

POPULATION REMOVALS

by Gerhard Mare'

The forcible uprooting and relocation of people is state policy in South Africa, and has been for a long time. This policy of disruption has directly affected many hundreds of thousands of South Africans, mainly Africans, but also coloured and indian people (through the notorious Group Areas Act).

Some whites have had to move (after handsome compensation had been paid) to allow for the shifting of racial boundaries that is called "homeland consolidation" or the establishment of "group areas". The major difference is that whites have a vote in the central parliament and have halted removals in a few instances when it has been in their interest to do so, or have had the effects blunted through high compensation.

Within South African society black people do not vote in elections that can influence the perpetuation of population relocation. Black people do not elect representatives to whom the agents of relocation are ultimately responsible (the Department of Community Development (sic), Cooperation and Development (sic), the police and military, etc). Furthermore, within the politically oppressed black communities of South Africa, population relocation affects different classes in very different ways.

Quantitatively, most of the people forcibly "unsettled" are members of economically exploited classes, as well as belonging to politically oppressed groups - they are the agricultural and industrial workers and their families; subsistence farmers; the unemployed and unemployable sections of the working class (this includes farmers; the aged, sick and disabled).

Qualitatively, relocation hits the working class and those dependent on agriculture worst of all. It deprives people of partial or full access to agricultural land and/or changes the quality of the land; it increases the distances to be travelled to work; it completely removes the possibility of employment in some cases.

It might have been expected that relocation of people on such a vast scale would have disrupted, or slowed down, production in South Africa. It might have been expected that the same volume of protest from the business community as that which accompanies

threats to tax fringe benefits, or existing skill shortages would have been heard.

But the effects of relocation cause scarcely a ripple. The exception to this rule of silence can be fairly easily explained. They usually relate to unfair (preferential) treatment of one fraction of the business community although they are enjoying increasing profits.

It appears that what is not being disrupted to any noticeable extent is production. This indicates that people being relocated constitute surplus labour and unproductive people. It also indicates how efficient the migrant and commuter labour systems are.

What then are the structural factors that have, at least, "allowed" if not always "necessitated" population relocation in South Africa? There is a need to isolate these factors if we are to move beyond merely describing, rather than analysing and understanding, the processes that are called relocation (removals/resettlement).



There are different descriptive "categories" of relocation (of african people).

A. The dominant production, and employment sector, in the economy is the industrial sector. It is due to changes in the

utilisation of labour in industrial production that relocation of people has assumed such importance.

Allocated labour for industry, mining, and commerce take the form of i) contract labour ii) commuter labour; and iii) a "permanent" group with urban residential rights. Both i) and ii) imply that labour comes from the bantustans.

Relocation occurs when changes in labour utilisation lead to mass and growing unemployment, and the fear of social unrest and disruption of production. There thus exists the need to control the unemployed and potentially unemployed within the bantustans. This means that influx control measures are tightened up, and that urban relocation takes place (moving the inhabitants of townships and locations that had previously been outside the bantustans across the bantustan borders, and making commuters of those who have jobs, while those without jobs are some distance removed).

* Arrests in <u>main urban areas</u> for pass law offences: (1)
1976: 197 760 (of whom 24 719 females) (250 030 whole country)
1977: 173 571 (of whom 22 955 females) (224 308 whole country)
1978: 272 887 (of whom 47 977 females).

* Increase in the urban population in the bantustans: (2)
1960: 33 486
1970: 594 420
1975: 984 271

* Increase in commuters from bantustans: (3)
1970: 290 000
1975: 557 000
1976: 638 000

B. Changes in agricultural production (due to mechanisation, and larger farms - ("agri-business")) means that a large permanent workforce is no longer essential. In its place has come a smaller, but settled, labour force, alongside seasonal contract (or child) labour drawn from the bantustans.

These changes in agricultural production have meant the relocation of thousands of ex-labour tenants, and the clearance of many "black spots" (african freehold land, mainly agricultural). It is also leading to a drastic reduction in the number of farm employees and of dependents of workers on white-owned farms.

* It has been estimated that roughly 258 600 africans were relocated from "black spots" to the bantustans in the period 1948-76. (4)

* *The number of people affected by the abolition of the labour tenant system and removed from white-owned farms to bantustans between 1960 and 1974 could be as high as 1 400 000. This process is continuing.* (5)

C. The state has two specific functions to fulfil in relation to capitalism as a system. These are, firstly, the maintenance of "security and stability" (seeing that the system reproduces itself without too many hitches). This can be achieved through (i) direct force such as through the police or army, and this remains a permanent threat even if it is not used, and (ii) indirectly, through "social welfare" measures, and the maintenance of ideas that do not threaten the status quo.

This first function of the state relates to relocation in that, in South Africa, it demands clearance of certain areas for "strategic" purposes. It also demands, the "consolidation" of certain areas where the "common sense" of "ethnic differences", "tribalism" and "separate nations" is supposed to find expression. "Consolidation" has demanded that enormous numbers of people be relocated.

The second major area of state functioning relates to provision of infra-structural schemes (railways, dams, industrial parks, electricity, etc.), and other aids to make production more

profitable. People have to be removed to make way for these schemes. This happens all over the world, but in South Africa its viciousness lies in the fact that the people mostly affected have no say in the matter and derive limited benefit from such schemes.

* Relocation directly attributable to bantustan consolidation:

1970 - 79: 304 958

The population of the "non-independent" bantustan areas increased in the same period by 54,83% from 4 199 113 to 6 501 326. (6)

The trends presented above do not account for all cases of relocation, but do provide an initial explanation for the largest categories of the forcible removal of african people.

