

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

JCB-13 Impressions of  
Zululand

16 Dan Pienaar Road  
Durban, Natal  
Republic of South Africa  
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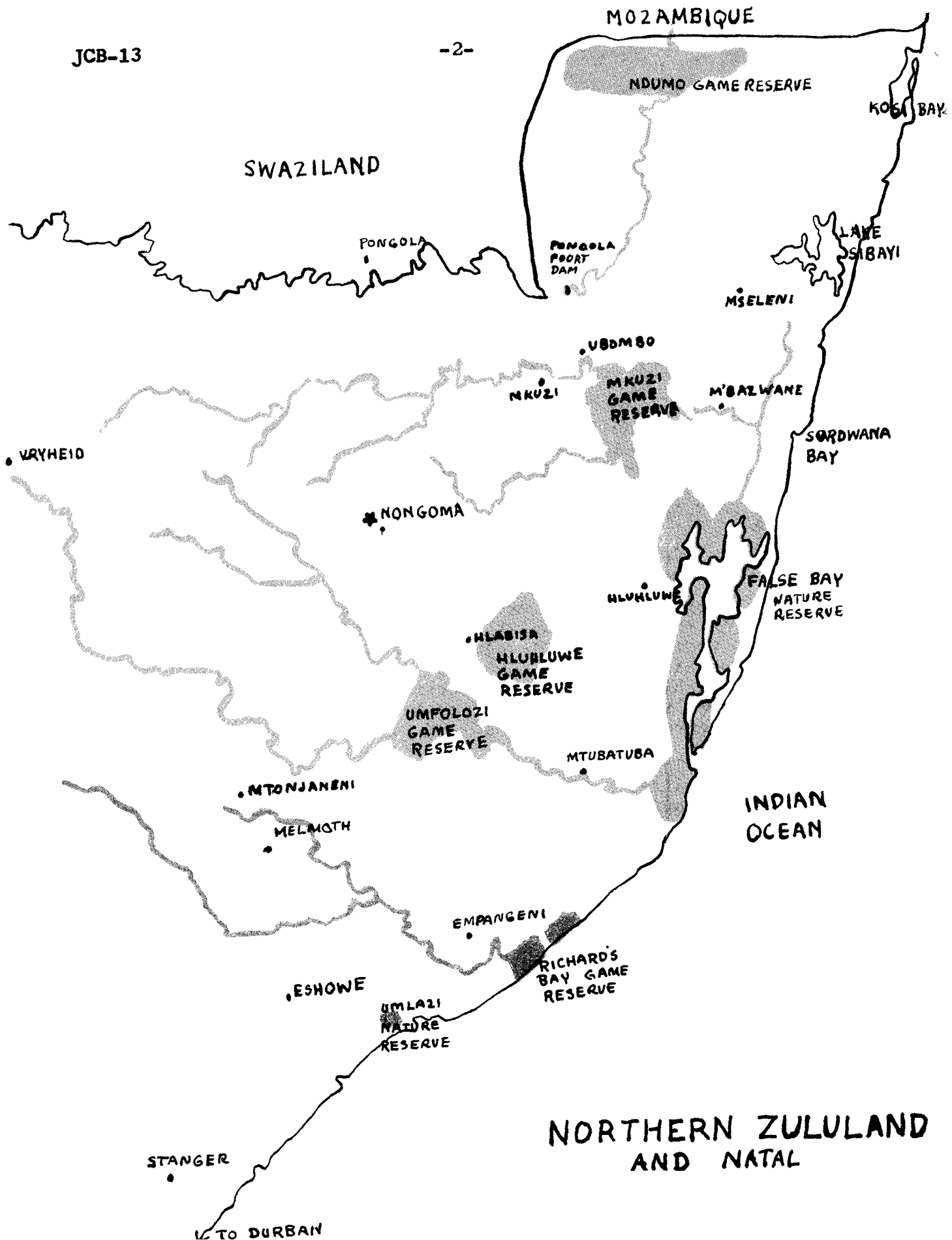
Dear Mr. Nolte:

As you travel northward from Durban you pass through endless fields of sugar cane which seem to be most productive on lands within sight and sound of the sea. This area was once the home of Shaka, the military-minded Chief who drew together the many Bantu tribes into the mighty Zulu nation. In Stanger, not far from Durban, is the sight of the kraal in which Shaka was murdered by his brother, Dingaan.

