



TRAC

Transvaal Rural Action Committee

Newsletter No 1 May 1983 • TRANSVAAL OVERVIEW

Introduction

In this , our first newsletter, we give an update on all those communities in the Transvaal with whom we are in contact as a result of their requests for support. This includes two N. Cape communities - Huhudi and Valspan - for whom we are the nearest support group. The summaries below show the diversity in the range of problems faced by these communities. However, there are also increasing similarities and predictability in the tactics and strategies used by the Government in its efforts to get these communities to move "voluntarily".

BLACK SPOTS

The 1913 Land Act and the 1936 Development Trust and Land Act divided the land in South Africa into that which only Whites could own and that reserved for Blacks. The Whites got 87% and the remaining 13% allocated to Blacks formed the basis of the homelands. However many Blacks had purchased land and got title deed to land before 1913 in areas that were subsequently proclaimed "White". These areas are called Black Spots. It is a term coined by the government and refers to all land bought by Blacks, given to them or traditionally owned by them in areas that the government deems to be part of White South Africa

Mathopestad

Mathopestad is a fertile, well-watered highveld area in the Western Transvaal near Boons. Its inhabitants have held the title deeds to the land since 1910. The intention is to remove the community to Onderstepoort near Sun City - an unhealthy bushveld area unsuited to agriculture, and, since the severe drought, completely devoid of water. In Mathopestad, the people have always been successful farmers, selling their surplus produce to the Koster Co-operative. Agricultural land there supports unrestricted live-stock. Increasing unity in the refusal to move among Mathopestad residents since their houses were first numbered in 1967/1968, has led to a series of meetings with Co-operation and Development. The move is still scheduled to take place, but where and when has not been decided. In the meantime the community is raising funds to build a school and a clinic at Mathopestad, and are determined not to move. Fund raising projects have included both men and women, and since the beginning of this year, women have been completely integrated into the tribal Kgotla (meeting), thus strengthening the unity and resolve of the entire community. Meetings now take place almost every weekend, and the community is positive in its outlook.

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Introduction

The South African government's policy of forced removals has meant that in the past 25 years one in ten africans have been moved into the bantustans. If this policy is ever completed, one in five africans will have been moved into these areas.

Statistics such as these may be shocking. But they cannot convey the human suffering and the financial loss and impoverishment faced by individuals and communities during the course of removal. Nor do they convey the extent of struggles fought by communities against their planned removal.

Communities attempt to resist these removals with good reason. They are well aware of the poverty and overcrowding in the bantustans and that unemployment is rife in these areas. Above all, they are aware that they lose all their urban qualifications, and in some cases their South African citizenship when they are moved.

Over the years representatives from such communities have approached the Black Sash for help with their problems. In recent years more and more people from threatened areas have come to ask the Black Sash for help. We have begun to find out about removals which were happening quietly and secretly.

TRAC

TRAC, the Transvaal Rural Action Committee, is a project of the Black Sash. It was established in 1983 to allow for an on-going and thorough response to the requests for support and advice from the communities described above. TRAC employs fieldworkers whose job it is to work with these people.

TRAC works within the framework of broad Black Sash policy and principles. When communities approach us for aid we attempt to help them in a variety of ways dependent on their circumstances and needs. For example, we sometimes put people in contact with lawyers who can advise them on their legal situation, or with professionals who can help them with land evaluation, surveys etc. We also put people in contact with groupings and individuals who are interested in their plight and who want to publicise the situation and conditions of rural people.

Motlatla

Motlatla is a black spot in the Western Transvaal, near Mogopa. It has been under threat of removal since 1973. Various places, in lieu of their present land have been shown to the people, but they have rejected these, insisting that these new areas are not as fertile, or as large as the land they presently occupy. Recently, the tribe were shown Geysdorp in the Sannieshof-Delareyville area. However they feel that the area is far smaller than the Motlatla land, and voiced this in a recent meeting with officials from Co-operation and Development. The people have developed the land with great success and hire some of it out to white farmers in the area.

