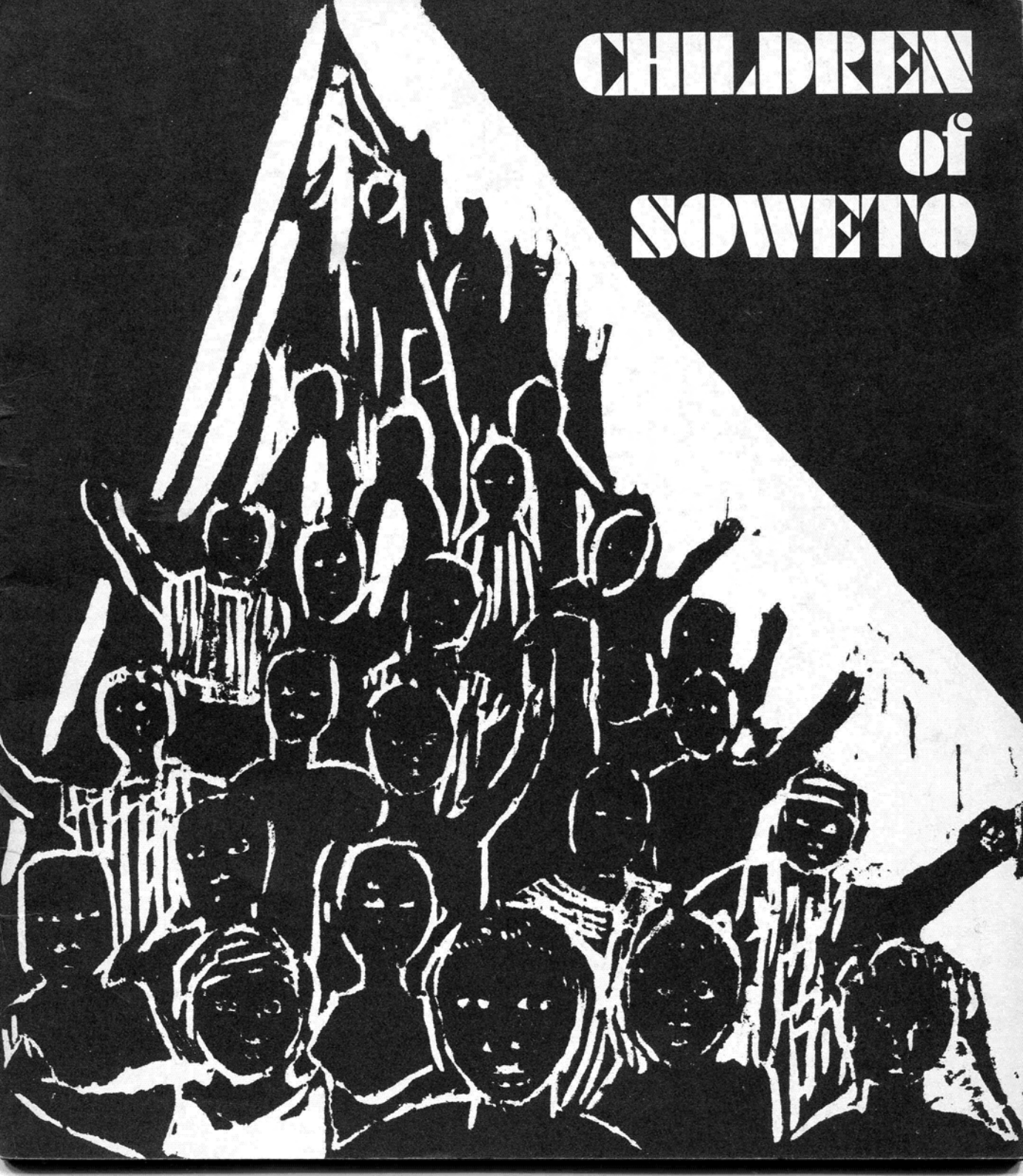
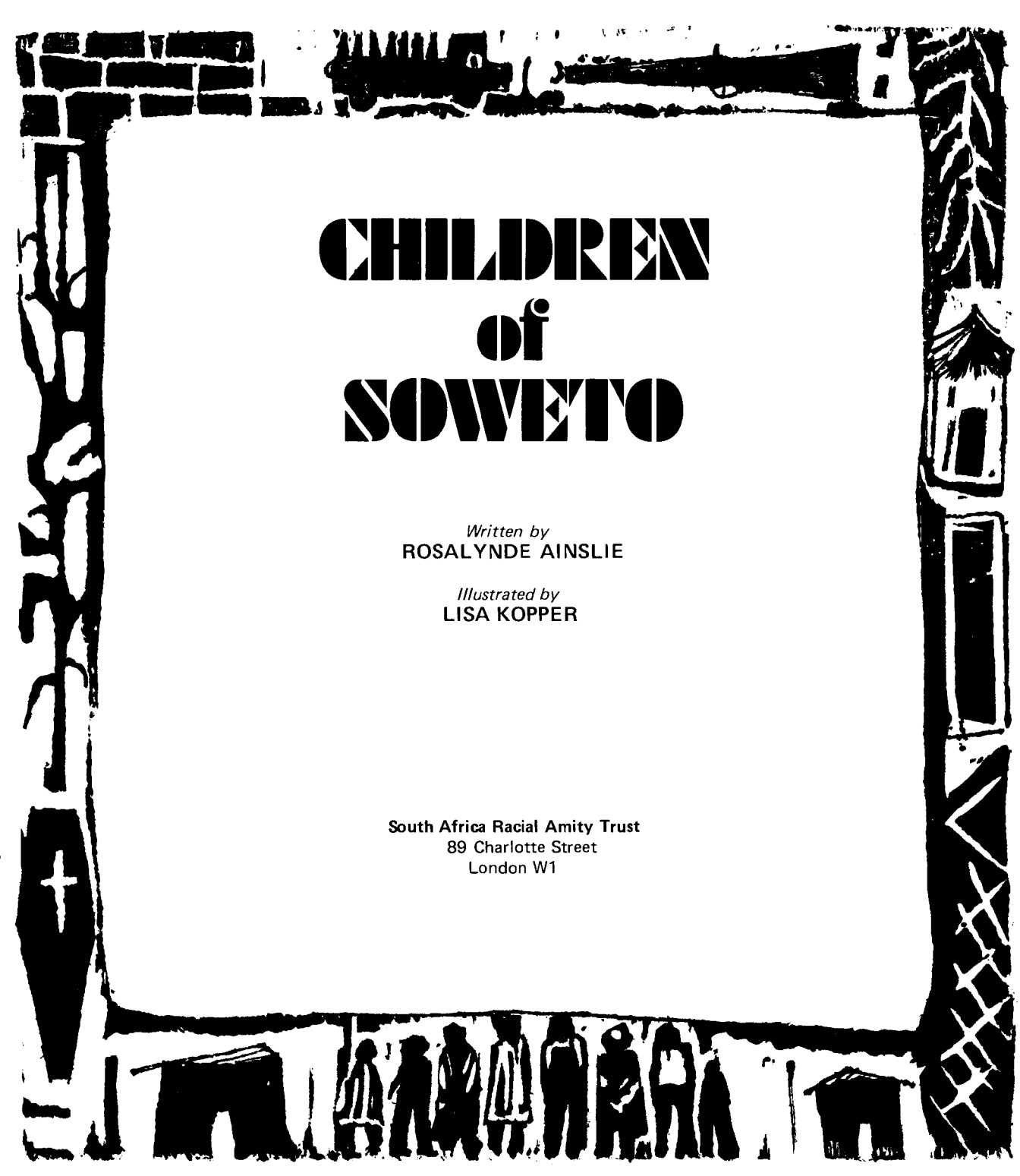
CHILDREN of SOWETO





