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SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTE OF RACE RELATIONS (INC.)
SUID-AFRIKAANSE INSTITUUT VIR RASSEVERHOUDINGS (INCELYP).

ASIATIC BAZAAR NO. 2, EAST RAND, BOKSBURG.

1. I visited Asiatic Bazaar No. 2 on the afternoon of the 14th December, 1949, in order to ascertain (a) the conditions under which the Indians are living there and (b) the suitability or otherwise of the alternative accommodation reported to have been offered to the Indian residents of Bazaar No. 2 on whom orders have been served by the Boksburg Town Council to demolish their dwellings in that locality.

2. During my inspection I was accompanied by Mr. N.G. Naidoo, a general dealer of the Bazaar, Secretary of the Boksburg Standholders Association and representative of the Indians on various organisations. Except for personal observations, the following information was given to me by Mr. Naidoo. I have not had the opportunity of checking any of it with the Boksburg Town Council.

3. The so-called Bazaar, an Indian location, is situated about 800 yards from the East Rand Railway Station. It consists of approximately 100 stands, 50' x 50' in size, of which approximately 50 are occupied and 50 vacant. Between 70 and 80 Indians African and Coloured families occupy the wood and iron structures erected on the 50 occupied stands. There are five Indian-owned licensed stores some of which are housed in fairly substantial brick buildings. A census taken about six months ago revealed that some 500 Indians and some 100 Africans and Coloureds lived in the location. A large number of Africans have since been ejected by the Boksburg Town Council and have been offered satisfactory alternative accommodation at the Stirtonville Native Location. There are,

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however, still many Africans and Coloureds in the Bazaar, all of whom are sub-tenants.

4. The Indian tenants pay the Boksburg Town Council a monthly rent of 5/- for each residential stand and 10/- for each business stand. In addition, the residents pay the water and sanitation. The sanitation - night soil removal system - costs the tenants from 10/- to 25/- monthly according to the number of members in each family. Removal is supposed to take place nightly but the residents complain that this is often not done and that they frequently have to report the non-removal of buckets to the municipal authorities. Water is laid on, one tap being provided for each stand. Residents pay 4/- per 1000 gallons and state that the water supply is adequate.
5. The location itself is in a disgraceful condition and is certainly one of the dirtiest and most unhygienic I have seen. The Indians themselves have erected the structures which serve as their homes. They are mostly of wood and iron, each building consisting of 5 to 6 rooms, the average size of each room being approximately 10' x 12' x 8' to 9'. On an average 5 to 6 families occupy each building, i.e. one family per room. The buildings are almost without exception in an extremely dilapidated state with the corrugated iron badly eroded. Cooking is done mostly on braziers (imbaula) in the back or front yards, coal being used for fuel. Candles, and in a few cases, hurricane lamps, are used for lighting. Three parallel "streets" run through the location. They are also in a disgraceful state with pools of stagnant water which accumulated during the recent rains.
6. The residents say that they are prepared to effect improvements to their shanties; some wish to erect new structures and others wish to renovate the existing ones. Permission has been sought from the municipal authorities for these renovations, but have, according to the tenants, been regularly refused on the ground

that it was the Municipality's intention to disestablish the location and to establish a new township for the Indians who live there. According to Mr. Naidoo, this has been going on for the last 25 to 30 years, with the result that the existing structures have deteriorated to such an extent that they are no longer fit for habitation.

7. Short history of Asiatic Bazaar No. 2.

(i) According to Mr. Naidoo, the location came into existence in approximately 1896, when, as a result of an epidemic which broke out amongst the Indians then living in Boksburg East, the new site was allocated to those Indians who wished to leave Boksburg East. Several families availed themselves of the opportunity and erected houses in the area which later became known as Asiatic Bazaar No. 2. Only a few of the original Indian dwellers are still alive and some of them maintain that the area was "given to them" by Paul Kruger. All attempts to establish this claim by documentary evidence have, however, been unsuccessful.

(ii) As far back as 25 to 30 years ago, the Indian residents submitted applications to the Boksburg Municipality for permission to erect decent dwellings on the stands, but permission has constantly been refused and the residents informed that another area would be set aside somewhere else for the establishment of a new township. In the meantime the original structures deteriorated so much that the area was proclaimed a slum in 1942. (Government Gazette of the 26th June, 1942). The Slums Court sat under the chairmanship of Mr. Venter who was then mayor of Boksburg. After the session had lasted for about three months, the Chairman adjourned the proceedings and told the residents that the decision of the Court would be conveyed to them. No decision was, however, given and it was only by accident that the residents learned about the proclamation in the Government Gazette of the 26th June, 1942.

(iii) Shortly afterwards notice was served on the occupants

of the dwellings calling on them to vacate the premises by the 30th October, 1942. In view of these notices, a deputation led by Mr. Leslie Blackwell, then Member of Parliament for Kensington met the then Minister of the Interior, Mr. Harry Lawrence. The deputation was informed by Mr. Lawrence that it had been decided to disestablish the Bazaar and that alternative accommodation would be provided. The Deputation pointed out to Mr. Lawrence that no alternative accommodation was available. The matter was left at that and nothing further happened until the recent orders to demolish.

