

REMOVALS AND RESETTLEMENTS BOX 1-13

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MASS REMOVALS IN NATAL :  
CONSOLIDATION AND FARM  
EVICTIONS

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**AFRA**

## INTRODUCTION

Removals are about people, about communities. To the people being moved, they are always particular, always specific. A group of people, with their own history and internal politics, get loaded onto trucks at a particular time and taken to a resettlement camp that may be better, may be worse than others, but is never simply typical - "the average". Or a family is given a scrap of paper instructing them to leave the farm on which they have been living, in a particular and personal relationship to land and landowner, and on a special day, a precise date on the calendar, their legal right to be on that land expires and they must find an alternative place or face prosecution. Removals are not an academic issue, nor a topic for merely intellectual debate. Far more important than all the academic or conference papers written on why removals are taking place, are the attempts to stop them and the effects that forced removals are having on actual communities and our rural areas - effects with which planners for any kind of reconstruction in a future South Africa will have to grapple. One of the most frightening aspects of resettlement areas is the social breakdown they reveal - the disorganisation, the demoralisation of people, the fragmentation of families and communities and individuals. On a broader perspective, with every truckload of people dumped in these places, the myth of separate "homelands", whose people have no claim to political rights or the wealth that they have helped produce in our common South Africa, is brought a step closer to becoming a reality. And these separate homelands, with their mushrooming bureaucracies and petty vested interest groups, cannot be wished away simply by labelling them puppet states. There is also the longterm ecological damage being done to our fragile environment, on which all life depends, as more and more people are forced into already devastated areas in or adjacent to the homelands - another aspect with which planners for a future South Africa will have to deal.

By saying that removals are not an academic issue, I do not wish to dismiss all debate and discussion on the subject. I am trying, rather, to put it in perspective and cut it down to size. It is useful, at times essential, to step back and piece together what is happening; to put together an overview that incorporates the particular into a general analysis of what is happening and why. If one is talking about strategies for fighting against removals, one needs an understanding of the dynamics of government policies concerning removals and of the dynamics of the diverse communities being moved. Too many analyses, however, are so abstract that they bear little relationship to what is happening on the ground, or so general that they cannot be applied

to the particular and the local. Often they are built up using only the crudest of statistical data - supplied courtesy of our state Department of Statistics. They deal with national aggregates (x number of tractors in the white farming areas in 1976, for instance) and the arguments thus constructed cannot allow for the immense regional variations that exist in this country and within different sectors of the economy. Finally, and most serious of all, too many theoretical and academic analyses never filter back to the people who are most directly affected and who are, finally, the only ones who will put an end to forced removals - the people being moved. Academic debate, discussions at conferences, do not, of themselves, engage with the realities of political power. They certainly do not stop removals - though they may contribute to that struggle.

Having made that point, by way of introduction and qualification, let me make my own contribution to the discussion. What I am wanting to do is sketch out some of the major dimensions of removals in Natal today. In the limited space available, it is impossible to discuss all categories of removals so this report will focus on two that in terms of the numbers of people involved, are very significant - consolidation removals and farm evictions. But first some general comments about Natal/KwaZulu.

#### 1. NATAL/KWAZULU

Natal is in many ways unique among the provinces - and not only because of the remnants of a colonial culture that still linger on in white society. There are other, more significant features about the area which have made the process of removals in Natal somewhat different from what it has been in the other provinces. In a general sense, what sets Natal apart is the unusual nature of the interaction between Natal and KwaZulu. In Natal there is only one homeland to deal with and, as homelands go, it is a relatively powerful one. KwaZulu dominates Natal in a way that no other homeland dominates any of the other provinces. It is one of the largest and most densely populated, and is the most fragmented of all the homelands. In the mid 1970s KwaZulu consisted officially of 48 major pieces, not counting the 150-odd small black freehold farms scattered throughout the province (the so-called "black spots"); by comparison Bophutatswana, the next most fragmented homeland, consisted of only 19 pieces. KwaZulu is a consolidationist's nightmare, straddling the entire province; the best that ardent Nationalist planners have been able to suggest thus far is that it be reduced to a mere 10 pieces. In addition the KwaZulu government presents Pretoria with the most recalcitrant line against consolidation and against "independence" of all the homelands. In this it has the support of powerful white agricultural and business interests, notably the South African Sugar Association - a tangled alliance

of expedience and opportunism. However cynically one may view homeland politics, it is nevertheless simplistic to dismiss the KwaZulu government as totally irrelevant, impotent homeland stooges not differing in any significant way from other homeland stooges. Ulundi is ultimately dependent on Pretoria, it is Pretoria's baby - but there are many twists and tensions in that particular umbilical cord and this does have repercussions on the nature of removals in Natal/KwaZulu.

