

An abstract graphic design featuring large, flowing, organic shapes in black and white. The shapes are layered and overlapping, creating a sense of depth and movement. The overall composition is minimalist and modern.

# A Place Called Dimbaza

a case study of  
a rural resettlement township  
in South Africa

# PLACE CALLED DI

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The sign welcoming people to the Dimbaza

**MY BUDGET FOR R5 PER MONTH  
APRIL 14 TO MAY 14 1972**

Item	Quantity	Cents
MAIZE MEAL	2.5 kg	19
SAMP	1.25 kg	10
KUPUGANI SOUP	1 1/2 pkts	30
BREAD	7 1/2 loaves	67 1/2
PRONUTRO	2 pkts	36
MARGARINE	500 gms	22
MILK	30 oz. + 1 pt.	52
COFFEE	375 gms	50
SUGAR	1 1/2 kg	24 1/2
SALT	500 gms	5
GOLDEN SYRUP	1 jar	14
PEANUT BUTTER		10
VITAMIN TABLETS		34
FUEL		90
MATCHES		3
SOAP		7
TOOTHPASTE		15
POSTAGE STAMP		5
GIVING		10
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>R5.04</b>

**JAMES Sibaba** had six children. Now he has five. His 12-year-old daughter **Elsie** developed a festering wound on her arm, he says. From that, she died.

Many children in Dimbaza do not live that long. One particularly pathetic grave bears a wooden cross and inscription Douglas. 68.





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# Study Project on Mass Removal of Population in South Africa

The Africa Publications Trust was established as a charity to promote the study of African affairs and to sponsor research and publications. It publishes regularly the bi-monthly magazine *Africa Digest*. The Trustees are Sir Robert Birley, Sir Bernard de Bunsen, Mr Rex Collings, Mrs J. Grimond, Mr Colin Legum, Mr E. J. B. Rose, The Rev. Michael Scott, Mr Paul Streeten and Miss Jane Symonds. The Secretary is Miss M. L. Obank.

This Study Paper has been compiled by Alan Baldwin and Anthony Hall with an introduction by Colin Legum and assistance from Nicola Harris and Duncan Innes. It is the first of a series of studies into the consequences of the mass removal of population carried out in South Africa over the past 20 years.

In publishing these Studies the Africa Publications Trust is contributing to a fuller understanding of South Africa's socio-economic policies. The views expressed are those of the authors.

Layout Design & Illustrator:  
Kitty Lloyd-Lawrence



**In a plot of land surrounded by a high, barbed wire fence there are rows of dusty children's graves — little mounds of earth with babies' bottles and toys stuck into them. Alongside are rows of empty graves. This week, men with pneumatic drills were excavating more graves.**

*Cape Argus, 27 May 1972*

## Tearing a Country Apart

**South Africa has produced the only government in modern history which is attempting deliberately to split up a unified country — a unique policy which springs from the over-riding wishes of the ruling Afrikaner minority to safeguard the permanence of a status quo based on white supremacy.**

Whether the apartheid regime will ever succeed in its objective of creating nine separate states in place of the present unified, multi-racial Republic remains moot; what is of immediate importance is the effect on human lives of this revolutionary experiment in racial balkanisation.

Surprisingly, after a quarter of a century of apartheid rule, no complete study has been made of the mass population removals and the consequent break-up of family life, which have resulted from the practical application of the ideology of Separate Development. As a result it is not known for certain how many people of all races, but mainly Africans, have been uprooted; but a careful estimate puts the figure of those already forcibly removed, or scheduled for removal, at not less than three million out of a total population of 21.45 millions.

**No transfer of populations of comparable magnitude has occurred in peacetime since Stalin's rule in the 1930s.**

The mass removal of population occurs under the various laws of the Republic designed to separate the four main racial communities into separate jurisdictional compartments. According to official figures(1), the Group Areas Act — designed to segregate the races in each city, town and village throughout the so-called 'white areas' — has been used to order the removal of the

following number of *families* up to the end of 1972:  
**27,694 Indians; 44,885 Coloureds; 7,500 Whites; 3,500 Chinese.**

Official estimates of the number of families still to be removed under the Act are: **10,640 Indians; 27,538 Coloureds; 1,162 Chinese; 135 Whites.**

On the basis of an average family of five, the total number of people involved under this Act alone are: **191,700 Indians; 362,000 Coloureds; 38,175 Whites; 1,450 Chinese.**

**This makes a total of 593,325.**

Since Africans have traditionally been segregated residentially they are not much affected by the Group Areas Act.

Africans removed under the various laws designed to clear up so-called 'Black Spots' — areas occupied by blacks within the designated 'white areas' — total 175,788, with a further 69,000 already scheduled for removal.

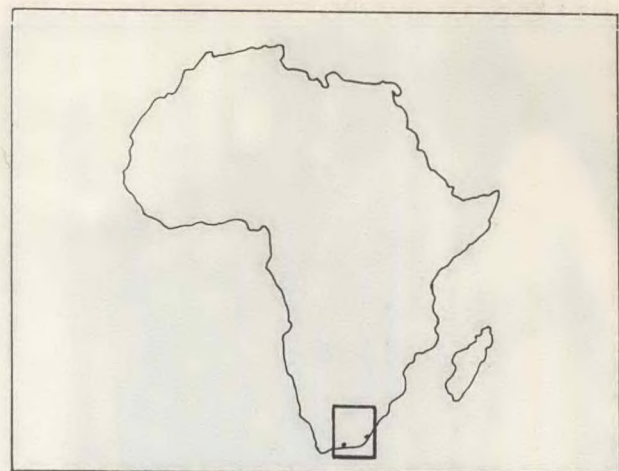
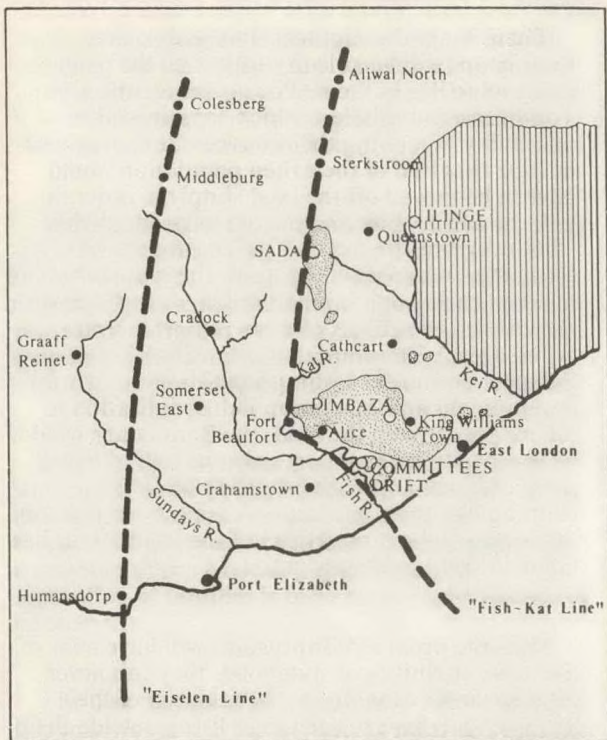
Thus, in these two categories alone, 769,113 people have already been transferred from their existing homes. Another 266,375 are scheduled for removal, making an overall total of 1,035,488.

