



# TRAC

Transvaal Rural Action Committee

## Newsletter No 9 September 1985 • EKANGALA

### EKANGALA: MODEL TOWNSHIP PEOPLE REFUSE TO LIVE IN

State President P W Botha visited Siyabuswa, the capital of KwaNdebele on August 7 this year. He held discussions with Chief Minister Skosana on moves towards the district's independence.

South African news reports presented P W Botha praising the 'high quality' of KwaNdebele leadership and saying how much he valued the way in which they are striving for independence.

At the same time, however, people in Ekangala, a township on the border of KwaNdebele, were adamantly opposing the proposed incorporation of their township into this homeland.

The Ekangala Action Committee which is against inclusion into KwaNdebele came under violent attack from KwaNdebele vigilantes.

What is really behind the protest and oppression?

#### KWANDEBELE

In 1976, KwaNdebele, the last of the ten homelands, was established on a portion of land arbitrarily carved out of the Transvaal. Although the land lacks any historical or ethnic justification for the tribe, the government belatedly realised that no geographical provision had been made for the Ndebele ethnic group.

From 25 000 people the population has rocketed to an estimated 465 000 people, of which only 50 percent are Ndebele. Many of these people were evicted from land they owned in so-called white areas. Others have come from surrounding towns, but the major influx has been people fleeing from harassment or discrimination in other homelands such as Bophuthatswana.

Chief Minister Skosana, who did not complete primary school, presides over KwaNdebele. He, his family and favourite colleagues apparently own or control the major proportion of income generated in private enterprise.

His kingdom consists of 300 000 hectares of sprawling relocation areas and shanty towns where it is only the relative proximity of major industrial centres that saves the people from starvation. Unemployment and poverty are widespread with the 1980 Gross Domestic Product for the area amounting to a per capita income of only R338.

Tens of thousands of workers commute daily to Pretoria by bus and from there to points further afield, travelling nearly 250 km daily. Many people leave home at 3 am and return at 10 pm. Yet despite these appalling conditions, KwaNdebele is to become 'independent' next year, with Skosana as its President. All Ndebeles, irrespective of where they live, will thereafter cease to be South African citizens.

As part of the bounty for accepting independence, large additional tracts of land from neighbouring Lebowa and Bophuthatswana are to be ceded to KwaNdebele. One of these is the Moutse area of Lebowa. This area has a population of nearly 100 000 North Sotho people who are opposed to incorporation.

One of the greatest prizes for Skosana is the 'model' township of Ekangala.

#### EKANGALA

Throughout the world and over the centuries towns have sprung up around people. In South Africa this process is reversed — first the town is built and then the people are moved in. Money which could have been spent on housing the people where they already live and work has instead been poured into the newly created Ekangala.

Situated 100 km from Johannesburg and the East Rand townships, Ekangala was built by the East Rand Administration Board on behalf of the Central government as part of the policy of creating decentralised growth points through 'orderly urbanisation'.

The government has put a housing freeze on all townships in the East Rand. In many areas there is no electricity, piped water or water-borne sewerage. No new houses have been built and existing houses have fallen into disrepair. People who have been on housing waiting lists for years cannot get accommodation. This is the strategy to force people to move to distant places like Ekangala.

13 000 hectares of land was bought for the establishment of the township. The quality of the housing is superior and roads are tarred and schools, sports fields and community centres are planned.

However, life in Ekangala is prohibitively expensive. The rent is between R100 and R200 a month compared with about R30 a month in the East Rand townships. Families received electricity bills of R100 a month until they managed to prove that faulty meters had been installed in their houses.

Transport costs were also incredibly high when the people moved to Ekangala — about R5 for a one way journey to work. This on top of the fact that workers have to spend over four hours a day travelling to and from work.

However, the residents did manage to solve many of these problems. They formed a committee, the Ekangala Action Committee which opened negotiations with the local authorities. As a result of their efforts the transport costs were cut and the electricity problem solved.

The issue of the incorporation of Ekangala into KwaNdebele has ruined this constructive relationship between the committee and the authorities.

## **THE PROPOSED INCORPORATION OF EKANGALA INTO KWANDEBELE**

On February 9 this year, only one week after Gerrit Viljoen, the Minister of Co-operation and Development announced the suspension of forced removals, he said that the whole of Ekangala is to be incorporated into KwaNdebele.

The township residents reject the proposed incorporation out of hand. They say they have been tricked into moving to Ekangala under false pretences because no mention of KwaNdebele was made when Ekangala was advertised as an ERAB township.

They insist that they are South Africans and that they do not want to lose their citizenship. They also have Section 10 rights which will die with the present generation if the incorporation goes ahead.

The Action Committee made the community's views clear to the authorities who responded by appointing

a Community Council with representatives from the KwaNdebele government in it. The Action Committee submitted a petition signed by almost a thousand householders. There was no response and on March 23 the community staged a peaceful protest march against the incorporation.

The march ended in disaster when the police shot and killed a young boy.

Since then the Action Committee has not been allowed to hold meetings in the township. The authorities also say it has no jurisdiction to represent the people now that the Community Council has been appointed.