When you turn away from the coast the land shows its richness by the variety of crops it supports. Now you ascend steeply from the rolling hills to a broken and hilly plateau at about 1500 feet above sea level. The gateway to this area is Eshowe at an elevation of 1850 feet. It was named for the sound of the winds sighing through the forests, and a remnant of the old rain forest is still preserved here by the Natal Parks Board. In Eshowe you leave the tarred road and civilization behind.

The dusty road makes its way along ridges and up and over hill after hill. The land looks more and more unpleasant, rocky, rough and unuseable, covered with scrub. Patches of green here and there show that with industry and water a farmer can make the land productive, but viewed on a hot day with your lungs full of dust it doesn't look particularly attractive.

Thirty-five miles north of Eshowe is Melmoth, one of the few places on the road where you can stop for food and drink. It is famous in the history of South Africa as the spot where Piet Retief and his followers were murdered by Dingaan in 1838. Retief, who had come with his party of Voortrekkers to settle in Natal, had drawn up a land treaty with Dingaan. After it was signed he was invited with his unarmed men to attend a war dance in Dingaan's kraal. There, during the dance, they were murdered. In this same area Chetawayo, the last of the great Zulu chiefs, was defeated by British forces.





The  
rolling  
hills north  
of Eshowe

As in the Transkei the road is busy with Africans coming and going, and small naked and half-naked children shoo the cattle off the road and out of your way. However, while the living conditions here seem poorer than the Transkei, it is an exception to see a Zulu wearing a blanket or tribal dress, a relatively common sight on even the main roads in the Transkei. This is probably due to the fact that White settlers are interspersed between the Zulu held lands, while the Transkei is one contiguous area. Here the Whites have influenced the Zulu in many material ways. Missionary work has not been as great here, however, and paganism is very common.

#### Capital of the future

Nongoma, the political center of the Zulu nation is virtually isolated. It is over 250 miles from Pietermaritzburg, the capital of Natal and the home of the main administrative offices of the Zululand Bantu Affairs Department. It is separated from the White administrative capital of Zululand at Eshowe by a hundred miles of rough winding gravel road, dusty in winter, impassibly muddy in summer. Eshowe is the closest tarred road and the closest railroad is Mkuzi, forty miles to the east.

Situated on a high ridge (over 2000 feet), Nongoma overlooks a countryside that shows evidence of serious erosion as well as irrigation attempts to stop its further spread. The town is small (one hotel, two petrol stations, four general stores, two tea rooms) and most unattractive. Herds of cattle create clouds of dust as they roam through the one street at different times of the day. White families living here have no school for their children

above the eighth grade, no dentist, no social life as they would find it in Eshowe. Why are they here? It is the home of Paramount Chief Cyprian and the heart of the homeland of the many tribes that make up the Zulu nation.

Nongoma is now the center of building and expansion as plans progress toward the establishment of South Africa's second Bantustan. A \$60,000 mansion is almost completed for the Commissioner General. Four \$28,000 homes will house his driver, secretary, and interpreter. One house is for an additional staff member when needed. At present the local Commissioner will live in it. On the same land, at some distance from the main house, will be the offices of the Commissioner General including office space for the Paramount Chief. Adjoining this land will be a school for the sons of Chiefs and across the main road a trade school for Africans is projected. When this building program is finished the Center will cost approximately a half-million dollars and will sizeably increase the population and prestige of Nongoma. You can't escape the impression, however, that the Commissioner General and his buildings will dominate the landscape.



Beginnings of  
the Nongoma  
building program

#### Mr. C.G. Nel, Commissioner General

The few Zulus with whom I was able to talk in the reserve, whether they approved of Government policies or not, told me the Commissioner General was a "good man". In his early 50's, C.G. Nel is a most energetic and impatient man who drives himself hard to carry out his mission. He is a purist and prides himself on his ability to speak Zulu as fluently as he can Afrikaans and English. He delights in stopping along the road to surprise people walking there with his command of their language, and he has little patience with those White men who make do with "kitchen" Zulu or whose command of the language is too academic. The Zulus call him "Butterfly" because he flies to the good and the bad.

