



TRAC

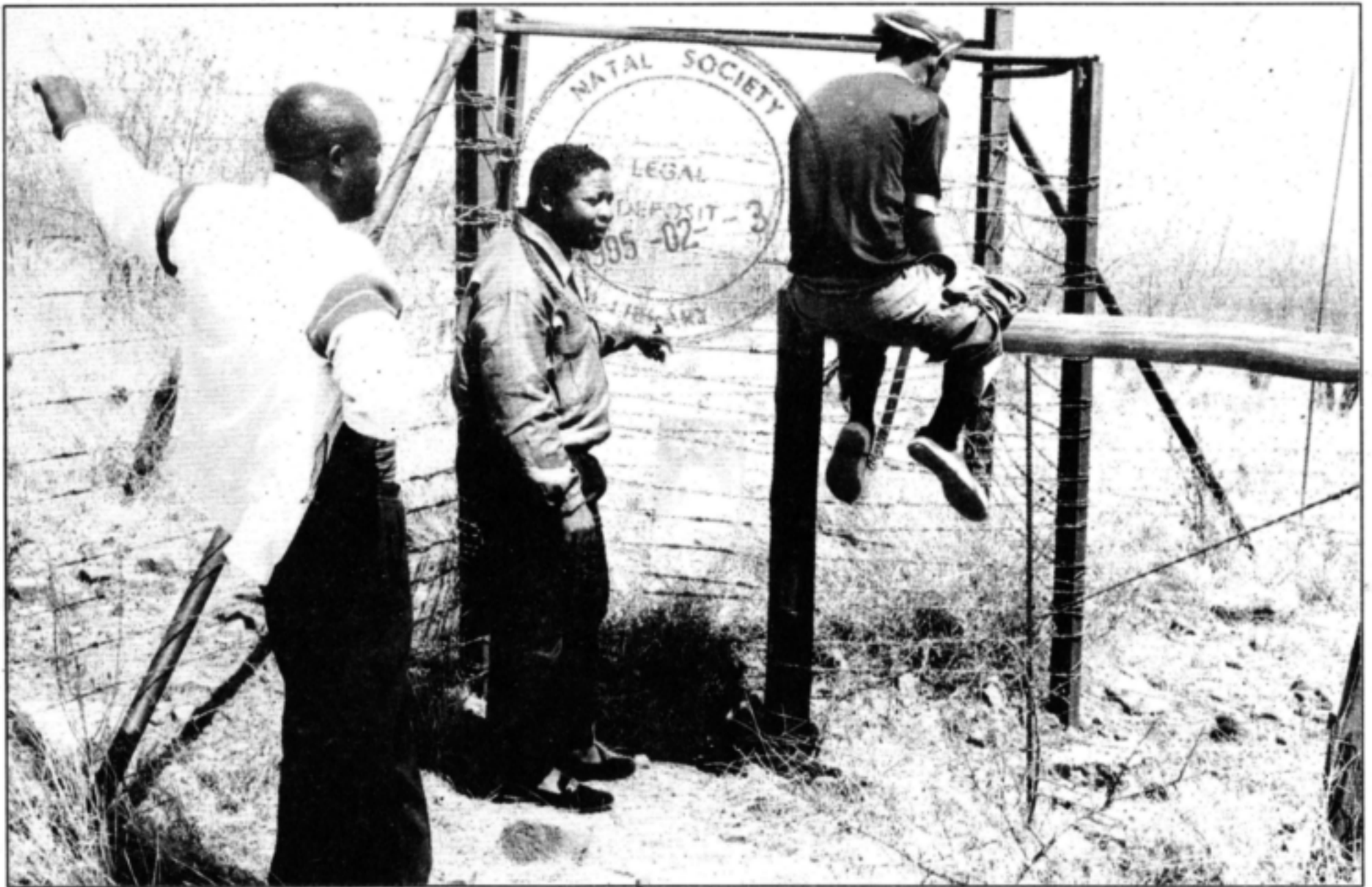
Transvaal Rural Action Committee

Newsletter
number 29

November 1994

ISSN: 1023-5310

MOUTSE: RESTORING OLD BOUNDARIES



Photograph: TRAC

Boundaries in the Moutse area have long been the subject of dispute. The issue has been greatly complicated by numerous forced removals (which continued right up until 1986), and by the previous government's bantustan policy.

