

# CROSSROADS : FROM CONFRONTATION TO CO-OPTION

(from Confrontation to Co-Op(era)tion)

by L. Platzky and J. Cole

Three years ago Crossroads was a household name.

What has happened to that united community which told the South African Government and the world "We will not move"?

It is a long, complicated story. Depending on who tells it, it could be concluded that the Crossroads people won, or that black South Africa lost. A little of each is true.

In July 1978 the Minister of Bantu Affairs, Dr. Connie Mulder said that Crossroads would be cleared. The Minister of Co-op(era)tion and Development, Dr. Piet Koornhof said in March 1980 "Crossroads is an unusual situation. Normal action was not suitable here."

The story of Crossroads has not ended. The people continue to struggle to remain in the Western Cape rather than return to starvation in the homelands. This article attempts to look at the process from resistance to confrontation to negotiation to co-option to diffusion and confusion to emerging realisation of Crossroads' place in the broader struggle. The article is not intended as an attack on those who participated in the process. It has been written in the belief that it is crucial to understand the new 'total strategy' of coping with resistance. Crossroads is a case study of a community under threat of forced removal. Dr. Koornhof has said there will be no more forced removals. This article examines the new more subtle enforcement of unchanged Government policy.

## CROSSROADS – 1978 – 1981

'The fight was actually won with the April 1979 statement of Koornhof which laid down the general rules for resettlement' – Urban Foundation Reg. Director.

On April 5th 1979, Dr. P. Koornhof issued a public statement\* of Koornhof which laid down the general rules for called 'the Crossroads problem'. The solution was a new township to be built between Nyanga and Guguletu. In it he made it clear that this was an 'ad hoc' decision for Crossroads and on the other hand stated that influx control measures would be increased to ensure that a similar situation did not re-occur

Two years later it appears timely and important to review not only the events which gave rise to the issuing of that statement, but also to review the implications of the process upon the community as a whole. This process demonstrates the confusion, division, co-option and organisational disintegration when community resistance is met not by the bull-dozer of the past, but the negotiation and co-operation politics of the Dr. Koornhof era. Crossroads is an example of total strategy at its best.

'The level of tension started high, but through **communication** this was lowered and they responded as any group under similar circumstances. They were not out of the ordinary' – Steyn Du Plessis, Urban Foundation.

## Pre - April 5th Statement Period:

Since 1975 the people had been struggling to remain as a community in the area. During this time there were numerous pass raids, individual home demolitions and the women solicited the help of a lawyer, and a number of successful court cases were won. (This early legal history gave rise to the later dependence upon and high expectations placed upon lawyers and legal battles). In 1976 the camp was declared a legal Emergency Camp and with this timeous legality it escaped the 1977 demolitions which destroyed Modderdam, Werkgenot and Unibell. These demolitions and their effect upon the wider Cape Town public had implications for the Crossroads community, since many of the people who later committed themselves to 'help save Crossroads' did so out of an emotional response to the demolitions of 1977 and early 1978.

## 1978

In February 1978, Crossroads itself was threatened with demolition. It was at this point that the so-called 'struggle for Crossroads' began a new phase.

Through its existing committees the community let it be known that it was not willing to move. The women who up until then had been loosely organised, formalised their organisation electing a committee with a new chairwoman, secretary and treasurer. The Women's Committee took its place alongside the existing Noxolo and Sizamile Committees and all three met once weekly at a joint committee meeting to follow and discuss the issues affecting their community. (Tensions existed between various individual members of these committees at this time, but the threat of demolition forged a degree of co-operation and unity and buried the differences which were to emerge at a later stage).

The women played a particular key role in the community during 1978, tackling issues as they arose:

1. The threatened demolition of 400 homes by the Divisional Council for non-payment of rental arrears was successfully countered by the women. For a period of 2½ months they screened cases from 7 a.m. – 12 noon and helped subsidize hardship cases with money raised.
2. A painting project was organised in all 4 sections of the camp as an attempt to up-grade the community

and express resistance to the alleged temporariness of the camp. The women collected 50c from members of the community to buy the paint.

3. During the daily pass raids of June, the women organised a march of  $\pm$  500 women to see Brig. van der Westhuizen, Chairman of BAAB, at Goodwood to demand an explanation and to protest against the raids.
4. Close links were established with local and overseas press and frequent press statements were released by women to publicise events and their interpretations of these to the public.

Whilst the other committees worked alongside the women, it was the women who took the lead and saw the threatened demolition as affecting them in particular.

