



CRISIS NEWS

No 25

A bulletin of news and theological reflection on the
South African emergency

October 1988

ELECTIONS BRING MORE REPRESSION



Members of the De Aar Youth Congress (DAYCO) have been assaulted by the security branch in De Aar and told if they discussed or if people did not vote in the municipal elections, they would be picked up and beaten again.

In an urgent application earlier this month, members of DAYCO

told the Kimberley Supreme Court of the reason why they live in fear of brutal attacks by the security police.

Themba Kampi, the chairperson of DAYCO, told the court he was taken to the security branch offices on 1 September 1988 by two security policemen, Grobelaar and Moses, after his house was searched and three journals, including "New Era" and "Isizwe" were confiscated. In the security branch offices he was told to read from "New Era" and when he complied with this he was hit in the face and his head slammed against the wall. He was told by the commander of the security branch, Gerber, that it would be useless for him to lay a charge because charges against him came to nothing. Gerber then asked Themba if he knew how Matthew Goniwe was killed and if the killers were ever found. Gerber then said "*Daar is baie mense wat teen die Struggle is en iemand gaan in julle huise ingaan en vir jou doodsteek.*"

Gerber then called in Themba's father and told him that although the journals were legal he did not want them in De Aar and so Themba must be punished. Themba's father was forced to beat

his son with a sjambok in front of five members of the security branch.

Another member of DAYCO, Mlungisi Voko, claims that on the 31 August he was taken to the security branch offices where he was hit in the face by Gerber. An ashtray was also thrown in his face. Throttling him, Gerber accused him of intimidating people not to vote in the municipal elections.

His father, a retired railway worker, was called to the offices, handed a sjambok, and told to beat his son or Gerber said he would do it himself. Mlungisi was beaten by his father many times on his lower back and buttocks. Gerber told Mlungisi that the security police could not be stopped by lawyers and if he contacted them Gerber would "get him" and beat him again.

Other members of DAYCO have similarly been assaulted and threatened by the security police as such attacks against activists intensify in an attempt to destroy all resistance to the October elections.



RURAL FOCUS





NO LAW AND ORDER

The following stories describe the blatant abuse of power by kitkonstabels who have intimidated, assaulted and killed people in Bongoletu. An urgent interdict was brought to court to restrain their actions in February 1988.

The kitskops have fabricated false charges against their victims to defend themselves and have not been punished for their crimes. However, three youth from Bongoletu have been sentenced to be hanged for the murder of a community councillor which occurred during a march in Bongoletu. The contrast in the treatment of the youth compared to the kitkops clearly shows how the legal system is prejudiced against those who oppose the authorities but protects those who are appointed by the authorities.

MOTHER DISABLED IN SHOOTING BY KITSKOPS

Lindiwe Phillips, age 36, is the mother of two children. She lives in Bongoletu, a dynamic township outside Oudtshoorn.

In September 1987 Lindiwe and her 6 month old baby attended a welcome home

party for youth who had been released from detention. Some kitkonstabels arrived at the party and began assaulting people. Lindiwe asked them why they were hitting the people. They responded by recklessly shooting her with birdshot while she was standing a few metres from them. She experienced great pain "en ek dink ek gaan dood".

She was taken unconscious to George Hospital and stayed there for three months. Her right arm, right leg and pelvis were severely wounded. After four operations

Lindiwe "voel nie lekker oor die saak want sy het niks gedoen nie"

she was informed that she would never fully recover from her injuries. Immediately before being discharged police detained her for five days for 'klipgooi'. In December she appeared in court on charges of public violence.

On 15 January 1988 she was acquitted along with Patrick Nyuka from Saamstaan, who was also shot on this occasion. They have filed a claim against the Minister of Police for damages. Lindiwe sê, sy "voel nie lekker oor die saak want sy het niks gedoen nie".

SHOT BY KITSKOPS, THEN CHARGES OF PUBLIC VIOLENCE

Moses Mvimbi, age 28, is a maths teacher at the Primary School in Bongoletu. On 16 January the car in which he and some friends were travelling was stopped by kitskonstabels.

The kitskonstabels asked them to get out of the car as they wanted to search it. When they were outside the car the kitskops began to assault Moses' friends. Moses told them to leave his friends alone and a quarrel started. One of the kitskops and Moses began fighting, then two white policemen hit Moses with sjamboks. The other kitskops then beat him with their rifles.

Moses retreated about ten yards and a white policeman told the kitskops to shoot. He was so severely wounded that the police were forced to take him to hospital where he stayed for six months. His right shoulder and femur were seriously damaged.

Moses was then charged with public violence and the others with attempted murder. No charge sheet has been produced and the case has been remanded to 27 November 1988.

sitting on death row

The South African Youth Congress, SAYCO, has launched a campaign called "Save the Patriots". It aims to work against hanging those on death row for political crimes, like the Sharpeville Six.