(iv) In all, 16 orders to demolish have thus far been served. Of these only 5 have led to actual demolition. (As the tenants did not obey the orders, the five structures were demolished by the Boksburg Municipal authorities.) The occupants of the five structures were all Africans who were subsequently offered alternative satisfactory accommodation at the Stirtonville Native Location. Of the remaining 11 orders, 5 expired on the 10th December, 1949, but the occupants failed to comply, nor has the municipal authorities carried out the threat to themselves demolish if the tenants failed to do so. The orders usually allow a period of 30 days for demolition. The date of expiry of the remaining 6 orders have been postponed to the 21st December, 1949 (?) to enable the municipal authorities to meet the tenants. Mr. Naidoo informed that that at such meetings the tenants were not allowed to put forward their own views - they are merely informed of the decisions of the municipal authorities.

(v) As far as Mr. Naidoo knew none of the 11 occupants who have received orders to demolish has been advised that alternate accommodation would be provided or that they were to move to any other area.

8. "The New Area".

(i) Mr. Naidoo stated that according to press reports which he had seen, land for a proposed new township for the Indians was approved by both Houses of Parliament in July or August, 1949. The Boksburg Municipality has, however, not advised the residents of Bazaar No. 2 of the area which has been set aside. It has merely advised them that houses would in due course be provided for those persons whose houses are to be demolished. According to Mr. Naidoo there is talk amongst the Indians of Bazaar No. 2 that the site which has been set aside for the Indians of both Asiatic Bazaar No. 1 and No. 2 is one known as Leeuwpoort No. 6 or 7, some 52 acres in extent, which is situated approximately midway between the two bazaars. I visited this area which is suitable for the establishment of a new township and which will be acceptable to the Indians. The Boksburg municipality has, however, not indicated its intentions in the matter.

(ii) Recently, however, the Municipality commenced erecting new structures amongst two lanes of bluegum trees on the outskirts of Asiatic Bazaar No. 1, about 1 mile from Asiatic Bazaar No. 2. Rumour has it that these structures are to serve as alternate accommodation for the tenants of demolished houses in Bazaar No. 2, but so far no Indians have moved into them and I was unable to ascertain whether any of them had actually been notified to move into them. In fact, as far as I could gather, the new structures have on no occasion been indicated as substitute accommodation, for the families whose houses have been demolished. The following case related to me by Mr. Naidoo seems to strengthen this :-

(iii) An order was recently served on the tenant of Stand No. 36, Asiatic Bazaar No. 2, that the structure on his stand was to be demolished. The occupant engaged the services of an attorney Advocate (?) S. Cooper who took the matter to Court.

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Under cross-examination Mr. Cooper asked the Boksburg Town Clerk what alternative accommodation would be supplied by his Council. The Town Clerk replied that no alternative accommodation would be supplied and that the occupants could find accommodation amongst their friends and relatives.

(iv) I visited the new structures which are being erected on the outskirts of Asiatic Bazaar No. 3. Thus for ¹four have been built all of old and eroded corrugated iron and wood. They are approximately 14' x 7' x 7'3" in size, subdivided into two rooms, each 7' x 7' x 7'3". Mr. Naidoo is of the opinion that the corrugated iron from the demolished houses in Asiatic Bazaar No. 2 is being used for the new structures and the indications are that he is right in this. A doorway, approximately 6'6 x 2' is provided in each room and also an opening for a window, approximately 3' x 2'. No doors or windows have as yet been provided. The "floors" consist of soft damp earth. The indications are that the roof of the structures will leak badly during rains. According to Mr. Naidoo, two families - ranging from 2 to 10 or more persons - will be expected to occupy each structure, i.e. one family per room. I would certainly describe the structures as "totally unfit for human habitation", to use Mr. Naidoo's words. The general feeling amongst the Indians is that if they have to move into this area, a slum much worse than the present one will be created and I am in agreement with this opinion. The Indians will, therefore, resist any attempts to move them to this area because they fear that even if the municipal authorities were to inform them that the arrangement was only a temporary one, they might have to wait another 20 years or more before they are able to move into decent accommodation.

9. SUMMARY.

- (i) The position regarding alternative accommodation for the tenants of demolished houses in Bazaar No. 2 is obscure.
- (ii) If the new structures which are being erected on the outskirts of Bazaar No. 1 are to serve as alternate accommodation, I would strongly advise that pressure be brought to bear on the Boksburg Municipality to abandon the idea as these structures are, judged by any standard, unfit for human habitation.

N.B. Since my visit to this area, Mr. Naideo has advised me by telephone that the Boksburg Municipality has ceased erecting new structures near Bazaar No. 1. He feels that, due to the objections raised by the Indians of Bazaar No. 2, the Municipality has perhaps abandoned the idea of offering the structures as alternative accommodation.

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