He came to Parliament as a Nationalist Party Senator in 1948 and was that body's youngest member. His devotion to party policies as well as his ability to speak Zulu led to his appointment two years ago as the Commissioner General of Zululand. He is one of five Commissioner Generals whose job will eventually be that of Ambassador from the South African Government to the Bantustans, advising the newly formed Bantu governments. At present he deals with the political affairs of the yet-to-be-formed Zululand Authority while the Bantu Affairs Commissioner deals with the administrative side. This arrangement presents a number of problems in the matter of relationships as there are times when it is not clear where the authority lies in a particular situation.

"The Zulus are a proud people," he said. "I have great respect for them. Although they fought my ancestors it was the English who have made them a problem. We are trying to do something to help the Bantu which the English never did while they were in power. In fact, by letting White settlers buy land all through the territory, they have made our job harder.

"I have introduced an absolutely new idea in relation to Africans: treat them with respect. Not everyone, of course, but those who deserve it - the Chiefs, teachers and the educated ones. Treat them as equals. This puts me in the middle between those of my people who find it difficult to act in this way and those who want equality for all. I try to influence our Bantu Commissioners to dress well at all times in the reserve." (His feeling that respect is shown through the wearing of a business suit takes real devotion to duty. It is most uncomfortable clothing in this hot and dusty country.)

#### Ubomboland to the sea

The next morning the Commissioner General and I left Nongoma in a light truck with his interpreter riding in the enclosed back. We sped along to Mkuzi and then to Ubombo, high on a ridge overlooking the flat plain stretching fifty miles to the sea.

On the way I noticed a skeleton of a road scraper by the side of the road. According to local story when this scraper first broke down an African was told to go and guard it until the Department could return to make repairs. Three years later a new official in charge made a road survey and discovered the scraper with the African camped nearby. "What are you doing here?" he asked. "I'm guarding the machine until someone comes to fix it," answered the patient Zulu.



Zulu huts on  
the coastal  
plains

At Ubombo we met the local Commissioner, a man fittingly called "Whirlwind" by the Zulus because of the nervous energy which he seems to expend on everything he does. Since there are no hotels in the area, he and his wife had to provide sleeping space for the Commissioner General, the Bantu Commissioner and his wife and myself. He had been under attack recently from the White farmers because he had sided with the Bantu in a land dispute. They had demanded his removal and he was obviously working hard to create a good impression on us all.

With the local Commissioner we left the mountains for the coastal plain. Here the scenery varied from little vegetation to thick bush, none of which was particularly attractive. In the summer the area is a bed of **Malaria** and other tropical diseases. Seeing a place where an African was making lalapalm beer, we stopped to watch. A lalapalm had been cut just above the ground and a slit made in the stump. A leaf formed a trough from the slit to a container and through this slowly oozed the liquid which would be a potent brew. In the container the liquid is covered with palm leaves and left to ferment. I was offered none and neither the



Fishing traps in  
Kosi Bay near the  
**Mozambique** border

District Commissioner nor the Commissioner General had ever tasted any. "There is all kinds of insect life in it by the time it's ready to drink," they told me.

In order to see the extent of this isolated and poorly populated region we took a ride in a bush plane borrowed from American missionaries stationed at Mseleni, an oasis with its hospital, school buildings and homes. We saw few other signs of human habitation as we flew northward over the brown grasslands. Since there is no way of controlling fire during the dry season small fires were always in view and firebreaks are necessary to protect anything of value. Even flying over the Ndumo Game Reserve we saw only a few animals but, turning at the Mozambique border and flying over Kosi Bay and Lake Sibayi, sizeable herds of rhinos showed their displeasure at our proximity and crocodiles yawned at us from the sand banks. Just off the coast in the waters of the Indian Ocean all varieties of sharks became unpleasantly visible beneath us. We saw one large sea ray.

In this inhospitable area (Maputaland between Swaziland and Mozambique in Northern Zululand, and Ubomboland) the Government has planned a reforestation scheme which would profit the Zululand Territorial Authority and use land otherwise unproductive. No one seems to know the exact number of people scattered over the area but a possible 20,000 to 30,000 Zulus may have to be moved in order to do this. When the project is completed it will be one of the largest man-made forests in the world. It will involve 162 million pine seedlings in some 300,000 acres of grassland at the rate of 15,000 acres a year over a twenty year period. In 40 years the Government figures the profit from such a project would reach fifty million dollars. The Mbazwane Forest Plantation near Sordwana Bay with its patches of healthy-looking timber gives a picture of things to come.

