
Down at Mqanduli

Z.S.N.

A Transkei Report

FOR SOME TIME the Government, through its spearhead, the Native Trust has been edging its way into this Mqanduli district of Tembuland in the Transkeian Territories. One of its weapons is the time worn promise of "green" pastures and better stock for those who allow their locations to be rehabilitated and fenced in. In more than one way the Trust is enticing the peasants to take a more active part and a pleasant attitude to cultivation of plantations and building of dams, etc. in the locations. At times indirect pressure is used in cases where the residents are opposed to the schemes. In locations where the people have accepted the idea of boundary fences and contours on their lands, Trust tractors are used in ploughing at reduced charges as compared with those where the residents have totally rejected the Native Trust schemes.

To date, less than a quarter of the arable land remains uncountoured, because the peasants are adamant that such acts not only decrease the carrying capacity of their lands but also that the Native Trust does not compensate them; by giving them additional land to replace that taken up by the contours. And that there is no reduction in the taxes paid for such countoured lands.

Recently, the Bantu Affairs Commissioner of the district called a meeting for discussion on the boundary fence between Ngqwara and Qokolweni locations, which are adjoining. The former is under chieftainship of Zwelivumile Mtwana and the latter under sub-chief Ephraim Sangoni. Sangoni had acquiesced in the rehabilitation of his location, while Zwelivumile of the Xesibe clan had rejected the scheme. The official concerned is all too eager to seek co-operation and see the Government schemes come to fruition in his area. The result was that, despite the vigorous opposition of the Ngqwara residents, the B.A. Commissioner ruled that the fence be pushed for about two miles into the Ngqwara location commonage. This was beyond the beacons as pointed out by the old men of this location. This came as a surprise even to the residents of Qokolweni, who never anticipated such a move. For their old men were almost in agreement with the Ngqwara people about the whereabouts of the beacons. This has angered the residents of Ngqwara location, who now are seeking ways of having the decision reversed.

The fencing of Qokolweni has been received with mixed reactions by the residents. Recently, the District Authority dealt with an anonymous letter addressed to the T.T.A., complaining that the residents never asked for plantations and dams, which will only serve to reduce their land, but only for a boundary fence. It read,

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in part, literally translated:

As you are aware we accepted the Rehabilitation Scheme voluntarily from the Government for certain reasons and under certain conditions. Amongst these we never asked for cultivation of plantations.

This came as a surprise last year when the Planning Committee pointed out on a Rehabilitation Map (diagram) large tracts of land that were reserved for plantations. We were shocked but we dared not voice our views lest we be branded rebellious against the Government.

The Committee said that the Government was in sympathy with our sad plight of having no firewood.

These Plantations are worthless to the location and a great loss too. We can always gather wood from the plentiful bushes around. What we do not have is arable land and pasture. When we complained about the arable lands that were converted into the commonage to make way for the Rehabilitation Scheme, it was categorically stated that the only solution was reduction of livestock as the pasture would be inadequate.

We beg that the land reserved for plantations be released for commonage, so that some of the land can be used for ploughing. Maintaining the present position would cause the people to be scared of the Rehabilitation Scheme. Because as it is, it is land robbery and forcing people to accept things they never asked for.

Further, neither the Government nor the people benefit from these Plantations. Because even if they are there the people will insist in asking the Government to buy them more land, due to overcrowding in the Location.

We request the District Authority to consider the matter. What we want is more land and not plantations.

TOWARDS THE END of last year chief Vulumhlaba Mrazuli of the Nqabe clan, in grand style, with a posse of about 50 horsemen and some pedestrians came to the B.A. Commissioner to return his people's word that they did not want rehabilitation and fences around their location, Ntlangaza. The reply was that the matter was receiving attention and a communication will be addressed to him in due course.

The officialdom's reaction only manifested itself last

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- Referring to cases of sabotage, Mr. Vorster said: I am responsible for law and order and it is my duty to minimise it as much as I possibly can." —*Digest of South African Affairs*, Department of Information, Pretoria.
- I want second-hand scaffold planks. What do you want?—Swop column, *Rand Daily Mail*.
- 20% discount on all fire-arms purchased during June—Advertisement in *Rand Daily Mail*.
- While we fully understand the importance of what Mr. Wentzel calls "non-violent tactics", and while we appreciate that these are by far the best weapon available to the politically oppressed, we do not choose such methods for ourselves—Dr. Z. J. de Beer in *Forum*.
- Mrs. van der Merwe will be the first woman to stand for Kroonstad. She has no experience of politics but has been associated with the National Party for 25 years—*Rand Daily Mail*.
- R6m Factory Makes World's Whitest Pigment—headline in *Rand Daily Mail*.

month when despite spasmodic protests a boundary fence was started between his location and Qokolweni. Even before the fence has been completed there have been incidents. Last week a boy from Ntlangaza was found guilty and sentenced to R25 or 3 months in the local Court for cruelty to animals as it was alleged that he had struck a cow from Qokolweni with a battleaxe when he had found it grazing on his side of the boundary! Presently there is a feeling of animosity between the two locations.

