

AFRA

UPDATE ON RESETTLEMENT

PART 2

Report No.9.

March 1981

This report is a follow-on to Report no.8.

III FARM EVICTIONS (see Report no.3, July 1980)

This is a major but poorly documented category of resettlement. We do not have accurate figures on how many people are being affected. We do, however, know that large numbers of people are steadily being driven off white-owned farms to swell the population of unemployed and landless in KwaZulu. The massive, state-sponsored evictions of the late 1960's and early 1970's are a thing of the past; now it is a less dramatic, more gradual whittling down of the number of blacks living and working on white farms. A family here, perhaps 8 or 9 there - but cumulatively, these evictions amount to many thousands of people.

An area that has received fairly extensive newspaper coverage has been the Weenen/Mooi River/Greytown triangle. AFRA has on file 107 cases of families evicted from this area during 1980 - we know that that is only a fraction of the total. Information on regions further north is more sparse but indications are that there too, evictions are a regular feature of life on the farms. 'Black spots' in the Ladysmith area report a steady influx of ex-farmworkers looking for plots to rent. At Umbulwane, 3 out of 7 tenant households interviewed by AFRA had moved there in the last 18 months from local farms. Still farther north, in the district of Nongoma, an agricultural officer has estimated that an average of about 20 families are moving into that district of KwaZulu every month, from farms in the Louwsburg area.

In the past the main target of resettlement on farms were *labour tenants* and 'squatters'. Now there are only scattered pockets of farms still making use of the six month family labour system; these remnants are gradually being tidied up. Proclamation 2089 of the 21st September 1979 set the 30th August 1980 as the final expiry date for all existing labour tenant contracts. The efficiency with which the Proclamation is enforced varies from district to district but numbers of recent evictions are because of it. At least 33 of the 107 cases we have on record were labour tenants. Ten of them came from one Colenso farm where only tenant children were employed, at 50c a month for their six month stint. All these families were given 3 months to leave the farm in August 1980.

More and more, however, evictions are the result not of state-sponsored action against labour tenants, but of private action (with state backing) by individual farmers and companies against *fulltime workers*, workers who for a variety of reasons are no longer needed. There are 2 processes at work. The first is the increasing rationalisation of the agricultural labour force. With increased mechanisation, many farmers are reducing their permanent labour force and relying on casual or seasonal workers for peak labour periods; at the same time, farm ownership is being concentrated into fewer hands and as previously separate farms become consolidated into one block, so their combined labour force is streamlined. The second process is not new. It involves what in many cases amounts to pure victimisation, the sacking of people whom the farmer considers unsatisfactory workers - because they are old/slow/unreliable/"cheeky" or a nuisance. Farmworkers are not covered against arbitrary dismissal by any Industrial Conciliation legislation. They have no union to represent them. They are a completely unprotected category of workers and provided the farmer gives a legitimate notice period, he may dismiss them for any reason he likes.

For most farmworkers notice spells disaster. There is no onus on anybody to provide an evicted fulltime worker with alternative accommodation. Most families have precious

stock which they cannot take with them into official resettlement sites. Few have the skills with which to compete for jobs in urban areas. What we are seeing is the grim process of marginalisation of a significant section of the rural population.

IV RURAL 'SQUATTERS'

The term 'squatter' is a very ambiguous one. The authorities use it indiscriminately to refer equally to rent-paying tenants on white farms or 'black spots', to long-established communities on state (formerly crown) land, as well as to people living on land without the sanction of the landowner (which is the more orthodox usage of the term). It is a convenient ambiguity: any black person whom the authorities want to move from the land on which he or she is living becomes a 'squatter' and, merely by that label, is stripped of any claim to legitimacy in the eyes of the public.

A category of rural 'squatters' who are threatened with resettlement but about whom we know very little, is people living on state land. We know of 2 areas where resettlement is imminent in the Umzinto and Mtunzini districts.

1) UMZINTO: Detailed information is lacking, but in September 1980 officials from the Port Natal Administration Board were reportedly numbering 'squatter' houses on state land in this district. The officials would not confirm whether removals were intended or not, but experience elsewhere has shown that the numbering of houses is invariably a prelude to resettlement at some future date. Local people certainly interpret it as such.

2) RED HILL, MTUNZINI: Red Hill is the name of a strip of coastal land immediately to the north of the Tugela River mouth. It adjoins KwaZulu Reserve no.7a and as far as its residents are concerned, forms part of the reserve - but it is in fact state land. In mid-January of this year the community of approximately 100 households were given notice to vacate the land by the end of February 1981. They have been offered alternative accommodation at a place called Bulwer Trust Farm, another 'closer settlement' site north of Stanger. They have not been given any reason for their removal, apart from the fact that they are illegal 'squatters' (and have been since the days of their forefathers).

The community does not want to move. They have stock, many have small sugar plantations, at Bulwer Trust Farm they would lose all this...it is a familiar story. They are trying to rally to meet the crisis and have formed an Ad Hoc Committee and contacted the KwaZulu government for help. Time is running out, however.

V NEW 'CLOSER SETTLEMENTS'

In 1979 the acting Chief Commissioner for Natal reported that his department was looking for another 10 to 12 sites on which to resettle about 300 000 "squatters", illegal labour tenants and inhabitants of 'black spots'. (Financial Mail, 6/4/79) We know of 3 'closer settlement' sites that are currently being prepared which fit this description. One is in the resettlement heartland near *Ezakheni*; there is a construction site in the vicinity and in October 1980 toilet slabs were being built there. Another is near an already existing resettlement camp about 5km from *Qhudení*. Government workers erected a construction site office in late 1980 and promised residents at Mzimhlophe, the existing camp, that there would soon be work for them preparing the new site. All through January Mzimhlophe men waited hopefully outside the office but nobody has yet arrived to employ them and start work. All we know about the third site is that it is in the *Babanango* district. In 1979 the Chief Commissioner also referred to a potential site near *Frankland*, Port Shepstone; whether this has been acquired and building started, we do not at this stage know.

It is clear from the above that there is to be no end to removals in Natal (or other provinces) only expedient concessions to those few communities who have the resources, the contacts and the organisation to force the government to take notice of them.

Also available in Zulu. Uma uthanda ukuthola lemibiko ngesi Zulu; bhalela abe-AFRA.

STOP PRESS: RED HILL REPRIEVE

The Daily News of the 6 March 1981 reports Dr Mdlalose, the KwaZulu Minister of the Interior, as saying that the Department of Cooperation and Development has instructed the local commissioner to withdraw the Red Hill eviction notices.