

GENERALLY SPEAKING, THOUGH, hopes for the plan are high. If it largely succeeds it will contribute enormously to the political stability of the country by creating a class of peasant farmers with a stake in the land and a vested interest in law and order in place of the large number of un- and under-employed people on the large farms and in the reserves. Moreover, one of the Government men responsible for putting the plan into operation told me that it was his considered opinion that far from resulting in a decrease in output the resettlement would in fact increase the productivity of the land. Income on the former European farms will inevitably fall off for the first few years while the people get settled but ultimately, the Government official felt, the land will be much more intensively farmed than before. It will be most exciting to see if he is right or not.

WHAT THEN ARE the lessons of this experiment for South Africa? First there is the obvious, but often forgotten, fact that it is possible for a Government to act vigorously and effectively to bring about a more equitable distribution of land in an area where a particular group has an economic stranglehold. The second lesson is that the success of such action depends primarily upon its having a sound economic foundation. However politically desirable, resettlement will be a total failure unless the peasants are able to make a living on their small-holdings. Such a living can only be made where intensive cultivation of a cash crop is possible and where well-run co-operatives exist to market the produce. In South Africa where real attempts are being made in the reserves to develop peasant farming one must ask whether such development is in fact possible where no suitable cash crop has been found. Also those who advocate a drastic re-allocation of the farm land of the Republic must pause for a moment to consider just how far large-scale sheep- and cattle-farms can be split up. The intensive-cultivation cash crops of this country are fruit (including vines), sugar and fibres and, although maize might be run on a small-scale co-operative basis, there is a limit to which the large farms of the Free State, the Transvaal and the Northern and Eastern Cape could be split up.

IN SHORT THE LAND resettlement plan of Kenya contains a great deal from which we, in South Africa, can learn. Resettlement can work and peasants are able to make a go of growing and marketing a cash crop without lowering of standards as the success of peasant coffee shows. But there are dangers and pitfalls which must be avoided: political enthusiasm must not be allowed to outrun economic reality. However, where it is possible to have peasant farmers instead of great land owners there is everything to be said for making the change, for not only does this bring about greater equality and more political stability but in a world of fluctuating commodity prices the peasant farmer is far better able to withstand a slump than is the great land owner who may be forced to let his farm lie idle and his workers fend for themselves. Kenya has begun a bold experiment to solve her land problem. Is it not time that South Africa began to move in the same direction? ●

The Two Moralities—III

In motive and direction the mental and physical "treks" of our African and white forefathers were opposites.

JORDAN K. NGUBANE

COMMISSIONER DE MIST SET FOOT in the Cape at the turn of the nineteenth century. He was shocked by the extent to which the settlers had drifted away from contemporary thought in Europe. He proposed reforms designed to bring them into line with the West. They would not have them. The mood they were in then suggests that if he had stayed on and forced his reforms on them, he might have succeeded in producing the Great Trek sooner than the British did.

The repudiation of European humanism was too deeply entrenched in the lives of the settlers when the British took over the Cape. The fact that the English were culturally and economically superior or politically more powerful merely accelerated movement in a process which was already driving the settlers toward clearly recognisable goals. The process found final expression in the Great Trek.

Seen against this rather vast background, the Great Trek was in part what we would today call a "freedom-movement" pushing events toward a particular class or racial goal. It certainly extended the area of effectiveness for a more advanced culture. At the same time the ideals which inspired it and its motivating urges narrowed its understanding of liberty. It wanted freedom for the group, the race or the class and not for the individual. In this respect it was nearer communism than liberalism. The morality it accepted was based on survival and was therefore more materialistic than that of the humanism it had repudiated. In important essentials it was a repudiation of progressive humanity. It was organised to maintain the supremacy of the Chosen People; to uphold the tradition of absolutism and to narrow down the area within which the individual could make the best possible use of his life.

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together as neighbours. The result was later a way of life which makes all talk of the African having to seek inspiration from the tribe sound like so much twaddle.

Contact between the Hottentot Africans and the Whites had in time led to the expulsion of the former from their lands. The wars, disease and trade reduced the numbers of their cattle. By the middle of the eighteenth century they had been so impoverished they had been compelled to enter White settlements to sell their labour in return for cash wages.

The man who left the tribe for the White area was originally illiterate, a pagan, with little or no knowledge of the White man's way of life or his thought habits. In his new surroundings he experienced a sense of freedom he could never have known in the tribe. He could determine his personal destiny without its help. He learnt new ways of living and thinking. He acquired new tastes for food or clothing and new habits of hygiene. He adopted a different outlook on life.