Whereas many of the men had rights to be in Cape Town the majority of the women knew they were 'illegal' in terms of Government policy and felt they had nothing to lose in openly resisting.

External to the community was another organisation involved in this struggle – the so-called Crossroads support group. It had been called together by the Crossroads lawyer in February and consisted of a number of local individuals and organisations with a history of involvement in squatter and human rights issues. This group was eventually to play a major role in the events leading up to the intervention of Dr. Koornhof. The issues of concern for this group included family life, Christian concern, maintenance of a stable economically viable community (using the existing informal sector in Crossroads as an example), the spirit and unity of the 'model' community and those who wanted to raise the political cost of demolition. The underlying causes of Crossroads were hardly touched i.e. migrant labour system and many felt the issue should not be broadened and seen in its whole context if a solution was going to be found. (This allowed Dr. Koornhof to treat Crossroads in an 'ad hoc' manner and created tensions between Crossroads and the existing townships).

The support group met weekly with a small number of community leaders throughout 1978. There was no clear strategy. The lawyer was in most instances directive of group activity i.e. the petition, community statements, liaison with local authorities and felt strongly on what was or wasn't a good thing to engage upon if results were to be obtained from the authorities. The dynamics within the community were not understood or perceived as crucial, and often community workers in the area found themselves confronting the lawyer on community-development principles versus the success of the 'campaign'. e.g. he wanted to obtain funds to subsidize the women's painting project in order to have the houses painted in time for a public occasion and was upset by the community workers refusal to speed up the process.

Many in the support group did not recognise the existing divisions within the community and operated as though working with a verified and democratic leadership. Others fostered the individualising of local leaders e.g. paying people to interpret particularly in taking overseas visitors around. This caused resentment in others and led to difficulties in obtaining interpreters for community meetings.

The seeds for the later internal conflicts and divisions were being sown during this period of support group involvement.

Later in the year the harassment of the community intensified with frequent pass raids – the biggest and last on Sept-

ember 14th culminated in the death of a resident. Overnight Crossroads became a household word and an issue beyond the wildest expectations of all concerned. The raids were followed by local and international outcry. Pressure upon the community continued – they were already physically and psychologically worn down. Following the squashing of a plan drawn up by the SAP, BAAB and Military in the Castle to surround and demolish the camp – in November Dr. Koornhof intervened and indicated he wanted to come to Cape Town personally to solve the Crossroads 'problem'. He not only caught all concerned off-guard, he was welcomed by a community weakened and dependent upon an external solution to their situation.

During September and October the Urban Foundation had been becoming more and more involved in attempts to negotiate on behalf of the community, as they feared the international implications of Crossroads as well as the possible local political instability should it be demolished. They had been secretly meeting with chosen leaders from the community and were already discussing and proposing solutions prior to Dr. Koornhof's visit to the camp in November.

When Dr. Koornhof visited the camp in November it marked the end of the bulldozer tactics and ushered in a new era of co-operative politics and promises of humane solutions to the existing 'problem'.

"Let there be no misunderstanding. There is a policy and the law. That is why your co-operation is so important. With your co-operation it may be possible to find a solution to the problem. If I get the co-operation of the churches I will do everything to look at Crossroads as a problem in itself".

The year ended with a memorandum to Dr. Koornhof prepared by the Joint Committees, in which they put forward two proposals:

1. to remain on the present site and have the houses up-graded
2. as an alternative, permanent accommodation should be provided for all residents in Crossroads in the greater Cape Town area.

Dr. Koornhof rejected these proposals, but indicated that he was willing to enter into negotiations with an elected delegation in early 1979 in an attempt to reach a solution to the "problem".

## 1979

If 1978 had its own particular problems and difficulties, in some ways they were easier to deal with than the complex and sometimes more subtle struggle which ensued in 1979.

The negotiations promised by Dr. Koornhof in late 1978 began in earnest in 1979 and lasted until the end of March, ending in the April 5th statement already mentioned.

From the very beginning it was clear from the meetings that what was taking place was not a negotiated settlement but a solution in the interests of the government. The fact that Dr. Koornhof was able to manoeuvre the assistance of the community's own representatives in obtaining a solution was a stroke of political genius.

These meetings clearly showed that there was very little room to manoeuvre on the part of the Crossroads delegation. Dr. Koornhof indicated at the first meeting that he felt the solution to the Crossroads "problem" was a township and when questions concerning this were raised by the representatives he never gave direct answers. He merely

asked the delegation to co-operate and trust him.