It calls on the South African government to sign the Geneva Convention. This recognises those involved in legitimate struggles against racism and colonialism as prisoners-of-war and treats them according to those codes of conduct. The ANC has signed this international agreement but the South African government has refused. The church in South Africa has adopted the call for an end to the death penalty.

Still the number of people sentenced to death rises and executions continue unabated. In March 1988 Michael Lucas of Bongoletu was hanged allegedly for the

murder of an ex-policeman.

Patrick Maginda, who is 24 years old is the youngest son of Alfred Maginda who lives in Bongoletu. In October 1986 Desmond Majola, Dickson Madickane and himself were sentenced to be hanged for the murder of a community councillor in 1985.

His father says he couldn't believe it when he heard the news and felt shocked and distressed. An appeal against the sentence was heard on 12 September this year but the judge reserved judgement for a few weeks.

He refused to accept a reopening of the case although there was new evidence from a woman in Oudtshoorn. Patrick has been allowed three visits from his father who has tried to keep his spirits up. Another important source of encouragement for him is through letters.

Please send letters to the following address:
Patrick Klandla Maginda
Maximum Prison
P B X 45
Pretoria, 0001



Mr Alfred Maginda outside his house in Bongoletu



inside a police cell

In a recent urgent Supreme Court application in Grahamstown, Xolile Mcilongo, a 20 year old student told how he was viciously tortured by members of the security branch in Middelburg.

On Wednesday 20 July 1988 he was taken from his house by three security policemen, Maliti, Dennis and Majorla. On the way to the police station he was asked if he had read a bible to a group of students the previous day. On admitting this, he was hit in the face by Majorla. In the police station his hands and legs were bound together with clothes and a wet sack placed over his head. He was then subjected to a series of electric shocks.

The sack was then taken off and he was questioned by Maliti as to who was telling the other students not to study. Xolile said that he knew nothing of this and Maliti gave instructions that his hands be tied together in front. A long pole was inserted behind his knees and above his forearms and he was suspended upside down in mid-air. A cloth was placed in his mouth and the sack placed back over his head. "I felt two objects being attached to my little fingers which felt like rings of wire. I heard a switch being turned on with a clicking noise. My whole body convulsed with spasms and I suffered extreme pain as an electric current surged through my body. I was unable to scream because of the cloth in my mouth." This continued for roughly twenty minutes before he was taken down and after answering some brief questions was released.

Xolile brought to the court specialised evidence from a pathologist in Cape Town who ran tests on blood taken from him less than a day after he was tortured, leaving little doubt to the truthfulness of his story.

WHEN WILL THEY BE FREE...

Detention is such common practice in South Africa that the public no longer question the immorality of imprisoning people who have had no trial to prove their innocence or guilt.

One of the worst aspects of detention is not knowing for how long you will be imprisoned. There is also no control over daily activities: a detainee cannot be sure that his/her basic needs (sleep, exercise, cleanliness) will be met. These decisions lie in the hands of the prison or police warders.

Detainees are also often held in solitary confinement and experience the psychological torture of spending months in isolation. In addition, many detainees face the possibility of assault or torture from their interrogators. There is no doubt that such brutality occurs in police cells and prisons.

DETAINEE NOT PERMITTED TO SEE HIS NEWBORN BABY

On 13 September 1987 Max Moss, a journalist, was detained for the second time under the Emergency regulations. He was held for nearly a year before being released on 1 September 1988.

His girlfriend Linda, discovered he had been detained when she arrived to go to a meeting with him and was informed he had been taken. Linda was one month pregnant at the time of his detention but was refused permission to visit him. After the birth of their baby she appealed to the security police but they would not allow her to see Max on her own or with the child. Max did not receive any visits for three months and had no access to lawyers for four months during his detention. Max was not heavily restricted on his release as he had been the previous time but had to appear in court in September on a charge of public violence. The case was remanded to 20 December.

STUDENT DETAINED - STD.S 5, 6&7

Koppe Coleman, a Std 5 pupil was detained in June 1986 under the Emergency regulations. He was held in Victor Verster prison in Paarl for six weeks. He was not allowed to study while he was in detention.

In March 1987 he was detained again under the Emergency regulations for a month. In September 1987 he was arrested for public violence and released on bail. In June this year, he was detained again and is currently in detention.

DETENTION OF ELDER AND YOUNGER SON

Mrs Moutom, a devout church woman was distressed when the police arrived at her house to detain her 19 year old son, Tick in February this year. She was overjoyed when he arrived home after 30 days.