When he returned to the tribe, he found its narrow disciplines a handicap. He had known wider vistas of life. The tribal taboos stunted the growth of his personality. He wanted to be an individual, free to make the best possible use of his life, perhaps like the White people for whom he had worked.

The tribe found it difficult to appreciate the changes in him. The White man had been the enemy pushing the Africans off their lands. The worker who returned to it having adopted the White man's ways gradually became a stranger among his people. The tribe sometimes distrusted him. He might be a spy of the Whites. In any case, there was no half-way house between the culture of the tribe and that of the White man. One's loyalties on this plane were fixed by race. There was no real room for the person who appreciated what was worthwhile in the cultures of both the Blacks and the Whites. Wherever the returned worker tried to do this he was often made to understand that his ways were not approved. He was treated with suspicion. More often than not he was regarded as a corrupting influence, bringing into the life of the community the ways of the White foreigners.

In time he left the tribe. He could not go to the White community and be integrated in its social life. The Whites feared that he might corrupt their culture, dilute their blood and finally destroy their race. He settled down in shantytowns on the outskirts of White settlements. Sometimes the descendants of the freed slaves and of other subjects and communities joined him. He started the slow and painful process of adapting to the requirements of his new environment. In time he developed a spontaneous pattern of culture which was unique in its blending of borrowing from both the tribe and the White side. It could not be otherwise. He

From the beginning the group consciousness of the Dutch-Huguenot settlers had refused to accept the African as a social equal. It recognised him as a separate person who could not be assimilated. It wanted him to keep to his own people. He, for his part, realised that for good or for worse Fate had thrown Black and White into one mould. If he clung to what was narrowly his own, he would meet the White man as an equal only on the battlefield. He felt the need for a pattern of adap-

tation which would enable Black and White to live could not shed his past. To keep his job he had to learn some of the ways of the White man. The cultural mixture transformed him into a new type of African.

WHEN HE MOVED OUT of the tribe he had started what Gabriel Setiloane, the prominent Methodist Youth leader in Natal, often calls the African Great Trek. His migration differed from that of the Dutch settlers in one major respect: he had rebelled against his own group, sought to assert his individuality and had turned on his own people in order to be free to identify himself with progressive humanity. Race no longer had significance as a political or economic factor.

The Whites did not have a high opinion of the product of the hybrid culture in the shantytowns. They were often confused, frustrated and sometimes uninhibited or even dangerous mixtures of the worst ingredients from both sides of the cultural line. The Whites called them *die oorlamse volk* (the forsaken people). The Nguni tribe africanised the adjective into *amahumusha*.

The significant fact this throws into bolder outline is that both the Whites—the ancestors of the Afrikaners—and the tribesmen regarded the inhabitants of the shantytowns as distinct people who no longer belonged to the tribe. Both sides gave to them a contemptuous label to mark them out as belonging to a world of their own. When government spokesmen today say that the detribalised African is a freak or a phenomenon of recent origin or a minority, they tread on ground they are not familiar with. Their ancestors knew of the detribalised African about two hundred years ago.

Economic factors had been the dominant influences behind the first phase of the African Great Trek. As a result, *amahumusha* saw in materialistic fulfilment life's highest purpose.

THIS PATTERN OF ACCULTURATION followed somewhat similar lines when the Whites met the Suto-nguni tribes. The results were more or less the same. This continuity in the African's experience of contact with the White man established a link tying together the various African peoples over a period of over three hundred years. The chain was never broken. The Whites played a decisive role in preserving the continuity. The Pass Laws were originally introduced to control Hottentot movements. They are in force today against the Suto-nguni.

A corresponding revolution had started in the rural areas toward the middle of the eighteenth century when White missionaries began to preach among the Hottentot Africans. The Christian teaching awakened the tribesman to a revolutionary appreciation of his personality and his potentialities. God was the creator of the earth and everything in it. The individual had been made in his image. The human body was his temple. Life's highest purpose for the man or woman was to strive to be perfect, like God; to develop their personalities to the best of their ability. If they did this they would be saved and would live in eternal bliss in heaven. If they followed Christ, the saviour, he would guide them and intercede with God on their behalf.

If the convert could become a better man without the

help of the tribe what need had he to continue to be subject to its taboos? Or to accept the authority of temporal kings when Christ looked after him even after death? Besides, if he crossed over to the side of God his horizons might be widened in ways which would eliminate the ruinous wars between Black and White and bring about stability in an age remarkable for its turbulence. The act of worshipping the same God promised to be a bond of unity which would, by transcending race, enable Black and White to live together as neighbours. To uphold the common faith and its values was to be the common purpose binding Black and White together in the march to a better future.