CHILDREN of SOWETO

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The Land

South Africa's total land area is 1,223,410 sq km, allocated by the Land Acts of 1913 and 1936 as follows:

Africans	13.7%
Whites	86.3%

The African areas are divided on an imposed tribal basis into ten 'Bantu Homelands' (marked [redacted] on map).

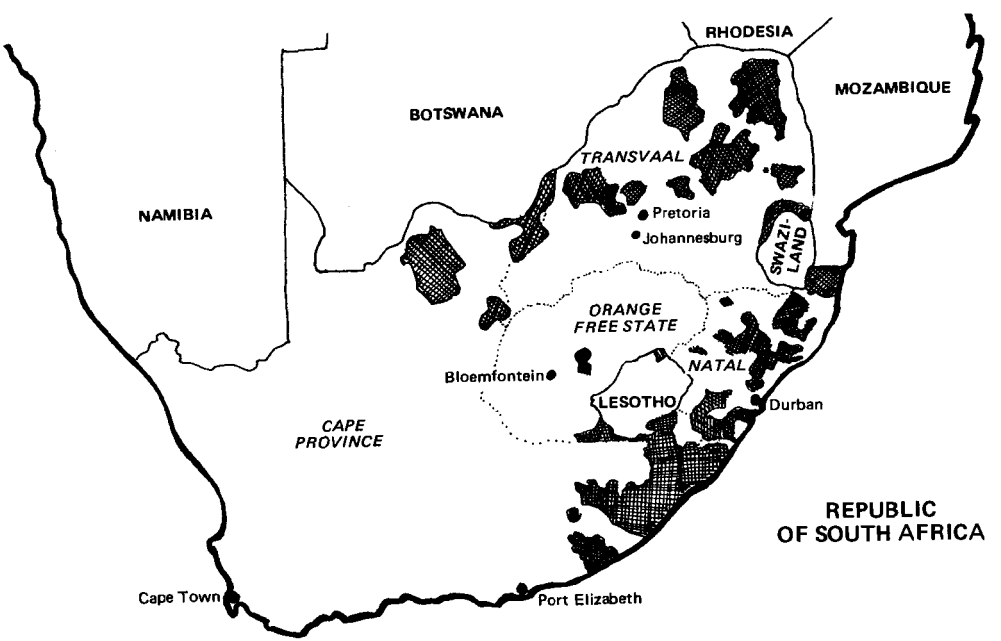
The Coloured and Asian people have no land allocation and live in segregated areas designated under the Group Areas Act, mainly in 'white South Africa'

The People

South Africa's estimated total population in mid-1976 was 26,129,000, divided by race as follows:

Africans	18,629,000 (71.3%)
Whites	4,320,000 (16.5%)
Coloureds (mixed race)	2,434,000 (9.3%)
Asians	746,000 (2.9%)

Only white South Africans are allowed to vote for the all-white parliament and the black majority have no rights in the land of their birth.



The Silinga family live in Soweto, ten miles outside Johannesburg. James Silinga works as a milk delivery man in the city and gets up at 4 o'clock every morning to get to work on time. He earns R54 per month. Sofia works as a domestic servant in a white suburb. She earns R30 per month and has Thursday afternoon and Sunday off to go home and see her five surviving children. Martha (age 13) looks after the younger children. The neighbours help.

Education

For white children, education is free and compulsory to the age of 16; for Coloured and Asian children it is free and it is planned that it will be compulsory by 1979; for Africans it is neither free nor compulsory.

State annual expenditure per pupil (1976)

White child	R605
Asian child	R171
Coloured child	R126
African child	R39

African parents, unlike those of other racial groups, are further burdened in that they must pay for stationery and textbooks and contribute towards school fees.

Overcrowding in black schools means that nearly 1 million children (69.42%) attend schools where a double session, or shift, system operates.

Almost 50 per cent of African children leave school by Standard 2 (second year primary) and only 4 per cent reach Form I (first year secondary).

Bantu Education: When the policy of a special syllabus for African children was first introduced in 1953, Dr Verwoerd (then Minister of Native Affairs) justified it on the grounds that since an African could not expect a place in South African society 'above certain forms of labour', his education should instil in him a 'respect for manual labour' (still a favourite phrase among government officials discussing African education) and fit him to 'understand commands' in Afrikaans and English (the two official – white – languages).

A UNESCO report in 1972 concluded from a study of South African school textbooks that the African child was taught to consider himself/herself as occupying an inferior position in society, and the white child that Europeans are superior and Africans 'primitive and barbaric'.

Black school curricula are decided by white administrators. It was they who decided in 1975 that Transvaal schoolchildren should be taught through the medium of Afrikaans – a language few teachers know.