Machakaneng

Machakaneng is a Black Spot near Wolhuter's Kop, on the Rustenburg road from Brits. The land was bought in 1904 and is jointly owned by 16 families. In 1983 all of their many tenants were removed by GG trucks to Hartebeesfontein, a resettlement camp on SADT land. It appears that a week before this removal took place, soldiers had arrived by helicopter and strolled around the village - an event that no doubt went some way towards 'smoothing' the removal process a week later. Now the landowners have been told they are to be moved. A road is already being built through the Machakaneng land by the TPA, and they have never received compensation for a road previously built by the TPA on their land in 1979. On the 16th June 1984, the landowners and their families are to be taken by officials to view the proposed compensatory land.

Bethanie

Many South Africans know about the Bakwena tribe's desperate attempts to retain their tribal land at Mogopa (near Ventersdorp in the Western Transvaal). These attempts failed when the South African police surrounded the village in the early hours of the morning on the 14th February 1984. People and possessions were forcibly loaded onto GG trucks and taken to the resettlement camp of Pachsdraai near Groot Marico. The Bakwena refused to stay in this arid area and began the long exhausting trek to Bethanie, land belonging to their paramount chief Lerothodi.

In Bethanie district they were given places to stay as refugees. Unfortunately they were divided into 3 villages; Bethanie, Modikwe and Barseba. Temporary shacks have so far been erected, and the people are presently facing water problems and the difficulty of co-ordinating their lives from three different villages. They feel however that they are in a better situation than they were in Pachsdraai, and are trying to reconstruct their lives, although the loss of Mogopa still hangs heavily over the people. What has been a constant positive factor in their plight however, is support from many different sources, including letters of encouragement, building materials and financial aid. School and projects to provide water have been started. Recently, the Mogopa women started up a sewing project which is going well.

Driefontein, Daggakraal and KwaNgema are three black spots in the Piet Retief/Wakkerstroom area of the Eastern Transvaal. For years the state has planned to move these areas, but in the last few years it has speeded up plans for Driefontein and Kwa Ngema because of the construction of the Heyshope dam. This dam will cover small parts of both KwaNgema and Driefontein. Instead of

TRAC itself also provides what support it can to these communities. For example, at the moment we are working with communities and individuals with a wide range of problems. In some areas we have helped people to lodge complaints about wrong compensation received after removal. In others, we are helping people with individual complaints around issues such as pensions. We also help communities gain access to a wide range of information and resources. For example, we can help people to discover where they can get funding for self-help and other community projects.

In addition to work with communities under threat of removal, TRAC is concerned to investigate and expose the conditions of people living in bantustan areas. Poverty, disease and malnutrition are widespread, and because these areas are so remote from urban areas, the extent of human suffering here goes unnoticed and ignored.

For this reason research, and the publication of newsletters such as these and information concerning our work is important. These newsletters are intended both to give communities under threat access to information about other communities in a similar situation, as well as to share a knowledge of the problems of people in rural areas with a wider public.

There are thus two aspects to TRAC's work. On the one hand we work with communities under threat of removal and who are opposed to it. On the other we work with communities who have already been removed. With this work we attempt to aid people who are trying to rebuild their broken lives after an experience of removal.

The work described above is an enormous task. In the case of removal, the law is designed to make it as easy as possible to move people, and often there is only a limited amount that can be achieved. As is the case with the Black Sash's work with influx control, the system which we are opposing is one which has been in operation for many years. Over these years many of the legal loopholes have been eliminated. Ultimately, it is the strength of communities themselves, rather than legal victories that are the basis upon which struggles are lost or won.

TRAC works according to the following principles

- * TRAC's aims are to monitor removals, gather information about them and support people in their struggles against the entire policy of forced removals and mass relocation.
- * TRAC believes that all South Africans should have access to information about the problems of people in rural areas; we believe all people are entitled to know and understand the policy and legislation which affects both their daily lives and their future in critical ways.
- * TRAC responds to appeals from communities and does not itself initiate projects or action.
- * TRAC believes that community self-reliance and self-help are important principles, and all our work is in response to the initiatives of the people who approach us.

leaving the communities to live on the edge of the dam as they wish to do, Co-operation and Development insists on moving them to resettlement camps in Kwa Zulu and KaNgwane. Both communities are strongly opposed to the proposed removal and have refused to participate in decisions as to where they would go. They are particularly indignant about the state's plans to classify them into ethnic groups and divide them into different areas, when they have lived as integrated communities for over 70 years. The dam will be flooded in December 1984. At the moment a resettlement camp is being built at Oshoek on the Swaziland border - this is one of the areas proposed as a resettlement camp for KwaNgema and the community fears it is meant for them, but Co-operation and Development has refused to confirm this. In fact in recent months there has been a very obvious lack of 'negotiation' in all 3 of the areas.