There is another feature of the area which is unusual and which has shaped the nature of removals there. In Natal, until very recently, a large percentage of African people retained access to agricultural land outside the scheduled or released reserve lands, either as labour tenants and so-called "squatters" on state or private land or as landowners and their tenants on those black freehold farms already mentioned. These people, living contradictions of homeland theory (or theories), have been a major target of state removal policies. In addition to all this, the region also has a small but strategically very sensitive common border with Mocambique, populated by blacks, and a long and, from the military point of view, exposed coastline stretching south from Mocambique, also populated mainly by blacks.

These features have all been important in determining the nature of forced removals in the province. Removals have been and are a means to an end, not an end in themselves, and have been used by a repressive, undemocratic government to achieve a number of different ends, some immediate, some longterm, and only in the final analysis related to each other. Apart from the implementation of the Group Areas Act and betterment planning within reserve areas (two important but somewhat separate categories of removals which I will not discuss at all here), the major thrusts of forced removals in Natal have been: 1) to consolidate KwaZulu into a more coherent geo-political whole; 2), and in some aspects related to the previous category, to eliminate the large black population living in what is regarded as the white areas, whether on white-owned farms, black-owned farms or in the urban locations, and to relocate them inside the boundaries of a consolidated KwaZulu; and 3) to clear strategic areas of potentially troublesome communities that happen to be living there. As a result of these policies, tens of thousands of people in Natal have already been forcibly relocated over the last 20 years; many more live under the threat of removal at some future date. Forced removals have not been peculiar to the apartheid era in South Africa's history, but they have been essential to it. Without them, "bantustans", "homelands", and now "black national states" could never have been imposed onto the maps.

## 2. CONSOLIDATION

Consolidation is currently a hot political issue and Pretoria, faced with opposition from both within and without its ranks, is delaying publication of its "final" report - the latest in a long history of final reports. There is clearly a great deal of murky manoeuvring and backroom politicking going on. Dr. Koornhof, when he addressed the Natal Agricultural Union's special congress on consolidation in May of this year, said that the major obstacle to the speedy implementation of consolidation in the province is "the unwillingness of the Zulus to be moved". There are, however, other obstacles which the government is less willing to talk about quite so openly, among them the astronomical costs involved (R6 000 million nationally, was one estimate) and the politically far more serious opposition of much of white Natal's agricultural and business interests. "Consolidation would be detrimental to the stability of the sugar industry, and because it is the major industry of Natal, it would therefore be bad for the province as a whole", said the Chairman of the powerful Sugar Association in April 1980.<sup>1</sup>

In the meantime, however, the government is quietly pressing ahead with removals in terms of consolidation: buying and expropriating land, eliminating "black spots" - between 1962 and 1979 about 100 black freehold farms were expropriated and their residents relocated - and altering the present boundaries of KwaZulu. Thus in January 1981 Reserve 4, a scheduled area to the north of Richards Bay, was excised from KwaZulu by proclamation, and its estimated 20 000 people currently await removal: in fear, uncertainty and bitterness. The basic plan to which the government is working is that contained in the 1975 consolidation proposals - although it has become clear that there will be modifications to that when the van der Walt Commission Report, or at least, the Cabinet Committee Report on the van der Walt Report becomes public (within the next 12 months, we have been assured).

The 1975 proposals have been incorporated into many maps; many maps of KwaZulu purporting to show its present boundaries in fact optimistically - didactically - present those proposals as fact, as the already existing boundaries, consolidation at that level literally a "cleaning up of the map". A comparison of the proposed 10 piece consolidated KwaZulu with the messy, jumbled, scattered reality shows the magnitude of the proposed land swaps and deals in terms of acreage; it does not begin to reveal the magnitude of the forced removals that implementation of the plan will entail. I would like, very briefly, to mention some of the areas under threat of removal:

- 1) Paulpietersburg: A large block of Trust land, east of Paulpietersburg on the Natal/Transvaal border, bought up in terms of the 1936 Land Act as additional 'quota' land for the Zulu bantustan and,

as such, used as a resettlement area for evicted labour tenants in the early 1970s; during that time a large resettlement township called Bilanyoni was established to cater for displaced people from the farms - today Bilanyoni houses an estimated 9 000 people. In terms of the 1975 plans, earlier plans for the area's eventual incorporation into KwaZulu were reversed and now perhaps as many as 20 000 people await a further removal, possibly to the Mondlo area south of Vryheid; nobody knows where for certain.

2) Upper Tugela Location: Scheduled reserve land adjacent to the Royal Natal National Park with a population that is estimated variously at between 30 000 and 100 000 people; the 1975 plans call for the removal of the entire population to an expanded block of KwaZulu centering on the Drakensberg Locations 1 and 2 near Estcourt - traditional enemies of the Upper Tugela people. There has been intense lobbying by the Bergville Farmers' Association to have all 3 of these Drakensberg Reserves moved out of the area and the people resettled in the south of Natal, round Harding and Ixopo - to the indignation and counter-lobbying of the Ixopo farmers. The people of Upper Tugela themselves are fiercely opposed to being moved and have already put up a militant opposition to removals necessitated in their area because of the building of the Woodstock Dam.