University education, too, is racially segregated. There are ten white universities, three African and one each for Asian and Coloured students. The medical school at the (white) University of Natal is open to all races. Finally, there is the University of South Africa which handles correspondence courses only and which, together with the black universities, has a limited curriculum, excluding such important courses as engineering, architecture, etc. Some black students may, *with the permission of the Minister,* use certain facilities at some white universities.

Student enrolment in 1977

	Total enrolment	*of which*	**No at Univ of S Africa** *(corres only)*
White	111,218		34,818
African	11,509		6,320
Coloured	5,357		2,000
Asian	8,274		3,576

Health

Apartheid South Africa offers one of the best health care systems in the world to its white population – but health services for Africans rank amongst the poorest on the African continent, in spite of South Africa's great wealth and resources.

Martha is still at school, but she stays home when the children need her. Nathaniel (16) has completed three years of secondary school, but has now left school to try to help support the family. Dan (12) and Lizzie (9) are at primary school. They are taught in three-hour shifts, 60 children to a class. Their parents have to pay school fees and they also have to pay for school books. Little Dudu is too young to go to school.

The facts behind the story

HEALTH

In respect of the African population, the South African government does not publish national statistics relating to such matters as life expectancy and infant mortality rates, although these figures are nationally recorded for the other three 'racial groups'. Certain local figures can be found, however, through the annual reports of city medical officers of health and these, together with surveys made by such bodies as the World Health Organisation, the United Nations and the South African Institute of Race Relations, build up to a picture of gross inequality in health care as a direct result of the apartheid system.

The two outstanding causes of ill health and early death amongst the black people in South Africa are malnutrition (the prime cause of which is poverty) and preventable communicable diseases such as tuberculosis, measles, polio and diphtheria. Whites do not suffer from malnutrition; and whilst these diseases may affect them they rarely result in deaths.

Malnutrition: According to the 1976 Survey of the South African Institute of Race Relations: in Mdantsane township, East London, 65 per cent of all children under five suffer from malnutrition diseases; and in Johannesburg 58 per cent of blacks under 10 years of age and 80 per cent of black children under two suffer from malnutrition.

Tuberculosis: The 1975 Institute of Race Relations Survey gives the following figures for 1974:

	No of cases	Incidence per 10,000 population
Whites	753	1.81
Coloureds	7,494	32.50
Asians	1,009	14.23
Africans	49,530	29.91

The doctor:population ratio in 1972 was:

Whites	1:400
Coloureds	1:6,200
Asians	1:900
Africans	1:44,000

The number of hospital beds available in 1970 was 10.2 per 1000 for whites and 5 per 1000 for Coloureds, Asians and Africans.

There are five medical schools for white students. Two of these train a few Asian and Coloured students, who may also receive training at the University of Natal Medical School in Durban. African students may train only at the University of Natal Medical School.

There are separate hospitals for different races, or segregated wards within the same hospital. Ambulance services are also segregated.

Doctors and nurses receive differing salaries according to their race. Figures for 1976 were as follows:

	Doctors	Nurses
Whites	R7,740-11,700	R3,000-5,340
Asians and Coloureds	R6,300-9,000	R1,740-3,450
Africans	R5,340-8,400	R1,740-3,450

At work one day, James is again insulted by the foreman. He loses his temper and is dismissed. Neither he nor Sofia was born in Johannesburg and under the pass laws the whole family can be forced to leave the city unless he can get another job quickly. On his way home he stops at the Municipal beerhall, determined to drown his troubles for a while. Thus fortified, he breaks the news to his family. Nathaniel says he will take a job in a mine rather than leave the city. Martha and Dan say they will stay and join the street gangs (tsotsis) rather than starve in a 'homeland'. Sofia says nothing because there is nothing to say.

Cursing the pass laws and apartheid, James reports to a Labour Bureau. All he is offered is work as a contract labourer on a farm at R12 per month. He is told his family must 'go back to their homeland'. But James was born in a city, he has no 'homeland'. Sofia is Zulu, he is Xhosa. Under the Status of the Transkei Act of 1976 that makes him a Transkei citizen, so he and his family must go to a 'resettlement area' in the Transkei.

Work and Wages

South African Whites have a standard of living hat ranks among the highest in the world.

Average monthly cash earnings last quarter 1976

Whites	Blacks
R536	R120

According to a survey by the Johannesburg Chamber of Commerce, an African family of of six living in Soweto in May 1977 would need an income of R152 per month to keep them above the 'breadline' (that is, to pay for essentials of food, shelter, clothing, fuel, transport and education for the children).

Average annual earnings (rands) by sector

Sector	White	Black	Ratio W : B
Manufacturing*	7,088	1,638	4.3 : 1
Construction*	7,036	1,380	5.1 : 1
Mining/quarrying**	8,927	1,093	8.2 : 1
Central Government**	5,278	1,679	3.1 : 1

The above figures are misleading in that they result from 'wage agreements', whereas most black workers are not governed by such agreements and their wages are very much lower. Nor do these figures take account of African unemployment, estimated at 2 million (1978).