Kwangema

At KwaNgema, a discredited leader, Gabriel Ngema whom officials were dealing with died in February. Since officials failed in their attempt to take his coffin to a proposed resettlement area, Lochiel, they have been ominously silent. This is probably because they have no option but to negotiate with the representative Ngema committee which is determined to stay in Ngema. A few houses have already been flooded there, and their owners have rebuilt on higher land above the proposed flood level of the dam.

Driefontein

At Driefontein there has been a leadership void since a policeman shot and killed the people's leader, Saul Mkhize in April last year. However, both the representative Council Board of Directors and the discredited Community Board refused to participate in a Government "planning committee" after his death (Planning Committees are set up by the local Commissioner as partners in the process of planning the removal).

The tragic death of their leader, and the acquittal of the policeman who shot him has served not only to embitter but also to unite the Driefontein people. Presumably it is because it doesn't see any "in" amongst them, that the State is now liaising with certain chiefs from the wider Piet Retief area. These chiefs have a direct interest in recruiting followers in KwaNgwane. They have no standing in Driefontein which belongs to private landowners who have elected committees to represent them. However on 27/2/84 Co-operation and Development officials had a meeting at Driefontein with 3 chiefs from the surrounding areas and told them to recruit followers at Driefontein. Now young men cannot renew their annual labour contracts unless they have the stamp of one or other of these chiefs in their passes.

Daggakraal

Daggakraal has been receiving less official attention than either Driefontein or KwaNgema because it will not be affected by the dam. Late last year the various committees at Daggakraal amalgamated to form the Youth Creative Cultural Organization (DAYCCO).

URBAN RELOCATIONS

All the communities in the section below cover urban relocations involving the removal of African townships situated within prescribed areas into the Bantustans. Relocations such as these have been a major feature of the 1970's.

Badplaas

On the 16/11/1983 the people of Embhuleni Village, near Badplaas were issued with "Notices to remove from Badplaas" on or before 11th January 1984. The notice states that the people are required to take up residence in Eerstehoek, Tjakastad or Honingklip. These are resettlement camps in KaNgwane, 30 kilometres from Badplaas. At Honingklip about 300 tiny plots have been laid out for the Badplaas people. The magistrate at Eerstehoek has told the Badplaas chief and his councillors that the tribe will have to levy the people to raise money to build schools and put in water. The Government will not provide even compensation for the houses and improvements of the people to be moved. They are presently living in a scattered semi-rural settlement with well established houses, fruit trees, water taps and two schools. Embhuleni was the site of the Royal Kraal of King Swati in 1846, before the capital of Swaziland moved to Hoho. The families to be moved have lived there since those days, and for well over a hundred years the ownership of the area has been disputed.

The people refuse to move. Since the 15th of November last year the removal squad with all its lorries has been camped at the entrance to their village. Not one family has moved. The people and their chief are united in their decision to stay at Embhuleni.

The 11th of January has come and gone without the removal taking place. The Badplaas people live in daily fear that they will be removed by force.

Leandra

Leandra is yet another urban Black township under threat of removal. There are as many as 18,000 people living in the township which provides the labour for the Leslie, Evander and Secunda areas. Until the 1970's the area was freehold land. Tenants paid rent to Black landowners. Then it was expropriated and the Administration Board took control of the area. In 1980 it was formally proclaimed a township. By that time residents had already once refused to be removed. Since the Administration Board took over the townships there has been no improvements to the township. As a consequence, as in the case of Valspan and Huhudi above, conditions have deteriorated, and one of the reasons now being given for the proposed removal is that the area is a slum. The Administration Board is at present building a new township adjacent to the existing one. 712 houses are to be built here. These are intended for a small section of the Leandra population. It is unclear where the vast majority of the people are to go - will they also be rehoused, or will they be sent to Kwandebele.

People's urban qualifications are being used by the Administration Board as the basis upon which to separate out the population. The removal is being resisted by the Leandra Action Committee. But there is no doubt that the Administration Board is intent on pressing ahead. In the past week the first families were moved into the new township and many more are to follow.