Harassed by the White man, the tribe regarded the converts as real or potential traitors. It called them *amakholwa* (the believers) to single them out as no longer belonging to it. In some cases it murdered them. In others it drove them into exile. That started the second phase of the African Great Trek.

More often than not, the converts settled around the homes of White missionaries, or in mission reserves where they evolved a syncretic culture based, like that of *amahumusha*, on borrowings from both sides of the colour line.

It differed from its predecessor in two major respects. It was based on a clearly defined set of spiritual and moral values. These had been taken from both sides of the cultural line and carefully selected for purposes of evolving a way of life which was fundamentally Christian. It was not and could not be a Christian life suited to European conditions. A Christian community emerged in Africa which was determined to uphold its faith and defend it against all attackers with a will and courage not excelled in any other part of the world.

Secondly, the syncretic culture was essentially rural and therefore more conservative than its urban counterpart. Where *amahumusha* pioneered the creation of a townsman's culture, the converts followed the teachings of the missionaries with the rugged sturdiness of the peasant. As a result the cultural synthesis had a dynamism, a vigour and sense of purpose and direction which were not paralleled in the urban pattern.

The thing to note about the second phase of the great migration from the tribe is that it was inspired by the desire on the part of the convert to identify himself spiritually and socially with the like-minded regardless of race or colour or language. He did not have much of an alternative. The tribe had murdered him or exiled him. He had known how brutal and malicious the blood group could be. This knowledge was to combine with the spiritual heritage he had brought from his native culture to ensure that the motivating urges behind his Trek remained the exact opposite of those which inspired the great migration of the White settlers from 1834 onwards.

A BRIEF EXAMINATION OF part of the tribal heritage might set *amakholwa* migrations in clearer perspective.

In the Suto-nguni (Bantu has objectionable political associations) language vowels and consonants express clearly defined sounds. The sounds in turn denote mental states, physical conditions, moods or meanings. The Suto-nguni believe that a certain power attaches to each sound. When a vowel or consonant is employed in this

connection it sets certain power vibrations in motion. Either is then regarded as a root or source of power. Thus, the root-vowel "a" in Zulu signifies love, compassion, sympathy, contentment or gratification. The root-consonant "t" expresses vitality. It combines with a number of vowels and consonants to produce a chain of significant concepts as the following show:

- t = vitality (as in sneezing), health, power
- thi = say, express
- into = the thing, fact, reality
- unzu = the physical centre of vitality, the inner lining of the stomach
- umunzu = the personification of vitality, the human being
- isinzu = humanity, the human heritage, culture
- ubuntu = the state or art or practice of being human, virtue, human perfection, the procreative organs (polite), the code of ethics based on regard for the person.

One of the central teachings of the *ubuntu* code of ethics is that the being of a person is sacred. Man has a common origin, the same experience of life and similar destiny. The individual is a temporary compound of living spirit, mind and flesh. The compound dissolves at death. The body decays and becomes part of the earth-substance. Mind and spirit remain united and live on forever as the spirit-form or *idlozi*—the ancestral spirit of the anthropologist. Every individual, no matter how exalted or humble, how good or bad and regardless of race or sex is first a spirit-form, then a personification of vitality and finally a spirit-form again.

This gives him a permanent and immutable sacredness which makes him the unchanging equal of his neighbour. This is the basis of *ubuntu* notions of equality and tolerance. It was taught in one form or the other in the initiation schools. In the uto-Suto-nguni kitchen children of the same age ate together, just as adults belonging to the same interest-group did, to inculcate in the minds of all the truth that no person had any right to anything he would deny his neighbour.

AS IN EVERY FIELD OF human endeavour practice often fell short of the ideal. Just as Christianity threw up the Inquisition, *ubuntu* produced the tribal tyrant and the dictatorship of the group.

Christianity had appealed to the converts for a number of good reasons. It accepted immortality as a fact. It promised the convert a fuller life. It enlarged his personality. It was a liberating and protecting influence. If he was discriminated against because he did not have a White skin, Christ said race, colour, sex or status were no qualifications for admission into the heavenly kingdom. One had to have faith. This opened every door to heaven. When the convert found himself alone against the tribe which wanted to murder him, he could flee to the mission station where he would be sure to be received as a welcome guest.

The humanism of the New Testament morality, the *ubuntu* evaluation of the human personality and the hostility of the tribe all combined to bias the syncretic culture of *amakholwa* in favour of the individual. The convert's trek can thus be said to have been a movement away from the group in the bid to enable the individual to make better use of his life in accordance with a clearly defined set of moral and spiritual values. (To be continued) ●