These figures do not take account of three further categories of removals. First, under the law which makes it illegal for Africans to live on white farms as squatters or as labour-tenants, the number of those removed are reliably estimated at 996,000(2).

Second, under influx control operated through the various Bantu Laws and Urban Areas Acts (as

(1) *Financial Mail*, Johannesburg, 2 March 1973

(2) *SA Institute of Race Relations Fact Sheet*, 14 February 1973



○ Rural Resettlement Townships



Ciskei



Transkei

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amended) — which provide, inter alia, for the removal of Africans declared redundant to the needs of the 'white economy' — 400,000 have been 'endorsed out' to so-called resettlement villages or other areas within the eight designated 'Homelands', or 'Bantustans' (3).

Third, under the proposals to consolidate the land holdings of the eight Homelands, large numbers of Africans and a small number of whites, will be required to move. So far the Government has tabled its proposals only for the consolidation of the KwaZulu Homeland in Natal and those in the Transvaal. The official estimate(4) of the number of Zulus to be moved in Natal is 133,000; while the numbers involved in the five Transvaal Homelands is 351,000 of whom 120,000 are affected in Bophutatswana alone. Thus, so far, just under half a million people are affected inside the Homelands. No official figures have been given of the number of whites who will be required to move, but they are expected to run into hundreds rather than thousands.

**The grand total of peoples so far caught up in the population removals under the officially announced, or already implemented, plans stands at NOT LESS THAN 2,884,000 people. It is impossible to say how many more will be caught up in this process by the time the full programme of population transfers has taken place under the various apartheid laws.**

Dramatic as these figures are, they do not disclose the full extent of the effects of apartheid laws on the lives of South Africans, especially of the non-white communities. The physical uprooting of peoples from their homes is only part of official policy of turning virtually the entire black population into permanent migrant workers in

their own country, with all the disabilities that go with the status of migrants.

**The physical uprooting of people from their homes and the migratizing of black workers are essential ingredients of a policy designed to achieve two major purposes: to ensure social segregation in the urban areas of the four major racial communities, and to divide the country up territorially between the whites and the blacks — with the 3.75 million whites retaining 87.1% of the land, and 12.9% being reserved for the use of the 15.06 million blacks. No separate Homelands have been established for Coloureds or Indians, who are allocated limited residential areas in each of the urban centres.**

The Bantustans are the cornerstone of apartheid. The objective is to divide the country into one white and eight black states. The latter are based on tribe, and each will have a partly-elected parliament. Africans working in the 'white area' will have no political or other rights there; while whites living in 'black areas' will similarly be denied citizenship rights there.

The theory of apartheid, therefore, is a kind of partition with eventual complete independence for each state as the goal. In practice it is nothing of the kind. The eight proposed Bantustans together represent about one-eighth of South Africa's surface. They contain none of the country's mineral resources, none of its major cities or industrial areas, and none of its ports. Except for the Transkei, none has a coastline; and none except the Transkei consists of an unbroken geographical area. The existing reserves, which are to become the Bantustans, consist of some 260 scattered areas.

(3) Ibid.

(4) *The Star*, Johannesburg, 28 April 1973



## The Worker Who Was Forced To Become A Migrant

Mr.W.M. was one of a very few in Dimbaza who had work with the Building Department earning c. £12.50 per month which made him much better-off than most. On his salary he supported a household of 12 people.

Unable to manage he nevertheless refused to give up his family to become a migrant worker. When he got badly behind in paying his rent of £3.38 per month, he was summoned to court. Not only was he order to pay all his arrears, but was also fined. Only the assistance of the Church saved him from jail.

He accepted defeat, left home as a contract labourer to keep his family — but at the cost of being separated from them.

There is not the slightest chance that these Bantustans will be able to support all the people required to live in them. The government's own Tomlinson commission, which examined the possibility of making the reserves viable, reported in 1952 that half of their then population would have to be moved off the land simply in order to halt the soil erosion and restore its productivity. This, everyone is agreed, is a clear impossibility. Since the Commission reported, these areas have in fact had their population doubled, owing to natural growth and the effects of more removals from 'white areas'. The commission concluded that on the most optimistic assumptions about money for development and maximum industrialisation to relieve pressure on the land, the Bantustans would be in a position to support only one half of South Africa's black population by the year 2000. Nothing like those assumptions have been met: on the contrary the productivity of the Bantustans has fallen in the past twenty years.

Thus the proposed Bantustans will have none of the basic attributes of statehood: they can never develop viable economies; the majority of their 'citizens' will have to earn their living outside their borders; their Parliaments can have no control over the source of livelihood of their citizens, nor over the areas which separate the different parts of their 'state'. Thus their citizens' voting rights will be restricted to Homelands' Parliaments which have no power to affect the basic needs of their lives.

Moreover, because the government is unwilling to curb South Africa's economic expansion, it seeks to control and direct, rather than to reverse, the flow of African labour to the towns. Just under five million Africans now live in the towns, an increase of more than two million since apartheid was introduced in 1948. A further 3.07 million work in the 'white' rural areas. Only seven millions — less than half of the total black population — live in the Homelands.

Three principles are applied to control influx: Africans have no automatic right to live or work in the 'white areas'; they are to be regarded for all times as 'temporary sojourners' there; and their right to work in these 'white areas' is dependent upon the specific labour needs of the 'white economy'. The Minister of Bantu Administration summed it up in a speech in 1962: 'It is . . . the duty of every official entrusted with the task of Bantu administration assiduously to apply the basic principle . . . that the Bantu stay in the white areas can be justified only by the need for his services there.'