"I am a preacher's son. I don't want to preach to you, but you must bear with me. I believe it is in your interest to do so. As I have said in the beginning. If you assist the officials to fill in these forms in a truthful way, we can solve this problem in a humane way. You have heard me say often that I want co-operation. I tell you now again that I want co-operation between the officials and you. If there is co-operation then things will go well. . . . . these officials have put up with a lot of difficulties which you don't know of, but I know of and I really request you to make it as easy as possible for them by co-operating. If I was preaching my message would be simple, it would consist of two words "please co-operate". You will not be sorry. That is the way in which this problem will be solved. I wish you God's blessings". (Dr. Koornhof, February 1979, in response to questions raised by community leaders given past experience and mistrust re co-operating with the officials on a survey).

The delegates became committed to a promise of confidentiality around the meetings and it was with a great deal of difficulty that meetings were eventually convened to review the negotiation process. These meetings were to include people outside of the negotiations to help debate and introduce objective criticism. Criticisms and advice were largely ignored, eg. at the meeting at which the blueprint was presented containing the categories which would supposedly cater for the majority of the community, there was concern and clear rejection of involvement in such a settlement using government categories. Despite these criticisms it was this very blue-print which appeared as Dr. Koornhof's categories for Crossroads in his statement of April 5th. Other criticisms concerning the speed of the negotiations, the confidentiality and its affect upon the broader community, the inadvisability of meeting individually with Dr. Koornhof, fell on deaf ears. The process was in the hands of a few and although the advisors argue that decisions were never their own by the time the 'negotiations' ended the struggle was completely out of the hands of the people. Throughout the leaders expressed unwillingness to agree to any plan which would divide the community and were unable to trust the promises of Dr. Koornhof. Negotiations in fact broke down in late March over these very points and in a last endeavour to persuade the community to accept the solution the advisors called in the Urban Foundation who spent an afternoon convincing the community 'to acquiesce as opposed to agree'.

It was under pressure from the advisors, the Urban Foundation, Dr. Koornhof himself and the reality of a position of weakness and poor political understanding that the community found itself 'acquiescing' to an agreement the implications of which they never fully understood.

These then were the events which preceded the April statement — a statement hailed by many as a major breakthrough on the part of the government with high hopes that all would qualify for the new township. Some were less optimistic since the policy remained intact. The fact that there was to be increased influx control of blacks in general in the W. Cape seemed to escape the general public. The difference of assessment and trust of Dr. Koornhof's promises set the tone of events which were to follow within the community and amongst those who had previously been relating to it.

In his public statement Dr. Koornhof had managed  
a) to defuse a highly political local and international issue,  
b) to set out a blue-print which would mean effective

stronger control not only of Crossroads but of all blacks in the Western Cape, c) to confuse and divide people further within and outside the community.

#### Post April 5th Period:

As stated above the immediate effect of the statement was to escalate already existing division and confusion within the community as people were forced to answer the question 'what were we really fighting for?' In reality nothing changed; the residents still found themselves arrested for pass offences and not free from the reality of being black and living in the Western Cape.

The first visible sign of a new process was the survey which Dr. Koornhof had indicated would take place in an attempt to ascertain who would qualify for the new township.

The period May to July was filled with meetings between the Urban Foundation, BAAB, the 'advisors' and the committee, in attempts to re-assure the leaders that they had nothing to fear in freely answering the questionnaires.

At one point a dead-lock was reached over resistance on their part to agree to particular questions concerning present employment qualifications and the lawyer was specifically phoned by Dr. Koornhof to obtain the trust of the committees. Crossroads had to be sorted out before Parliament adjourned and before Dr. Koornhof went overseas. Unless they co-operated, all would be lost was the message. The leaders were in no position to argue — much of their strength was already dissipated and dependence upon external advice firmly entrenched.

Despite the fears, the survey proceeded and a close working relationship between lay leaders and the local BAAB officials was initiated. This ear-marked a further disintegration of the community leadership.

This liaison eventually resulted in charges of fraud for both some committee members and some local BAAB officials for e.g. issuing permits for R10 and a bottle of brandy each.

The next significant event to take place in the community was an election. A new executive committee was ushered in during late July with Ngxbongwana as the elected chairman and his own hand-picked committee. The committee excluded women from the decision-making body and immediately dissolved all previously elected committees in Crossroads (from Sizamile to the school committees to the creche committees). Despite some resistance to the undemocratic handling of the elections, it went relatively unsupported by outside groups who chose to work with the elected body since it was felt to be expedient to do so if the Koornhof deal was to go through. A group was needed to make decisions and meet with, and internal dynamics of the community were largely ignored in an attempt to achieve the 'solution'.

