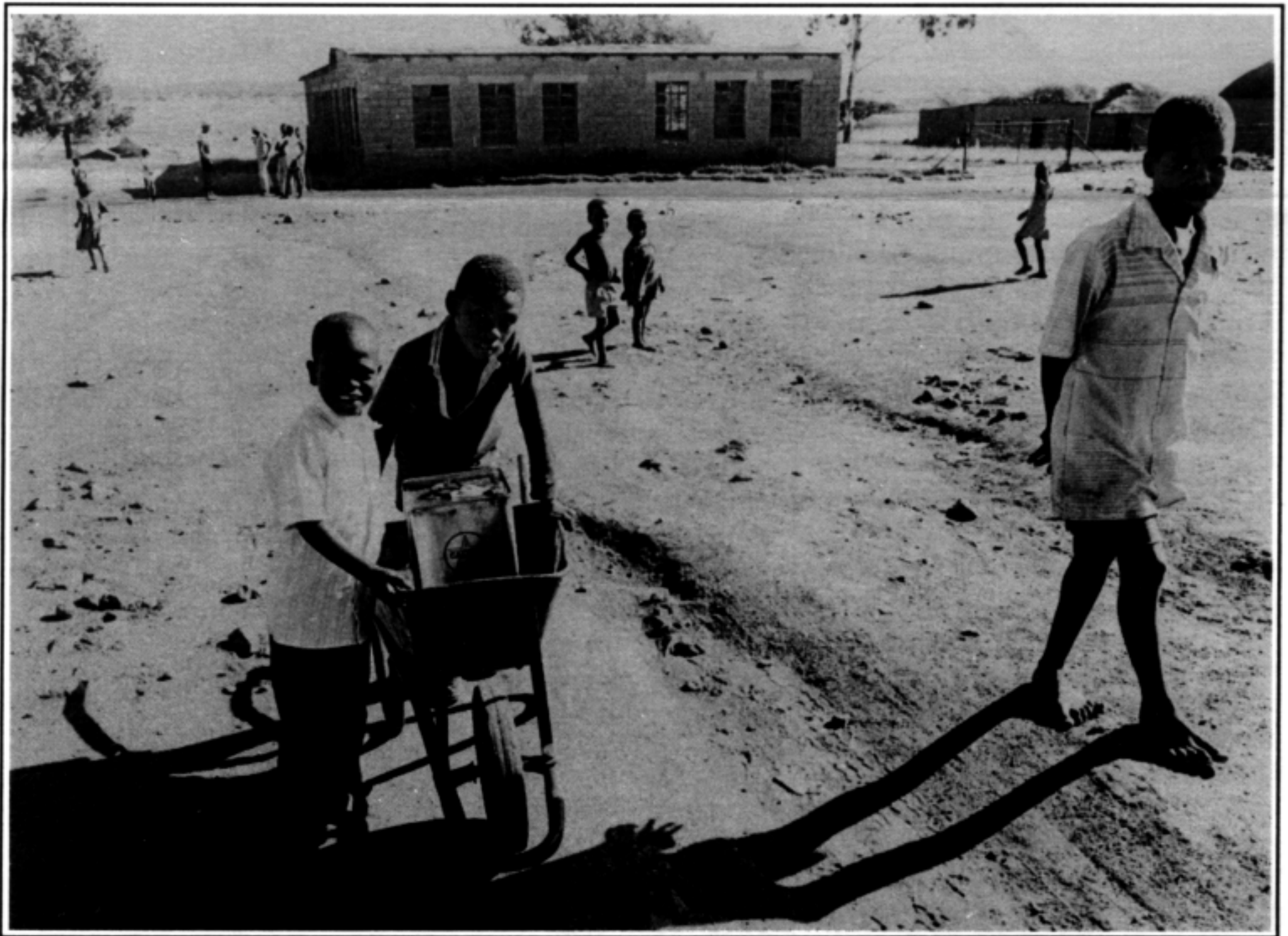




AFRA

ASSOCIATION FOR RURAL ADVANCEMENT

Afra Newsletter (2) 1988



CORNFIELDS: 'Black Spots' and 'voluntary' removals



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this place that we don't want. Why can't they just spend a little bit of money to make things a bit better here. This is where we are wanting to stay."