In the mid-1980s, attempts were made to incorporate Moutse into the kwaNdebele homeland. Bitter struggles were fought against the Mbokodo vigilante movement, backed by troops, armoured vehicles and helicopters of the apartheid armed forces.

With the recent collapse of bantustan structures, the struggle in Moutse enters a new stage. The challenge is now to regain what was lost, and to restore productivity in an area which saw some of the worst excesses of the apartheid era.

With this issue: A Brief history of the Transvaal Ndebele, plus Background reading on Moutse & kwaNdebele

Moutse: a stronghold of the Rural Women's Movement



MamLydia Kompe, founder-member of the Rural Women's Movement

Moutse is one of seven sub-regions of the Rural Women's Movement (RWM). There are currently more than thirteen groups of women meeting regularly in the Moutse area.

Through the efforts of mamLydia Kompe (former TRAC fieldworker, and now a member of parliament) RWM groups were established in Moutse in 1986 and 1987. They played a central role in the struggle against incorporation into the kwaNdebele homeland.

The participation of organised groups of women in resisting apartheid policy has greatly strengthened the position of women in Moutse. However, the problems facing rural women are still considerable.

With the successful resolution of the incorporation issue, the women in Moutse have begun to focus on issues which directly affect basic living conditions, such as water, health, income-generation, and child-care.

Several creches, pre-schools and sewing projects have been established.

The RWM march for water in October 1992 has inspired women in other areas to organise around the provision of safe drinking water. This is clearly to the advantage of the whole community. The Moutse women's march for water is described in *TRAC Newsletter* number 25 (March 1993).

In July 1993, the women in Moutse decided to establish a Co-ordinating Committee, to build the capacity of women's groups throughout the sub-region and to negotiate with outside organisations.

A number of women are currently being trained in leadership skills, small business management and income generation, and these women will then pass on their skills to others. Several workshops have been held to discuss the RDP and the interim constitution.

In mid-1994, the Moutse Health Development Forum was launched, and thirty Community Health Workers were trained. Following a recent meeting between the RWM and the Director-General of the Department of Health, it has been decided that another thirty women will be trained using the facilities at Philadelphia Hospital. A list was also presented to the Department of Health, proposing the establishment of fourteen new clinics in Moutse.

Plans are currently under way to establish a Moutse Community Radio Station. The station will be owned and controlled by the RWM, through the Co-ordinating Committee. Money has been supplied by the Open Society Foundation to hold a series of training workshops, and to conduct test broadcasts. An application has been made for a temporary broadcasting licence, and the first broadcast is due to take place on 7th December.

Although the work of the RWM has shown the ability of women to plan and execute important tasks, women are still not part of the Kgotla (the traditional decision-making assembly), and there are on-going tensions with some male-dominated civic associations.

The TRAC publication, entitled *The Rural Women's Movement: holding the knife on the sharp edge* (January 1994) outlines some of the victories of the RWM, and some of the difficulties which they still face in Moutse and elsewhere.



Photograph: Elmond Jiyane

Members of the Rural Women's Movement march for safe drinking water, October 1992

Moutse consists of three magisterial districts (known as Moutse 1, 2 and 3), covering about 66 000 hectares between Groblersdal and Marble Hall in the central Transvaal (approximately 150km northwest of Pretoria). There are more than forty distinct villages, and over 120 000 people.

The area has been occupied by Pedi-speaking people since the late Eighteenth Century, and formed part of the Pedi resistance to colonial rule. During this period, many people from surrounding areas were integrated into Pedi society.