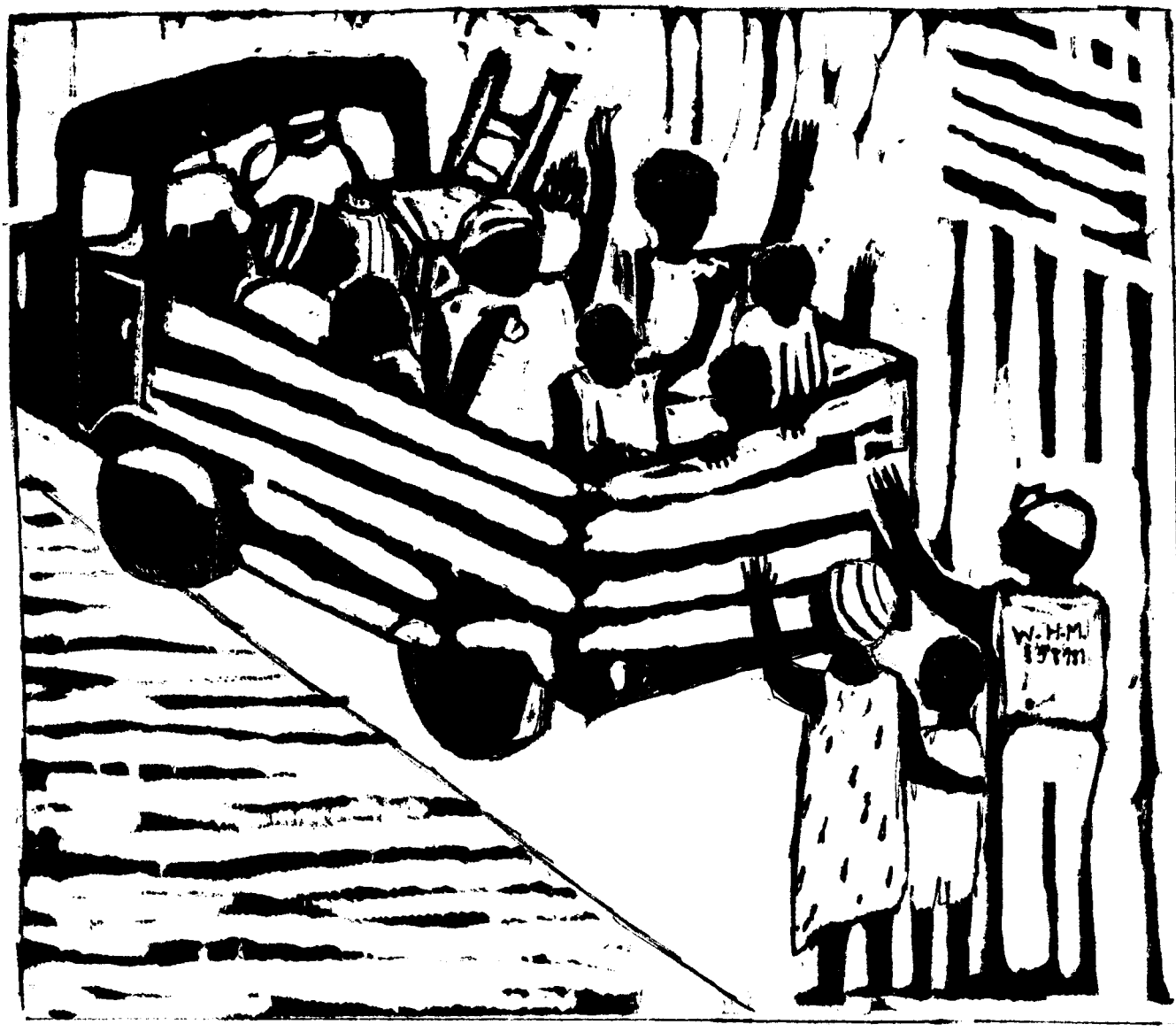
Wage differentials according to race are entrenched by a series of laws, including the Bantu Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act of 1953 which excludes Africans from the definition of 'employee' and therefore from membership of any registered trade union; the 'job reservation' clause of the Industrial Conciliation Act of 1956 which enables the Government to exclude Africans from certain (skilled) occupations; and the Bantu Labour Relations Regulation Act of 1973, which amended and replaced the 1953 Act and provides for the setting up of works and liaison committees. These committees, together with Industrial Council Agreements and Wage Board Determinations, are the only machinery whereby 'binding' wage agreements for Blacks can be negotiated, and have the effect of excluding recognition of, and negotiation with, the unregistered (but not illegal) African trade unions.

The 1973 Bantu Labour Relations Regulation Act (amended in 1977) also lifted the total prohibition on strike action by African workers and, in theory at least, allowed them to go on strike. However, such action must be preceded by lengthy arbitration which, with other restrictions, makes it virtually impossible for Africans to strike legally. Most strikes, particularly those in support of trade union recognition, have been put down by brutal police action.

Direction of Labour

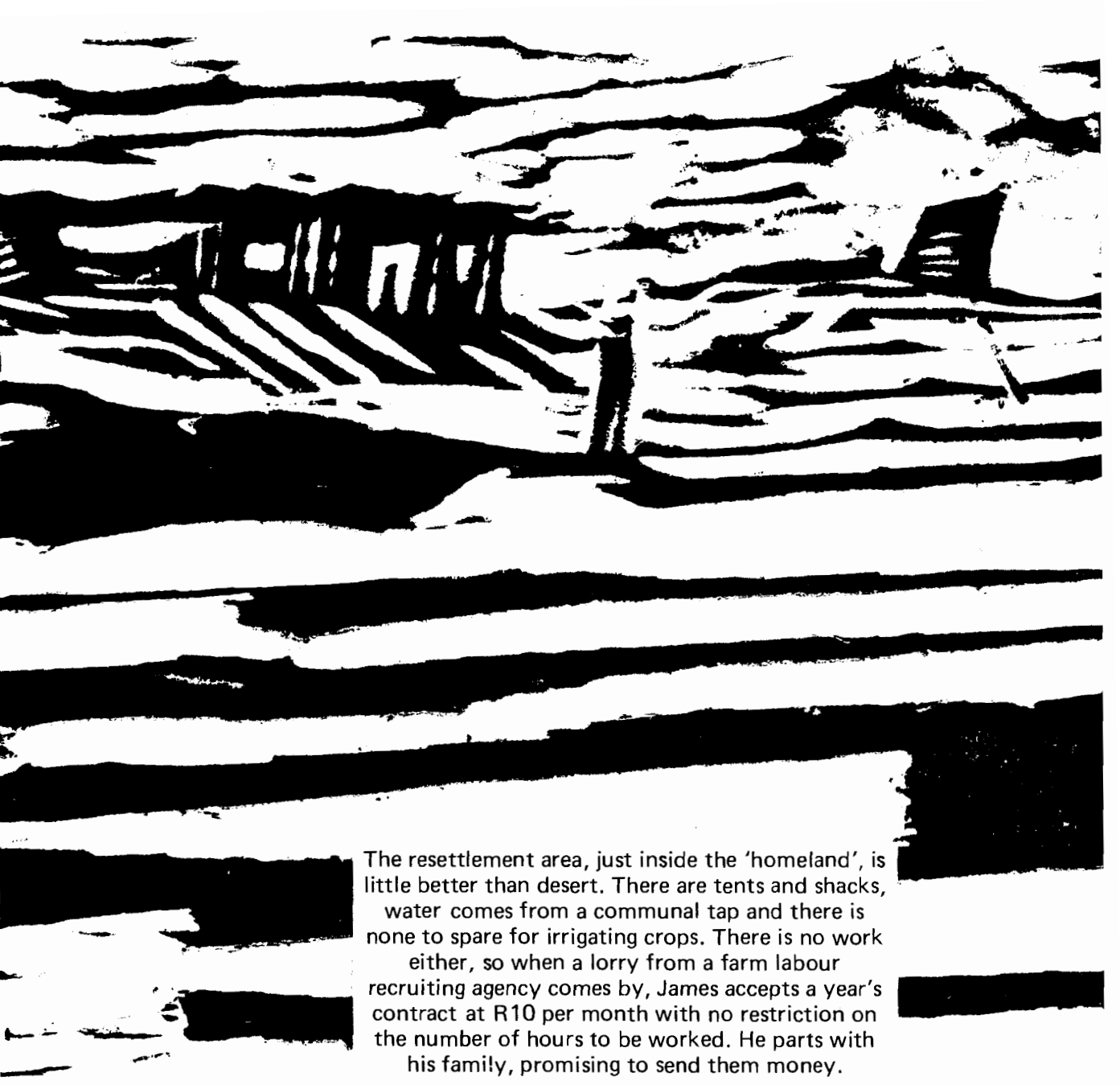
Every African over the age of 16 outside a 'homeland' must carry a 'pass' or Reference Book issued under the unsuitably named Bantu (Abolition of Passes and Co-ordination of Documents) Act of 1952. The book contains his/her identity number, photograph, 'ethnic group' (Sotho, Xhosa, etc), name and address of employer, residence permit, tax receipts. An employer must sign the book and record the date of discharge from service. A woman's pass also carries the name and pass number of her husband, parent or guardian. Passes must be produced on demand (unlike the simpler