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ping the land for the purposes for which their forefathers bought the land many years ago

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Thanks to Cedric Nunn for the pix.

THE MYTH OF VOLUNTARY REMOVALS

THE CASE OF CORNFIELDS - A "BLACK SPOT" IN RURAL NATAL

Since February this year, a large number of families have been moved from the African owned freehold community of Cornfields in the Estcourt district of the Natal midlands, to a resettlement area on trust land near the KwaZulu bantustan township of Wembezi, about 20 kilometres west of the town of Estcourt.

BLACK SPOT REMOVALS

Cornfields is one of a large number of communities in Natal that the state has sought to move since the 1960's. It is a "black spot" - an official term for black-owned freehold land in what the Pretoria government designates as a "white area" in terms of the apartheid land policy. In Natal more than 100 000 people have been forcefully removed from Black Spots since the 1960's, and an estimated 160 000 people are still threatened.

VOLUNTARY REMOVALS

But according to the government, the people of Cornfields have moved voluntarily to the new settlement area. Government officials have emphasised the fact that it is not a forced removal. This is consistent with the govern-

ment's much publicised statement in 1985, that they would no longer force communities to move.

At face value there appears to be some truth in these claims. The government can point out that last year many families submitted their names to a local KwaZulu Chief requesting their relocation to the resettlement area, following a meeting with Pretoria and local officials. Since February this year trucks have conveyed these families with their belongings and building materials to residential sites in the new area which have been provided with basic facilities such as water and temporary fletcraft homes.

There have been none of the familiar state actions that have characterised the brutal forced removals of the past; no police, arrests, detentions, bulldozers and home demolitions that aroused such condemnation from the South African and international community in the past. Furthermore the government has not taken explicit action against those who have said they will not move.

NEW STATE STRATEGIES

But the Cornfields removal represents a more subtle but no less forceful way of getting people to move. Its success so far has been achieved through the manipulation of com-

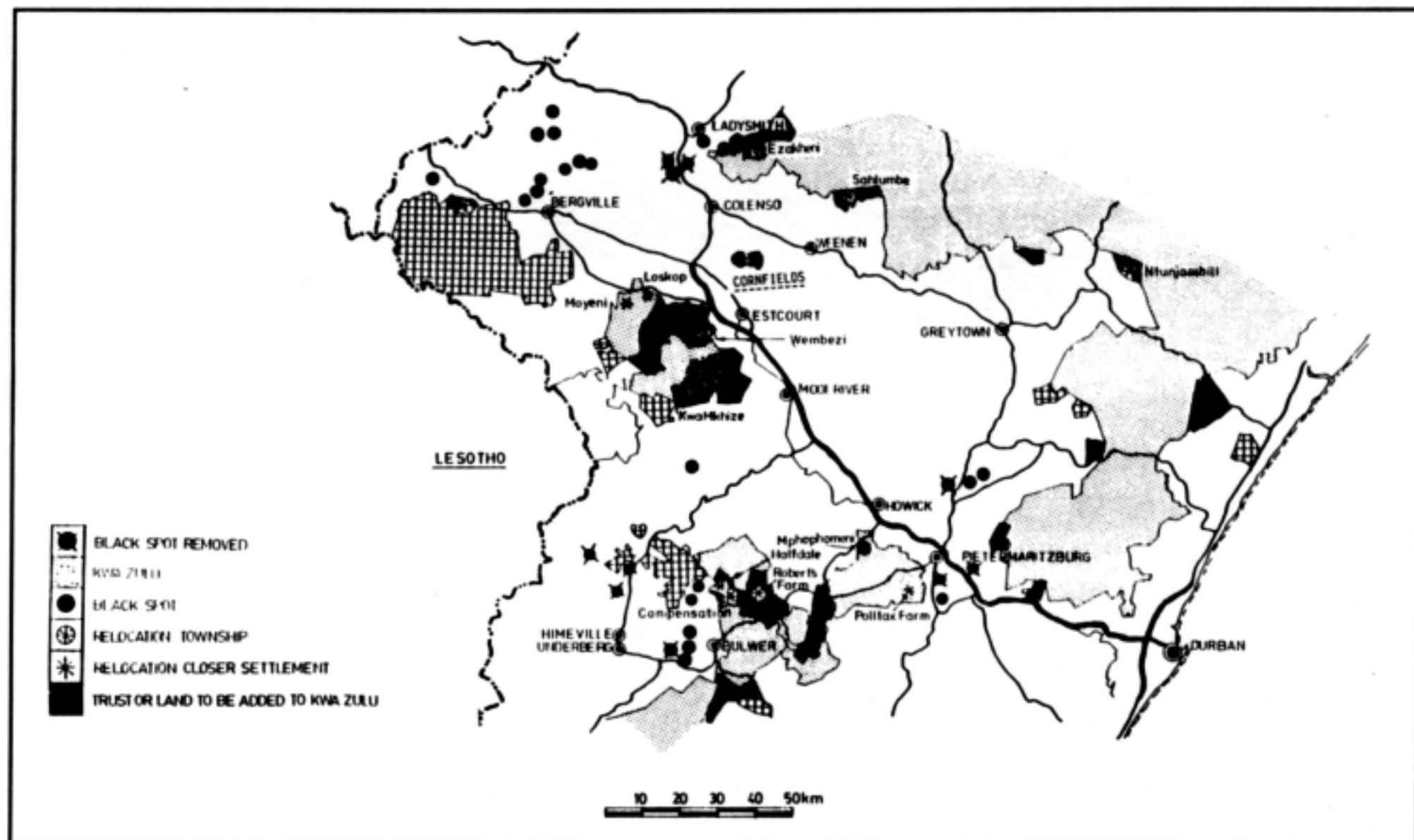
munity development resources: the systematic and official neglect of Cornfields in the provision of water, roads, schools, clinics and other services on the one hand, and a heavy commitment to the provision of resources into the proposed resettlement area on the other. It is the familiar carrot-and-stick strategy that the government is increasingly using to achieve its apartheid objectives.