Among the early Pedi inhabitants of the area are the Ntoane people, who still live near the town of Dennilton, under their king, Kgosi Mathebe.

Much of the land in Moutse was bought by tribal trusts in the first half of this century. For example, the farm Kwarrielaagte (in Moutse 3), was bought by Chief

Paledi Mathebe of the Ntoane in 1919. Vlaklaagte was bought in 1926. Other farms, including Elandsdoorn, Waterkloof and Valschfontein, were added later.

In the early 1920s, Toit's Kraal 421 was purchased by the Matlala-Ramoshebo tribe. In 1927, the Rathoka people bought the neighbouring farm, Toit's Kraal 422. They were subsequently moved to Makeepsvlei.

The Lehwelere people purchased portions of the farm Kuilsrivier in 1921 and 1927. In 1958, they bought the neighbouring farm, Zondagsfontein, from which people were later forcibly removed.

The farm Gruysbank was bought between 1930 and 1932. The owners were removed in 1963.

People of the Bakone-Matlala tribe were given compensatory land in Moutse in 1945, after their land near Loskop Dam was expropriated. The land was given to

black soldiers returning from service in the Second World War. An elderly man explained: "We cleared that land of bushes and trees, to plant our crops. Then someone else came and took what we had done. We were taken somewhere else and had to start again."

Life under apartheid

Moutse was initially destined to become part of the Lebowa homeland. However, during the 1980s the apartheid government tried to force Moutse's incorporation into the newly created kwaNdebele. Those who were not prepared to live under kwaNdebele rule would be resettled in Immerpan and Salliesloot (in the Nebo district of Lebowa).

In an effort to crush opposition to kwaNdebele rule, the Mbokodo vigilante movement embarked on a reign of terror. Mbokodo's actions in Moutse are documented in *TRAC Newsletter* number 10, and

in the CIIR publication *Now everyone is afraid* (1988). By April 1986, more than 40 people had been killed and over 400 injured.

Vigilante action was supported by kwaNdebele police based in Siyabuswa, and units of the South African Police (SAP), operating from as far away as Nylstroom (over 100km northwest of Moutse).

A popular movement, under the leadership of the Ndebele and Ntoane royal families (the Ndzundzas and the Mathebes), opposed kwaNdebele independence. From mid-May to mid-August 1986, the region was plunged into a civil war, in which at least 160 people were killed. Whole families fled into the bush, and villages were patrolled day and night by police in armoured vehicles and Landrovers.

During this period, the kwaNdebele Minister of Police refused to comment on particular police actions, referring inquiries to SAP headquarters in Pretoria.

By the end of September, at least 900 Moutse families had been moved from Kwarrielaagte and Uitvlucht to resettlement camps at Tweefontein, Saliesloot, Immerpan and Kwaggafontein. Although these removals were said to be voluntary, many of them involved the use of teargas, sjamboks and armoured vehicles.

115 Battalion of the South African Defence Force (SADF) was deployed in Moutse in 1987, to assist the kwaNdebele police and "special constables" in their efforts to suppress popular resistance. A curfew was imposed, and journalists were prohibited from entering the area.

Pensions, business and vehicle licences, civil service jobs and tertiary education were all made conditional on a person holding kwaNdebele citizenship. These measures were particularly strongly

resisted in Moutse, where the majority of people consistently refused to recognise the kwaNdebele administration.

In 1988, Moutse was finally returned to central government jurisdiction, and the difficult task of reconstruction could begin.

Land claims

Mr William Mathebe of Ntoane village talks of a war in 1822, after which two rival chiefs came together to decide on the boundaries. TRAC believes that it is important to take these old boundaries into account.

TRAC and the Transvaal Land Restoration Committee (TLRC) are currently dealing with four land committees in the Moutse area. They are Ntoane, Kgobokoane, Ramoshebo, and Lehwelere.

Contact has also been made with a number of other land-claiming communities, who are still in the process of establishing representative community structures (these include Rathoka, Wal-kraal/Gruysbank, Zondagsfontein and Kleiklippot).