Work-seekers from the Bantustans must have permission to enter a 'white area' and to stay and work there. In terms of the Bantu Law Amendment Act of 1964, any African can be summarily 'endorsed out' of his place of work and his home — however long he and his forebears have lived there — if, among other things, the Minister has decided that the number of Africans in the area exceeds its reasonable labour requirements; or the African concerned comes from an area from which the



Minister has decided that no more labour is to be recruited for the 'white area' concerned; or if an African is deemed to be 'idle' or 'undesirable'; or if it is deemed not to be 'in the public interest' that the contract of service shall continue.

Wives and other dependents of Africans working in the 'white areas' may not live with their husbands and fathers unless they have 'ordinarily and legally resided' with him in the same area previously. Migrant workers have no right to bring their families with them from the Bantustans, regardless of the length of time they are to be away.

**Since it is government policy that all Africans working in white South Africa will eventually do so as migrant workers, and since there is no foreseeable prospect of the Bantustans supporting a majority of the African population, the separation of families is to be an endemic feature of African life.**

The destruction of African family life — with all this implies for the moral basis of marriage and the psychological health of children is therefore an integral part of government policy.

A wife may visit her husband in a white area without permission only for periods of up to seventy-two hours. Exceptions are possible if, for example, the purpose of a woman's visit is to conceive a child, she may argue her case for a longer visit before white officials in charge of the labour bureaux. It is not difficult to imagine the humiliation of a woman subjected to interrogation by a suspicious and unsympathetic white official as to her motives and the time she requires to be certain of conception.

The phenomenon of mass population removals and of the break-up of family life is therefore directly related to the overall policy of dividing the country up into unequal territorial units designed to entrench white supremacy, but which at the same time ensures the continued growth of the Republic through the availability of millions of migrant workers. Because there is no hope of effective employment in the Homelands, these workers will constitute a permanent pool of idle labour. The official census figures put African unemployment at about 7%; but academic and other unofficial studies indicate the true figure is more likely 15% or even 20% (5).

Although migrant labour has been an historical feature of policy in South Africa (6) it has been applied more ruthlessly and more extensively under apartheid than at any previous time. The change is not only one of degree; it represents a fundamental change of purpose since the basic aim, as declared in Ministerial statements, is to convert, in time, the entire black labour force in the Republic into permanent migratory workers.



**Annie Malasi (right) — hospitalized for under-nourishment**

Clearly therefore, a direct relationship exists between mass population removals, the break-up of family life, the creation of hostels in the urban areas for workers without their families and for resettlement villages (like Dimbaza) in the Bantustans, the intensification of migrant labour, and the industrial problems of inefficiently-trained and impermanent black workers. Unfortunately these interlinked problems have not, as yet, been systematically discussed. For this reason the Africa Publications Trust decided in 1971 to establish a Working Party of specialists to prepare a series of studies for publication. *A Place Called Dimbaza*, a case study of a single resettlement village, is the first in this series of publications. Other studies now in progress include:

(i) An overview of the policy of Separate Development, its rationale, its effects and implications. It will attempt to give the first comprehensive statistical account of the massive demographic changes being imposed.

(ii) The effects of the racial re-zoning on the two minority subject groups, the Coloured and Asian communities, with detailed studies of their forced removals in Cape Town and Durban.

(iii) Individual case histories to focus attention on the tremendous human misery caused by the break-up of families and social groups, particularly in the urban areas.

(5) See in particular the work of Professor J. L. Sadie of Stellenbosch University, and the estimates of the National Development and Management Foundation.

(6) For a useful recent study see Dr. Francis Wilson's *Migrant Labour in South Africa*, published by the S.A. Council of Churches and Spro-Cas (1972)

## PART 1

## The Place and its Origins

In the 1960s when the South African Government decided to intensify its policy of removing all Africans declared to be redundant to the needs of the white economy in the urban areas, or who got in the way of implementing other aspects of its apartheid policy, it found that large numbers of these summarily displaced people had neither families nor homes to which they could go in the eight Bantustans, or Black 'homelands'. At first some were simply dumped on the bare veld, provided with tents or other temporary accommodation, and with an absolute minimum of services; others were put into rapidly established, or expanded, rural townships in different parts of the country. These 'dumping grounds' were for predominantly workers' families who — in the characteristically frank language of the lawmakers — were declared to be 'surplus appendages'.

The plight of these people first became widely known through the first-hand investigations of Father Cosmas Desmond (now restricted under a banning order). His findings were subsequently published in *The Discarded People* (Penguin's, London, 1971).

Dimbaza (at first called Mnxesha) was one of these dumping grounds. Since Cosmas Desmond first wrote about it, Dimbaza has gained considerable notoriety in South Africa, largely through the work of its resident Anglican priest, David Russell, himself the son of a former well-known member of parliament. When Cosmas Desmond first came across this place in May 1969, he wrote:

*'One look at Mnxesha was sufficient to convince me that the reports I had heard had not been exaggerated and that here was grinding poverty, squalor and hardship equal to the worst places I*

*had seen. There were the families, tiny one roomed houses, many with a number of ragged, hungry looking children or a bent old woman sitting outside. It was not quite true that I could no longer be shocked or disturbed. I was, in particular by the sight of one tiny baby, a virtual skeleton, unable to move or even to cry and covered with flies. I have been through the children's wards in African hospitals throughout the country and, over the past ten years have seen thousands of starving, dying children. But I doubt whether I have seen anything worse than this. It was as bad as any of the horror pictures from Biafra.'*

Many of the people in Dimbaza had been removed from Middleburg, a prosperous agricultural centre in the north-eastern Cape Province. According to Desmond:

*'Many people at Mnxesha were quite adamant that they had been employed, reasonably housed and very much wanted to stay at Middleburg. . . . They said they were told by an official of the Bantu Affairs Department that at Mnxesha they would have proper houses with a bath and a stove; there would be shops and other facilities and special bachelor quarters with their own kitchens and cookers. Others claimed that they were told that if they did not move dogs would be set on them. Some were told to settle their families in Mnxesha and return to work in Middleburg. . . . People from other towns also claimed that they had not wanted to move and that they had been in employment but were now unemployed'. (1)*

One group who, according to Russell, don't complain too much are the people moved off white farms whose conditions were so bad that by comparison, even Dimbaza was to be preferred to their lives as farm labourers.