The divisions could not, however, be contained, and 1979 ended with physical violence within the community as different interest groups clashed, leaving two dead and the executive committee in total control. All who questioned their authority were attacked and ostracised.

As the year ended Crossroads was already a different community with stark division, wholesale corruption and internal disorganisation. It also found members of the support group either withdrawing or confused as to what their role should be in the present situation.

#### 1980

1980 began with the arrest of 6 Crossroads residents for fraud; with Mr. L. Fouche, the Secretary for Community Development, announcing plans for the new township in

Nyanga called Nyanga Two; (He indicated that the township would house Crossroads residents as well as others from neighbouring townships); and with reports that Crossroads residents applying for permit extensions at the Nyanga offices were being questioned by the Security Police - some were being given only 3 month extensions.

In February, with the assistance of community workers a 14 point memorandum was presented to Mr. Timo Bezuidenhout, Commissioner for the Western Cape.

The memo referred to:

1. apparent break-down in relations between the authorities and the people
2. large security police presence at the issuing of extension permits resulting in intimidation
3. the committee demanded S. Police withdrawal and impartial observers to be present at the Nyanga offices (to be chosen by the committee)
4. regarding permit issuing, certain irregularities were taking place:- reports that some people were even required to sign for their wives and families to return to the homelands before being granted extensions - some were told that unauthorised lodgers were reflected in BAAB records and therefore only 3 month extensions were given.
5. Crossroads residents were charged for fraud, and questions were put forward about the officials involved and whether they too would be charged.
6. dissatisfaction with the name 'Nyanga Two' instead of the New Crossroads as promised.
7. difficulties were already occurring in the permit process and the Appeal Committee promised should already have been operating.
8. Crossroads residents were informally promised jobs in the building of the new township and this wasn't happening satisfactorily.
9. meetings between BAAB and the residents shouldn't just be to inform the committee of decisions already taken, but should be meaningful consultation in the true spirit of the word.

Some assurances were given on the points raised, but there was growing insecurity which intensified when BAAB announced that Crossroads would become a formal township at the end of March. What formerly had been an abstraction was becoming a reality and fears and doubts concerning this began to surface. As a result the executive took the issue to the broader community and were given a mandate to see Dr. Koornhof.

The meeting with Dr. Koornhof took place in April 1980 and he once again reassured them on all points raised and avoided direct answers to questions regarding their future position. It was a repeat of his earlier diplomatic performance and once again the tension was lowered through direct communication.

For the remainder of the year however things went from bad to worse. The advent of the new Chief Commissioner in the Cape (replacing hard-liner Frikkie Botha in September 1979) was a significant step on the part of Dr. Koornhof; he played an increasingly important role in co-opting the executive and playing off one power group against the other in the community.

With an executive which no longer reported to and therefore took no direction from the broader community, with the careful political manoeuvrings of the new commissioner and his local officials, with the women no longer able to

play a meaningful role and the increased presence of the Urban Foundation in the area (Mr. Kweza was sent in as a community worker) it became impossible for the community to change the direction of events. The support group including the advisors were nowhere to be seen. The only hope was that eventually the general community would resist the authoritarian nature of the executive under the leadership of Ngxobongwana, as they experienced the reality of being left off the survey for the new township or could take the financial exploitation by their leaders no more.

All during this period 'consultations' were being held over the new township and when the notices were delivered for the first families to move the women's committee (whose members had been monitoring and watching events) decided to re-engage in the decisions affecting their community and set up an appointment to see Mr. Bezuidenhout. (They had on a number of occasions attempted to speak to the executive, but without success). This they did and once again the Commissioner played off one group against the other. He phoned the executive to inform them of the meeting; this further polarised the men from the women.

In November 1980, the first families moved to the new township. The move found the community divided between those who wished to move, those who felt they couldn't move unless certain concrete guarantees were given, and those who wished to remain in Crossroads to explore the possibilities of a site and service scheme.

A clear demonstration of the degree of co-option was the fact that 4 of the executive were paid employees of BAAB at the time of the move. One of the men even driving the truck to remove the zincs and belongings of the residents as they moved to the new area. The dismantling of the houses, the subtle demolition of Crossroads went relatively unnoticed, as Mr. Bezuidenhout stood at the side of the road overseeing what was clearly a victory on the part of the government.