But much more ominous than this is the fact that a reign of terror against the Action Committee members and their supporters has begun. Vigilantes who are KwaNdebele supporters have been given carte blanche by the local SAP to assault and terrorise the people of Ekangala.

Travelling in cars with 'KN' registration numbers, wearing balaclavas and armed with pangas, sjamboks and clubs, these men roam the townships and mete out 'justice' to all seen to oppose KwaNdebele rule.

TRAC is in possession of numerous statements by victims of the vigilantes. The statements present a consistent picture of violence, intimidation and oppression against people whose initial motivation was simply to seek a home, but who have now become embittered and politicised in the process.

One of the people who suffered most at the hands of the vigilantes is Mr Peter Kose, the vice-chairman of the Action Committee.

### **MR PETER KOSE**

On March 30, the vigilantes attacked Mr Kose's home and broke the doors and windows. Later his daughter was expelled from school as were the children of the chairman and secretary of the Action Committee.

Mr Kose was also forced into a car and taken to the home of the Ndebele chief, Mr F K Mahlangu, an official of the KwaNdebele government. Mr Kose managed to escape before he was assaulted. However, on June 16, he was abducted again and severely beaten by a group of vigilantes.

When residents rushed to the South African Police station in Bronkhorstspruit and asked them to intervene, the police did nothing.

When he had recovered, Mr Kose went to the SAP to lay charges against the men. On his first few visits they refused to take his statement. Only after his lawyer intervened did they accept the charge. However they have taken no apparent action against the people responsible.

## LETTERS FROM EKANGALA RESIDENTS

*I came to Ekangala on March 28, 1984. I came here because of the shortage of houses in Tembisa, an East Rand Administration Board township. I was told by the Tembisa Superintendent that there is nothing wrong with Ekangala because it is also under the ERAB. So I came to live here with my family because there was no other accommodation.*

*I was given a piece of paper by Mr Oberholzer, stating that I qualify in terms of Section 10 rights to live in Ekangala. I was happy because I was sure that I am now going to get a house and be able to enjoy life with my family.*

*The Ekangala Superintendent told me and others that we must not worry about the rent because it will be reduced after six months. After more than six months the rent remained the same and the electricity was very high. We were paying about R100 for electricity. Transport was about R130 per month. We as Ekangala residents decided to come together in order to solve our problems.*

*At our first meeting we decided to choose a committee — the Ekangala Action Committee to help us to solve our problems. The chosen committee brought the bus fares down to R32,50 and the electricity bill was also reduced because they discovered the meters were faulty.*

*We were very much surprised when we heard on the television news that Ekangala was to be incorporated into the Kwa Ndebele homeland. I was shocked to hear this because it was not my will to be under any homeland. After the announcement the Kwa Ndebele government started victimising our leaders in such a way that they had to run away from the township to save their lives.*

*The committee wrote a letter to the Minister of Co-operation and Development, Dr Gerrit Viljoen saying that they wanted to discuss this problem with him, but he has still not replied.*

*We are still very much disappointed about the incorporation and Ndebele people are still victimising us.*

**James Rhadebe**

*I am one of the Ekangala residents who lived in Tembisa before moving here. In Tembisa I was staying with my sister — two families living in a four roomed house. We heard rumours that the East Rand Administration Board had built houses for people who qualify under Section 10 rights near Bronkhorstspuit. I thought it good to come here because I was looking for a house for my family. Although Bronkhorstspuit is far away, there was nothing I could do because there was no accommodation in Tembisa.*

*It was proved to me that Ekangala falls under the East Rand board because our Section 10 rights were needed by the Superintendent.*

*I was enormously shocked when I saw the news on television on February 5 this year that Ekangala will be incorporated into Kwa Ndebele.*

*This made me very worried because I do not want to be part of any homeland. The Minister of Co-operation and Development did not even come and hear our feelings about it. The Ekangala Action Committee tried to write him a letter, but there was no reply.*

*It does not matter that we won't lose our Section 10 rights — we don't worry about that, we just don't want to fall into any homeland.*

*We are worried now because we are being terrorised by the Kwa Ndebele government at night and almost every weekend. We did complain to the Bronkhorstspuit police, but it was in vain because no serious action was taken against the vigilantes. Instead the police say we are lucky because we are still alive. Matters are made worse because the ERAB has chosen their own people to represent us, even though we have elected our own committee who are working hard to solve our problems.*

**Betty Mbele**

On Saturday July 27, Mr Kose was again attacked by the vigilantes. He was beaten unconscious and placed in the boot of a car and taken to Mr Mahlangu's home again. He was assaulted in a bath of cold water.

Mrs Kose heard her husband's screams and rushed to the SAP. Eventually Captain Kendall of the security police went to the chief's home and fetched Mr Kose. To his amazement, Mr Kose found that he — and not his assailants — was under arrest on a charge of assault.

His head wounds were stitched by the district surgeon but he was not given any other medical treatment, despite his assertion that his ankle was broken. He spent the weekend in a cell with only one blanket.

It was not until Monday morning that a lawyer managed to secure his release and the police finally accepted the charge of assault against the vigilantes. Mr Kose was then admitted to hospital where he was x-rayed and his broken ankle was set.