Because behind the Cornfields removal is a clear ideological strategy; the removal of people from so called "white" South Africa into an area that the government intends to incorporate into KwaZulu as part of its Bantustan policy; the creation of a separate Zulu ethnic nation.

To fully understand the recent silent war of attrition that has been waged against Cornfields, it is necessary to take a closer look at the history of this rural Natal community and their struggle to retain a hold on their ancestral land.

WITHIN THE "WHITE" FARMLANDS

Cornfields is about 27 kilometres north-east of the town of Estcourt. It is situated about 8 kilometres from the old national freeway between Johannesburg and Durban. Just to the north of the settlement is the Blaaukranz memorial, which was erected to commemorate those who died during the attack of Din-



gane's regiments on the voortrekkers in February 1938, shortly after they had crossed the Drakensberg into Natal.

Cornfields lies at the foot of a range of hills which separates it from another smaller black spot community called Tembalihle. (Tembalihle is also threatened with removal, but so far nobody has been moved). Both communities are surrounded by white farms. The land is not exceptionally fertile, but is suitable for cattle grazing. A school, church and a number of stores have been erected by the community.

After years of neglect there are only two water points for the whole community and people start queueing in the early hours of the morning to collect water. The school which caters only for primary school children is very overcrowded. There is no secondary school.

A COMMUNITY OF LANDOWNERS AND TENANTS

There are 276 registered landowners at Cornfields. According to official figures there were 5 000 people living at Cornfields prior to the recent removals. (At least 250 families have already moved across to the resettlement site).

The vast majority of those who have moved are tenants who pay rent to landowners. They came to Cornfields as displaced people during the 1950's and 1960's after being evicted from white-owned farms in the Weenen and Estcourt district where they had been farmworkers and labour tenants. This was the only land that they could find.

SECURING A CHRISTIAN LIFE

The farm Hatting 1222 on which Cornfields is situated was purchased by an American Baptist Missionary, Reverend William Cullen Wilcox in 1912. Reverend Wilcox subdivided the land and sold it to African people shortly before the passing of the 1913 land Act which prevented Africans from buying land except in scheduled areas.