Because of the mess caused by apartheid, some of these claims are extremely complicated. The Ntoane and Kgobokoane communities are together claiming more than twenty farms. Some of the land being claimed has been sub-divided, and includes both state and private land, as well as kwaNdebele trust land.

The land claims in Moutse can usefully be divided into three types, according to the way in which the land was lost: pre-1913 removals, post-1913 removals, and encroachment.

Many of the claims fall within existing legislation, and will be dealt with through negotiations with the Department of Land Affairs (DLA). Such cases will in-

clude groups of people who were forcibly removed from (or defrauded of) land which they previously owned. Also included are cases involving the encroachment of white farmers onto land which belongs to neighbouring black communities.

Pre-1913 claims are more difficult, and require the collection of very detailed information on the history of the people concerned.

1) Pre-1913 removals

The interim constitution and the new Restitution of Land Rights Act only make provision for claims to land which was lost between 1913 and 1994. These claims may be based either on title deeds, or on historical evidence.

At the Community Land Conference (CLC) in Bloemfontein in February this year, 353 land-claiming communities rejected the exclusion of claims to land which was lost before 1913. TRAC supports them in this.

Clause 3.2.2 of the Land Charter, adopted by the CLC, reads: "Indigenous people's right to the land must be recognised. Communities must be able to make claims to land that was taken from them as far back as 1652."

TRAC is working with the Ntoane people to challenge the exclusion of pre-1913 historical claims.

2) Post-1913 removals

In the past, white farmers would "sell" land to black people in exchange for papers which they said were proof of ownership. The government would then claim that it was state land, saying that the people had simply been defrauded.

In this way, the people of Ramoshebo were made to pay again for land which they had already bought in 1925. They were sub-



Photograph: Melinda Swift

People of the Matlala Ramoshebo explain how their cattle are being shot by neighbouring white farmers, who have moved the boundary fences

sequently persuaded to leave their land temporarily, under the pretence that plots were being demarcated for them. When they tried to return, guns were pointed at them and their cattle were impounded.

The Gruysbank community (now living at Walkraal) were removed from their land in 1963. A white farmer convinced them that extensive tests were being conducted to determine the fertility of the soil, and that they would then receive full compensation. This has never taken place. Unlike Gruysbank, Walkraal had no water or schools. Gruysbank is now owned by a white farmer (Mr Jordaan).

TRAC and the TLRC, together with the DLA, have established a working group to deal with claims that fall within existing legislation. Because of the number and extent of land-claims in Moutse, TRAC and the TLRC are motivating for the establishment of a sub-regional

working group to focus specifically on claims in Moutse.

A common complaint from all the land-claiming communities is the unco-operative attitude of the Moutse Magistrate's Office. Provincial and local officials have repeatedly obstructed negotiations, insulted community members, and stormed out of important meetings.

Whenever negotiations with a particular commissioner have seemed to be progressing, he has been transferred, and his replacement then claims to be unfamiliar with the case. In August this year, for example, TRAC explained all the different land-claims to Mr Eloff of the Moutse Magistrate's Office. Mr Eloff expressed some willingness to assist. He has since been replaced.

The establishment of a Moutse sub-regional working group may go some of the way towards addressing this problem.

3) Encroachment

In some cases, white farmers entered into land-use agreements with local chiefs, whereby the farmer would pay a fixed amount of tribute (Lotsha), like everyone else. Over time, the farmers would then fence off the property and claim it as their own.

The Matlala-Lehwelere people have lost their grazing land bit by bit, as neighbouring white farmers shifted the boundary fences. If these new boundaries are crossed, people are shot at and their cattle impounded.

The problem of shifting boundary fences is common in Moutse. Similar reports have been received from Ramoshebo, Ntoane, and Kgobokoane. The people of Ramoshebo often hear gun-fire, and some of their cattle have been shot.