(1) *The Discarded People*, pp. 176-7

**DIMBAZATOWNSHIP/DORP**  
**ENTRY WITHOUT A PERMIT IS PROHIBITED**  
**TRESPASSERS WILL BE PROSECUTED**  
**INGANG SONDER 'N PERMIT IS VERBODE**  
**OORTREDERS SAL VERVOLG WORD**



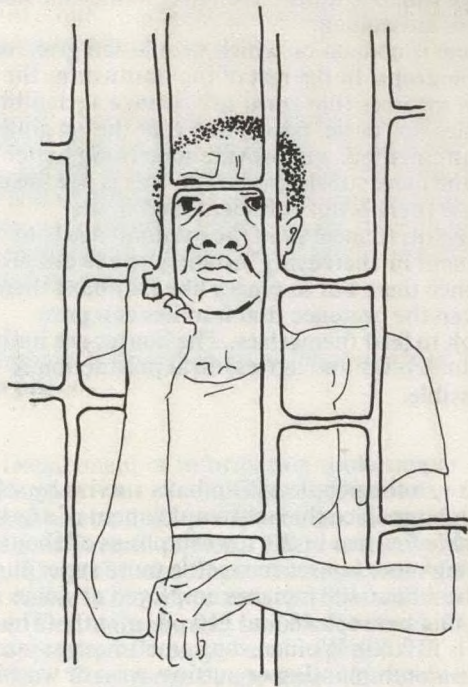
The township of Dimbaza is situated about 12 miles from King William's Town just off the road running west to Alice. From the road very little of the township is visible.

The first people to resettle arrived in November 1967 and early 1968, with a rapid increase in numbers between December 1968 and February 1969. By March 1969, the Minister of Bantu Administration and Development (BAD) put the population at 2,897, of whom 2,041 were children. Their numbers had increased to 3,400 by May, although Desmond estimated a much higher figure. By 1971 it was around 7,000 and by 1972 it had reached almost 10,000.

An official description of the kind of people sent to Dimbaza and of the arrangements made for them was given to the *Daily Dispatch* (2) by an official of the chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner in King William's Town.

*'Redundant people are being moved to Dimbaza. We house redundant people . . . The people would be of no particular age group and could not render productive service in an urban area . . . Men who had lost their jobs and could not find new employment; old and infirm people; unmarried mothers. The government would provide the children with one substantial meal a day and rations would be given to the old and infirm people. Able bodied men would be able to enter into contracts for work in the mines, industries, and other avenues of employment. The provision of employment in the new village is receiving the attention of the authorities.'*

The vast majority of Dimbaza inhabitants are children, old people and mothers — economically



### A Family Sentenced With Their Father

**Mrs D.H. Goni** is worried about the future of her four children. She was living in a Port Elizabeth township with her husband, who was born and brought up in the city where he worked until he was arrested for armed robbery and sentenced to 20 years imprisonment three years ago.

She was told she may no longer stay at their New Brighton home since her husband was serving a term of more than six months in jail.

'My in-laws are in Port Elizabeth and my home is in Cradock. I cannot settle at either these places. I would leave Dimbaza at any day if I were allowed to do so'.

She complained about the dampness in her two-roomed house and the difficulty of rearing her four children — twins of 11 and two of 5 and 3.

She works as a wall-washer for £3 a month. The government supplies the family with rations which, she says does not last long.

(2) *Daily Dispatch*, East London, 16 January 1969

'non-productive units'. Well over half of the householders are women.

There is no land on which people can graze cattle or grow crops. In the rest of the Bantustans the theory assumes that rural subsistence agriculture provides for 'basic' needs, and that the earnings of migrant menfolk will provide something better than the mere subsistence level; this is not the case because there is not sufficient land in the Bantustans to meet even the minimal needs of those sent in increasing numbers to eke out an existence there but in places like Dimbaza there is not even the pretence that families can grow enough to feed themselves. The houses are built on very small plots and agricultural production is impossible.

Nor can the people of Dimbaza survive by selling their labour since the only employment of any kind available for men in the township is as a labourer building more houses to resettle more superfluous people. About 400 men are employed at wages averaging between £8 and £10 per month. (The top wage is £12.50). Women can sometimes get jobs for £3 per month planting or cutting grass or washing walls.

In August 1972 the Deputy Minister of BAD announced the creation of new jobs in Dimbaza — in fact, this amounted to no more than the action by a church women's group in King William's Town who provided a grant of £300 for beadwork, which enables some women to earn £2.50 to £3.50 per month. King William's Town, twelve miles away, offers some job opportunities, e.g. in hotels where the monthly pay is £6. The return bus fare is 20 pence, which leaves exactly £2 per month for someone working a five-day week.

Most of the Dimbaza men and women of working age had jobs when they lived in the towns. Russell comments:

*'It is said, look, you know, you can go back to the towns to work. In fact the wickedness of this whole resettlement thing is that it accentuates and, if you like, increases the migratory labour structure. Because, for the first time in their lives, the majority of these people, the vast majority of these people are becoming migrants.'*

The housing provided is inadequate, overcrowded and the rents charged are astronomical relative to income. The first arrivals at Dimbaza were put in tin-roofed wooden huts measuring 16' x 16', and ten feet high; they had no floors or ceilings and no foundations. Stifling in summer they are freezing in winter. In the rainy season the floors become very damp. Many of these houses are still in use though most were replaced by two-roomed ash-brick houses with asbestos roofs — but still without floors or ceilings. There have been attempts to improve conditions by installing concrete floors. Some of the houses stand alone; others are semi-detached, having the appearance of four-roomed dwellings; they are, in fact, only two-roomed dwellings. The few four-roomed houses are for a privileged few, such as teachers.

With rents fixed at £1.71 per month for a two-roomed house, 85% cannot afford to pay any rent at all, according to an official admission.

These inadequate housing conditions, a rudimentary sanitation system, and desperate poverty, have not surprisingly made health a major problem.

**The signs of mannutrition are inescapable. The death rate, especially among children, is very high — graves are dug in advance. By May 1969, although the bulk of the population had arrived only in the preceding six months, there were already over ninety graves; over seventy were those of children. It is difficult, if not impossible to keep warm in the bitter winter cold and wet. Apart from the lack of food, there is a chronic shortage of fuel.**

The problems are different in summer. January 1972, high summer in the Ciskei, was a bad time for gastro-enteritis. In under two months, 52 children had died; by the beginning of May 1972, though the death rate had slowed considerably, there were over 400 children's graves.

Confirming these figures, a government spokesman regarded them as being nothing unusual.