Two weeks ago, on the pretext that there was a tribal fight (which is quite common in these parts) the Mobile Unit of the Police swooped down upon the peasants of Ntsitshana and Mgojo locations. There were about 20 armoured jeeps. Here peasants were picked up while either lazing in the sun beside their kraals or busy on their daily routine work in their fields. They were thrown into the vans, which were all full to capacity.

Nothing was said at the time of their arrest by way of charge or excuse for picking them up, until they were at the Police outpost at Kwaaiman. Here the whole lot was charged individually for failure to produce Reference Books. Those who, fortunately, had the Books on their persons were released. The others were sentenced to fines ranging from R5 to R10.

A man from the affected area says that he was driving an ox-sledge and had his Reference Book in the coat which was on the sledge. They told him that they were looking for *Dompas*. He told them that his was in the coat, but all the same he was thrown into the van and had to pay R10. His cattle (oxen) and sledge trespassed into someone else's land and he had to pay another R2 as there was nobody with the oxen while he was detained at the Police station. His location is one of those that strongly oppose the Government schemes.

In the meantime there is a craze amongst the chiefs for Tribal Authority offices. Some such offices are under construction like the one at Vulumhlaba Mrazuli's place and Bazindlovu Holomisa of the Gebe clan and his sub-chief Pandlindlela Mdunyelwa, are running around the district taxing the people 50c per adult male towards funds for putting up an office. Failure to attend meetings called for this purpose entitles the chief to an amount of R10 from each defaulter.

AS FROM LAST WEEK the Bantu Affairs Commissioner here is going round the district addressing gatherings at the chief's places. Amongst the routine matters he intimates that there is soon going to be a big Tembu meeting at Bumbane, the Great Place of the Paramount Chief, Sabata Dalindyebo, and that at the meeting Chief Sabata and a handful of his followers will stand against the Transkeian Constitution. But advises the people to reject this stand and accept the "Constitution" to avoid unpleasantness that may follow if they reject it as the Government will be reluctant to give them any assistance whatsoever in future. He also intimates that the people of Engcobo and Umtata districts are also being advised accordingly by their respective B.A. Commissioners. So far two out of three locations that have been so approached have indicated that before making a decision in the matter they would prefer leaving it open until they have heard what the Tembus as a whole have to say about the matter. ●

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African Writing —African or Writing?

NEVILLE RUBIN

A CONFERENCE of writers sounds almost like a contradiction in terms. It is easy to imagine editors, or critics, or almost anyone else concerned with publishing, sitting at a table and deliberating with a view to deciding something. Not so writers, at least creative ones. Somehow they do not bring to mind the sense of hard-headed urgency which conferences—particularly international ones—normally require of those who go to them.

The Mbari Conference of African writers in English was held at Makerere College, Uganda, under the auspices of the Mbari Writers' Club of Ibadan, Nigeria and the Congress for Cultural Freedom, Paris, from 8 to 17 June 1962. Neville Rubin represented The New African in place of Randolph Vigne, who was refused a passport.

Yet this was a conference, and an important one. True, it was not composed of delegates, anxiously fulfilling mandates, and it did not set out to decide anything. But it did bring together (and for the first time) a selection of novelists, playwrights, short story writers and poets from a number of English-speaking African countries, and it did provide an opportunity for discussing the works of African writers.

Thus they were able to come to grips with some of the problems of writing in contemporary Africa, to see them if not to solve them. They were able to criticise a whole range of writing—from that of the early romantic novelists, who dwelt on themes of a society that had already been made to undergo a complete transformation, to the excessive realism of the short-story writers dealing with situations rather than people in countries, like South Africa, where consciousness of social evil was an almost inevitable adjunct to literary sensitivity. They were able, too, to cock a snook at the latter-day romantics, glorifying an Africa that combined myth and mystique, and attempting to resurrect in Paris, London, New York and the West Indies a notion of racial self-consciousness which had not yet been born—at least in Africa.

More positively, they could point to the difference between the rounded West African novel, with its emphasis on the clash between traditional and modern cultures, and the socially committed, almost tendentious, narrative writing that has come out of South and East Africa.

Underlying all this serious literary dissection there was a distinct determination to avoid being patronised, to ensure that the same standards are applied to African writings as are used to judge writing anywhere else. As B!oke Modisane put it in an excellent critical paper on