TRAC has undertaken to compare title deed records with aerial photographs of the area, to deter-

mine the extent of the problem. If necessary, a surveyor will be brought in and the boundaries re-defined.

Development planning

Historical claims to particular pieces of land cannot be made conditional on plans to develop that land. This was one of the many faults of CLA (the Commission on Land Allocation), under the previous government. If people were removed in the implementation of racist policies, then they have the right to return whether or not they have clear development plans.

However, it is obviously very much to the advantage of a community if development planning is part of the restoration process. People need water, wood, housing and roads. Often, particularly in the case of people who were forcibly removed, they also need assistance to re-establish agriculture.

Access to safe drinking water has long been a problem for people in Moutse, despite the efforts of the Rural Women's Movement and other organisations. The area is prone to drought, and ground water is scarce.

Many of the roads are extremely bad, and this interferes with the transport of people and supplies.

Land is potentially a source of production and wealth, and the efficient use of this resource has a direct affect on the quality of life of all those concerned. This was the message conveyed to the people of Moutse by the Minister of Land Affairs, Derek Hanekom, when he encouraged them to establish local committees to look not only at land claims, but also at each of the different aspects of development.

Because of the time-scales involved in development work, it is essential that communities start

Meeting with the Minister of Land Affairs



On Sunday 25th September this year the Minister of Land Affairs, Derek Hanekom, met people from several land claiming communities at Moshate wa Ntoane (the Ntoane king's kraal) in Moutse.

The minister heard presentations by land-claiming communities in the area, and then went on to explain the new government's position regarding land-claims.

The government is committed to ensuring that there is justice for those who lost land as a result of racist policies, said the minister.

The Land Restitution Act, which has recently been passed by

their planning at an early stage in the land-claiming process.

However, it should also be noted that the concept of "development" is open to abuse, and is often used to obstruct land reform.

There are allegations that some white farmers on contested land in the Moutse area are building unnecessary structures in order to complicate expected land-claims, and to artificially inflate the compensation-value of the land.

parliament, will enable the new government to right some of the wrongs of apartheid. A Land Claims Commission and a Land Claims Court will soon be established to ensure justice for those who were dispossessed by apartheid laws.

However, this legislation will only be of use to those who have strong historical claims to particular pieces of land.

The minister urged people to start preparing their claims now, so that they could be processed quickly when the Commission and Court come into existence. The Department of Land Affairs and organisations such as TRAC will help people to document their claims.

At the same time, it is very important that people start organising local committees, to look at the various aspects of development (e.g., water, roads, agriculture, and forestry).

The minister pointed out that the restoration of lost land is only the beginning of a process. That land must then be used to increase food production and to create jobs, to ensure a better standard of living for everyone.

Provincial representation

Moutse is now officially part of the Eastern Transvaal Province. The people of Moutse were not consulted in this decision, and many of them are very unhappy about it.

People are arguing that they have no historical connection with Nelspruit (their new provincial capital). Many of them work in Pretoria, which is part of the PWV Province.



Photograph: Cedric Nunn

Representatives of some of the land-claiming communities in Moutse attend a recent meeting with the Minister of Land Affairs

The issue is complicated by the hostility which was created by apartheid between the residents of Moutse and kwaNdebele. Some members of the old kwaNdebele administration now sit on the Eastern Transvaal provincial legislature, and claim to represent the people of Moutse.

The people of Moutse, however, don't recognise them. They see themselves as having had no regional representation since Moutse's excision from Lebowa in October 1980.

The question of provincial representation has important implications for the development of the region.

It has been suggested that a new province be created, with its capital at Middelburg or Witbank. However this would involve a lengthy constitutional process, and

does not address the immediate need for representation.

It has also been argued that Moutse should become part of the PWV Province. Again, this would involve bureaucratic delays, and the PWV Province is not particularly geared to address issues of rural development.

TRAC is therefore encouraging people to focus rather on the need for representation on the provincial cabinet, and on regional committees of the new government's Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP).

Traditional leaders

In Moutse (as in kwaNdebele) traditional leaders were in the forefront of the struggle against the homeland system.