3) Reserve 4: Already mentioned, near Richards Bay, one of the most favourable areas of KwaZulu with its high rainfall, sub-tropical crops, forest plantations; its excision has already been formally gazetted and the Minister has confirmed, in answer to questions in Parliament during this session, that the people are to be moved but has refused to state to where. The likelihood is that they will be taken to a much drier, bushveld resettlement area called Ntambanana about 30 km west of Empangeni. The chiefs and the communities do not want to leave but are confused about who to negotiate with and how - they no longer form part of KwaZulu and in any case, Ulundi maintains it does not know about the excision. Indications are that at least part of the reason why this area is to be moved is strategic - a precautionary measure, influenced by the proximity of the Reserve to Richards Bay, but part of an ongoing programme of removing Blacks living on the entire coast north of Richards Bay. Since the late 1960s thousands of

coastal dwellers have been pressurised by the state into settling further inland; this process has gone hand in hand with an extensive forestry plantation programme on this northern coastline.

4) "Black Spots" in the Ladysmith area: Over the years several "black spots" have already been cleared in the Ladysmith area; according to official figures, between 1970 and 1979 some 26 000 people were removed to local resettlement camps at Ezakheni, Ekuvukeni, Limehill etc.<sup>2</sup> Dr. Koornhof publicly announced, at the NAU special congress on consolidation in May, that the remaining farms are to be cleared as soon as possible: Matiwane's Kop, Lusitania, Umbulwane and the large Driefontein block of farms - altogether, according to the officials, approximately 88 000 people.<sup>3</sup> The original titledeeds for these places date back into the 1870s and 1880s. All the threatened areas have put it on record that they do not want to be moved; they have functioning committees that are trying to organise and direct the general opposition to the threat of being moved but they have many problems to contend with - isolation, ignorance of the law and its administration, lack of funds and resources, fear, intimidation, co-option of leaders, divisions between land-owners and tenants being some of them. The challenge here, as elsewhere, is not to generate opposition - that is already there, latent or overt - but to translate that opposition into effective and democratic organisation. In the long run communities acquiesce to being moved not because the majority wants to go - not because they are going voluntarily, as the Minister and his civil servants like to maintain - but because they do not have, or do not believe they have, the resources to oppose Pretoria.

5) The Makhatini Flats: On the surface, the other side of the coin - "compensatory" land being offered to KwaZulu in return for other areas excised; a very large strip of land in the extreme north of the province, separating the strip of KwaZulu on the Swazi border from the strip on the Maputaland coast. State land, but in fact not empty, already settled by black people: when the Zululand Reserves were proclaimed in 1904 this strip was not set aside as were the 2 strips neighbouring it to left and right. The state kept control and the black people already living there became, technically, "squatters" on their former territories. Now this already populated land is being offered as compensation for other lands excised from KwaZulu - a fraud of major proportions.

How many people, then are affected by current consolidation plans? The statistics are notoriously inadequate but in 1979, demographers at the University of Natal estimated that if the 1975 proposals were implemented, then some 300 000 people, almost exclusively black, would have to be moved.<sup>4</sup> It is not clear whether they had attempted to include "black spot" removals in their calculations; since, however, very few "black spots" feature on the consolidation maps, being too small, it is unlikely. There are, we estimate, in the region of 140 "black spots" still to be expropriated and removed in Natal, with populations that vary from 500 to over 10 000 people: perhaps another 150 000 to 200 000 people in all. Combining these two figures, then, one can project a figure that approaches half a million people under threat of removal for consolidation purposes - in Natal alone.

When one is dealing with figures as grotesquely large as that, it does not really matter whether 100 000 or 500 000 people are moved. The fact is that consolidation has meant and will mean that vast numbers of settled communities must be uprooted. The people are to be trucked to barren, rudimentary resettlement camps. For a substantial number of people it will be the second or even the third time that they will have been forced to move, to start building a house, a place, a community from scratch all over again.

What of conditions in the resettlement areas? If people living on scheduled - reserve - land are moved, they generally qualify as a tribe for agricultural land and, depending on how their chief allocates the compensatory land, they may still have land after being moved. However, such land is often of a poorer quality than the land the tribe held before. A particularly glaring example of the substitution of marginal for good-potential land through consolidation is in the Richards Bay area. Here, in 1976, some 6 000 people were moved from Reserve 6, high-rainfall, sub-tropical coastal land, to Ntambanana, 50 km inland: drought-stricken bushveld country, suitable for extensive cattle-ranching, perhaps, but not for dense settlement or cultivation. If a "Black spot" is moved, only the small minority of landowners owning more than 20 ha. of land qualify for compensatory land. The bulk of the people - the small landowners and the tenants-lose all access to land and are settled in euphemistically termed "closer settlements". Former cattle-owners, people with a rural base, are allocated small, township-size plots, laid out in a grid, given a temporary prefabricated hut made out of sheet metal (a "fletcraft") and told to rebuild. They are forbidden to keep stock and reduced to total dependence on cash incomes: outside wage employment, when available, pensions, or semi-legal and illegal informal activities such as beer-brewing, hawking, dagga-running, stocktheft, etc.