When the police came to detain her son a second time on 25 August she refused to sign the forms confirming his detention. She knew he hadn't committed a crime and realised that the behaviour of the police was unChristian. There was no reason for his detention and it disrupted his education again. She applied for permission to visit him six weeks ago and has not yet been allowed to see him. Her younger son who is 16 years old was also taken by the police and assaulted until he agreed to testify as a state witness in the public violence trials of residents of Diasville.

21ST BIRTHDAY IN DETENTION

Adele de Bruyn, the full-time advisor of the Advice Office that opened in Diasville in April 1988, was detained the day before 16 June. On 10 October she will turn 21 in detention.

Stop this torture





THREATENED... ...BUT NOT DEFEATED

In the rural areas people are experiencing intense repression which is intended to prevent any democratic discussion or organization. This level of repression is widespread and is not restricted to certain individuals or places.

Security force threats of detention, injury and death are common. Some of these threats have been carried out as the police operate under the protection of the State of Emergency, and abuse the vast powers given to them by the Emergency regulations.

The Advice Office in Bongoletu had a bomb scare the day after the bombing of Khotso house (housing the SACC), in Johannesburg. Rev. Van Wyck from Riversdale also

recently had a bomb scare at his home. In addition to this form of intimidation he has been prevented from preaching on farms in the region of Uniondale even though they fall within his parish.

Crisis workers are continually harassed and threatened, and are often prevented from monitoring events in the area in which they work. For example, Louise Boesak a church worker from Carnarvon, was ordered to leave Beaufort-West in two minutes by the security branch and was escorted by them out of the area. On 1 October a busload of people returning from a rugby match near Saldanha, was stopped by police. Each individual was interrogated separately as there were slogans about the elections written on the bus.

Numerous smear pamphlets discrediting democratic organisations have been mysteriously appearing throughout the rural areas. There has also been extensive interference with the telephones making it impossible for workers to use them for their work. For example, the lines of Saamstaan, the Bongoletu Advice Office and the Southern Cape Council of Churches have been connected together on occasions making it impossible to reach outside lines. The problems that Saamstaan, a community newspaper for the Southern Cape, has experienced clearly illustrates this daily harassment.



hulle staan nog saam

The story of Saamstaan, the Oudtshoorn based Community newspaper which has continued to spread news in the area despite harsh attacks.

Reggie Olifant and Derek Turner from Saamstaan were amongst individuals and 17 organisations which were restricted in terms of the emergency regulations on 24th February this year. They can no longer participate in the activities of any community organization in their region, they may not address any gathering of more than ten people, they cannot be quoted and they are confined to their homes between 6pm and 5am.

In November '83 a community rally was held where it was decided that "the time has come for people in the Southern Cape to stand together". In February 1984 'Saamstaan' was adopted as the official name of the community newspaper.

From its inception Saamstaan has been under attack by the authorities. In 1984, 27 people were arrested while distributing the newspaper. Staff of the newspaper were regularly detained under the Emergency regulations and at one point in 1985 most of the Executive and staff of Saamstaan were in detention. In 1986 they were all arrested. In March that year 9000 copies of Saamstaan disappeared between Cape Town and Oudtshoorn.

On three occasions the office has been petrol bombed. The police have broken down the shutters and doors to arrest people and money disappeared after the police raided the offices.

In March 1988 Saamstaan received a warning from Stoffel Botha that the paper could be closed.



A Divisive Force

- Vlok's answer to resistance.

As the struggle for justice in our society gains more ground the emergence of right-wing groups becomes increasingly apparent. This coincides with the growing repressive measures of the government. More significant however is the relation between the emergence and operation of such groups and the government's so called "winning the hearts and minds campaign".

We already know that the strategy of the government is to implement social welfare programs to win back the allegiance of the masses, while at the same time providing opportunities for collecting intelligence on political activities. Recently, Adrian Vlok gave us a detailed explanation of how he expects the system to operate:

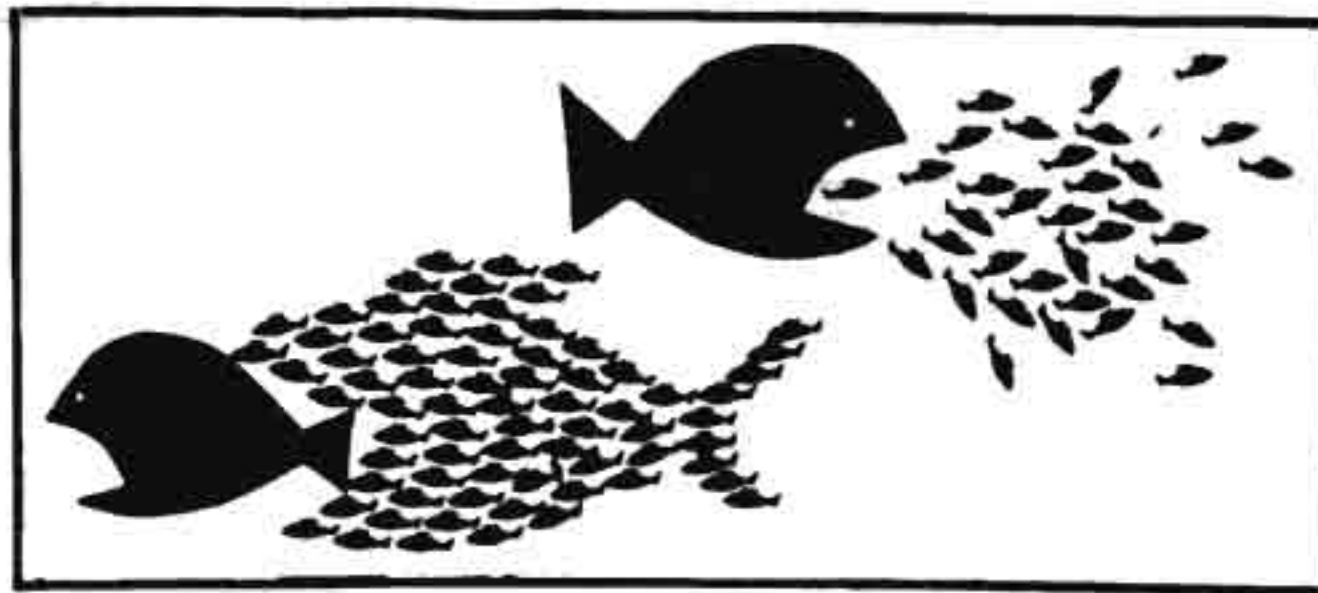
ADDRESS GRIEVANCES

"We have made studies of similar situations in the rest of the world, which show that if you are to win a revolutionary war there are three important aspects which must be borne in mind. You have to address the security situation; secondly, you have to address grievances and bring good government to the ordinary people and thirdly, you have to address the political situation.

RE-ESTABLISH LAW AND ORDER

"We have evidence to show that whenever we have re-established law and order, people begin feeling more secure - children started going back to schools and life began to return to normal. Only then can you move to the second stage and this is the addressing of grievances. You simply can't address the real grievances of the people if there is no law and order. When a situation returns to normal, you find that people, the ordinary man in the street, start telling us where the terrorists are and who assists them. They also provide us with a host of other information.

"When stability has been restored and people start feeling more secure, you must start with the second issue - good government for them. The government must prove to them that it cares for them, that they have something to lose, that there is something that they can fight for. That is why it is so important that they must have



houses of their own, that they must own part of the land, it must be theirs. Then they will stand up and fight those people who want to burn down their houses and take away their land.

FIND POLITICAL SOLUTIONS

"The third issue is equally important - the question of constitutional, political rights for the people ... it is of the utmost importance that we find a political solution that is acceptable to the majority of all South Africans. Success with this aspect will surely make it more difficult for the activist to create violence and easier for the security forces to maintain law and order.

"These three things go hand in hand..."

It seems clear that these initiatives aim at isolating the broad democratic mass movement. They are designed to prevent further resistance by promoting small scale reforms. Because we do not have the political power we have to try and see what is possible for us to do within a framework in which somebody else is ultimately going to make and implement decisions that are going to influence our lives.

The people of Saldanha have a history of

struggle. With the migration of many people to this coastal town in search for better living and working conditions, progressive organisations gained momentum. This was coupled with a strong sense of opposition to the reformist strategies of the government.

Within the past year or two all organisations have witnessed the emergence of parallel right-wing organisations which work hand in glove with the oppressor against the aspirations of the people. Disinformation is spread and individuals discredited. Regular training ensures that the leadership of

these organisations are brainwashed on a continual basis.

Their style of operation is signified by an abundance of financial resources, glossy paper etc. Co-option of the middle class, regular coverage in the local newspapers, close working relationships with the Labour Party etc., indicate strong active support from the local authorities.

The immediate consequences of these organisations are the division of the community, and creation of chaos. This is an ideal breeding ground for the state - they can only rule when chaos exists. These organisations are also trying to ensure a voter's core for the coming elections.

TEMPORARY IMPROVEMENTS

These parallel right-wing organisations do not address the real questions of exploitation and oppression in our society. They may succeed in bringing about temporary improvements in living conditions but they are unlikely to transform society.

It is above all imperative that the democratic movement does not allow itself to become isolated from its mass base but that it continues to maintain a noticeable presence in communities.



THE RURAL FACE

As the October elections draw near it is important to take a new look at the way in which the state's 3-pronged approach to total strategy is taking shape. This article focuses specifically on what this means for people in the rural areas.