More recently, civic associations (popularly referred to as "ci-

vics") have been formed, and in some places divisions are emerging between those who support the chief and those who support the civic. This has serious implications for local government elections which are scheduled to take place next year.

Because of the history of forced removals, the question of traditional leaders is sometimes extremely complicated. In many cases, people who were resettled still recognise the authority of the traditional leaders of areas from which they were moved.

Traditional structures have tended to exclude marginalised groupings in the community, such as women, youth, and tenants. On the other hand, civics were constituted to operate in towns and cities, and cannot be imported into rural areas without adaptation.



Photograph: Cedric Nunn

In many parts of Moutse, water is still brought in by trucks

It is important for the future of Moutse that people find a way of resolving this issue. In an effort to address this problem, TRAC has undertaken to run workshops on the nature of local government, and on the roles of traditional leaders, civics and local committees.

Conclusions

TRAC is working intensively with only a few specific communities in Moutse (e.g.,

Front page photograph:

The southern boundary of the farm Kuilsrivier, belonging to the Lehwelere community, is one of the many disputed boundaries in Moutse

Lehwelere, Ntoane and Kgobokoane). These communities have immediate problems, which can be resolved in a clearly defined way. It is thought that in solving these local problems, precedents will be set for the solution of similar problems in other parts of Moutse (and elsewhere).

More generally, TRAC is providing advice, training and administrative support to TLRC and

RWM structures in the region, and facilitating negotiations between them and outside organisations (such as development agencies, training organisations, and national and provincial government).

TRAC believes that it is through strong and representative local structures, rather than through outside interventions, that the struggles of the people of Moutse will be won.

Produced by the Transvaal Rural Action Committee
4th floor Khotso House, 62 Marshall Street, Johannesburg
PO Box 62535, Marshalltown 2107, South Africa
Telephone: (011) 833-1060/1/2. Fax: 834-8385
E-Mail: SN0097@connectinc.com

TRAC is an affiliate of the National Land Committee

With the next issue: Index to TRAC Newsletter numbers 1-30



TRAC

Transvaal Rural Action Committee

Affiliated to the National Land Committee

4th floor, Khotso House
62 Marshall Street
Johannesburg

PO Box 62535
Marshalltown
2107 SOUTH AFRICA

E-MAIL: SN0097

Tel: (011) 833-1063

Fax: (011) 834-8385

A Brief history of the Transvaal Ndebele

The Ndebele people entered the Transvaal in the 16th and 17th centuries. They originally settled near present-day Pretoria. There were two distinct groups. The Manala Ndebele remained in the Pretoria area, while the Ndzundza Ndebele settled close to present-day Roosenekal (near the Steelpoort River) in the North of Eastern Transvaal Province.

In the early nineteenth century both groups suffered during the period of turmoil known as the Difaqane. Among their enemies were the Khumalo Ndebele under Mzilikazi, who had recently arrived from Natal. The Manala Ndebele were particularly badly affected, and by the 1870s small remnants of this group were living on Wallmansthal mission and surrounding Boer farms. Mzilikazi's regiments were defeated by the Boers in 1837, and forced to move North of the Limpopo, into present-day Zimbabwe.

The Ndzundza Ndebele survived the crisis, and re-emerged as a strong chiefdom under the leadership of Mabhogo Mahlangu (whom the Boers called Mapoch). By the 1860s they had established a fortified capital in the Eastern Transvaal, and were extracting tribute from Boers in the area.

After the destruction of the Pedi paramountcy by British troops in 1879, relations between the Transvaal Boer republic (the ZAR) and the Ndzundza deteriorated rapidly, and a war of attrition began. In 1883, the Ndzundza chief Nyabela surrendered to the ZAR. The Ndzundza lands were distributed to white farmers, and the people were dispersed throughout the Transvaal as indentured farm-labourers (virtually slaves).