A petition submitted to the Minister of Constitutional Development and Planning earlier this year by the community states that their forefathers purchased the land for the purposes of "leading a christian life, promoting a community of harmony and peace, and a place of secure residence for their children and generations to come".



Tenant families prepare to rebuild their homes at the resettlement camp known by the community as "Mqwabaland". Note the the temporary fletcraft homes awaiting construction in the background.

LEGAL DISPOSSESSION

Reverend Wilcox died in 1928. A 252,3 hectare portion of land was still registered in his name, which he left as a commonage for the people. In 1971, a lawyer acting on behalf of the estate sold the commonage to the South African government through the South African Development Trust.

CONSOLIDATION AND REMOVALS

In the 1970's, the government's policy of black spot removals became enmeshed in the consolidation proposals for KwaZulu. In the 1975 consolidation proposals, Cornfields was specifically identified for removal although it had previously been declared a "released area" (ie.land

added to the schedule as black-occupied in terms of the Development Trust and Land Act 18 of 1936).

USING THE INSTRUMENTS OF THE STATE

In the early 1980's the government began to move faster on the proposed removal, despite consistent resistance from the community to the plans. In February 1982 the Assistant Chief Commissioner of Natal curtly informed a meeting of the community that their removal had been decided "by an act of parliament", and that there was no point in discussing whether they wanted to move or not; He said that not even Dr Koornhof himself could go against an act of Parliament and he was there simply to dis-

cuss how they were to be moved.

An even less ambiguous indication of the government's intention to

move the community by force if necessary was provided at a meeting a year later when a senior Pretoria official urged the community to "co-operate" with the government's removal plan so that "the operation could be carried out without the assistance of the police."

In 1985 an official enquiry was instituted into the land ownership position at Cornfields. As a result of the enquiry the government through the South African Development Trust (SADT) took title in terms of 51 pieces of land, claiming that the registered owners could not be found.

REMOVALS AND "DEVELOPMENT"

In the same year, a senior official from Pretoria informed a meeting that the people were to be removed because "it was the wish of the Department (of Co-operation and Development) to develop the people, and this included political development".

Other reasons, he added, were because the roads were in a shocking condition, the water supply was inadequate and the area could not expand.

CO-OPTION AND THE LIAISON COMMITTEE

To "involve" people in the removal process, a "liaison" or "planning committee" was established by the government consisting of 10 members from each of the two communities - Cornfields and Tembalihle. At the first meeting of this committee, the magistrate reportedly ousted both the chairman and the secretary who were from the community. These two key positions were then allocated to two white officials.

KWAZULU

In 1984, two members of the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly attended

Deed No. 1014 June 1961 and signed at Estover, Natal.

And do not appear before his principal, the said JONATHAN SHALUNGA had truly and legally sold the undermentioned land and that he, the Appearer, in his capacity aforesaid, did by these present cede and transfer in full and free property to and on behalf of

SIPURA ANSON SHABALALA

(born 20th October 1920) unexempted native, a member of the Native Group, his heirs, executors, administrators or assigns, of a certain piece of land being:-

Sub 251 of Cornfields of the farm Duiting No. 1222, situate in the County of Weenen, Province of Natal, in extent five (5) acres.

Further particulars whereof will appear on reference to Deed of Transfer No. 177/1961 dated eveny herewith and the diagram thereto annexed in favour of Appearer's Principal.

This land is transferred :-

- A. Subject to the whole terms and conditions of the original Government Grant No. 1222 dated 1st October 1952 as are still in force and applicable,
- B. Subject to half the width of a Servitude of Right of Way twenty (20) feet wide as reflected on the diagram of the said Sub 251 in favour of transferred subdivisions as created in the relevant subdivisional transfers and in favour of the Remainder as created in the said Deed of Transfer No. 577/1961 dated eveny herewith,
- C. Subject to half the width of a Servitude of Right of Way twenty (20) feet wide as reflected on the diagram of the said Sub 251 in favour of Sub A of Lot 321 and the Remainder of Lot 321 as created in Deeds of Transfer Nos. 2909/1945 and 2910/1945 dated 2nd May 1945 respectively,
- D. With the benefit of the use of Roads and Rights of Way as shown on the enlargement of Cornfields attached to the Deed of Transfer No. 43/1912 over transferred subdivisions as created in the relevant subdivisional transfers, and over the Remainder as created in the said Deed of Transfer No. 577/1961 dated eveny herewith,

A landowner's home. The owners refuse to give up freehold title to the land which they inherited from their forefathers.



meetings of the Liaison committee. The participation of these two officials in the committee was seen as tacit evidence of the KwaZulu government's complicity in removals.