### The Zulu Shows

The main attraction for my visit were two Zulu shows at which the Commissioner General was to speak. We reached the first one, in the most primitive part of Ubomboland, about noon the next day. We were late and Mr. Nel was annoyed because he tries always to be punctual to set a good example for the Zulus who have a somewhat careless attitude toward time. After a bit of socializing we gathered around chairs and a microphone for the speeches. Here we finally had need of the interpreter. The Commissioner needs an interpreter on these occasions as a courtesy to the Chiefs who are by custom addressed through an intermediary. Also, most of the White men present could only understand Afrikaans or English and most of these rural Zulus could only speak their own language. Mr. Nel, to the delight of his Zulu audience, would occasionally interrupt his interpreter and reword the statement in Zulu himself.



Fun at the Zulu shows: A girl drums for the dancers, and right, the dancers take time out for lunch

The group actually listening to the speeches was made up mostly of school children who had to be there, and a few of the village elders. Dancing, picnicking, drinking and general disorganized fun seemed the order of the day for most of the crowd. Interspersed in the background as the speeches continued were the shrill cries of women carried away in a frenzy of lalapalm beer. A local official sitting near me said these cries were a sign that the Zulus were getting too worked up and if I heard many such cries at one time it would be best to leave in a hurry since you could never tell what a frenzied mob would do. An Information officer sitting next to me whispered, "They could wipe us out in a few minutes."

Later a Dutch Reformed missionary joined me as I walked among the various dancing groups (who certainly seemed friendly enough in spite of all the dire warnings). "How do you find the country, particularly the Africans?" he asked me. I said the few with whom I had talked seemed frustrated. "Look at them dancing," he pointed to the group I had just left. "Do you think they are frustrated?"

The second show, much better organized than the first, took place outside of Nongoma the next day. Both shows featured exhibitions of crafts, foodstuffs, sewing, cattle and a full program of singing and dancing. And of course the speeches.



School children  
sing their  
national anthem  
at the Nongoma show

I ended my visit a day later with a look at a stud farm where various breeds of cattle are being developed to help the Zulu herds, and a visit to the site of the Pongola Poort Dam near the Swaziland border. When finished this dam will irrigate a tremendous portion of northern Natal and Zululand.

The Commissioner told the Zulus at both shows that the Government had only their interests at heart. He warned them to beware of Communists and agitators who would tell them that the Government was going to take their land away after they had improved it. Since the Government must move groups of Zulus in order to accomplish plans for their benefit (such as the movement necessary for the reforestation scheme and to make needed border changes in the Umfolozi and Hluhluwe game reserves) he feared the Communists might try to stir up the Zulus and make them feel victimized. One Chief had already been penalized for not moving his people from a game reserve area, and this could lead to trouble.

#### The coming Zulustan and Mr. Nel

"I wish the Zulus were more politically conscious. It is difficult to get the necessary Zulu regional authorities organized because so many of the Zulu have no interest in such things and would like to stay more or less as they are now. My present job is to establish a Zululand Territorial Authority to which I can serve as political Ambassador."

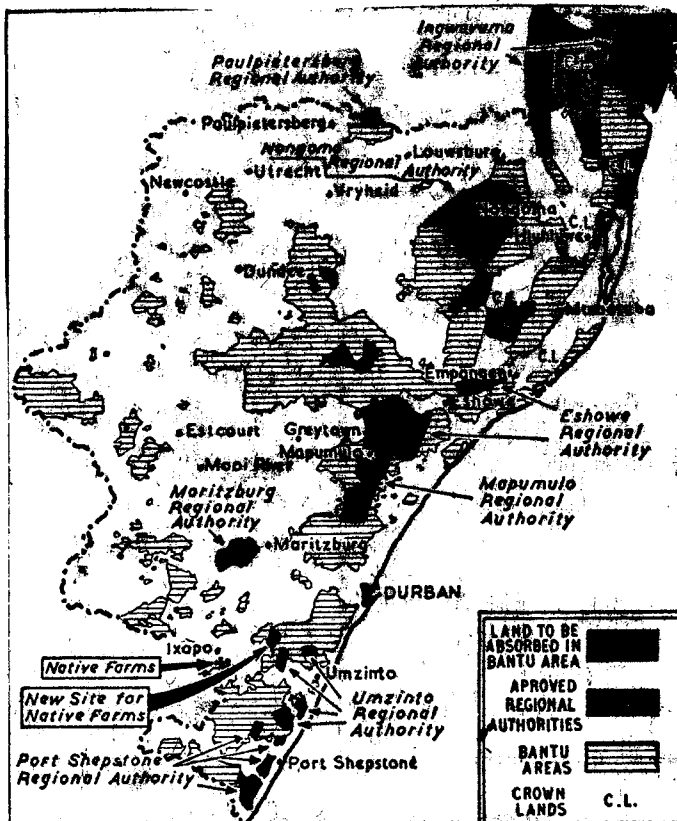
Although a constitution for the Zululand Territorial Authority has now been promised for next year the establishment of a Zulustan will be much more difficult than in the Transkei, as impossible a job as that is. Zulu lands are scattered throughout Natal; there are no contiguous areas. In order for these lands to be connected White-owned land must be purchased at prices that are advantageous to the owners. In some cases Zulu land is exchanged