In 1954, a group of Ndebeles under Chief Mapoch sought refuge in the area controlled by Chief Mathebe of Moutse. A farm was bought, and on this flimsy basis Pretoria subsequently decided to construct a new homeland structure. By 1974, there was a core area of 51 000 hectares, and plans were being made to add another 99 000 hectares from Bophuthatswana, Lebowa, and neighbouring white farms.

In 1968, an Ndzundza tribal authority was established, and in 1974 it was given regional powers. In 1977 an Ndebele territorial authority was established, and two years later this authority was replaced by the kwaNdebele Legislative Assembly. In 1981, after the necessary amendments to the Promotion of Black Self-Government Act, kwaNdebele was declared a self-governing territory, and requested independence. The date for independence was set as 11th May 1986, but had to be postponed due to popular resistance.

By this time, large numbers of Ndebele refugees had settled in the area, fleeing ethnic persecution in other bantustans (particularly Bophuthatswana).

The kwaNdebele homeland was completely illogical, even by apartheid's perverse reasoning. In 1986, the homeland's population numbered approximately 200 000, only about 50% of whom were Ndebele. To this the government decided to add over 100 000 Pedi-speaking people living in Moutse, plus the culturally diverse district of Ekangala. This would have effectively made the Ndebele people a minority in what was supposed to be an ethnically determined national state.

Background reading on Moutse and kwaNdebele

Christopher, AJ - *Atlas of apartheid* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1994. ISBN: 1-86814-237-X), pages 69-72, 84

Claassens, Aninka - "Rural land struggles in the Transvaal in the 1980s" in Christina Murray and Catherine O'Regan (eds) - *No place to rest: forced removals and the law in South Africa* (Cape Town: OUP, 1990. ISBN: 0 19 570580 7), pages 42-3

Delius, Peter - "The Ndzundza Ndebele: indenture and the making of ethnic identity" University of the Witwatersrand History Workshop, 9-14 February 1987

Forced removals in South Africa: the SPP Reports Volume five: the Transvaal (Cape Town: Surplus People Project, 1983. ISBN: 0-86810-052-8), pages 47-59, 147-9, 204-5

Goldblatt, David - *The Transported of kwaNdebele* (New York: Aperture, 1989. ISBN: 0-89381-366-4) [A collection of photographs]

Kompe, Lydia, Janet Small and Beauty Mkhize - *The Rural Women's Movement: Holding the knife on the sharp edge* (Johannesburg: TRAC, 1994), pages 26-32

"KwaNdebele: a question of power" (Black Sash conference paper, March 1988)

KwaNdebele: the struggle against "independence" (TRAC, no date)

Land Update (publication of the National Land Committee) number 34, October 1994, pages 7-8

McCall, Colleen - *Satellite in revolt: KwaNdebele: an economic and political profile* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1987. ISBN: 0-86982-314-0)

Now everyone is afraid: the changing face of policing in South Africa (London: Catholic Institute for International Relations, 1988), pages 105-153

Plasket, Clive - "Homeland incorporation: the new forced removals" in Christina Murray and Catherine O'Regan (eds) - *No place to rest: forced removals and the law in South Africa* (Cape Town: OUP, 1990. ISBN: 0 19 570580 7), pages 215-6

Platzky, Laurine and Cherryl Walker - *The Surplus people: forced removals in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1985. ISBN: 0-86975-255-3), pages 178-85, 369-72

Race relations survey 1986, part 2 (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1988. ISBN: 0-86982-330-2), pages 496-7, 546-9, 632-9, 681-92

Small, Janet & Harald Winkler (compilers) - *Botho Sechabeng: a feeling of community* (TRAC, [1994]), pages 24-7

"Submissions to the commission of inquiry into the constitutional and related matters and the political future of the district of Moutse" (TRAC archives, no further details)

TRAC Newsletter number 1, May 1983 - "Transvaal overview", page 5

TRAC Newsletter number 9, September 1985 - "Ekangala"

TRAC Newsletter number 10, April 1986 - "Moutse"