Health facilities were at first virtually non-existent. In May 1969 a qualified nurse was appointed to run a free clinic with a doctor visiting once a week. Free medical treatment is available in King William's Town, but the bus fare makes visits prohibitively costly. A free ambulance service operates for emergency cases, but the nearest telephone was four miles away and did not operate in the evenings or at weekends. The nearest African hospital is at Mt. Coke mission station, 22 miles away.

Russell recognised some improvement by 1972. There was then a clinic run by two nurses, with a doctor visiting once a week who is prepared to see only ten patients a week. But the clinic sometimes ran out of drugs. Further improvements came at the end of 1972 with the doctor visiting five days a week, and a telephone was installed at the clinic.

The basic structures for education have been provided. The first primary school opened in March 1969, and by 1972 there were four primary schools and one secondary. Mothers have difficulty trying to raise the money for school books, uniforms and fees, without which children may be prevented from attending. There are no school recreational facilities.

The superficial appearance of Dimbaza has improved somewhat since Desmond saw it first in 1969. The *Cape Argus* said in May 1972: 'Outwardly Dimbaza looks little different from dozens of other African townships. Rows of gaily



... painted little concrete houses are spread over the crest of a hill . . . it is the graveyard which belies the innocent facade . . .'

Russell describes the appearances as 'quite pleasant'. But, he goes on to ask: 'What is the use of having the most beautifully coloured walls if the floor is wet? What is the use of having schools if the people can't afford to buy books for their children? You could live in a palace but it would be a farce, if you had no money.'

Dimbaza is described by its inhabitants as 'a clean prison'.

A Department of Information spokesman, replying to critics of conditions in Dimbaza, claimed he could fill two Dimbazas 'tomorrow'. To this David Russell replied: 'There might be some truth in what he says. If you take away an African's right to live in an urban area and then offer him free rations, a free house, schools for the children and work, then of course he will agree to be resettled.' They receive a glowing picture of what to expect — 'instead, they arrive here and find that there is no work.'

A government circular in 1967 set out the different types of settlements in the Bantustans to which people removed from the white areas are sent. The category into which Dimbaza falls is described thus:

'Towns in the homelands with rudimentary services and housing . . . water is normally laid on only at convenient places in the streets in pillar-faucets, and cesspits are used as far as possible, while the houses built by the (Bantu) Trust usually consist of prefabricated one or two-roomed buildings which may be either purchased or rented . . . These townships are developed for families of which the breadwinners are usually employed as migrant labourers in European areas, or for the aged, widows and women with dependent children, etc.'

The overall reality of a place like Dimbaza is its grinding poverty and the helplessness of the great majority of its inhabitants to do anything about improving their lot.

'I've never seen such concentrated and depressed poverty as I've seen in Dimbaza,' says David Russell. 'The fundamental question is work. At another level the question is why they were removed there at all.'

## The Dead And The Dying

**Mrs. E. M.** arrived at Dimbaza with her six children from Burgersdorp in December 1968. By May 1969, two of her children were dead. Two others, aged 13 and 6, had gross pellagra (a killing deficiency disease), according to a doctor at the St. Matthews mission hospital. Another child was in hospital suffering from a less advanced form of malnutrition.

A widow, she had supported her family in Burgersdorp by doing domestic work. She received no pension for she is only 37, and as Dimbaza is a rural area she is not entitled to a child maintenance allowance. Her sole source of income from the time she arrived at Dimbaza were the few cents she managed to earn by collecting wood from miles away and selling it in the settlement.

She sometimes took her children to the nurse for medical attention, but, because she did not have the fee of 20 cents (10p), they were not attended to. The official ration, is quite obviously inadequate.

## When A Husband Leaves Home . . .

Mrs. M.X. was living with her husband and family near Cape Town. They were not well off but they managed; then they were removed to a Resettlement Township. Her husband was required to leave his family and become a migrant. At first he sent £5 home each month; in time it became rather less, then it became irregular. He had turned to drink and had found another woman. The system of migrant labour is calculated to destroy family life.



A Dimbaza grave. The death rate, especially among children, is very high.

## PART 2

## Dimbaza - Only One of Many

Dimbaza is by no means unique. Two other similar townships in the same area, Ilinge and Sada, have caused scandals. Sada severely shocked even Dr. Piet Koornhof, then Deputy-Minister of BAD, one of the men responsible for its creation. During a conducted tour of the area he remarked in the presence of journalists: '*Verskriklik*' (terrible).

Many similar dumping grounds were systematically exposed by Cosmas Desmond in *The Discarded People*. (1), such as Limehill in Natal, Kuruman in the northern Cape Province, Morsgat in the Western Transvaal and Stinkwater, north of Pretoria. More recently, Francis Wilson drew attention to the creation of a series of rural townships — principally Itsoseng in the Tswana Bantustan, Mondlo in the Zulu Bantustan, and Witzieshoek in the South Sotho Bantustan. These are being built specifically to house the dependents of migrants and are rapidly increasing in size, though, like Dimbaza, offering no local means of livelihood.

Dimbaza displays the features of both types — primarily a place where people superfluous to the needs of the whites in the areas can be dumped, and also as a base for recruiting mainly rural migrant labour.

Close to Dimbaza lie two large townships, Zwelitsha and Mdatsana. Zwelitsha, 3½ miles from King William's Town, was originally built to provide labour for a large textile mill but was considerably expanded in the 1960s to accommodate people removed from the Western Cape.

Work is not generally available in the town or in the textile factory since cheaper labour can be

brought as migrants from further afield in the Ciskei and Transkei; so most men have to return as temporary migrants to the Western Cape.

Mdatsana, 10 miles from the port of East London but within the boundaries of the Ciskei, contains an estimated population of 120,000 (although officially it is given as 58,000). It consists of people moved from the old East London location, Duncan's Village, and from the Western Cape. The inhabitants supply labour to the 'white' industries in East London, across the border.

The government's policy for the Western Cape is that it should be cleared of all Africans as permanent dwellers to enable the area to become a 'Coloured-preference area' for labour. African families are to be removed to the Eastern Cape Bantustans of the Ciskei and the Transkei. This is part of a grand design intended to exclude them from a part of the country where the majority of the Coloured people live. A dividing line known as the Eiselen line after the architect of this plan, Dr. William Eiselen — runs from Kimberley, through Colesberg, to Humansdorp. It has since been moved even further east to what is now known as the Fish-Kat line, which follows those rivers north, then through Sterkstroom to Aliwal North (see Map on p.3). All Africans living west of this line are to be moved out and may only return to work for temporary periods. This plan has already resulted in one of the most massive population removals yet undertaken. Some 70,000 people have already been resettled in places like Dimbaza (2). The Government plans to move 600,000 from the eastern Cape alone into the Ciskei and Transkei.