People in the rural areas are particularly vulnerable to



oppression and manipulation. There are several reasons for this:

1. VULNERABILITY TO ABUSE

In many rural towns the police, be they the regular uniformed police, the security police, the kitskonstabels or greenflies soon come to know who are members of the progressive organisations. As a result it is very difficult to carry out political work. Political activists are severely harassed and the police can supply potential employers with information which will make it impossible for an activist to find work.

2. A LACK OF RESOURCES

People in rural areas, who face abuse of power have great difficulty in getting lawyers. Many small-town lawyers refuse to take on political work for fear of antagonizing their paying clientele.

This means that the police very often make it very difficult for people who are victimized by them to lay charges. For example, in Mossel Bay, a person who had been assaulted by kitskonstabels laid a charge against them, and after a while was himself charged with fraud because police alleged that his charge against them was a false one.

In Hofmeyer and Aberdeen when youths who had been assaulted by the kitskonstabels tried to lay charges against them they were threatened with more assaults. In Carnarvon a teacher was threatened with detention if he did not withdraw his charge of assault against the police.

In these small towns, where there is not enough work to keep a prosecutor employed full-time, a policeman sometimes acts as prosecutor in the court. That situation is entirely absurd in the South African context. How, one may ask, is a policeman going to take the people's interests seriously when prosecuting a fellow policeman.

This lack of legal protection encourages the police to feel that they can do what they like in rural areas, as the case study of De Aar in this issue demonstrates.

3. A LIMITED COMMUNICATION SYSTEM

In many of the rural towns the population is often too small to sustain a community newspaper. A further problem is the shortage of skills and financial resources to set up a community newspaper. Even when one is set up, as in the case of Saamstaan in Oudshoorn, the paper and its workers get subjected to the most vicious ongoing attacks by the system. The small town press, if one exists, has little interest in publishing anything about police abuses of power and the



OF REPRESSION

concerns of progressive organisations.

In cases where progressive organisations attempt to publicise abuses of power outside of their towns, communication difficulties slow down the process considerably. Often the telephones operate through manual exchanges where conversations can easily be intercepted, and so it is necessary to resort to other channels of communication, which are inevitably slower and costlier.

These three points show how vulnerable the rural areas are to repression and manipulation. With the October elections looming, it is quite obvious that the entire state machinery is being used to ensure that the elections cannot be democratic.

In Khayemandi, Stellenbosch, a woman who heckled the mayor during a campaign speech was shot dead on

the spot. The Khayemandi mayor is overtly using the greenflies to intimidate residents.

The brutality being waged against those who are opposed to the October elections could result in them



IS THIS REFORM ?

being described in the history books as the election that happened at gunpoint. Is this how Minister Vlok wants to bring "good government" to the people?

An important aspect of the state's strategy is to address political grievances. This approach aims to reconstruct civil society from below without listening to the people's demands. A necessary part of this approach is the development of state "community structures" in opposition to those of progressive organisations. These "community structures" include youth groups, women's groups, advice offices, sports bodies and civics, all supported by state funds and people who hold conservative rather than progressive views.

Addressing political grievances in this way is nothing more than a subtle strategy for co-option. The real political issues remain unaltered.



A member of the municipal police commonly called "greenflies"



Lawaaikamp...

Clearing PW's Black-yard

Around the country forced removals continue despite the promises of the government that there will be "no more forced removals". Authorities are trying to make the removals look voluntary by using harsh tactics which make it impossible for residents to stay in the area. Lawaaikamp in George is an example of how "orderly urbanisation" is being implemented. 'Reform' is the word used to describe the act of removing and controlling settlements under the disguise of development.

ACTION BY THE AUTHORITIES

The municipality has made a determined effort to force the residents of Lawaaikamp to move. 150 houses have been demolished by the municipality and the SAP. Residents have been informed that they must move and all community meetings to discuss the removal have been banned or cancelled by the municipality. Essential services in the area have been neglected and service charges have been increased. The municipality closed the creche which was reopened after protest. Mysterious fires have destroyed houses and when the houses are rebuilt they are told that they do not comply with the building regulations. Offers of R1000 have been made to people to move.

The reason for the removal is that Lawaaikamp has been proclaimed a 'coloured' group area. The residents are presently integrated and have lived together peacefully for over forty years. Until the establishment of Sandkraal, an

African township, there was no township for African people in George.

In April 1986 a Civic Association was elected in George to represent the people. Later that month about 80 people from the Civic Association were detained. The residents met with the municipality in Oc-

"Lawaaikamp is extremely favorable to upgrade" which is the demand of the residents. They have requested more taps as there are only four, toilets and street lights. DAG reports further that "Lawaaikamp is a highly suitable as a residential area in terms of location and terrain" yet the municipality disregards



Watching and waiting....a Lawaaikamp child ponders his fate as a South African Police van approaches.

tober 1986 and were treated dismissively by the George Town Clerk. The residents held their own meeting to discuss the removals. They sought legal representation and have sent several letters and delegations to Minister David Curry and P.W. Botha. After receiving eviction notices and notices of illegal occupation at the beginning of 1987 they won a Supreme Court judgement in June of that year instructing the municipality to rebuild the houses in the area.