Bethal

Bethal has been the scene of numerous individual evictions over the last year. Families have been evicted one by one in the dead of night, rather than en masse. There are no public plans to move the whole location; the Administration Board justifies the evictions on the grounds that the people evicted are "illegal". However it appears that many of those under threat of eviction have lived in and around Bethal for generations. After a protracted battle, one person, Lena Vilakazi, won the right to return to Bethal after Administration Board officials dumped her in KwaNdebele with half her children, a ten day-old baby and all her possessions. They arrived in the resettlement camp after the bi-weekly water delivery and they had to improvise a shelter in the dark.

Ekangala

Ekangala is a model township about 20km from Bronkhorstspuit in the central Transvaal. Most of the township has been built on land that is due to be incorporated into KwaNdebele in the future. 13,000 ha of land were bought for the township and it is eventually intended to be bigger than Soweto. The housing here is of superior quality relative to that in other areas - the houses are well built and all have electricity and running water. But rents are in the region of between R100 and R200 per month.

This model township was built by the East Rand Administration Board is not providing anywhere near the amount of accommodation necessary to house the people in the East Rand townships themselves (for example, KwaThema, Daveyton, Vosloorus and Katlehong) Thus people with Section 10 qualifications who live in these townships, remain on housing waiting lists for years and eventually move to Ekangala in desperation. From here they have to commute back to the East Rand towns to work - in many cases a one and a half hour journey.

The housing crisis, and the provision of superior quality housing in areas that may well be incorporated into the homelands is thus being used to entice people with urban qualifications to move to distant and expensive areas. At the moment Ekangala will be administered by both KwaNdebele and South Africa (through the East Rand Administration Board).

Moutse

Moutse is in the North Eastern Transvaal near Groblersdal. It is a large area with a population of about 100,000 people, the majority of whom are North Sotho. The area was part of Lebowa until 1980 when it was excised from Lebowa so that it could be handed over to Kwa Ndebele as part of the independence deal (Moutse has facilities such as tarred roads, schools and a hospital, which are embarrassingly lacking in KwaNdebele)

Since this time the people of Moutse have fought this excision and planned incorporation into KwaNdebele. They reject KwaNdebele's acceptance of 'independence' from South Africa, fear discrimination against non-Ndebeles in the area and also fear gross poverty in KwaNdebele.

The refusal of the Moutse people to accept incorporation has led to a protracted negotiation process between Lebowa, the South African government and KwaNdebele. The Lebowa Residents resisting the removal want a referendum to be held in order to decide the issue. KwaNdebele has refused this. The Central Government has now attempted to rid itself of the problem by insisting that it is up to Lebowa and KwaNdebele to solve the matter between themselves. This resistance to incorporation has wide popular support. In 1982 when Koornhof visited the area 10,000 Moutse residents met him and expressed their opposition to being removed.

Valspan

Valspan is a community in the Northern Cape and is the township attached to the town of Jan Kempdorp. The community, mostly Tswana, is supposed to go Pampierstad in Boputhatswana. Koornhof maintains that this is not according to any Act, but according to 'long-standing policy'. Some of the Sotho speaking people have already been moved to Onverwacht. Meanwhile people are being individually pressurised to move. People are usually told that this area is 'White' or that 'the area has now become a slum and must be cleared' - the fact is that in Valspan a freeze was put on building in 1964, and the mud houses are slowly falling down around people's possessions, thus strengthening Government claims to this effect. At this point about 275 sites are left at Valspan. Rents have been raised. However, the Community Council in Valspan is strongly opposing the attempt to relocate the community.

Huhudi

Huhudi is also a Black township in the Northern Cape attached to the White town of Vryburg. There has been a freeze on housing since 1970, when the people were told they were to be removed. People attempting to repair or renovate their houses have been fined, and one man has even been jailed for this offence. Through harassment such as this, the inhabitants of Huhudi are being pressurised into moving to Pudimoe, 55 kilometres away in Boputhatswana - a place marked as a future industrial growth point. People have been encouraged to move by false promises of retaining their Section 10 rights once they are settled in Boputhatswana. The Huhudi Civic Association is trying to fight this removal.

