

During my first working day in South Africa, I was driven 30 km west to Pelindaba, the National Nuclear Research Institute. Compared to Los Alamos in the USA, Harwell in Britain, Trombay in India and Jülich in Germany — all of which I had visited — it was of course much smaller and less sophisticated, as I had expected. I had a long and friendly talk with Dr W. Grant, the Director of the Atomic Energy Board, who assured me that South Africa was only interested in peaceful uses, and that it had no collaboration with West Germany for the production of a bomb, as had been alleged by East German sources.

I made this statement the opening line in my report to my newspaper, but it was not published. A novel method of producing uranium as a by-product of gold-mining was news to me. There were no Bantus at the Institute, the reason being, as I was told, that it would be too expensive to duplicate all facilities; I suspected however that security and the lack of suitably qualified Bantu scientists was the true reason.

The following day I was the guest of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, the CSIR, which showed me their Nutritional, Building and Sewage Research Departments. The study of heart diseases in baboons, treating them to a diet similar to 'white executives', I thought might have made a short paragraph in my newspaper. I reported it but again it was not published. A similar fate awaited my story concerning a novel sewage treatment, which I found interesting. It had been invented by Dr G.J. Stander and called after him. I saw his pilot plant in which he removed detergents, ammonia stripped the sewage, employed activated carbon and finally chlorinated it. I tried the result and the water tasted fine. I was not given any financial figures comparing it with more established, conventional sewage works.

A visit to a typical Bantu town, Ga-Rankuwa — meaning 'Going Home' concluded the day. It was scientifically designed, I was told, with a minimum of mass-produced housing. This story was published a month later. I described the liquor store and entered three houses, one very clean and well kept, one with a filthy kitchen and one with a spotless one. I could not draw any statistical conclusions from these three visits.

More than 50000 people lived in this town, and it was hoped to build 134 similar Bantu suburbs in the future. As the one I saw was only 35 km from Pretoria, I suspected it to be a prestige showplace for foreign visitors.