It is clear too from a report by the Development Action Group that

this information despite the fact it would even cost less than to move people to Sandkraal.

31 May 1988 was declared as the final deadline for people to move out of Lawaaikamp. The residents were granted a reprieve after extreme harassment and intimidation. In June this year the municipality refused to accept rent from the people of Lawaaikamp in order to prove they are squatting illegally. The municipality has now gone to court to get permission to move people, and in the interim is illegally demolishing houses and moving people out.



Mr and Mrs Schapp are elderly residents of Lawaaikamp, where they have been living for over the last twenty years. They are shown here under a tree which they planted when they arrived. Now they are ordered to move to Sandkraal.

Mrs Schapp says "Ek is nou oud, ek kan nie meer huis maak nie, ek is moeg van vertrek. Ons is ook mense al is ons swart, 'n mens kon nie mors so met 'n ander mens maak nie. Ons maak ons plek ordentlik dan moet ons trek. Hulle sal help daar afbreek maar nie help daar bou nie, net daar in die veld afgooi".



ANOTHER BLACK SPOT ?

On October 26th, the day of the municipal elections, the Port Nolloth squatters will resume their court application to fight for the right to remain in the area.

At present the residents of the Tentedorp and Bloukamp squatter communities in Port Nolloth face eviction under the Group Areas Act. The reason given for the intended removal is that there is no proclaimed area for Africans in the whole of Namaqualand. There is no African township within at least 200km of Port Nolloth.

Most Africans in Namaqualand work on the copper or diamond mines. They live in compounds within mine property where access to them is strictly controlled. Their wives are not permitted to live with them and visits are few and far between.

This is an example of how the Group Areas Act is used to control the movement and settlement of Africans. Although the pass laws were abolished in 1986, Africans who work in Namaqualand can still not live with their wives and families.

In 1979 and 1980, a number of black families settled in a squatter settlement in Port Nolloth. In 1984 the community began to be harassed and a number of black residents were arrested. The settlement was then demolished. 'Coloured' people were resettled in the area and African families told to leave. Approximately 300 people trekked across the Orange River to Namibia and settled on a farm in Noordoewer.

In 1986, the people claim that soldiers and police forced them to move back into Namaqualand and



people took refuge in Vioolsdrif, a town on the Orange River. A delegation then approached the Springbok municipality for help. In May of that year the Port Nolloth and Springbok municipality gave the residents temporary permission to stay in Port Nolloth. Residents were supplied with tents and a piece of land.

In January this year, eviction notices were served on the residents of Tentedorp giving them less than two months to leave the area. Residents opposed the notice in court and were given a six month 'reprieve' until September 19th.

The local 'Coloured' communities and all but seven local businesses have signed petitions giving support to the community facing eviction. The residents of Tentedorp and Bloukamp have been continually harassed and warned against getting the support of the local communities. A solidarity church service was forbidden by the police but went ahead despite a police presence outside the church.

On 11th September, a general community meeting was held and the residents decided to fight to remain in the Port Nolloth area. The court application began on 13th September and has been postponed to the 26th October.

The future of the residents remains uncertain.

CAN YOU BELIEVE ??

BEACH APARTHEID

The beach at Harold's Bay, in the vicinity of George is divided strictly along racial lines. 80% of the beach is reserved for whites, and 20% for their "Coloured Servants".

RACIAL VOTING

'Indian' families who live in the

'Coloured' area of Carnarvon will vote for 'White' candidates in the October municipal elections.

PROPOGANDA

An estimated R4,7 million has been spent on propaganda to encourage people to vote in the October municipal elections.

ELECTRICITY

In Bongoletu, a township of Oudtshoorn, electricity has recently been installed. One man who is active in the local civic was approached to stand as a candidate in the municipal elections. When he declined, his new electricity meter box was ripped out of the wall.





HOUSES, SECURITY & COMFORT?

Diasville, a small 'coloured' township outside Saldanha, is one of the many examples of the enormous housing problems facing people in South Africa. The statistics tell us that there is a shortage of 600 000 houses for black people and this is growing.

An average of thirteen people 'live' in each of the 900 houses which make up Diasville. In one section it is common for two families to stay in a small two-roomed house. In Diasville there is no electricity and the 'bucket' system is still in use. For this the tenants pay R33 per month.

Abie Williams, a Labour Party MP, recently bought some houses which belonged to a fishing factory. On becoming the new owner he raised the rent from R4 to R30 for the workers staying there.