Ignoring the fundamental issue of landlessness, the government publicly - blandly - assures us that it always provides the basic infrastructure of water, sanitation, clinics and schools before it resettles people. Thus Dr.



Koornhof, speaking in Parliament in April 1980, said that resettlement areas are "first planned, developed and certain basic requirements such as water, sanitation, schools and clinics are provided without any cost to the people resettled."<sup>5</sup> It is probably true that conditions in resettlement areas have, overall, improved since the terrible days of Mondlo, Limehill and Sada in the 1960s. Pretoria is a little more sensitive to adverse publicity these days (although in the light of the recent Nyanga Bush removals in the Western Cape, that proposition has become more dubious). However, as anybody who has visited the resettlement camps of the 1970s will be able to testify, these places are not the well-planned, well-serviced model villages that the government pretends they are. In many places the basic infrastructure that the government says is always there is lacking - this is most often the case in the remote areas where few journalists and opposition politicians venture.

At a place called Qudeni, for instance, north of Kranskop, people have been living for five years without any official water supply, only a polluted stream from which they themselves have dug a furrow. Only this year have a dam and piping been installed, not, however, by the authorities, but by a private contractor and the people of Qudeni are having to pay R35 per family for the privilege of getting water piped to their plots. At Ntambanana, mentioned above, as well as having a totally inadequate water supply, there were no schools other than rudimentary prefabs when the people of Reserve 6 were moved there in 1976; now there are four primary schools but not yet the official secondary school for which the community has been agitating for a long time. At Mbazwana, near Sodwana Bay, the state had made no provision for water and basic health services - had not even warned the malaria control officials - when they dumped thousands of people there in 1979. A doctor at nearby Mseleni Hospital has estimated that now half their malnutrition cases, in what is a very large health ward, come from this one resettlement community alone.

These are 3 examples; I could give many more which expose the lie of free services and all basic facilities. But a further point that needs to be made, is that even if these very basic facilities - facilities that are crude by comparison with the facilities all of us take for granted - even if these were provided, that still would not make the policy of forced removals acceptable. Too much of liberal opposition to removals centres only on the physical suffering that it imposes on people in resettlement areas, to the exclusion of other issues. As soon as people like Dr. Koornhof can say that they have given rations/put in a clinic/put in taps, then the entire argument against removals appears to collapse.

Undoubtedly people who are moved do suffer materially, particularly in the short-term. Compensation is inadequate, goods are damaged in the move, people leave valuable assets, e.g. fruit trees, behind. Preliminary results of

a survey we have conducted at a resettlement camp called Compensation, 70 km from Pietermaritzburg, bear this out. About 350 people were resettled there in July of this year, having finally been forced to leave a small, obscure "black spot" called KwaPitela near Sani Pass in the Drakensberg. From our survey, it appears that the average compensation paid out was in the region of R379 (obviously with a wide range of actual amounts paid); based on an earlier survey we conducted before the people were moved from their homes at KwaPitela, the average value of Kwa-Pitela homesteads was in the region of R880 - a R500 shortfall. Again, the crude figures, the averages, point to the material loss suffered; they cannot possibly convey what that means to those moved, the struggle that that loss imposes on the families faced with the huge task of rebuilding a house, a home, with meagre resources. Those being moved off "black spots" who do not qualify for compensatory land - the great majority - are probably the worst off of all those forced to move for consolidation purposes: they lose a vital subsistence supplement in the form of the land and stock they enjoyed before and have to adapt to a landless, foreign way of life in those 'closer settlement' tin towns.

It is probably true, however, that in terms of material deprivation, resettlement areas are, again "on average", no worse-off than many other settled reserve communities. All are deprived, neglected, dependent for their survival on cash incomes earned by those lucky enough to get jobs in the distant, restricted-entry urban areas - the homelands being, in a sense, no more than extended resettlement camps themselves. To focus attention only on resettlement areas obscures the general crisis of landlessness, poverty, unemployment in the black rural areas. However, even more devastating than the material losses caused by removals and an aspect which does set resettlement areas apart from more established reserve communities, is the social and psychological cost that forced removals impose on people - costs which neither clinics nor taps (when available) can make good. The trauma of being moved, uprooted, wrenched from the familiar and, without being able to control the process, dumped in the foreign, the unfamiliar, saps the vitality and coherence of communities and individuals. One person once described a particular resettlement area to me as a place where all are strangers and that probably sums up the general situation. There is anger, there is bitterness, but instead of this being channelled into positive organisation and constructive action to challenge the oppressive structures that control these areas, too often the anger dissolves into apathy or is released in a violence that is turned inwards and takes the form of anti-social behaviour, crime, an individualistic battle for survival.