for White land. an unhappy affair on both sides since neither the Zulu nor the White farmer wishes to give up what he has always had. Thus Government acquisition of property has been slow. A look at the map of the scattered nature of Zulu lands shows the improbability of eventually connecting the lands.

The map also shows how few regional authorities have as yet been established. These authorities will be the basis for any new government and their establishment will have to be speeded up at an impossible rate if there is to be any basis of government by next year when the Zulustan will supposedly be established.

The Government has decided to go against the recommendations of the Tomlinson Commission which laid stress on the importance of consolidating the lands if the separate development policy was to succeed. The plan is now to have a Zululand in three parts, governed by a single Territorial Authority.

The Commissioner General strongly disagrees with this plan. "The people in Pretoria never consider the political ramifications of what they do. They make my job more difficult. Outsiders will look upon the separation as part of a policy to divide and conquer. A wise old Zulu once told me that 'the Government should let us alone and we would split into factions and kill each other off. Then we would be much easier to manage.' But it shouldn't be our place to split the Zulu. We don't want them to destroy each other. We are concerned for their welfare. Only if the Zulus want to separate should they do so. In spite of all the problems Zululand should be kept together as one unit."



Mr. Nel was upset because all the Chiefs of Zululand plus the major Chiefs from other areas



Mr. Nel and his  
interpreter speak

were not going to be invited to attend the ceremony of the dedication of his office building in Nongoma. "Pretoria ought to realize that this is an important political function for Zululand and the invitations should not be limited. It will cause friction between those who are invited and those who are not.

"The future of Zululand is in the hands of the Zulus themselves. Their leaders (the tribal Chiefs and headmen) will determine the constitution. What voice the urban Bantu will have in the country will be determined by the constitution."

However, those educated Zulus who live in the cities will have no opportunity to take part in the drafting of the constitution. Since many of them are opposed in principle to the idea of a Zulustan they wouldn't participate even if given the opportunity. This is the source of those men whom Mr. Nel would label "agitators".

#### The Commissioner General speaks of the future

"The influx of the Bantu into the cities from the reserves has stopped. No Bantu can be in the city unless he has work and this has halted their further urban migration. Some of our officials now think the reverse is true; that the Bantu are now flowing back into the reserves from the city. If this is not already a fact it will be soon since the reserves are developing more and more and they will soon have their own government. It is our hope that there will be industry and more businesses in the reserves to keep the Bantu employed as well as to attract back some who have gone to the city.

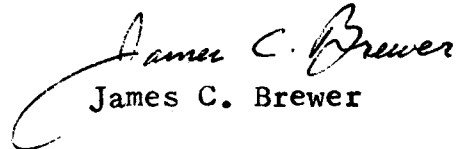
"While the Government is opposed to the use of White capital to launch enterprises in the reserves, we want the Bantu to develop on their own and there is the Bantu Development Corporation ready to loan money to those Bantu who have the initiative. The Government is not opposed to these people calling on White advisors but the Bantu themselves should make such requests. We are not going to force them.

"It will take time to convince the Zulu to use new ways of farming and to participate in the government of their own

territory. They are a very conservative people and are suspicious of anything that is new. Time is needed - and it appears that we no longer have any time.

"We Afrikaners are like the Americans. We fought for independence against the British but you finished with them and we didn't. Now we finally have our Republic, and we are going on with our present policy without any deviation, no matter what. If this means we must fight to carry it out, we shall fight."

Sincerely yours,

  
James C. Brewer

Received In New York July 26, 1962