New houses are being built, at a cost of R18000 each. These are, however, beyond the reach of most of the people living in Diasville. High rents, low wages and unemployment make it difficult for the inhabitants of rural townships to afford houses. As a result squatting is widespread.

Housing conditions in other rural towns are even worse. Some people have been living in appalling conditions at squatter camps like Transit camp outside Carnarvon or Noordkamp outside Victoria-West for as long as ten years. The shacks are overcrowded, water is scarce and toilet facilities are practically non-existent. At Transit camp there is a single tap for 26 shacks which house approximately 350 residents. In Noordkamp the residents are expected to pay a service rent of R7,00 per month.

Many of the inhabitants of these squatter camps are ex-farmworkers who were either evicted or left the farms because the wages were low. Some farmworkers both in the Karoo and Southern Cape are paid less than R50,00 per month. A farmworker near Oudtshoorn was injured in June 1987 while doing a dangerous job on a waterpump machine. He has received no compensation for his arm which is permanently disabled. Instead he and his family were evicted on 23 September this year. Farmworkers are badly exploited as the basic conditions of employment of the Wage Act and Employment Act do not protect farmworkers.

town water for whites only

Outside the Karoo town of Vanwyksvlei is a settlement of 500 people called de Lande. Most of the residents are farm workers who were evicted from the local farms and have been living there for many years.

Their greatest problem is the lack of water. At one time they had to fetch water in donkey-carts from the big dam and pay R3,00 per drum.

A municipal regulation prevents the inhabitants of de Lande from using water from the town. In desperation some people fetched water from the town and were not only charged with breaking the regulation but also forced to pour out the water onto the ground.

Now the people of De Lande in desperation some people fetched water from the town and...were forced to pour out the water onto the ground

fetch water once a week from waterholes and mudpools nearby in containers or 44-gallon



Oom Piet fetching his water

drums. The water is stagnant and unhealthy. Even after it has been carefully sieved and boiled, it makes people sick.

Despite the difficult conditions the people do not want to move. They have managed to raise R50 000 with which they plan to build 50 houses. Now they have another problem. The local management committee will not make land available on which to build.





The Eastern Cape is well known for its political activists. The following reflection of a minister who worked in one of the small Eastern Cape towns during 1984 and 1985 portrays the part played by religion.

The rural areas in South Africa have to a more noticeable extent felt the brunt of Apartheid. The rural black population with their poor living conditions and high unemployment levels, lie in stark contrast to the lifestyle of the white farmers. The rural areas have also been easy targets for state repression, largely because of their geographic and political isolation.

In most rural areas religion is a source of strength and is an important part of people's lives. While being a source of strength, religion for rural people has also acted as their opiate. The bible especially has been used to justify and even entrench the political and economic conditions of rural people.

With the rapid development of political events in the mid 1980's people began to explain their experiences through their religion. Through this, people began to see God differently. God was no longer

removed from them but rather identified with them. God became the God of the Oppressed. How did this change come about?

When the repression in these areas became more harsh with detentions, killings, assassination and torture, people started to reflect on God's response to their suffering.

Political and economic aspirations began to surface. An old man raised these aspirations by saying: "If the white man can

show me how he made the land, then he can make claim to the land. But God made the land and therefore the land belongs to all of us."

Rural people have used their dehumanized existence to extract inspiration and strength. The Bible has become a weapon to assert people's claim to dignity, freedom and rights. The understanding rural people have of God has enabled them to make a contribution towards the liberation of the oppressed in South Africa.



REFLECTIONS OF A PLATTELAND MINISTER

Only a few generalised observations can be made on the nature of the rural repression in South Africa. Nevertheless, it is obvious that repression in the rural areas reveal some unique characteristics as opposed to repression in the urban areas. To put it simply: the baton-charge - boer se moer - police dog - petrol bomb - rubber bullet version of repression is virtually unknown in the "platteland". In fact rural repression could be characterised as racism with a human face.

This is well illustrated by the following incident. A 'Coloured' labourer on a building site in Victoria West, on being asked about his well-being by a white person, responded with a broad smile, "goed baas, elke hotnot op sy plek". Rural repression indeed reveals a very human face, on the condition that the rural order is strictly adhered to.

The nature of the rural order is completely determined by the local white community and its management structures. This political power in turn creates the opportunities for white "baasskap" to be camouflaged by fulfilling a Father Christmas role - an easy role for those who have the wealth as well as the

economic power! Sports clubs, churches and recreational bodies of the black and not white enough communities often collect money from the whites. In the initial stages this could have been described as survival tactics by the repressed rural people, but this beggar attitude has to a large extent become a way of life. For many repressed people this order has not only become acceptable, but indeed it is regarded as proof of the Christian generosity of the white community. Of course sporadic incidences of sackings or even assaults on workers, especially on the farms, do occur. These must however be seen "in context". Even these incidences do not seriously undermine the "good relations" in the rural areas. It is not uncommon to hear platteland whites refer to "our coloureds" who are still "good types" who "know their place".

