

Forced Mass Removals

- PROMISE LAMOLA

The same day when our young combatants; Comrades Anthony Tsotsobe, Johannes Shabangu and David Moise were illegally sentenced to death, the racist tyrants carried out yet another act of naked terror against our people. The fascist police and administration board officials staged a massive nazi-style pre-dawn raid against the homeless people of Nyanga. Police cordoned off the area within minutes, bulldozed and razed all shelters and property. Hundreds were arrested and many mothers were separated from their children. A Johannesburg newspaper (Rand Daily Mail 22.8.81) reported: "At least three babies were separated from their families as 1,000 Nyanga squatters were deported and as the squatters arrived in Umtata in driving rain yesterday... Among them was a woman who was hustled out of Cape Town so fast that her breast-feeding baby stayed behind - while two small babies turned up in Umtata without their mothers... Of the many possessions left behind, one was the most poignant. The bundle, lying in the sun, stirred and a 7 week-old baby began displaying hunger pangs. His mother was not there to feed him."

The Nyanga squatters are being forced to return to the poverty stricken 'homelands'. The government provides no housing nor compensation for their bulldozed houses and property. Evicted people are sent to 'resettlement' camps whose conditions are extremely appalling. With unemployment rampant in these far-flung camps, most 'resettled' families are dependent on money sent by their menfolk who sell their labour power as contract workers. At places like Compensation and Keiskamahoek, these 'surplus' people live in barren wilderness. At the Oxton 'resettlement' camp situated in the stony and desolate wasteland area of the Whittlesea District, children barely old enough to walk rise early each morning to fetch wood from the mountains 8 kilometres away. Water supply is a problem with up to a 1,000 families sharing two taps in some areas. Those who are lucky enough to find jobs in the neighbouring 'white' areas have to commute long distances, leaving at 3 am to return as late as at 8 or 9 pm. This is the life of mil-

lions of our people in apartheid South Africa.

LANDLESSNESS

The forced eviction of the Nyanga squatters is neither an isolated nor the first incident of its kind. The policy of clearing Africans out of the 'white' 87% of the total surface area of our country has continued unabated since the ascendancy of the Nationalist Party to power. Millions of our people have been increasingly forced into the Bantustan 'homelands' since 1948. Of late this campaign has been stepped up with zeal and gravity, touching all corners of our country. We need only recall the people of Kratzenstein, a 'black spot' 50 km north of Pietersburg; the community of St. Wendonlin's near Durban; the Batlokwa and Ndebele people, to mention but a few.

These people are forcibly removed from lands they have occupied for centuries to poverty-stricken bantustans. In a paper presented to the First Conference of the ANC Women, Comrade Ray Simons described the conditions in Ciskei as follows:

"The population in the Ciskei has doubled in the last ten years. There are 87 people for each square kilometre of land. The Ciskei, which is to become 'independent' on the 4th December, is an over-populated piece of land with little industry and poor agriculture. The people live under poverty conditions, they are more than 11 times as poor as the average white South Africans."

The majority of the people are landless and even the few who have rights to any land at all cannot survive on its products because the land is poor with no fertilizers and irrigation schemes. As a result an alarmingly high rate of infant mortality, kwashiorkor, malnutrition and other diseases is the plight of our people.

Faced with these horrible conditions our people are forced to leave for white farms, mines and industries as migrant labourers, selling their labour power for extremely low wages, because of the alarmingly high rate of unemployment in the Bantustans. According to research done by the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR), for every job created in the Transkei there are 120 potential work-seekers. This 'reserve army' of labour is the source of cheap labour created to secure super profits for the white monopolists. These migrant labourers leave their families for periods of up to a year and

more and are housed in single-sex hostels and compounds. The thousands of homeless squatters who are subjected to endless arrests and forced removals are the families of migrant workers. Failing to eke out a living in the 'homelands', the families are forced to join the breadwinners in 'white' South Africa.

RACIST POLICIES

The victims of forced evictions fall into the following categories:

- (i) Africans moved to the Bantustans when townships in 'white' areas are 'deproclaimed'.
- (ii) Africans relocated in the Bantustans under the policy of clearing them off 'black spots', usually black-owned farms in the 'white' areas.
- (iii) The so-called 'illegal' Africans under the inhuman pass and influx control laws.
- (iv) The 'unproductive' Africans, i.e. the unemployed, the old and the very young.
- (v) The Indian and Coloured population removed from their homes under the Group Areas Act.