Eliot Mngadi, a former landowner at a "black spot" called Roosboom, near Ladysmith, which was cleared in 1976 in terms of consolidation planning and moved to the huge resettlement township of Ezakheni, has described the differences between the community of Roosboom and the non-community at Ezakheni thus:

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"After dark you cannot just walk in the streets at Ezakheni. And, a part I don't understand, out of every ten people there, eight have guns. I know that they don't have any licenses but still they have guns. Now at Roosboom, we were a Christian community. We had no hooligans, no criminals, no people interfering with the stock of their white neighbours. At Roosboom you could walk safely both day and night without anybody interfering with you. But at Ezakheni - in fact, I must leave this meeting before 5 o'clock to get home before it's dark.

"At Roosboom I had planned for my old age, that I would keep just 5 cows and my own chickens. You know, when you have your own milk, your own chickens, what do you want? I get a visitor, I slaughter a chicken; a best friend, I slaughter a sheep. In winter I slaughter a beast for my own children. That is the life I had planned for my old age. But now, in my old age, I have to start afresh, at this new place where I have to be careful that small boys do not shoot me. So that is why I say: you people who are still at your own places, stay there! Sit tight!"<sup>6</sup>

In addition to the longterm damage being done to social structures and institutions by removals, there are, as I have already mentioned briefly in the introduction, fundamental economic and political arguments against removals - against consolidation - that again all the clinics and all the taps in South Africa can never explain away. Natal/KwaZulu is a single entity; for better or for worse, it forms a part of a greater South Africa - historically, socially, economically, ecologically - and nothing that the present government does to deny or distort that basic reality, can alter that fact, although it may delay and complicate its ultimate resolution.

### 3. FARM EVICTIONS

The category of farm evictions - removals of black workers or tenants, "squatters", and their families off white-owned farms - has some features in common with removals as a result of consolidation planning but is also, in certain fundamental respects, separate. Whereas I would argue that consolidation removals are carried out with a primarily political end in view, evictions off white-owned farms are the product of a complicated interaction of the economic and the political. Several different processes have been at work in the white farming areas of Natal over the past 15 years or so, one result of which has been that many thousands of people have been driven off land on which they were living, often for generations, and forced to resettle, or forcibly resettled, elsewhere - in state-controlled resettlement camps, on Trust land, in KwaZulu, on nearby "black spots", even on other white farms. It has been,

and still is, a complicated, confused process - a major social upheaval in the lives of thousands of voiceless people, an important but poorly documented category of removals.

Until the late 1960s, the most common form of farm labour in Natal was that of labour tenancy, a system that had evolved over several generations into what was commonly known as "the six-month system". Under this system, a family supplied the white landowner with their labour, generally for six months of the year, at a nominal or non-existent wage, in return for the right to graze some stock and cultivate some land on the farm: labour serving as a form of land-rent. It was a labour-exploitative system, but in a situation in which access to both land and the cities was severely restricted for African people, it had certain attractions to which most labour tenants clung. Chief of these was the scope it offered them to keep cattle and to plough.

Then, during the 1960s and early 1970s, the state, in conjunction with organised agriculture (but not with blanket support from all white farmers), launched a drive to eliminate labour tenancy throughout South Africa and to replace it with a system of reduced, fulltime farm labour. The promotion of a more efficient, capital-intensive agriculture was one consideration; there were also fears being voiced about the political and security risks of what was officially described as "die beswarming van die platteland" (the blackening of the platteland). During this period, the central government proclaimed district after district as non-labour tenant areas; farmers were instructed to switch over to a fulltime labour system and those labour tenants not prepared to make the change, were evicted and taken by state trucks - the infamous GG trucks - to resettlement camps. In Natal, where the labour tenant system was particularly deeply entrenched, the peak period for these state-sponsored evictions was between 1969 and about 1976. I do not have figures for the total number of people thus evicted but in one district alone, the Weenen district in central Natal, contemporary newspaper reports estimated that about 20 000 people were moved over a period of about six, crisis-ridden months.<sup>7</sup> Certainly many thousands of labour tenants and their families were pushed off land which they regarded as their own, forced to sell their cattle to eager white farmers at criminally low prices, and resettled in bleak, rudimentary "closer settlements", hastily erected and generally miles from the urban centres on which these people were now dependent for their living - Nondweni, Bilanyoni, Sahlumbe, Nomoya, Emakhoseni, dreary, depressed rural slums where these people are still living today.