Businessmen in Vryburg are also protesting about the relocation, as they will have to increase wages to cover transport for these future commuters. In 1982 Koornhof promised the Chamber of Commerce that most of the people of Huhudi could stay, but the North Cape Administration Board is pushing for all the residents to be relocated.

Lothair and Warburton

These are 2 small locations in the Eastern Transvaal which are due to be moved to Mayflower. Mayflower is part of a string of rural slums stretching over the hills in the southern section of KaNgwane. In the last four years 150,000 people have moved there, mainly in desperate circumstances off White farms. When people arrive they set up shelters and then have to rebuild once sites are set out after their arrival. The sites are very small, there is no area allocated for cultivation which makes sense in view of the stony ground and the shortage of water. Schools are now being built, but in some areas people were without any facilities for years after their arrival. Lothair location was established in 1976 when people moved off White farms and were told to go there. They now face their second removal into KaNgwane, from where they will have to travel long distances everyday back to Lothair to work. Some local Whites also oppose the move for this reason. Warburton was originally a village for workers on a forestry plantation.

Winterveld

It is not always direct Government proclamation and force that makes people move on a large scale. Sometimes mass relocations take place as a form of resistance when people find themselves forced by circumstances to move to urban areas - often to seek any means of survival that they can.

Winterveld is the biggest example of this kind of relocation in the Transvaal. It is a densely populated area in 'independent' Bophuthatswana, 30 kilometres north-west of Pretoria. Estimates place the inhabitants at 1 million people, and 90% of these are said to be non-Tswana speaking. Most people moved to Winterveld to be closer to the factories, and therefore to jobs and survival. Since the middle and late '70's there have been a number of tactics exerted on non-Tswanas in an effort to harrass them into 'voluntary' relocation, thereby paving the way to Bophutatswana's claim to ethnic purity.

Tenants in Winterveld are mostly non-Tswanas, living in the densely populated part called Stakaneng (Shanty Town) which is closest to the industrial areas of Pretoria and Rosslyn. In April this year, about 200 tenant families were moved. Their homes were demolished to make way for the Lucas Mangope Highway. This road under construction was designed to cut right through the middle of this most densely populated area. The people who were moved were tenants on privately owned land. They received no compensation for their homes. They have now been moved to the Mabopane Section U. Here, rents are far higher than they are in Winterveld, and some of the recently moved residents fear that they will fall into arrears. In addition there are unconfirmed rumours that the Mabopane houses may be only temporary.

Hartebeesfontein

A resettlement camp near Brits on the Rustenburg road, Hartebeesfontein consists of tenants from Black Spot removals (such as Machakaneng), and farm labourers who have been retrenched and therefore evicted, or who are still working but who now commute to the farms. There are also families from the Brits location, who were tenants there, but due to lack of housing have found themselves evicted with nowhere to stay and so have moved to Hartebeesfontein. Apparently people are also moving there from the Mabopane area in Bophuthatswana, because of housing pressure. People are building houses and improving their standard of living in an impressive way. However there are problems facing the community. Bus fares from Hartebeesfontein to Brits or Rustenburg are very steep - R1,50 single, and very many of the residents are unemployed. Also, the people claim that they did not know that Hartebeesfontein was to be included into Bophuthatswana in the future, and that they were unhappy and apprehensive about the implications of this.

Kindly turn overleaf for conclusion. Thank you.

CONCLUSION

In the process of investigating removals in the Transvaal, certain points have emerged;

1. There appears to be no intention of stopping removals.
2. There is a trend towards more sophisticated methods of carrying out removals, using different techniques such as invoking Influx Control regulations. There is very little, if any real negotiation, and an almost total refusal to deal with the elected leaders of the communities.
3. In every move observed by us there is always an element of coercion. They are never truly voluntary.
4. In all instances involving the removals of agriculturally viable rural communities, the result is hardship, deprivation and material loss.
5. These removals are all taking place in a time of recession. There is simply no validity in the Government's claim that removals are economically justified. There is certainly no moral justification. The only "justification" is in terms of the Apartheid ideology.

People are not being moved for their own good.

The Myth of Voluntary Removals and South Africa - a land divided as well as all other Black Sash publications are available from:

Black Sash Office, 42 De Villiers Street, Johannesburg 2001

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