The Transkei and the Ciskei are two of the eight black Homelands created under the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act of 1959 to become

(1) Op. cit.

(2) *Sunday Tribune*, Durban, 14 May 1972



Casual labourers for the Government Department of Works, building new houses in Dimbaza. Men get £10 per month, women (widows), £3 per month.

self-governing territories'. Although they are constituted as separate Territorial Authorities they have only very limited powers of jurisdiction over matters such as agriculture, education, roads, justice and local finance. Both these territories are already seriously overcrowded and face massive problems of unemployment and poverty.

The leaders of the Transkei and Ciskei have vigorously campaigned for much larger allocations of land to make it possible for their people to survive economically; and both have criticized the burdens placed on their limited resources by the continued removal of large numbers of African families from the white areas into the overcrowded 'homelands'.

The attitudes of the Bantustan leaders are typified by a statement made in October 1972 by Mr. Z. M. Mabandla, the Minister of Roads and Works for the Transkei, when he warned that his Authority may refuse to allow any more people to be removed from the 'white areas' into the Homelands. Complaining that black workers had no control over their own destiny and no protection against being uprooted physically and 'dumped somewhere near Illege' — a resettlement camp near Queenstown — he added: 'The time has come to stop humiliating and ill-treating Africans'.

The government has not shown any willingness to yield to this kind of criticism. Its policy over the role of the Bantustans in the scheme of apartheid was explicitly stated by the Deputy Minister of Justice, Mines and Planning, Mr. S. Froneman on 27 April 1969:

*'The removal of these superfluous Bantu from the White Homelands is not dependent on the development of the Bantu Homelands, except that*

*housing facilities should be made possible for them.'*

He went on to say that the 'White State' had no duty to prepare the Homelands for superfluous Africans because they are actually illegal aliens in the White Homelands who only have to be repatriated. He added: 'Wives, children, old people and idlers must go back to the Homelands'.

Mrs. Helen Suzman, M.P. one of the most critical voices in parliament, commented on the Government's policy on Dimbaza and other resettlement villages:

*'It's unworkable if you care what happens to people. The Government's main concern is to reduce the number of Blacks in the White areas. When that becomes your prime concern, the results are what you see in the Homelands . . . A poor, depressed people. The fact that they think people can live on R2.50 a month indicates this.'*

By transferring unwanted, 'surplus' Africans into the overcrowded Bantustans with their growing pools of unemployment, the government is engaged in transferring the pressures from the wealthier white urban areas to the poorer black areas. It has forced on the Bantustans, without their leaders even being consulted, a string of new townships like Dimbaza. As David Russell puts it:

*'Who will now carry the financial burden of the resettlement schemes? There are signs of an ominous trend developing. The Deputy Minister, Mr. P. Koornhof, was reported as saying that with the constitutional development of the Black nations and the establishment of their own revenue*



accounts, the burden on the whites would gradually become easier. Is the White Government anxious to disown its "illegitimate offspring", the resettlement townships. Only two months ago a Ciskeian leader was reported as saying that limited funds were hampering them in accelerating the development of the Homeland. Here, surely, is a plea that you do not leave these townships like millstones around the neck of the Ciskei government. Dimbaza and the like were foisted upon the Ciskei. Now, it is as if you are saying "You can have it, you MUST have it, and you are going to pay for it." To people thirsting for almost any sort of freedom from the white yoke, it is a bitter "choice" to have to be at the receiving end of a vast resettlement policy when work is so scarce, wages so low, and land so chronically insufficient.'

How do people survive at places like Dimbaza? Principally they are forced out of their areas of previous residence by the series of laws which exist for this purpose. The Bantu (Urban Areas) Act of 1952 is the main instrument for deciding whether a person remains in the area or not. Under Section 10, those qualifying for exemption are Africans born in a particular area; who have worked for one employer for 10 years, or been in continuous employment there for 15 years; or wives, unmarried daughters and sons under 18. People can be 'endorsed out' of their established places of residence by administrative order if they lose their jobs or their work contract expires; 'if they are guilty of a 'pass' offence, or are convicted of offences carrying a six-months' sentence; or if they are wives whose husbands die or lose their jobs. In many cases those ordered to leave are victims of a decision to redesignate the area in which they live as reserved exclusively for white or Coloured occupation. In such cases a small compensation might be paid.

People living on white farms or in 'black spots' (land owned or farmed by blacks in predominantly 'white areas') are only given a limited time before being physically removed.

Others falling into the category of those to be resettled are political prisoners released from Robben Islands and other jails. Seventy-five people, imprisoned on political charges in the early 1960s for periods of 6-12 years have been taken on their release straight to places like Dimbaza without even a chance to see their families.

**The government claim that people move 'voluntarily'. In practice this means that many choose to move before legal steps are taken to force them out through police action.**

The people resettled in Dimbaza come principally from the Western Cape, though many come from the area between the Eiselen line and the Kat-Fish line, which includes 'white' towns like Middleburg, Burgersdorp, Cradock, Somerset East and Port Elizabeth.



## A Family of Twelve In One Room

**Mrs R. Nikani** is still surprised that she was removed from her home in Rosemead and sent to Dimbaza.

'They told me I must vacate my house and come here because Rosemead is for Coloureds. But there are still Africans staying in the same area where I stayed with my 11 children'.

The family of 12 stay in a rent-free one-roomed wooden hut.

The family's sole breadwinner is a daughter, Nonvume, who earns £3 a month as a wall-washer. A son, Mayford, was employed in the village, but was made redundant.