In these settlements, farm evictees face the same problems as former "black spot" residents: landlessness, high unemployment, a foreign township-style of life. This is how one resettled ex-labour tenant, a woman who was moved off a Weenen farm to a resettlement camp called Sahlumbe, on the Tugela River, has described what happened to her:

"A BAD man gave me a stand which had four poles at the corners and said that that was where I could build my house. I was given a tent to erect on the stand. As soon as we had put a roof on the first hut, the tent was taken away for someone else. A water tanker was parked nearby so that we could get water to make the mud walls of our huts. The moment the tents were taken away, the tanker was also taken elsewhere.<sup>7</sup>

"There were no latrines... We came from homes where the nearest neighbour was half a mile away and there were thick bushes to give one privacy. Now we were all living right on top of each other. When we were moved we were told that we could not take our cattle and goats with us and that there was no land for us to cultivate because there were already too many people in the location."<sup>8</sup>

The elimination of labour tenancy in Natal during this period, was not achieved without resistance - both tenants and some farmers themselves clung tenaciously to the only system of labour and land tenure that they know. Those being evicted generally regarded the land as theirs. Many households had lived there for generations; they could point to family graves that dated back well into the 19th century and proved their prior claim to the land. At some stage, title to the land had passed to the white settlers but the tenants' ties of settlement, cultivation and family history were far more binding to them than a mere titledeed, a piece of paper that many could not even read. Many tenants refused to accept their eviction notice and had to be driven off by police and farmers, who came with dogs and guns and fire, burned down huts, impounded cattle, arrested the people still living on the land. A group of former labour tenants in the Dannhauser district, now living at Qudeni (already mentioned), have described the process of their eviction in 1975/76 thus:

"We saw whites arriving with police, alleging that our boys refused to work (on the farm)... Thereafter we were given letters to vacate which we took to the Commissioner's office at Dannhauser... The Commissioner wanted to know our ideas; we told him we only needed assistance because our children were no longer keen to work on farms. He promised to approach his senior officer in Pietermaritzburg to contact the KwaZulu government..."

<sup>7</sup> Their nearest water supply then became the Tugela River, about a kilometre away; today the state has still not provided a clean water supply.

"While we were waiting police came to arrest us and we were kept in Dannhauser cells. A fine of R30 per head was fixed. We requested the magistrate to call the senior magistrate at Pietermaritzburg and also requested help from the KwaZulu government. They both told us that there is a place at Nondweni but it is a town and no preparations had been made yet... We told them that Nondweni can't be a good place for us; in particular, we have stock and if we were interested in town life we would be going to nearer towns such as Osisweni and Madadeni.

"The Commissioner advised us not to sell our beasts and further promised to fix something for us within a period of six months. During the waiting period we were summoned to come before the Commissioner's court at Dannhauser where we were told that we were not required in the place and further were threatened that if we did not move away we would be arrested and sentenced to imprisonment... We told him that we were not refusing to move but were still waiting for a decision from Pietermaritzburg...

"On the 15th July 1976 GG trucks arrived with soldiers, police and their dogs. They said they did not need any argument but had just come to move us to Qudeni. We enquired - how can we be moved while we are still waiting for something from the Commissioner in Pietermaritzburg? We were told that what was happening was on his instructions."<sup>9</sup>

In this case, the tenants finally submitted to the removal trucks when they arrived. In other instances, tenants attempted to outwit the trucks. A group of tenants facing removal from a Weenen farm to Madadeni, far to the north of their former home, hid their possessions and loaded trucks and packages filled only with stones onto the removal trucks; on being dumped at Madadeni, they then found their own way back to the Weenen district, many returning to squat on their former land.

Such resistance as there was, however, was localised, often individual and spontaneous, reacting to the crisis as it hit. There were - and are - no farm-worker organisations to take up the struggle on a wider basis, to lobby on behalf of those being evicted, and mould them into a united group. Local tenant opposition could succeed in delaying the evictions; it could even, perhaps, win concessions about where the tenants would be resettled; it could not, however, prevent evictions when the local farmers and local authorities were agreed on the necessity or inevitability of enforcing them. As a result, the majority of labour tenants in Natal were removed during this period, and by the late 1970s government planners, cosy

in their offices with their files, were convinced that the system had been eliminated. The Rieckert Commission of 1979 certainly made that assumption; so too did some academics.

There is, however, always a gap between the proclamation of policy at the centre and its effective enforcement and administration in the outlying areas. Not all farmers wanted to make the change to fulltime labour - smallscale, under-capitalised farmers, absentee farmers, traditionalist farmers, perhaps lazy farmers who had calculated what it would cost in terms of energy and time to get rid of stubborn tenant households. During 1979 reports began to surface, from development agencies and in newspapers, that indicated that although greatly reduced, labour tenancy in various guises was still being practised by certain farmers in certain areas, among them the Weenen/Muden, Louwsberg and Ladysmith districts. The government responded by issuing a proclamation in September 1979 which set the end of August 1980 as the final date for the automatic expiry of all labour tenant contracts.