#### Present Situation:

But the struggle is far from over. Confident that it was possible to continue making decisions with a select few of the leadership Mr. Bezuidenhout and his officials have made two decisions which could once again revive community resistance:

1. He made a deal with Mr. Ngxobongwana and two other executive members to re-house residents from nearby KTC squatter camp in the new township without informing the general community.
2. The children at the old schools in Crossroads were told to attend the new lower primary school without
  - a) consulting the existing school committees
  - b) continuing the employment of the present Crossroads teachers. — they were under the understanding that their services would continue.

In addition to this Mr. Ngobongwana agreed that only 20,000 residents should obtain 'permanent' residential rights in the new township plus the name of the new school was arbitrarily decided upon (and is in fact Ngxobongwana's Xhosa name). Residents in the new township are already experiencing rental difficulties. An additional charge for water has been added to the already high rents and some people are finding themselves with 3 month permits when they move in and are told to return to the Transkei after this period.

The general community, largely motivated by those women who played key roles during the early Crossroads years, demanded public meetings and demanded answers to their questions.

At the time of writing the executive is in pieces, Mr. Ngxobongwana's power is seriously threatened, the women are actively re-organising, Mr. Bezuidenhout's role is being questioned and his influence appears to have diminished. A number of general meetings were held concerning the schools, decision was taken to refuse to send the children over to the new school. The schools continue as before with the same teachers.

As a result the school inspectors told the community in no uncertain terms that they had no say over the new township or facilities existing there. There was heated response as people began to realise that what limited control they had had over their own lives before, was now in the hands of the State. The reality is that New Crossroads means total control. It has taken two years for the full implications of the Dr. Koornhof deal to hit home.

The community demanded to see Mr. Scheepers (Chief Inspector of township schools) and he has refused to come to the community. He indicated they could send a delegation to him instead. At a recent report-back meeting the general community refused his request and the position remained one of dead-lock until Mr. Scheepers agreed to meet the community in mid-May. The children remain in their old schools.

### Conclusion

Whether or not the community will be able to maintain their present resistance and re-organise remains an open question. How the community resolves the effective non-leadership issue will largely determine whether or not community strength can be re-built.

Whilst internal divisions still remain, the confusion amongst some appears to be less and there are clear signs that people are re-defining the struggle for themselves based on their experience of the last two years.

It would appear that once again a new phase has begun in the history of the Crossroads community. Crossroads has not been "won" or "lost", it continues to be a case study in the South African process of struggle against apartheid.

### \*Summary of the April 5th Statement/(1979):

1. A degree of co-operation achieved in order to obtain Dr. Koornhof's objectives.
2. 'ad hoc' arrangement for Crossroads whilst increasing control to avoid similar situations arising.
3. organised Commerce and Industry pledge to support his plan i.e.
  - a) implementation of new housing project
  - b) measures to prevent blacks not properly housed not to obtain legal employment.  
Black labour to be made more expensive.
4. Rejected Crossroads Committees original proposals that
  - a) upgrade scheme on present site (noise-zone: D.F. Malan Airport)
  - b) if alternative resettlement is provided elsewhere in the Peninsula, it be offered to the entire community without exception.
5. Categories Dr. Koornhof is unable to allow include:
  - 5.1 Criminals convicted of offences jeopardising their Urban Areas Act Section 10 (1) (b) rights acquired through long employment.
  - 5.2 Those vagrants – with no visible and legitimate means of income.
  - 5.3 That substantial number voluntarily electing to return to the Transkei on offers of settlement and employment.
6. The balance of the community to be re-housed in the Cape Peninsula.
7. After agreement from cabinet, Urban Foundation to help build a new township between Nyanga and Guguletu consisting of 2,575 sites.
8. Those qualifying include:
  - 8.1 Those with 10 (1)(a) and (b) rights in terms of the Urban Areas Act
  - 8.2 Those with 10 (1) (d) rights in terms of the Urban Areas Act the following:
    - a) contract workers and their families
    - b) breadwinner not formally employed but earns legitimate living e.g. craftsman rendering service to community.
    - c) cases avoiding hardship
9. For those qualifying 10 (1) (a) or (b) temporary permits issued and maintained for as long as they qualify i.e. employed or fulfill criteria.

### LABOUR

By Vortex

Something new is coming to birth  
in our country.  
And we must welcome it.  
It is there, implicit within us,  
and has to come forth.  
We must allow  
the movements of labour,  
painful though they are.  
To stifle them  
or hold them back  
would be the deepest sin.  
We pray for an easy birth. □