## Family Life on One Week's Rations

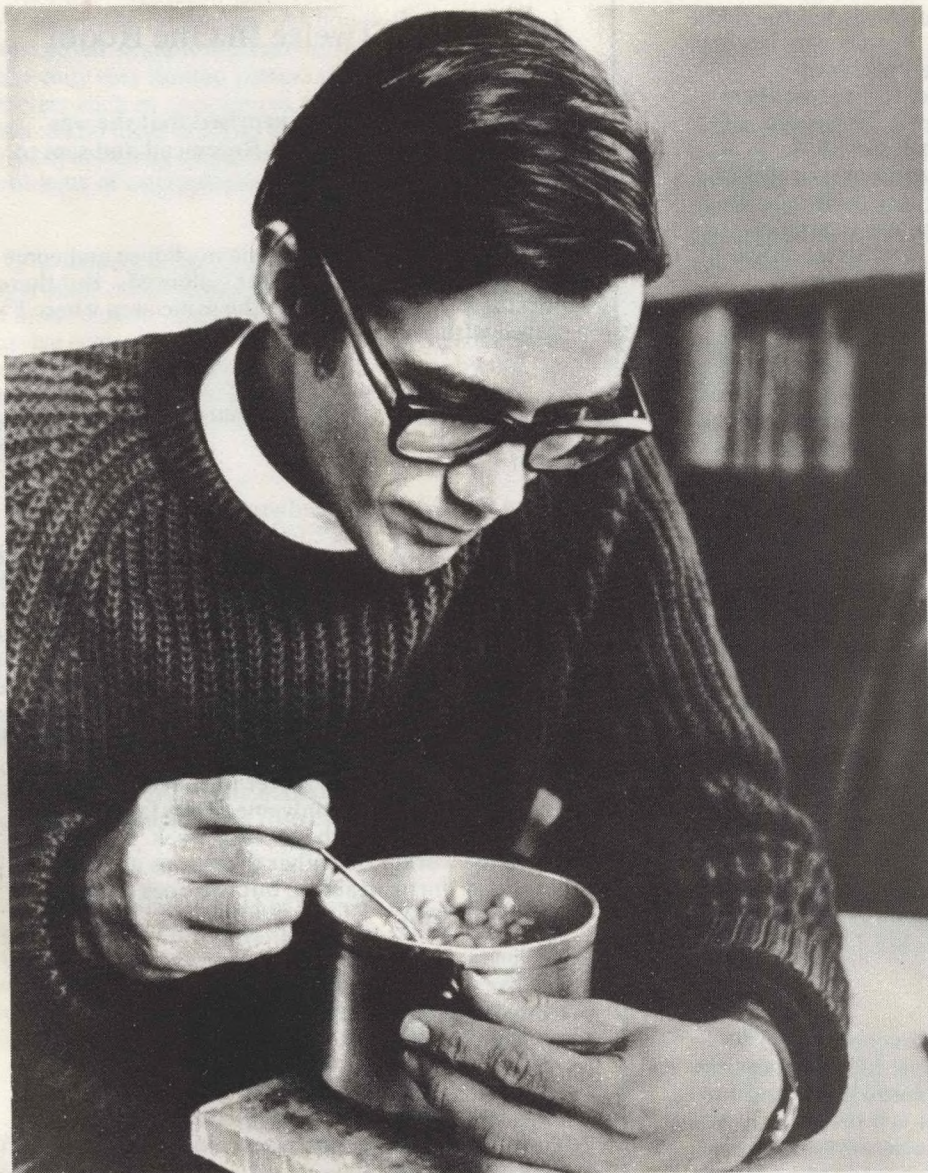
**Mrs L. Thamana** is 61. With her husband and five children, she came from Beaufort West to Dimbaza in March 1972. Her husband died soon afterwards. She is the only one in the family receiving rations which last for a week. Nobody in the family works. Her other three sons are in Cape Town and Port Elizabeth, but she does not know their addresses.

'I owe people here money which I had to borrow to buy food for my family. Now I need £10 to pay my neighbours.'

An asthma sufferer, Mrs. Thamana says the dampness of her house is worsening her condition.

PART 3

# Eye-Witness in Dimbaza



The Rev. David Russell and his lunch — a saucepan of samp and beans

## Young Delinquents

Mr. V., still only a youth, went to work under a contract on a coal mine in the Transvaal. Conditions were unhealthy, and the workers were badly treated. He was scared and unhappy, and ran away. In doing so he broke his contract and made himself a criminal.

Young J. joined up to work on the roads near Cape Town. On arrival he found himself tied by the contract to a job where the treatment was rough and the hours long. He left before his time was up and in doing so he, too, became a 'criminal'.



David Russell has been working as a priest in the Ciskei since 1965. Since moving to King William's Town in 1969 he has been exclusively concerned with Dimbaza. His involvement developed out of his activities on behalf of individuals — mainly widows and old age pensioners — trying to obtain allowances and grants for them.

The system of allowances, rations and pensions requires an explanatory word. People who have no other means of subsistence, such as a father or husband working as a migrant in the cities, are entitled to receive a monthly food ration, valued at £1.32. For adults it consists of:-

**20 lbs. mealie meal (ground maize)**  
**8 lbs. whole mealies**  
**1 lb. fat**  
**2 lbs. skimmed milk**  
**½ lb. salt**  
**5 lbs. beans**

Those under 12 receive smaller portions, valued at £1.14.

The rations provide bulk but are grossly deficient in nutrient and are extremely unappetising. The amounts have been *reduced* over the years. In 1969, eligible persons aged over twelve got 25 lbs. maize meal and 10 lbs. whole maize.

A doctor at the S.A. Institute of Medical Research has described the rations as almost totally lacking in vitamins A and C, low on protein and dangerously low on calories.

Five thousand adults and children at Dimbaza are totally dependent on these rations.

People over the age of 60 are entitled to a pension of £5 every two months. (The old age pension for whites is now £20.50 per month.)

Widows are entitled in certain circumstances to a Maintenance Grant amounting to £1.25 per person per month. This, again, presupposes no other means of subsistence.

By way of comparison, the Poverty Datum Line — the figure arrived at to provide for the mere essentials of existence for a family of two adults and four children — in a rural area like Dimbaza is £32 per month. A figure more generally accepted as representing a reasonable 'Effective Minimum Level' is calculated to be at least £50.

Every day David Russell found a queue of people at his door: anxious people; frightened people; people too deadened by constant near-starvation to express any emotion at all.