It is clear today that there are still pockets of labour tenancy, still a gap between intent at the centre and administration at the periphery, but these remnants are gradually being gathered up. As a result of the proclamation, there was a further spate of evictions, with a number of cases coming to light in the Weenen area. Sometimes, however, the changes have been purely cosmetic. In the Louwsburg area it appears - though further work is needed on this - that farmers have transformed the outer form of the labour contract, by converting the tenant family's labour obligation from a six month one to a twelve month one, but without improving or even instituting wages, and without converting the tenant's obligation to work from a family one to an individual one. Still, in essence, a feudal relationship but now a more onerous one for the worker. Nevertheless, overall, the labour tenant system has by now been replaced by a fulltime wage system. With this, a significant phase in the history of land and labour relationships in the Natal countryside has been brought to an end and thousands upon thousands of farm people have been transformed into a landless rural proletariat. (The people of Nondweni, of Sahlumbe, of Bilanyoni, of Qudeni, hidden from view from the cities).

The tapering off of labour tenancy has not meant the ending of farm evictions, however. These are still continuing though on a lesser scale and for somewhat different reasons from before. In this last section, I would like, briefly to outline the major features of farm evictions as they are happening today in Natal: still a major area of removals, still poorly documented, poorly understood, widely dispersed but hard to quantify.

During the past 5 years, evictions have, more and more, come to be the result not of state-sponsored action but

of private action - with state backing - of individual farmers and farming companies against fulltime workers, workers who for a variety of reasons are no longer wanted on the land. The massive, state-sponsored evictions of the early 1970s are a thing of the past. Now it is a more gradual, less dramatic whittling down of the numbers of black people living and working on white farms. A family here, perhaps five or six there - but cumulatively, amounting to thousands of people. In the last 2 years AFRA has collected details on about 200 farm eviction cases coming mainly from the central triangle of Weenen, Greytown, Mooi River. We know that that is the mere tip of the iceberg. Further north, clinic staff at Nondweni, the resettlement camp south of Vryheid, estimated in April this year that about 60 farm families had moved in there since the beginning of the year. In the KwaZulu district of Nongoma an agricultural officer has given a figure of about 20 families a month entering the area during 1980/81, looking for places to live, having been evicted off farms in the Vryheid/Louwsburg area.<sup>10</sup>

There appear to be several processes at work although, again, a great deal of work needs to be done in correlating and refining the broad trends in relation to what is actually happening in particular farming districts. Speaking very broadly, there is, firstly, the increased mechanisation of agriculture - those thousands of tractors referred to earlier. With increased mechanisation, many farmers are reducing their formerly large labour force and relying more on a small nucleus of permanent workers, supplemented by seasonal or casual labour at peak labour periods. Secondly, it appears that, overall, farm ownership is being concentrated in fewer hands and as previously separate farms become joined into a single management block, so their combined labour force is streamlined and reduced. Thirdly, with that, many farmers are wanting to extend the area on their farms under cultivation or grazing and to limit the amount of land set aside for their workers to cultivate or graze stock upon. They may, as a consequence, either give redundant workers notice direct or they may limit their workers' access to land and thus bring workers themselves to decide to leave the farm - the disadvantages of farmlife coming to outweigh the advantages more strongly.

Many evictions occur when farm ownership changes hands. Partly this relates to the factors above; partly to a fourth factor which is that farmers are less inclined today than before to shoulder the welfare and control tasks imposed on them by a large labour force and, particularly, by the extended families of the labour force, many members of which are not working on the land. Farmers complain bitterly that they are not only employer, they are doctor, ambulance driver, policeman and Father Christmas as well. The point is that in shedding these other roles, they are shedding people who have been tied in a particular relationship to land, have serviced the needs of white agriculture over several generations, have only just become redundant to its needs and can make no claim on the state to provide them with viable alternatives: somewhere to live, fully



and decently, and to work.

There is a fifth factor at work, something which is not new but has been true of conditions on our farms from the beginning - the omnipotent position of the farmer, as employer and landowner, in relation to the families living and working on his land. Many current evictions are the result of what in an urban-industrial context would be described as pure victimisation. Farm-workers are a completely unprotected category of workers. They are not covered by the Industrial Conciliation Legislation and, in a dispute between employer and employee, all power rests in the hands of the employer, the farmer. Provided he gives a worker legitimate notice - one month - he may legally evict him for any reason that he likes; and if, as often happens, he does not give a legitimate notice period he is likely to get away with it anyway. We have on record cases of workers injured during work, or elderly people who have spent a lifetime living and working on the land, being given notice because they are too frail to work and their children are unwilling to work for the farmer in their place; of workers who have complained about poor working conditions being dismissed for being "agitators", trouble-makers.

Finally, while talking about evictions and removals from farms, one should point out that there are those who choose to leave the farms - who, weighing up the crudely limited options, decide that on balance they will be better off in KwaZulu itself or as a tenant on a "black spot" or in a squatter settlement on the edge of town. It is a private and individual choice - a form of "voluntary" removal, coerced and controlled by many hidden pressures and forces.