**November 1976 **February 1977*



James, Sofia, Grandma, two cousins and the two youngest children, and all the contents of their home, are bundled on to a lorry to be transported to the Transkei. Nathaniel has signed a mine contract. Martha and Dan stick to their decision – there is no future for them in the bare veld which is the resettlement area in the distant 'homeland', no schooling, no prospect of jobs. They will stay with their friends. A relative agrees to take them in. They try to comfort Sofia.

James leaves with a heavy heart: what he has most feared, the break up of his family, has come about.



The resettlement area, just inside the 'homeland', is little better than desert. There are tents and shacks, water comes from a communal tap and there is none to spare for irrigating crops. There is no work either, so when a lorry from a farm labour recruiting agency comes by, James accepts a year's contract at R10 per month with no restriction on the number of hours to be worked. He parts with his family, promising to send them money.

DIRECTION OF LABOUR

identity documents of other race groups), and failure to do so means immediate arrest.

The main function of the reference book (passes date back to the 19th century and the beginning of urbanisation in South Africa) is to control the entry and movement of Africans into 'white', particularly urban, areas and their employment once they are there. An African may enter an urban area for no more than 72 hours without a work permit stamped on his pass, and should he infringe any one of the various 'influx control' regulations he is liable to 'endorsement out' of the town – deportation to a 'homeland' or allocation to farm labour in a white rural area.

In 1976 some 250,030 Africans were arrested for infringements of the pass laws and other offences created under the apartheid system which relate only to Africans.

The pass system is used to direct labour to where it is 'required' – to the least popular jobs, where pay and conditions are worst: on the mines and on the farms.

A network of labour bureaux, computer-run from Pretoria, has been set up over the past 20 years, through which all African labour is eventually to be channelled. Over 3½ million African workers were registered with the bureaux by 1975.

Every African 'work-seeker' must register with a bureau, which will allocate him to a job, depending on current demands for labour. If registered as a mineworker or farm labourer, an African worker is not permitted to accept work of any other kind. He must also register all changes of employment, which in turn necessitates production of his pass with a signed discharge from his previous employer.

This system not only ensures a supply of labour to the worst paid jobs, but makes it very difficult for a worker to improve his situation by changing jobs. Wages are thus kept artifically low.

These controls are being used to institutionalise the system of **migrant labour**.

Families are being expelled from the cities and the white rural areas under a series of special laws (most of them passed in the 1960s) and removed to the 'homelands'. Breadwinners are then encouraged to re-enter the white economy on the basis of an annual contract. Such contracts must be renewed annually – *but this can only be done in the 'homeland'.*

In the words of Mr Froneman, then Deputy Chairman of the Bantu Affairs Commission, in 1968: 'We are trying to introduce (the) migratory labour pattern in every sphere. That is in fact our policy so far as the white economy is concerned, namely a system of migratory labour.'

The 'homeland' economy, however, cannot support the family that remains behind. It is unlikely that they have a plot to cultivate and live on and so they depend entirely on money sent by the breadwinner – who is paid a wage calculated (explicitly by the mines at least) to support him alone.

The transfer to universal migrant labour can thus also be seen as a further instrument for keeping black labour cheap.

It also means broken families, fatherless children, lonely wives and men condemned to live in comfortless single-sex hostels for 11 months of every year.

On the farm James shares a barrack room with six other men. They have only blankets to sleep on, open fires to cook on, and there are no proper sanitary arrangements. They work sunrise to sunset, six days a week. The foreman, called the 'boss boy', carries a sjambok (a hide whip). The work is gruelling, the maize meal, milk and occasional vegetables James is given to eat leave him hungry. But if he spends his money on food at the farm shop there will be none to send to Sofia.

Resettlement and Removals

In accordance with the Government's policy of 'elimination of the redundant, non-economically active Bantu' from the 'white' areas (in the words of Dr P G J Koornhof when he was Deputy Minister of Bantu Administration and Development), two and a half million Africans had been removed from white rural and urban areas to the 'homelands' up to 1974. In 1975 alone 67,000 Africans were 'endorsed out' of the urban areas — their permits to live there cancelled from their reference books.

The removals have mainly taken place under various provisions of the Bantu (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act of 1945 and the Bantu Laws Amendment Acts of 1964 and 1973, which progressively disqualified Africans from the right to live in 'white' areas. Section 10 of the Bantu (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act strictly controls those Africans allowed to live and work permanently in urban ('white') areas. However, no African living in a 'white' area, even with permanent rights of residence, can be certain that he and his family will not be removed under one or other of the apartheid laws controlling his life.

The Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act of 1951 and its subsequent amendments (the latest passed in 1976 and 1977) have been used to remove the many thousands of squatters living and working 'illegally' in urban areas — during 1977 thousands had their camps razed to the ground and were 'returned to the homelands'

All those 'surplus to labour requirements', whether old, disabled, sick or simply unemployed, are liable to be 'endorsed out' and compelled to move to a 'homeland'. Those who have no family connection with a 'homeland' (probably the vast majority of all those removed) are compulsorily 'resettled' in remote, often desert areas either inside an existing 'homeland' or in an area specially scheduled as part of a 'homeland'.

People are transported in lorries to their new 'homes', then dumped with their possessions in the veld. Sometimes they are given tents as temporary accommodation and left to build their own houses. Some may receive an initial grant of money and immediate rations of foods. Often the only water is a communal tap — and sanitary facilities do not exist. Without water the land cannot be worked. There are often no schools, no clinics, no churches or social amenities. Crime, starvation and disease are rife.

No one is allowed to visit these areas without a special permit.

Farm Labour

Some 6,000 Asians, 110,000 Coloureds (mainly in the Western Cape) and nearly 1 million Africans are employed on white-owned farms. With dependants, this makes a total black population in the white rural areas of some 3.6 million. These are the most deprived class in the country. Their conditions today are hardly different from those of medieval serfs in Europe.

Farmworkers are paid partly in cash, partly in

Sofia, her only income what James and Nathaniel send her, has begun to organise her neighbours, with the help of a church charity, to run a children's clinic. But Nathaniel's money suddenly stops. Lizzie and Dudu are now not getting enough to eat.

Sofia decides to send them to a friend who lives in a farming district and has a plot to till. The friend's husband is away working in the city but has long ceased to send money. Helped by her elder children, the woman grows maize, keeps a few goats and chickens, but the soil is eroded because she cannot work it properly. A single dry season can mean disaster. Lizzie and Dudu begin to show signs of malnutrition, growing distended bellies and a scaly skin.

FARM LABOUR

kind, and they work up to 11 hours a day supervised by 'boss boys' often armed with *sjamboks* (hide whips). Official figures for 1977 indicate that African farmworkers are paid on average between R14.24 and R42.9 in cash per month – less than a quarter of the wages of the lowest paid industrial worker.

Under the archaic Masters and Servants Laws desertion or the refusal to obey an employer's command were criminal offences – white farmers controlled the lives not only of their workers but also of the wives and children of their workers. They punished misdemeanours by fines, reduction of wages or beatings. Though this law was formally repealed in 1974, its spirit survives. Every year there are numerous cases of assault by farmers on black labourers, few of which reach the courts.

Farm work is thus the least popular form of employment and successive governments have evolved legislation to force black workers on to farms. Agricultural labourers are forbidden to seek work in towns, while town workers who lose their jobs may be offered the option of farm work rather than prosecution under the influx control laws which would mean their banishment to and resettlement in a 'homeland'. Convicts are regularly hired out to farmers for a few cents a day.

In the past, farmworkers lived on the farms with their families, either on a share-cropping basis or by receiving shelter and land for cultivation or grazing as part wages. Over the past ten years, however, the migrant labour system has been imposed on farmworkers as on urban workers, and their families are now deported to 'homelands' and resettlement areas.

'Bantu Homelands'

The so-called 'Bantu Homelands' are ten tribal territories carved out of the scattered patches of African reserves that remained after the white conquest of South Africa in the nineteenth century. They are all fragmented pieces of land and none of them – with the possible eventual exception of the Transkei and Lebowa – comprises a single integrated land unit.

'Homeland'	'People'
Transkei	Xhosa
Ciskei	Xhosa
Bophuthatswana	Tswana
KwaZulu	Zulu
Lebowa	North Sotho
Basotho Qwaqwa	South Sotho
Ndebele*	Ndebele
Gazankulu	Shangaan & Tsonga
Vhavenda	Venda
Swazi	Swazi

**Not yet granted official 'homeland' status*

Under the Promotion of Bantu Self-government Act of 1959 the 'homelands' were offered a form of internal self-government; and the Bantu Homelands Constitution Act of 1971 extended this concept to include the possibility of eventual 'independence'. In October 1976 the Transkei became 'independent', followed in December 1977 by Bophuthatswana. KwaZulu is one 'homeland' which has stated that it will not take up the option of 'independence' in the future.

The Bantu Homelands Citizenship Act of 1970 declared that all Africans in South Africa were citizens of a 'homeland', whether they lived in one or not. Every African in a white area is therefore deemed to be a migrant

James realises that he will never earn enough on the farm to support his family. He makes up his mind to escape and to join the thousands already living illegally in the city. Without a pass, he must find friends to hide him, he has to keep on the move, and find someone to employ him without asking to see his papers.

Inevitably he is caught by a police patrol one night and jailed for being in an urban area without proper documents.

'BANTU HOMELANDS'

from a black area — even if he/she has never been there. This means that Africans whose 'homeland' becomes 'independent' are deprived of their South African citizenship. The African people of South Africa have never had the opportunity to vote on any of this legislation and the whole concept of 'Bantu Homelands' has been imposed on them by the white government.

Since the 'homelands' include none of the industrialised areas of the country and (apart from large platinum deposits in Bophuthatswana) contain few of its mineral resources, they depend on income from migrant labour and on direct grants from the South African government. Even the 'independent' Transkei's internal economy generates less than half its gross national income and grants from Pretoria are expected to balance its budget for the forseeable future.

More than 50 per cent of 'homeland citizens' are in fact living in 'white South Africa' and, of those resident in the 'homelands', more than 40 per cent of the economically active men are absent (working as migrants in white areas) at any one time. A recent study on the Transkei found that 67 per cent of all households were headed permanently by women; over 70 per cent of all families earned less than R600 a year; nearly 7 per cent had no cash income whatever; and only 8.4 per cent produced enough food to feed their families every year.

Mine Labour

The gold mining industry occupies a uniquely powerful place in South Africa's economy, its financial interests stretching into fields of enterprise throughout the Republic and well beyond its borders. Its cheap labour structure has acted as one of the fundamental models for apartheid.

The gold mines employ some 400,000 African workers and in 1974 the real profits for the gold mines were over R1000 million. African miners receive very low wages whilst white miners, with a highly organised trade union structure, are paid at least eight times as much as African miners.

