

# THORNHILL

At the beginning of 1977 the name THORNHILL became synonymous with the heartlessness and death that are the details of the implementation of a large part of the apartheid policy. (We are seeing it again now with threatened Crossroads resettlement. What is not seen are the many other bantustan areas where conditions are worse, if anything, than the few places that do succeed in attracting the selective eye of the commercial press).

Thornhill has just been in the news again, lost in the publicity justifiably given to Crossroads:

"A serious outbreak of typhoid, which is understood to have reached epidemic proportions, has hit the overcrowded resettlement camp at Thornhill near Queenstown. Four new cases were admitted to Queenstown's Frontier Hospital at the weekend, but officials have refused to disclose the total number of cases admitted.

A spokesman for the Frontier Hospital...noted that Thornhill was in the Ciskei and he had no authority to speak for the homeland government.

Ciskei's Secretary for Health, Dr J Klopper, is on leave and not available for comment. The Minister of Health, Chief M Mqalo, was also not available." (Star, 78-03-29)

"The Ciskei Government has refused to give any details to the South African Government about the Zweledinga, formerly known as Thornhill, and Oxton resettlement areas in the homeland.

The Minister of Plural Relations, Dr Connie Mulder, approached the Ciskei Government for particulars about the settlements, 'but they inform me that they do not wish to furnish the information,' he said in reply to two questions tabled in the Assembly..." (RDM, 78-04-19)

"The recent typhoid outbreak at Thornhill claimed three lives, the Minister of Health, Dr BR Maku, said in the Ciskei Legislative Assembly yesterday. 130 cases were handled altogether. The Department immunized over 10 000 people against the disease 'and what might have been a serious problem was rapidly and quickly contained,' Dr Maku added.

The farmhouse which was taken over as a makeshift clinic at Thornhill had been remodelled and reshaped to take the form of a small cottage hospital with six beds. 'The clinic has also been substantially strengthened by the addition of nursing staff and a senior health nurse'." (RDM, 78-09-14)

The Thornhill farm, now known as Zweledinga, is situated in the Ciskein Bantustan close to Queenstown. During 1976, after the Transkei had taken over the Herschel district, some 15 000 people left that area and settled at Thornhill, part of about 50 000 people who had fled from the Matanzimas. The numbers soon swelled and estimates were made of 30 000. More specifically, the exodus seemed to have been in response to Transkeian suppression of opposition groups, and real or potential action against Sotho-speakers in particular. The residents of both the Herschel and

Glen Grey areas had opposed incorporation into the Transkei - in a 1971 referendum 84% voted in favour of remaining as part of the Ciskei. An interesting side comment was made by a "Ciskeian spokesman" who said that "many" of the people had come "from the Free State when it was rumoured farms were to be given out in the Ciskei." Freehold land tenure is not available to Africans outside of the reserves/bantustans since the 1913 Land Act. The QwaQwa bantustan for Sotho-speakers has a de facto population density of 136 per square mile and a de jure density of 7 085 people per square mile. It is, therefore, more than understandable that there should be an intense hunger for land, even to the extent of travelling hundreds of kilometres on the strength of a rumour.

In exchange for Herschel and Glen Grey the South African government was meant to buy white-owned farms adjoining the Ciskei, but ran out of money. The Thornhill and Loudun farms were shown to chiefs from Herschel and Glen Grey and they decided to accept them for their people. A "stampede" started as Transkeian "independence day" (October 26) neared. It must be kept in mind that Thornhill and Loudun had been farms, with no facilities (eg the nearest shops were some 20 km away). No employment existed at the time and the recent report that prompted this briefing mentions that: "The Government had not planned any industrial development at the controversial resettlement township of Glenmore in the Eastern Cape but agricultural development is being considered" (RDM, 78-04-19).

In the style that has served (purposely) to confuse similar issues (see, for example, KwaZulu vs central government on Malukazi; Transkei vs central government on Crossroads; BophutaTswana vs central government on Hoekfontein, Winterveldt, etc; BophutaTswana vs Basotho QwaQwa on ThabaNchu; etc, etc, etc) Thornhill was also left in the cold with Sebe and the central government both denying responsibility for whatever occurred - "The Department of Bantu Administration has tried to lay the responsibility for the Thornhill tragedy at the door of the Ciskei government, but in fact the department itself was responsible for moving 3 500 families, comprising an estimated 21 000 people, from Herschel to Thornhill" (Sunday Express, 77-01-16); "The Chief Minister of the Ciskei, Chief Lennox Sebe, has blamed the Department of Bantu Administration and Development for the conditions at Thornhill" (RDM, 77-01-11).

In bantustan politics one event not only serves as an example of what is to be expected during the next but flow into each other with a terrible irony, until one resettlement camp is not to be

distinguished from the rest, and the one prepares the way for the next. The residents of Thornhill are now engaged in building at Bridge Farm for the first truck loads of people from the Crossroads camp outside Cape Town.

They are not to be blamed. There is no other work at Thornhill. And very little pretence that anything exists for them at Queenstown as only one bus a day runs between the two places. And that costs R1,50 return. The breakdown is not only physical but also mental, a pattern found in the KwaZulu bantustan as well (and the university psychology departments play with rats and statistics).

"These people exist on mealie meal - nothing else. They eat only porridge. We get complications from the malnutrition and have a high incidence of psychosis - particularly schizophrenia. This could be caused by the depressing conditions under which people live (nursing sister at Thornhill clinic)... Dr Hendrik Beukes, Whittlesea district surgeon and the doctor in charge of Thornhill, confirmed the sister's remarks. He said the incidence of psychoses throughout the district was high. "It is not only Thornhill. I don't know what causes it," he said." (Sunday Tribune, 78-10-08)

There is no better way of summarising the situation than to leave the last word to an administrator of the policy of "separate development", Mr DJF Hidge (Chief Commissioner for the Department of Plural Relations in Queenstown), who "does not care that there are no jobs where he intends settling people.

"That is not my problem. We will provide the necessary infrastructure of water and toilets in the camp. Where the people work is not my business. It is like any other area. In the rural areas there are no jobs either - the people are migrant workers. The provision of jobs has nothing to do with me!" (Sunday Tribune, 78-10-08)