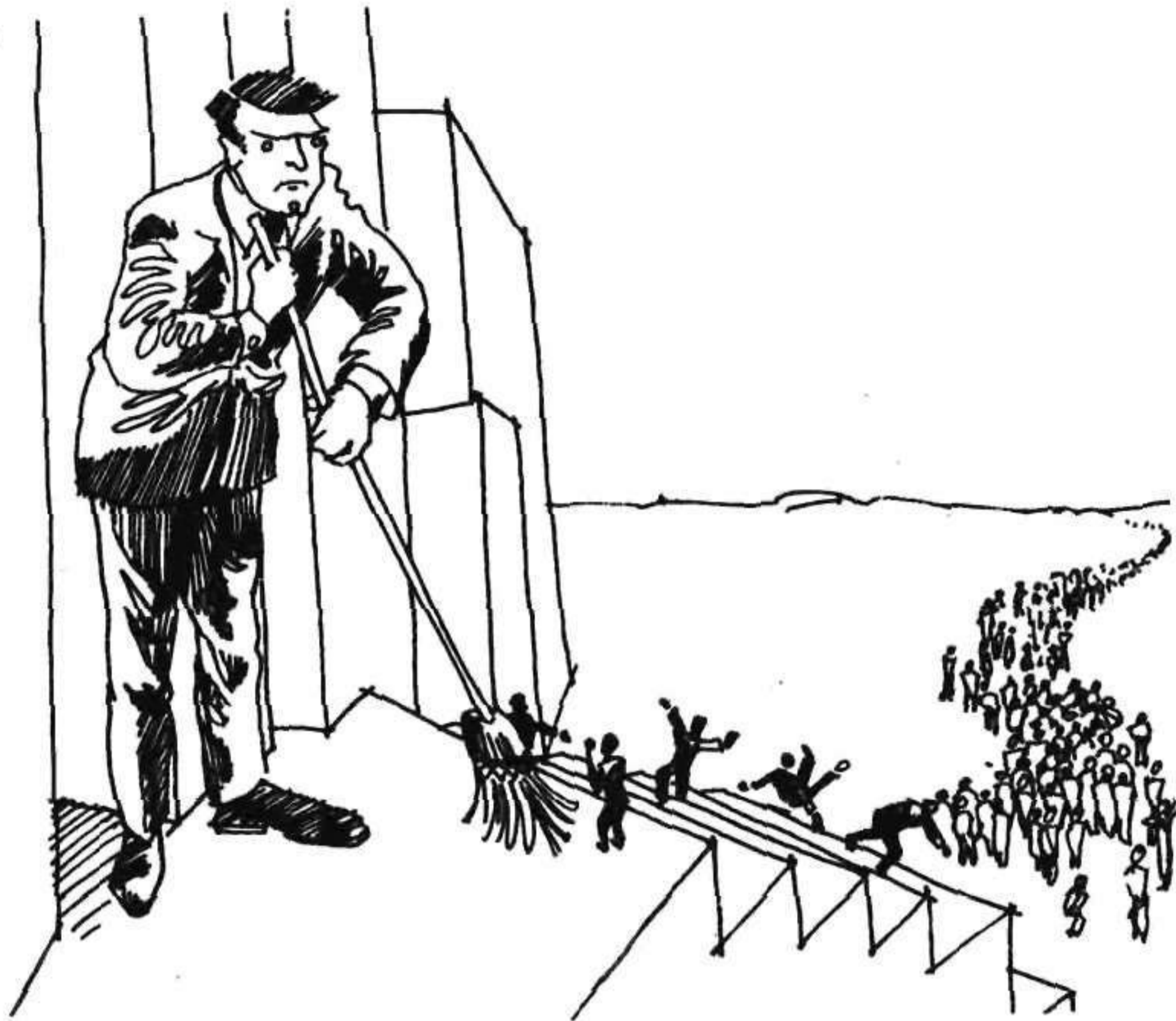
Relocation takes place in a spatial context, from one place to another. Relocation is enforced (in a variety of direct or indirect ways) from "white" South Africa that is also the site of industrial, mining and agricultural production (the site of the creation of wealth), to the bantustans, the reserves, the dumping grounds. This relocation does not take place only within South Africa, but as with mine labour, within Southern Africa.

It is the areas of relocation and the conditions that exist there that need to be examined. What are the effects on health (physical and mental)? What are effects on social bonds (the family, trade unions, religion, etc)? What happens to the aged and the young in such situations? What are the effects of droughts, cattle and plant diseases in such an appalling situation?

How do people survive?

REFERENCES:

- 1) Mare, G.; African Population Relocation 1980 in South Africa. SAIRR, Johannesburg, 1980, page 20.
- 2) Ibid, page 26.
- 3) Ibid, page 26.
- 4) Quoted in Mare, 1980, page 7.
- 5) Mare, G.; African Population Relocation 1980 in South Africa. SAIRR, Johannesburg, 1980.
- 6) Cleay, S.; Bantustan Consolidation. DSG/SARS, 1981, page 5.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

For general information, and bibliographical references to further material, see Mare, Gerhard - African Population Relocation 1980 in South Africa (SAIRR, Jhb).

SAIRR - Surveys of Race Relations (SAIRR, Jhb.) annual.

DSG/SARS - Population Removals (Information 1981 Publication 3, Jhb.)

Further useful publications are:

SASH (journal of the Black Sash) and
the AFRA Factsheets (Pietermaritzburg.)

Details on further bibliographical and resource material can be obtained by writing to the author, c/o Critical Health.