African Wages in South Africa's Gold Mines

	1974	1976	% increase
Average monthly cash earnings	R47	R88	87.5
Minimum monthly cash earnings (surface workers)	R31.2	R40.3	29.25
Minimum monthly cash earnings (underground workers)	R41.6	R65	56.5

These relatively large increases in wages, which were won mainly as a result of unofficial and illegal strike action by the African workforce, represent no increase at all; rather they represent a decline in the *real* income of African workers because of the very low starting point and the fact that they came during a period of massive inflation.

Between 1972-1975, 2993 African miners died and 110,169 were seriously injured in accidents. And between 1973-75, 150 African

In prison, he hears that Nathaniel too is under arrest. His son is in trouble for attempting to organise a trade union among the mineworkers. He has been charged under the 'Sabotage Act' for distributing illegal leaflets. If he is found guilty of 'sabotage' the court can sentence him to death.

MINE LABOUR

miners died as a result of police action during 'riots'. These figures do not include the many thousands of miners permanently disabled by diseases such as pneumoconiosis.

The vast majority of black miners are migrant workers recruited in the 'homelands' and from territories outside the Republic (such as Lesotho, Botswana, Swaziland and Rhodesia). They live in all-male barracks in enclosed mine compounds to which no women are admitted. Conditions in these compounds have been described as 'degrading and inhuman'. A visitor to the City Deep goldmine saw one room housing 24 men in two-tier concrete bunks. A coal stove in the middle of the room provided the only heating – as well as the only source of light. There were no tables and chairs. Privacy was non-existent – even in the lavatories, which had no separate cubicles.

Police and Prisons

The South African Police Force numbers 30,000 and has nearly 1,000 police stations. Although about half the force is black (mainly African) all commissioned officers and most sergeants are white. Black policemen may not issue commands to white policemen, even if of lower rank, nor do they normally arrest white members of the public. Although legally permitted to do so, such action in apartheid South Africa would be unwise.

White policemen are armed – with rifles, sten-guns, armoured cars, helicopters and light aircraft, many imported from Britain, France, West Germany and the USA. Black policemen are armed to shoot only black 'rioters'. There are special units trained to put down local opposition and to combat African guerrillas. It was these riot police in their 'hippo' armoured cars who were used against demonstrating children in Soweto in June 1976 and subsequently in Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, East London and elsewhere. On 16 June alone 120 Africans, most of them children, were officially admitted to have been killed by police fire. Unofficial sources estimated that more than 1,000 had been killed by the end of the year in the uprisings that followed.

The Security Branch has over the past ten years grown enormously in numbers and in power. Under the Terrorism Act of 1967 and the Internal Security Act of 1976 security police may detain 'political suspects' indefinitely without trial and hold them incommunicado. They are interrogated by special teams who use a sophisticated array of physical and mental tortures such as sleep deprivation, electric shock torture, beatings, etc. At least 26 political detainees died at the hands of the security police between June 1976 and December 1977, and a total of 50 are known to have 'died' in detention since 1963, when 'no trial detention' was first introduced.

The following figures were given in the official report of the South African Commissioner of

News of the detention of James and Nathaniel reaches Martha and Dan in Soweto. But they are not the only children facing this problem. Robbie and Lindelwa, Tembi and Nkosazana, Johnny and Bongi and Dube and little Hintsa all have a father or a mother in jail or in exile. The anger of their parents is already theirs. The turn of the children is coming.

POLICE AND PRISONS

Prisons for the year 1 July 1975 to 30 June 1976:

Average daily prison population *(compared with some 40,000 in England and Wales where the total population is nearly 3 times the size of South Africa's)*	94,861
Deaths in custody	391
Sentenced to death	109
Executed	60
Serving life sentences	280
Children ('infants') in custody *(including 202 born in prison)*	2,870
'Juveniles' in custody	5,020

These figures do not include the hundreds of people detained without trial under the various security laws (662 at the end of September 1977).

In 1976, 250,000 Africans were arrested for 'offences' under the pass laws and influx control.

In April 1977 the Minister of 'Justice' admitted to 383 sentenced political prisoners in South Africa. Their numbers have been added to since then and the many political trials currently taking place mean that their numbers will increase still further.

The figure given by the Minister relates to prisoners sentenced under the Sabotage, Internal Security, Unlawful Organisations and Terrorism Acts. But because apartheid laws discriminate against people simply because they are black, most of those in prison are prisoners of apartheid and can thus be termed political prisoners and detainees.

Political prisoners get no remission of sentence. Blacks are held in high security prisons such as Robben Island, off the Cape Town coast, and whites are held in Pretoria. Female political prisoners are usually held in Kroonstad Prison in the Orange Free State. All political prisoners are subject to a total news ban and are severely restricted in the number of visits they may receive or letters they may write. Recently political prisoners have been deprived of the right to study for degrees and will now only be allowed to study up to matriculation standard.

Political Repression

Black South Africans are denied the vote (the South African parliament is a white parliament elected by whites) and have no constitutional means of influencing the policies by which they are governed. Their efforts to make their voice heard — both before and since the advent of the apartheid government in 1948 — have been ruthlessly put down by increasingly repressive legislation, detentions, arrests and police brutality.

A battery of security laws has been passed, from the Suppression of Communism Act in 1950, through the 12-day, 90-day, 180-day no-trial detention laws, the Sabotage Act, the Terrorism Act to the Internal Security Act (which replaced the Suppression of Communism Act) in 1976. A communist is defined as 'any person whom the Minister deems to be a communist'; distribution of propaganda can become 'sabotage'; and under the Terrorism Act a person need only be

