and farms.

By the 1930s land shortage generally had become so acute that tens of thousands of Africans who had formerly been able to work on a migrant labour basis were forced to leave the reserves permanently. The farms and mines offered every more jobs but denied both stability and security,

for they refused to house the families of married workers.

For the landless, deprived of their right to an independent existence in the rural areas, and the disenchanted migrants whose jobs exiled them from their families, the only recourse was to migrate to the urban areas where these rights had not as yet been entirely restricted.

The depression, which accelerated the influx of both Africans and poor whites to the towns, had inevitable social and political results for both. It also hastened a growing labour crisis and pointed up the failure of government attempts to solve the poor white question. The government then set out to reappraise its entire 'native policy'.

This revised 'native policy' was spelt out by the Native Affairs Commission (NAC) in its 1939 report and a follow-up article in *Forum* (August 31, 1941) by Senator Heaton Nicholls; a key member of the NAC.

The policy was to be one of territorial separation. The Commission aimed to set aside 'sufficient land to provide a family anchorage for all Natives except the comparatively small sections which must be considered as permanently detribalised and urbanised and who could not be lured back by any Reserve reward'.

To appreciate how comprehensive the intent was even then, under the Smuts government and 15 years before the Tomlinson Report, one reads the Commission's declaration along with its propo-

sal that all Africans on farms in white areas should be removed to the reserves and that males only be allowed to leave the reserves.

As Nicholls stated: 'The breakdown of the labour tenant system under the stress of economic conditions means the ultimate removal of families of farm workers into the reserves and the conversion of all farm labour into wage labour on the same basis as mine labour'.

The NAC had every justification for this line. The Native Land legislation of 1913 and 1936 and the Natives (Urban Areas) Acts, especially as amended by the Native Laws Amendment Act of 1937, implied the policy of barring Africans from property or domiciliary rights in 'white areas'.

In fact all these measures were thoroughgoing in their effort to reverse the flow of Africans from the reserves to the towns, and the policy of regarding urban Africans as temporary sojourners was emphasised by the provisions for expelling 'redundant' Africans from the towns.

The Native Trust and Land Act of 1936, in Chapter 4, made it possible within a 30-year period to uproot all labour tenants and peasant squatters in white areas, while provision was also made to expropriate African freeholders on land in the so-called 'black spots'. Landowners thus expropriated were to be given compensatory land of 'equal pastoral and agricultural value' in the reserves.<sup>1</sup>

1. This clause was later amended so that only Africans whose land measured over 40 morgen were entitled to compensatory land.

To ensure a 'family anchorage' for a population of three million Africans already resident in the reserves in 1936 and a further 1½ million whom the NAC estimated would have to be repatriated from the white areas, the State instituted the so-called betterment schemes. These schemes were legally enforceable in the 7 250 000 morgen of potential trust areas (ie quota land) to be released under the 1936 act, and it was hoped that the remaining 10½ million morgen scheduled in 1913 would also eventually become betterment areas.

Zanyokwe, like most other areas in Keiskammahoek, was, for some undisclosed reason, left out of the 1913 schedule. It was one of the first to be proclaimed a betterment area in 1939 and was immediately subjected to a whole host of regulations restricting the number of stock, and about the fencing of grazing camps and land allocation.

In drawing up the scheme the administrators apparently relied heavily on some of the labour devices used by Cecil Rhodes in his Glen Grey Act of 1894.

The success of Rhodes' system was that it increased the government's control over Africans in districts surveyed under the act. This control was strengthened by ensuring that 'headmen in the pay of the Government' would serve on councils created under the act.

The headmen would be responsible not only for levying taxes for local development, but also for collecting government ones. Secondly, the act limited people to four-morgen allotments under individual title, which was hardly sufficient for an economic peasant holding, but small enough to impose severe restrictions on squatting.

There was to be hereditary succession on the basis of primogeniture, and land could not be alienated without special permission. Rhodes thereby ensured an ever-increasing labour force, for in each generation all but the eldest son would be made landless; and by declaring the surveyed lands inalienable the move towards segregation had begun.

The betterment planners modified Rhodes' scheme in one important respect. Although it was usual in trust areas for the eldest son to inherit the land, this was seen as a privilege given at the State's discretion, not as a legal

right. Under the new scheme a man could only have a certificate of occupation and it could be withdrawn if he failed to obey any of the trust's demands — any of their proclamations or servitude regulations.

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only the promise of rent and high transport costs, where before there had been none. The cost of living at Glenmore is exorbitantly high.

In 1976, the Poverty Datum Line for a family of six, living in Grahamstown, was R105,06. In Glenmore, three years later, where basic commodities are more expensive than they are in Grahamstown, most families have an income of only R27 per month.

Two farmers recruited women and young men to pick sprouts at 90c per day or at 2c per kilo, plus a meal of beans and mielie-soup. Worker turnover was high, and productivity low, with women earning R1,40 per week. They were in the fields before dawn, soaked to the waist before the dew was off the freezing plants, and then remained there until after 5 pm.