The events at Ekangala highlight a number of important issues:

- Ordinary South African citizens have no choice about being incorporated into homelands.
- KwaNdebele provides a good example of the quality of the leadership imposed on black South Africans

by the government's homeland policy.

- Such leaders have to rely on violence to maintain authority. In the Ekangala case this is condoned by the local South African Police.
- When the people attempt to respond to this situation, it is characterised as 'black on black' violence. The Bronkhorstspuit police have gone so far as to say that the KwaNdebele vigilantes are members of the United Democratic Front.
- The Ekangala Action Committee includes representatives from numerous different 'ethnic groups' as well as Ndebeles. They are completely united in their opposition to incorporation into a homeland. But, with the imposition of control by ethnic leadership and the consequent victimisation on the basis of ethnicity, ethnic conflict is growing in Ekangala.

The residents of Ekangala, represented by the Ekangala Action Committee are convinced that the independence of KwaNdebele will mean their expulsion from the area. This expulsion might not be formally done, but would consist of brutal attacks on themselves, their children and property. This would force them to leave the area.

Rather than leave one by one in fear of their lives and face homelessness, 6 000 people are ready to leave Ekangala en masse. They are determined to claim their

right to housing from the East Rand Administration Board and will squat in the ERAB area until the promised housing is forthcoming.

The committee has secured a meeting with the ERAB head office to discuss their demand for alternative accommodation. They have also obtained quotes for tents and Zozo huts for the period immediately after their arrival in the East Rand. This is not to say that they are prepared to live as 'squatters' indefinitely, but they can-

not safely continue to live at Ekangala while new housing is being built.

The government's plan to build a model township, fill it with Section 10 people and hand it over to Mr Skosana as part of the independence deal has backfired. Instead of being able to pass Ekangala off as a generous gift to the 'blackman', they have the housing crisis in the East Rand area swelled by 6 000 angry people.

## **STOP PRESS ...**

### **DRIEFONTEIN AND KWANGEMA ARE REPRIEVED**

Driefontein and KwaNgema have been reprieved. They have also been given adjacent land in an unprecedented decision finalised at a meeting between Mr Ben Wilkens the Deputy Minister of land affairs and the communities on Monday August 26.

Both areas are 'black spots' which have been under threat of removal for many years. They have fought long and determined battles to stay where they are and in the process the leader of the resistance in Driefontein, Mr Saul Mkhize, was shot and killed by a young policeman who interrupted a community meeting.

Mr Pickson Mkhize, Saul's brother and the chairman of the Council Board of Directors says that the reprieve means his brother did not die in vain. 'This is what my brother was fighting for. In fact he always said he was prepared to die for our land. At many times since his death we have seen that the government was ready to move us by force. We told them we would rather all die and be buried with him. Now eventually the government has agreed to leave us peacefully at Driefontein.'

'This is a wonderful day for us, but it is also sad. Our leader was killed when in the end all that is needed is sitting down and talking like responsible people,' said Mr Mkhize.

In recent years the government's plans to move Driefontein and KwaNgema received new impetus because of the building of the Heyshope Dam. This dam, which will cover parts of Driefontein and KwaNgema, was used as an excuse by the government to say that both communities must be moved en masse to a resettlement camp due to be incorporated into KaNgwane.

Leaders from both communities proposed that instead of this the government should make some adjacent land available to compensate for the areas to be flooded by the dam. This is what the present settlement entails. It is an unprecedented reversal of the removals policy — not only can Africans keep the farms they acquired prior to the 1913 Land Act — but extra state owned land will be transferred to them.

The settlement had to be reached on an urgent basis because the first summer rains will flood sections of both areas. The government's dilemma was either to move these particularly strong and famous communities by force within the next two months or to make other land available immediately.

We can only be thankful that the government chose the latter alternative rather than cause further violence in the present troubled state of our country. In a very real sense the dam, which was always hated as a reason for the proposed removal has been the catalyst for the reprieve.

The reprieve is the result of a very long struggle. Both communities asked for help from every possible quarter and received some unusual assistance. Mr Enos Mabuza, the chief minister of Ka Ngwane took an unprecedented step for a homeland leader when he refused to co-operate with Pretoria's plan to move the communities to Oshoek on the border of KaNgwane. His stand averted a removal which would have taken place at the end of last year.

Barlow Rand has also taken a step which is a first for big business. One of their subsidiaries, Lotzaba Forest, made available to the government land adjacent to Driefontein which will form part of the compensation packet. Without this land there would not have been enough land for both communities to settle in above the water level.

Mr Wilkens stressed that no whites would be forced to give up their farms to make land available for Driefontein and KwaNgema, so the stand taken by Barlow Rand overcame a problem which could have ruined the settlement. As it is there is a shortfall of agricultural land in the Ngema case and the government has agreed to pay monetary compensation for this portion at the rate of the land value in the area.

This is the first formal reprieve of a Black Spot for many years. Dr Viljoen's statement earlier this year was about the suspension of forced removals, not stopping them. We can only hope that the Ngema-Driefontein reprieve will set a precedent for all the other Black Spots whose fate hangs in the balance at the moment.