He spent a long time discreetly, patiently negotiating with those who have the power to improve conditions for the people of Dimbaza. In the course of his endeavours he found a curious anomaly in the regulations governing aid to widows which, if it were corrected, would slightly alleviate the suffering of many women and children. He had discovered that the Children's Act of 1960 provided for grants to be made to widowed mothers in urban areas, but that the same provision had not been made for rural areas. If he could persuade the Department to make the terms of the Act applicable to Dimbaza's widows, the monthly grant of £1.25 would, with their rations, at least provide twice as much food. A simple administrative adjustment could make life for many a little less desperate. The grants, after all, had been intended



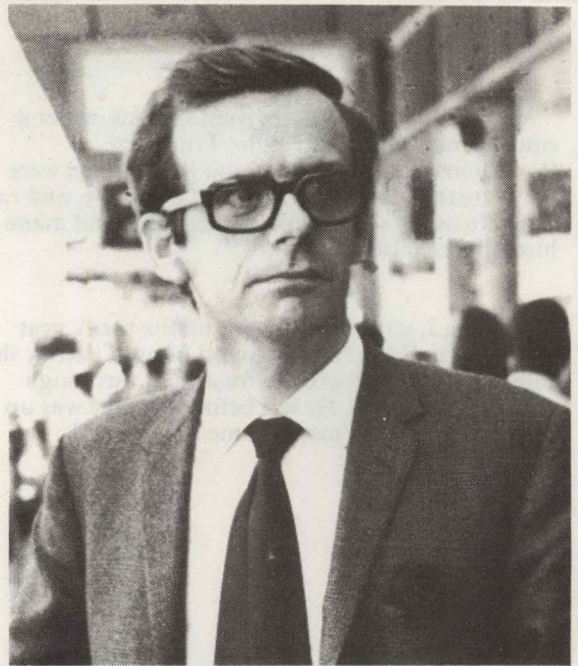
## The Mother Who Prefers Prison

Mrs. **Joyce Mapolisa**, released from prison in 1969 after serving a six years' term of imprisonment under the 'Suppression of Communism Act', was sent to Dimbaza with her three children. She is unemployed. Now 49-years-old, this former Port Elizabeth domestic servant says:

'Life here is worse than in prison. I am an asthmatic and have since contracted TB, and the dampness of my home is making it worse. The food scarcity is depressing. I might have been happier if my children did not have to suffer these hardships with me'.

The rations supplied by the Government are mainly starch 'with the result that diseases such as TB and malnutrition are hard to ward off'.

'Last year I went to see some of my children in Port Elizabeth and was arrested for not being in possession of valid documents . . . I asked the magistrate rather to send me to prison than send me back to Dimbaza.'



Photograph by Colin Smith, Courtesy "The Observer".

**COSMAS DESMOND . . .**  
The first eye-witness; now restricted.

for these same women. Though their need was now so much greater, they had lost their entitlement when they were forcibly removed from the towns.

In September 1970, David Russell assumed it would be a mere formality. However, eight months later and after many letters and many fruitless visits and interviews with local magistrates and Ciskeian officials, it was apparent that no one was prepared to do anything. Therefore, on 2 April 1971 he wrote a letter direct to the Minister of Bantu Administration and Development in Cape Town, M. C. Botha:

*'I asked the Magistrate that these widows in great need be given Maintenance Grants in terms of the Children's Act. It then became apparent that the local government officials are not in a position to have the regulations regarding such grants made applicable to the people at Dimbaza, but that it requires your personal permission, Sir, to enable these widows to apply for this much needed assistance. That is why I write to you directly in the hope that you will respond to this appeal. I would like to stress that my decision to write to you on this matter was not lightly taken. I have been visiting at Dimbaza for well over two years. I believe it is true to say that I know more about conditions there than any other person who does not actually live in the place. I have been into homes, and seen so many pitiful cases of poverty, that I have ceased to count them. I receive so many requests for help that it is beyond my capacity to cope.'*

There was no reply, so in May he went to Cape Town to try and see the Minister personally. He was told the matter was being handled by the Deputy Minister, A. J. Raubenheimer, who was fully aware of the importance and urgency of this matter. Still no interview or help was forthcoming. From 12 May, Russell sat down on the steps of St. George's Cathedral in the centre of Cape Town.

He waited 4 days and nights, fasting and holding up placards which read:

**RESETTLEMENT WIDOWS DESPERATE  
— BIBLE DEMANDS JUSTICE FOR WIDOWS  
— HUNGER IS VIOLENCE**

He was photographed by the press. Questions were asked in parliament. On 14 May, while still on the steps, he received a vague message that assistance was available in the form of grants and other help. Russell said he knew of no grants for widows under 60 who were not permanently disabled, and if 'other help' meant rations, this was not enough.

On 19 May he was told from the Minister's office that he should bring individual cases before the magistrate for Dimbaza. On 6 June he reported six cases of extreme hardship, and more subsequently. For the next six months nothing happened. Then, on 25 January, 1972, the magistrate told him that, to his knowledge, Dimbaza had never been prescribed as an area where Maintenance Grants could be paid. The 60 or so applications had never been dealt with.

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**'All the Prime Ministers since Union except General Smuts, have been called upon by God to lead South Africa'.**

*Dr. I. D. Vorster, October 1966*

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In February Russell wrote again to the Minister protesting about the delay and appealing to him to declare Dimbaza an area in which Maintenance Grants could be paid. A telegram told him that the Ciskei Government had been empowered to dispose of applications. The reply from that quarter was a thunderbolt — as Russell recorded in

his next letter to the Minister (9 March 1972):

*'They informed me that an individual who received a Maintenance Grant will no longer be allowed rations. This means that what is going to be given with one hand, will be taken away with the other, because the Maintenance Grant amounts to R.2.50 (c.£1.25) per adult, and the cost of rations at the shop is R.2.55 (c.£1.28) for an adult. This renders meaningless, months and months of patient efforts to see that the families at this resettlement township are adequately provided for. So alarmed am I by the lack of progress in tackling the needs of families in the resettlement townships, that I have decided to come to Cape Town yet again from April 10th to 11th. I wish to ask whether you will be prepared to see me, so that I can explain the situation in detail.'*

He was allowed to meet the Deputy Minister on 12 April, who told him that the government could not afford to pay for rations and a Maintenance Grant. In a letter to the Minister he expressed his disillusionment and frustration:

*'However, I will not give up; so I will try a new approach which I hope might bear more fruit than words alone. For the next six months I will try to live on R5 (c.£2.50) per month myself. This is the amount an African old age pensioner is expected to live on. Each month I will send an Open Letter to the Minister as head of the Department, explaining from personal experience, how it feels to live on this. It is my prayer that in this small way I may reach the hearts of those who have power to remedy what is surely an intolerable situation which challenges our Christian consciences. I believe it is right to share with fellow-white South Africans the facts which constitute the daily struggle of their fellow men. We whites have been protected from seeing what we do with our power and what we fail to do.'*

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