Glenmore was destined to receive 40 000 blacks from isolated pockets in the Eastern Cape, who were to live in 5 000 houses on a 1 000 hectare farm on the banks of the Fish River.

But in August 1979 further removals were stopped and development of the R26 million scheme was frozen after Dr Koornhof visited the area. Shortly afterwards, Dr Koornhof, in an address to the Grahamstown Library of the Blind, said he was 'the honorary mayor of Alexandria, the Godfather of Crossroads, and would soon be the Father Christmas of Glenmore'.

By November, there were only four people employed out of the 3 800 Glenmore residents, family incomes had dropped by more than two thirds — from an average of R80 per month to R27 per month — and more than 20 people had died, mostly from malnutrition or kwashiorkor-related diseases.

Mr D. Hitge, Chief Commissioner for Co-operation and Development in Queenstown, said that where people worked was not his responsibility. 'There are the rural areas where there is no work either — the people are migrant workers'. He said: 'The provision of jobs has nothing to do with me'.

### LOSS OF RIGHTS

The most important loss, apart from family members and cattle, is of Section 10 rights (Section 10 of the Urban Areas Consolidation Act of 1945), which enables them to seek work in urban areas. This loss is extended to their children, which means the Glenmore people have been forced to become migrant workers.

The Government endorses this view. Ten years ago, the then Minister of Bantu Affairs and Development, Mr M. C. Botha, said resettlement areas were not meant to be areas of employment, but areas from which blacks could become migrant workers.

Resettlement, in Government terms, aims at clearing 'non-productive Bantu' or 'redundant blacks' from white areas, and sending them to resettlement camps or back to their homelands.

These 'non-productive Bantu' have been classified by the Government as: the aged, unfit widows, women with dependent children, families who do not qualify for Section 10 rights, superfluous farm labourers and squatters.

Ironically, even professional blacks, such as doctors, attorneys, agents, traders and industrialists have fallen into this category because they do not fit into the so-called 'white' economy.

Glenmore reveals that there has been no major shift of Government policy over the past few years.

This was an elegant method of control. The sporadic and potentially explosive peasant resistance movements which proliferated in many reserve locations against cattle culling, the one-man-one-lot principle, and the forcible internal resettlement of scattered homesteaders in closer settlement villages did not occur in Zanyokwe.

Any rebel there could be brought to heel at once by threatening to cancel his certificate. The administrators did not even have to look tough. While land allocation kept people docile, the official eye focused benignly on such mild interests as conserving soil and reclaiming land.

Zanyokwe has been a betterment area for 40 years. Despite the label, conditions there have steadily deteriorated. In a population of just over 1 500 in 1975, only 13 families with freehold title had lands and stock, and 15 household heads had been given certificates of occupation. Over 200 families were landless and without stock.

Tomlinson had recommended in 1955 that landless or 'surplus' people be removed to rural resettlement villages to be created outside the locations. This was to allow for the growth of a rural peasantry. It has not been done because the resettlement camps

of the last two decades like Sada, Dimbaza and Thornhill were needed for the 'redundants', 'surplus', 'illegals' and squatters uprooted and resettled from the 'white areas'.

Meanwhile the landless villagers living in closer settlements in the betterment areas are, like their resettlement camp neighbours, totally dependent on the wage sector. The present focus on the appalling living conditions for people in resettlement camps seems far too narrow. It implies falsely that life in the rural locations is somehow better.

As Macmillan wrote in 1930:

'in South Africa . . . there was a general conscience-comforting *idée fixe* that the Native is a lucky being, able to live on very little, working only when it suits him — passing lightly between town house and country seat.'

(Complex South Africa, p 188.)

His comment still hold true for most whites today.

With Riekert updating the Tomlinson plan, the future looks even bleaker for most homelander. Industrial legislation which has long afforded protection to privileged whites, and then coloureds and Indians too, led to a gross over-

supply of unskilled Afrikan workers. It is a main cause of the present critical shortage of skilled workers and the increasingly high rate of unemployment amongst unskilled workers.

To right the balance this preferential policy is now to be extended, but only to include the 4½ million or so urban insiders who qualify under the rigorous terms of Section 10, 1 (a), (b) and (c) rights.

Where does this leave the homelander? Under the Tomlinson plan industries and rural development programmes were to have created the jobs and the opportunities for Africans to fulfil their rising expectations 'in their own areas'.

Benso statistics for 1975 and 1978 show that apart from the prospects for African politicians and civil servants, a sprinkling of business and professional men, and a few unskilled workers in sub-economic and small-scale industries and irrigation schemes, this dream is fast becoming a homeland nightmare. Most rural dwellers still depend entirely on the white wage sector for survival.

In fact there seems to be less room for rural development than before. Using the Ciskei example once again, with Herschel and Glen Grey ceded to Transkei, the Ciskei has already lost 478 167 morgen of its original quota.

One must also add the loss of all areas in the north-western Cape to Bophuthatswana (the Mafeking district alone measured over one million morgen) which, unlike the Eastern Cape and 'black spot' expropriations, was not added to the Ciskei quota.