This shunting around of our people is aimed at enforcing the abominable Bantustan system on our people. By evicting the settled communities in the so-called 'white' areas the Pretoria boer regime intends keeping our people in a state of constant mobility and instability with a naive hope of preventing organised opposition and resistance to the cancerous system of apartheid. We are relegated to the position of 'foreigner' in the land of our birth. We have no say in the government and no rights to vote except for our 'homeland governments' which are merely toy-telephones. This is the plight of a Black man in South Africa. Thus the only way in which we can improve our lot is through resistance.

GROWING OPPOSITION

Mass removals have always met with heroic resistance from our people. We need only recall the fearless struggles of the Ndebele and Batlokwa people against Mangope's treacherous schemes. Recent evictions have also roused the anger not only of squatters but also of other sections of our population; churchmen, intelligentsia, youth, etc. Responding to a plea by Actstop, the anti-removal organisation formed to take up the plight of Group Areas Act victims, about 140 Johannesburg

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lawyers have rallied to defend free of charge the hundreds of African, Coloured and Indian people charged under the notorious Group Areas Act. Thousands of our people including whites demonstrated against the removal of the Nyanga squatters to Transkei. Protests and prayer meetings were held all over our country and funds were raised to feed and clothe the homeless squatters. Even some of the

Western powers could not close their eyes to this brutal fascist eviction but joined progressive mankind the world over in condemning the Pretoria racists.

The heroic resistance of the Nyanga squatters has provoked the same old response from the intransigent racist rulers. "We will not allow anarchy. Those people (squatters) will find we are not only capable of using strong tactics, but we will use them," said Piet "Promises" Koornhof, racist Minister of Cooperation and Development. What obstinacy in the face of growing internal and world-wide opposition! The racist Premier, P.W. Botha, claimed that the anti-removals campaign was organised, orchestrated and financed by people with ulterior motives, the so-called agitators. This comes as no surprise since all our resistance is seen to be the work of 'foreign agitators' and 'communists' especially when it is most pronounced. But while acknowledging our selfless resistance to mass removals, we also need to point out some shortcomings.

UNITY IN ACTION

In his January 8 message Comrade President Oliver Tambo urged:

"In particular, we have not yet succeeded to bring together in common and simultaneous action all the black students, teachers and parents... We have allowed the Ndebele people to fall victim to Mangope's machinations in the same way as we have not come to the aid of our brave Batlokwa people. To remedy this national failure, we

should adopt as our battle-cry, the motto of our trade union movement and of SACTU; 'AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL'. The kind of unity we must seek therefore is unity in action, unity for common action against the common enemy, unity for victorious struggle."

It is only through united and co-ordinated resistance that we can bring these forced evictions and other tyrannical schemes of racist rule to an end. Solidarity actions with all fighting people; striking workers, evicted squatters, students on boycott, etc., should be given priority by all sections of our people. No amount of terror can defeat our united and organised mass anger. Let's all come up in one voice as we have done during our nation-wide campaign against twenty years of the fascist republic. Let us use the level of unity and organisation achieved during this campaign as the basis for future battles, be they for issues of immediate, local or national interest.

Our people's army, Umkhonto we Sizwe, has made its presence recognised by sharpening the people's struggle with military blows at the enemy's military and economic installations. The recent devastating attack against the Mabopane police station has added a new quality to the struggle of the people of this area against mass removals.

FREEDOM CHARTER

An end to forced removals will only come about with the total destruction of the apartheid system and its replacement by a people's government based on the Freedom Charter which in part declares that: "THE LAND SHALL BE SHARED AMONG THOSE WHO WORK IT" and further states: "All shall have the right to occupy land wherever they choose." This is the type of South Africa we have dedicated our lives for, a South Africa free from pre-dawn raids, pass laws, Group Areas Act, land hunger and mass removals. We are aware that this struggle will be long and bitter and we have already shown our capability to wage it to its final end, the seizure of power by the oppressed majority.

**ALL SHALL HAVE THE RIGHT TO OCCUPY LAND
WHEREVER THEY CHOOSE...**

- THE FREEDOM CHARTER -