Structural repression in the rural areas is seldom recognised as such and those who dare to challenge these structures are often rewarded with the label of "opstoker". In fact the human face of rural repression turns very ugly once the rural order is seriously challenged. Little proof of "Christian generosity" remains. Financial support is withdrawn, and ostracism,

downright rudeness and detention without trial follow.

What should the church of Christ do in the rural areas? The greatest stumbling block, it would seem, is the human face of rural repression. Any initiative that results in the worsening of the existing "good relations" will probably be frowned upon, even by many whom the church hopes to liberate. Add to this the extraordinary demand for "opium" in these areas. This is either in the form of liquor (platteland hotels are small goldmines) or "divine opium". The latter being the "evangelical" distraction from the gap between eternal salvation and everyday reality.

It would seem that the only realistic way of proclaiming the good news to the poor of the rural areas, would be to introduce them to the liberator God in such a way that they, the powerless, will be empowered to eventually become the initiators of their own liberation, as well as of their oppressors. Only once the vital issue in the platteland, that of "blanke baasskap" has been challenged and overcome will the genuine reconciliation of black and white people in the rural areas become a possibility.

On 1st September this year the much publicised amendments to the Labour Relations Act came into effect which would "hang like a sword over the heads of the unions", as the Minister of Manpower put it.

COSATU made its objection to the Bill clear. Bosses were called upon to reject the Bill, and lunchtime factory-based demonstrations were held. Objections to the Bill were submitted to a parliamentary standing committee. 20 of the 27 objections were rejected, 4 partially agreed to, and 3 accepted.

In May, at COSATU's Special National Congress, workers

decided to proclaim 3 days of peaceful national protest action on 6-8 June in order to protest against the Bill as well as the restrictions on COSATU, UDF and 16 other organisations.

After the stay-away SACCOLA wanted to negotiate with COSATU and NACTU about the Bill. SACCOLA agreed that those sections of the Bill to which COSATU objected should be removed from the Bill. However the government, despite earlier statements indicating that they would seriously consider amending the Bill in line with any agreement reached, announced that the Bill would become law on 1 September 1988.



Workers pay the price of protest



Workers at Cape Gas have known hardships for a long time. They have had to work long hours under harsh supervisors. Now some of them are faced with greater hardships since their unfair dismissal.

watching them for the slightest mistakes, and that they could lose their jobs. But they could see that the new labour bill wanted to destroy the unions and therefore rejected it.

More than 100 workers at Vineyard and Townhouse Hotels were dismissed following their support for the 3 days of national protest in June.

Poor working conditions united the workers in their battle against management. Their union, the Chemical Workers Industrial Union, has been blamed for the actions of the workers but workers say that they are never forced to do anything by the union. Since joining the union they have become clear about their rights and demands. They are aware that the bill affects every worker and so, after much discussion and debate, they decided to support COSATU's call.

Before the stay-away, some workers received warnings because of their participation in a go-slow or May Day (or both). They were aware that bosses were

The Labour Relations Act includes the following :

Section 1: says that all sympathy or solidarity strikes are illegal and makes it easy for bosses to legally dismiss and retrench workers.

Sections 27 and 35: say you can only strike legally if you notify the Manpower Department within 21 days of the dispute starting. The Inspector can delay forever the time when a union can go on a legal strike.

Section 67: says that the Industrial Court judgments can be kept secret from workers.

Section 79: says a union is responsible for all strikes that happen and that the union can be sued for cost incurred during these strikes.

After the stay-away all those with warnings were dismissed. They have been without work and pay for many months. This is especially difficult for those with wives and children. They are still committed to their cause, and in spite of hunger remain united in their opposition to the bill.

In spite of their dismissal they continue to reject the bill, while also fighting to get their jobs back. They say they haven't lost hope and that they still know that the protest action was the right thing to do.

They also know that there are many other victims of bosses. "The workers who didn't protest are not our opposition", they say, while they try to teach them what they have learned and show them the spirit of the union. They know that if they are unified they will be strong. It is only when they are united that they can stop the bosses and the bill from destroying the unions.



PRAY FOR

These workers of the WPCC were detained on 29 and 22 September along with others in the most recent clampdown around the October elections. Repression has now hit the church more directly with heads of churches being investigated, church workers detained, and the Word of God being distorted by the government.

Hebrews 13 calls on us to pray for these detainees as if we were detained with them. So, as we are asked to pray, we are asked to commit ourselves to standing for the truth and opposing undemocratic plans of the government.

Theresa Solomon

Charles Martin