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## EDITORIALS

# 1. "FREE ENTERPRISE" AND THE "BLACKSPOTS"

"Free enterprise" is the catch-phrase of the day, the magic formula the P.W. Botha administration has discovered to sort our problems out. The implication surely is that if you show enterprise you should from now on be given every freedom and encouragement to use and develop it.

How seriously is the present government committed to this proposition? Which will win out when the interests of "free enterprise" and "apartheid" clash? There has been a not very encouraging hint from recent developments in Natal. In that province growing pressure is being put on a number of "blackspot" communities to move from where they are presently happily settled in "white" South Africa, to where they don't want to go to in Kwa-Zulu. Matiwane's Kop is a case in point.

The black settlement of Matiwane's Kop was established in 1870 when a group of 120 members of the Shabalala, Hlophe and other families clubbed together to buy a farm in freehold where they and their chief could live in security at a time of considerable uncertainty and upheaval. The farm had been abandoned by its previous white owner and

no new one could be found who was prepared to buy it. It was too swampy and inhospitable. The forefathers of its present owners decided to buy it in spite of these shortcomings. They then proceeded to develop it slowly, over the years, draining the swamps to increase the area of cultivable and habitable land, building homes, shops, schools and churches, until now they are a settled, contented and relatively prosperous community of some 10,000 souls. There are 19 school buildings, twelve shops and numerous churches, all built out of the community's own resources.

But in recent years the one asset more precious to them than any other, the security provided by their title-deed, has begun to be threatened. The Government has told them it is going to move them. They are a "blackspot" in "white" South Africa, and so, offensive to Pretoria's planners. That treasured title-deed, which in 1870 they were told was inviolable, carrying with it the promise of perpetual security, it seems is really not worth anything. If the land to which it applies falls on the wrong side of an arbitrary line drawn by a faceless apartheid ideologue in Pretoria, obsessed with separating black from white — well that's that.

Matiwane's Kop is in some respects not a typical blackspot. It is less crowded than many, although it suffers, as most others do, from the pressure of a growing population, some of it from natural increase, some of it from an influx of tenants who over the years have found in the blackspots a haven of relative freedom from white control. But in one respect it is a typical blackspot, for it shares with all the others the common threat of losing all its people hold most dear, and being moved, lock, stock and barrel, to a hostile and alien environment in Kwa-Zulu.

During the last thirty years many long-established black freehold communities in Natal have been destroyed to satisfy the dictates of Government policy, but there are still some 150 left. That earlier wave of destruction was defended on the basis of the slogan of the day – "apartheid". But the slogan of today is "free enterprise", and what possible defence for their destruction can there be in the name of that system? For have the blackspots not been a magnificent example of free enterprise at work? Is not that sacred title-deed and its promise of perpetual security an absolute corner-stone of the free enterprise system? Are not the people who have lived in the blackspots, and those who still live in them, and who would like nothing better than to stay in them and build them up, some of the first black converts to free enterprise? Was not their building of homes and schools and shops and churches, out of their own resources, the very thing that free enterprise is all about?

It is true that many blackspots have become overcrowded and overstocked and eroded and are now desperately in need of rehabilitation. But whose fault was that? Would it

have happened if the free enterprise system, to which they were such a clear example of a new black commitment, had, for black people, extended beyond their boundaries? If the people who lived in them had been free to sell their skills on the best market? Had not been actively prevented by law from acquiring most of those skills which would have made it possible for them to accumulate capital – and, if they did manage to accumulate capital, had not been prevented by law from using it to expand their land holdings to accommodate the growing population which, over the years, has placed such enormous pressure on the resources of the blackspots?

The story of what white South African governments, not always Nationalist, have done to the blackspots in the past is a blot on the name of everyone who ever voted for them. But in those days such actions could be justified, however spuriously, on the grounds that they were being done in the name of "segregation with justice" or "apartheid". But today's rallying-call is "free enterprise". How could a regime seriously committed to that slogan do anything but encourage the people of the blackspots to build on what they have already created, develop the institutions they have evolved, and become examples of settled and industrious communities for other people to emulate?

In our eyes and those of black South Africa Mr Botha's commitment to free enterprise will not be judged by what he says to the captains of industry and commerce in the Carlton hotel, but by what he does to the people of Matiwane's Kop. What happens to them will show us whether free enterprise or apartheid is his first concern. □

## 2. THE DEATH SENTENCE

South Africa may not yet be able to bring itself to abolish the death sentence completely but we sincerely hope that it has reached the point where it will become official policy to commute that sentence whenever it is imposed for a political offence.

We cannot afford to go into the future carrying with us, along with all our other problems, the burden of bitterness which the carrying out of such sentences will leave with us. □