Following media publicity on the issue, the KwaZulu Minister of Health and Welfare, Dr Frank Mdlalose, issued a strong denial that KwaZulu was assisting the South African government's with its removal policy. He said that the two members had only attended the meeting to assist the communities in opposing the removals. But the Johannesburg newspaper, City Press, quoted the two as having assisted officials in getting information on the number of businesses, and a population survey of the communities. It is also alleged that one of the members has since established a large trading store in

Wembezi close to the resettlement area.

In 1985, a senior official informed a community meeting that official discussions on the removal of Cornfields were taking place "at a high level". He said that "Settlement Committee" meetings were taking place at the office of the Chief Commissioner on which "KwaZulu was strongly represented".

NO MORE FORCED REMOVALS

Since the 1985 statement by the government that it would no longer force people to move, official meetings with the community have been characterised by less than subtle attempts to highlight the advantages open to community members who choose to go across to the new area

and the disadvantages of staying where they are.

In April 1987 officials from Pietermaritzburg and Pretoria called a

meeting at which they made it clear that people would not be forced to move, and only those who "expressed a desire" to move would be assisted in this regard. These people were requested to register with the Chief who has jurisdiction over the resettlement area. The officials also told the meeting that those who decided to stay at Cornfields "should not expect any further government money for development in their area."

PROMISING A LAND OF MILK AND HONEY

Besides boasting of the facilities that will be available at the new resettlement area, (and which are so sorely needed at Cornfields), officials have also made bold promises about grazing and residential land. There can be no doubt that tenants have been particularly impressed by the opportunity of acquiring their own land, and officials have made the most of the opportunity of dividing landowners from tenants by offering the tenants "rent-free" land.

But there also exists a great deal of confusion over the exact basis of land distribution. Although official parliamentary enquiries have revealed that the tenants will be settled on small residential plots in a closer settlement, tenants have been led to believe that they will also be pro-

Victims of a silent war of attrition. Note the house in the background that has been numbered for removal





Residents allege that officials insist that those who agree to move destroy their old homes completely before claiming for compensation.

vided with grazing land for their livestock.

At present there is sufficient land available for grazing, but this will soon diminish as soon as the resettlement plans for the area are implemented. According to a cabinet-approved consolidation report released at the end of June this year, the government is planning to use the resettlement area for the relocation of people from "badly situated areas" (an official euphemism for "black spots"), in the Ladysmith, Bergville and Estcourt areas. It will not be long before tenants realise that they have been deceived and that they face the same plight as the rest of the estimated 430 000 people who have been resettled into overcrowded closer settlements and bantustan ghettos in the Natal region since 1960.

COMMUNITY RESISTANCE

Those who have consistently refused to move are mostly landowners' families, although there are many tenants too who do not want to move. The landowners are represented by a landowners' committee.

In April 1982 representatives of Cornfields together with seven other black spot communities made a special representation to the Minister of Co-operation and Development, Dr Piet Koornhof, stating their strong objections to the removals plans.

In February 1988, land owners and other residents who opposed the removals sent a petition to the Minister of Constitutional Development and Planning calling on him to "note our opposition to

the plan to remove us from our beloved Cornfields village."

THUTHUKISA LAPHA! (DEVELOP HERE!)

The residents have also called on the government to "proclaim Cornfields a permanent township and to upgrade it into a proper modern township". The residents argue that to upgrade Cornfields would cost a great deal less than developing the new resettlement area. At a community meeting this year, a community leader noted:

"The State President says the government and the people of South Africa must not spend too much money because of the economic problems. But now the government is spending a lot of money developing



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