Where do the evicted farmworkers of the 1980s go to? The earlier period saw largescale resettlement by the state - the agent of eviction - in 'closer settlements', those tin-towns on Trust land. Today, since evictions are generally private, relatively few families are being resettled officially by the state. The local commissioner (magistrate) may make a site in a resettlement area available to an evicted farm-worker if approached and asked for help, but the majority of farm-workers that AFRA has dealt with strenuously avoid this alternative if at all possible. Many families eventually end up in resettlement camps but that is usually only as a last resort. The largest single objection is that people are not allowed to keep stock there. Rather than accept that, evicted farm-workers go to enormous lengths to find a private solution to what is in fact a political problem. They may try to appeal to the evicting farmer to change his mind, often paying arbitrarily fixed "fines" of cattle, or submitting to docked wages to achieve this. They may simply "squat" and hope, passively, to wear the farmer down into changing his mind or at least ignoring them - a precarious strategy at best. They may approach neighbouring farmers for a place, an indawo; a few lucky ones may succeed. Farmers one speaks to will report a steady stream of supplicants for a job, a place...hat in hand, at the back door. Other evictees are crowding into neighbouring areas of

KwaZulu, often bribing the local induna for a site on which to build, or renting a space on a "black spot" where they face the threat of another removal at some stage. In doing so, they place further strain on communities whose resources are already stretched or depleted.

What of resistance? As in the past, it is fragmented, localised, very individualistic. Continued "squatting" and individual acts of sabotage against individual farmers' property are probably two of the most common overt signs of opposition. There are still no worker organisations straddling farm boundaries; meetings, access to farms by outsiders, communication are all enormously difficult undertakings. The KwaZulu government, apart from speeches, has not attempted to tackle the problems of farm-workers who, as it is quick to point out, do not come under its jurisdiction anyway. Farm-workers are generally dismissed as individuals now, making organised action even more difficult than in the past when large numbers of people in a single district faced the same crisis at the same time. Workers who have not been given notice are too intimidated to support those who have; they know how vulnerable they are. By way of example of what this can mean: in 1979 I was in contact with a group of about 8 families who had all been given notice to leave a farm in the Weenen district - a labour farm with an absentee landlord who was coming under pressure from the local authorities and the Soil Conservation Board to control the numbers of people living on his farm. There were a further 10 families also living on the farm who had not been given notice but it was clear that that was likely to follow at a later date. This second group, who had not yet been given notice, absolutely refused to attend any of the meetings arranged by the evicted group, out of fear that to do so would expose them to the wrath of the farmer. A few months after the first group had been cleared off the land, the second group received their notice - too late for them to benefit at all by the discussion that had at least accompanied the eviction of the first group.

The position of the farm-workers is an enormously complicated one; the solutions are not easy, either to propose or to achieve once decided upon. In the plight of the evicted farm-workers and their families, wider issues of exploitation and of powerlessness are exemplified. An eviction notice means more than simply the loss of a job, serious as that may be; it also means the loss of a home, of access to land, of security, of a way of life - perhaps of life itself. The individual farm-worker receiving that notice is a victim of processes of political and economic change over which he has no control. Without influx control, many people living on white farms would have moved to the cities long ago. They have been chained to the rural areas. Now, no

longer needed by the white farms, they are being pushed out even further into the periphery. The middleterm solution is obviously to build up farm-worker organisations, to extend to them minimum protection in their employment; the longterm solutions will not be found under existing political and economic structures.

#### CONCLUSION

What are the conclusions to be pulled together out of this very broad (and partial) survey? That mass removals are continuing and future ones planned for Natal on a scale that is difficult to grasp; that in the vast majority of cases these removals are neither voluntary nor well-planned but are coerced, whether overtly or subtly, destructive - destabilising to both communities and the environment; that there is widespread resentment and opposition among those threatened with removals or already removed, but organisation among them is mostly weak... all of these are partial conclusions, an interim assessment of an ongoing struggle. Mass removals in Natal today can be seen as a continuation, in another form, of the 19th century wars of conquest and dispossession during which the colonial power drastically reduced, restructured and controlled black access to land to serve its own ends. The final conclusion to that process has yet to be written.

NOTES

1. Natal Mercury, 31.10.81.
2. Compiled from reply to Question No. 537, House of Assembly, April 1980.
3. Reply to Question No. 200, House of Assembly, 26.2.81.
4. Daily News, 28.6.79.
5. Reply to Question No. 545, House of Assembly, 22.4.80.
6. E. Mngadi: The Removal of Roosboom, AFRA Special Report, 1981.
7. AFRA Report No. 3, July 1980.
8. AFRA Report No. 3, July 1980.
9. Qudeni Committee: Report from Qudeni Settlement, June 1981 (AFRA Files).
10. AFRA Fieldtrip Notes, 1981.

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