The excision of these lands means that Africans are being still more deprived. The lands promised in 1936, but still to be purchased, will more than likely be allocated as compensatory land to those already removed. The rest must be given to landless chiefs in the Ciskei. Little if any land will be available, therefore, to relieve the congestion in the heavily overpopulated locations.

Up to October 31, 1979, destitute homelander could use a loophole in the influx control laws



Picture by GRAHAM HAYMAN

by entering towns in the hope of finding a job within the visiting limit of 72 hours. Most employers (except perhaps in the Western Cape) found that they could register these people in the ordinary way as contract workers. But on October 31, 1979, the three-month moratorium for the registration of 'illegal' employees was withdrawn and this loophole was shut.

Employers now face a R500 fine for hiring an 'illegal' worker, which will effectively stop this practice. From now on, rural dwellers will have to join the queues of the tens of thousands of unemployed workseekers in the homelands in the hope of getting contract work.

Moreover, if Riekert's recommendations are fully applied, the chances of a homelander receiving even contract work will be greatly reduced, for the homelander will then have to compete against his more favoured unemployed Section 10 counterpart.

In Riekert's proposals, furthermore, it is recommended that Section Tenners be allowed to move freely between prescribed areas. But since the free movement of workers is conditional on both housing and jobs being available, it is possible that future family housing programmes will be co-ordinated with the estimated labour needs of the various districts.

In this way the State can regulate the redistribution of Section 10 workseekers between the urban areas while at the same time prevent the uncontrolled influx of Section Tenners to any one particular industrial centre simply by refusing to sanction the building of extra houses where no jobs exist.

Besides, employers themselves are likely to prefer workers who are free of red tape, and few will invest in the training and apprenticing of workers who are unsure of being able to stay permanently in town. Thus priority in the redistribution of unemployed skilled and unskilled Section Tenners will be assured.

With the existing oversupply of unskilled workers this could mean that once Riekert's recommendations are fully implemented, contracts for homelander in certain

sectors will be reduced and eventually only the menial, low-paid unskilled jobs — those needing cheap, casual, seasonal or perpetual migrant workers — will be open to homelander. With no other means of subsistence, what choice will the rural destitute have? And how can he bargain for better wages even in those base kinds of employment?

One also notes the present boom and the assurance of political stability which may signal a return to mass white immigration. If skilled workers flock in from abroad, even Section Tenners will struggle to find jobs in that sector and will have to take unskilled work instead. In turn they will be encroaching on the most menial work sector, so that even those contracts will not be left for homelander.

Tomlinson predicted in 1955 that by the end of the 1970s the tide of Africans flowing from the reserves to the towns would be reversed. As a result of one government action after another, culminating in the Riekert recommendations, his prophecy has come true.

Africans will now pile up in the homeland areas where land and employment are both totally inadequate to keep even the present communities alive. The luckiest of them will get contract work of the poorest kind, living away from their families, and with no power to seek either better jobs or higher wages.

This reverse tide has been most evident from 1968 with the passing of the Bantu Labour Regulation Amendment Act which not only tightened up influx control machinery but made it virtually impossible for a homeland worker to qualify (as he had in the past) for the much-coveted Section 10, 1 ((a), (b) or (c) rights in urban areas.

Alongside this and various anti-squatting measures the State finally took steps to implement Chapter 4 of the Native Trust and Land Act as the 30-year limit had expired. Thus began the mass resettlement of squatters, labour tenants, and 'redundants' such as the old, disabled, and unemployed dependants.

Not only has resettlement occurred on a mass scale but, even after allowing for a natural average 2,74 per cent annual population increase, the number of Africans with domiciliary rights in the white sector has been effectively reduced: the latest CED estimate is only 870 000 families, or 25 per cent of the entire African population, while the number of people flowing back to the Ciskei each year is well over the 2,74 per cent natural increase.

Riekert's refinement of the separate development plan condemns the rest of the African workforce to either a migrant or contract-worker existence if they are employed at all. For workseekers resettled in locations near industrial growth points (Riekert estimated there were 43 500 Ciskeian frontier commuters in 1976) there will be some job opportunities and at least as daily commuters they will be able to live with their families. But for people like the Zanyokwe residents living in closer settlement rural locations and the tens of thousands of others dumped in the now notorious resettlement camps, jobs will be scarce, remote, and of the poorest kind.

In contrast, whites may feel benefited by these developments. By trial and error, and a constant updating of the blueprint first worked out in the 1930s by the old United Party, the State has finally shaped its labour control and regulation to suit the labour needs of all sectors.

Perhaps as important to most whites, urban Africans may well stay low-key politically in order to keep the privileges and protection belatedly extended to them. It is argued that this could defuse the urban political time-bomb or at least win time for doing so.

Yet this hope for safety in town is bought at the expense of life itself in the country. For those more concerned about future violence than present suffering, the plight of the homelander is still serious — it could be another fuse to the same bomb. And for others, the priority is that people everywhere have the right to live, which implies at the very least a reasonable system for survival.