POLITICAL REPRESSION

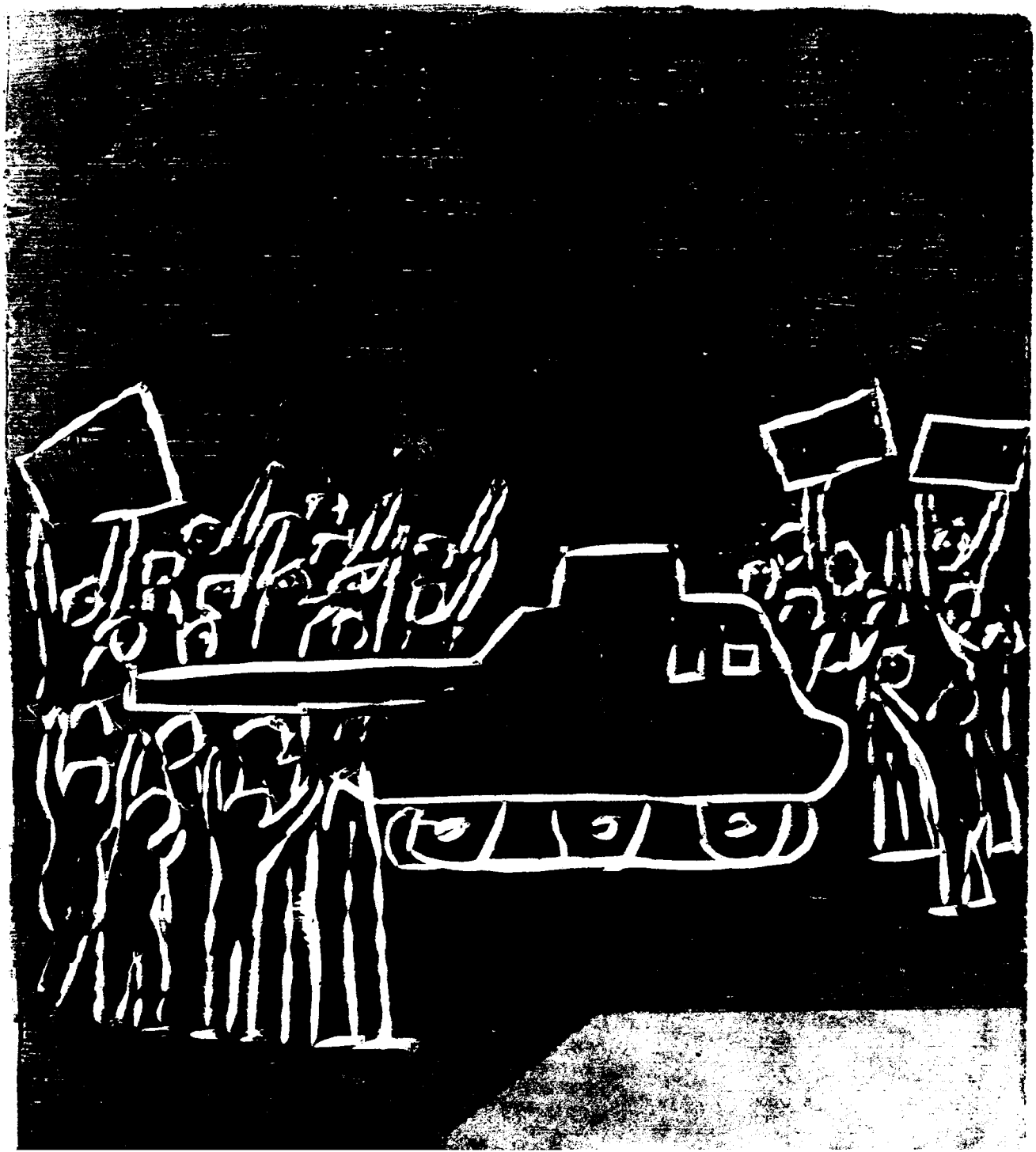
suspected of knowing about 'terrorist activities' to be detained. If he or she survives the customary interrogation and torture and is brought to trial and convicted, sentences range from 5 years' imprisonment or more to the maximum penalty of death. Section 6 of the Terrorism Act provides for indefinite detention in solitary confinement without access to family, friends or a lawyer. The Minister is under no obligation to inform the family or public about detainees and in many cases the whereabouts of a detainee has only become known when he or she is brought to court, either as defendant or state witness.

The Communist Party was banned in 1950; the African National Congress and the Pan-Africanist Congress, the two main African political organisations, were banned in 1960 under the Unlawful Organisations Act; and in 1966 the multiracial Liberal Party was forced to dissolve itself with the passing of the Prohibition of Political Interference Act which banned multiracial political organisations. The Riotous Assemblies Act of 1956 is used to ban political meetings.

Under these and other laws thousands of South Africans have been banned, house arrested, banished to remote areas, detained indefinitely without trial and imprisoned. A banning order (usually for five years and renewable on expiry) prohibits a person from attending gatherings, from entering certain premises (eg factories or educational institutions), or areas set aside for members of a different racial group. It carries severe restrictions on movement — usually confinement to a specified magisterial district and sometimes to a house or flat for 12 or even 24 hours a day (house arrest). Nothing written or spoken by a banned person may be published or quoted.

In October 1977 nineteen organisations — the last to speak out and act legally (as opposed to underground) against the apartheid Government and its policies — were banned. Many were part of the black consciousness movement and included black student, cultural and other organisations, trade unions, and the Christian Institute, an ecumenical church organisations working for black-white understanding. The black newspapers *The World* and *Weekend World* were closed down. The freedom of the press has been under constant attack for many years and is severely restricted by censorship laws and other 'codes of practice'. The security laws have been used, particularly since the uprisings of 1976, to imprison, detain, ban and otherwise silence numerous black journalists.

In spite of this massive array of legislation the resistance of the black people of South Africa to racism and repression continues: their militant opposition to the apartheid system which denies them all basic human rights is escalating.



The Children of Soweto

In June 1976, 30,000 schoolchildren, most of them in their teens and many of them under ten years of age, confronted the guns and armoured cars of South Africa's riot police. Hundreds were killed and thousands arrested in that first week in Soweto and in the uprisings of youth that followed all over the country. Eighteen months later, the children's resistance was still going on.

What experience can possibly lie behind a national rebellion of children?

Our story is an attempt to dramatise something of what it means to be a black South African and to demonstrate the unrelieved frustration of life under apartheid, the system which denies the blacks any possibility of improving their lot or of legally voicing their opposition to it.

The mass of South Africans are black – most of them Africans, some Coloured (mixed race) and some Asians. No black South African, however, has the right to a say in how his country is governed. All are subjected to a network of race discriminatory laws which control where they shall live, what work they shall do, what they are to be paid, and even what their children shall learn at school.

The Silinga family do not, as far as we know, exist. But there are thousands – perhaps millions – of Silingas, all the same.

Whose brother is James Silinga?

Whose sister is Sofia?

Whose children are the children of Soweto?