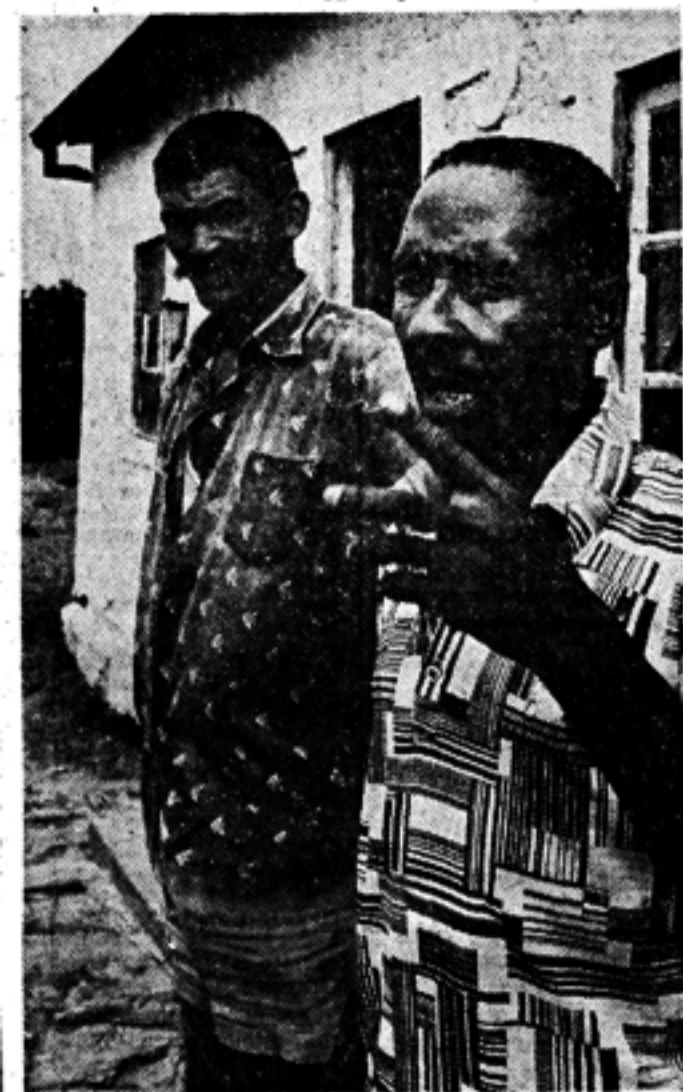


MRS EVELYN Boko in front of the shanty which she and her husband, Mr Daniel Boko, have occupied in a squatter settlement near Bushmans River village since the beginning of the year. Finding water and firewood is her biggest problem.



MR MAGNUS van Rensburg, foreground, one of four coloured usufruct holders of a farm near Bushmans River village, confirms that he has allowed more than 240 families to squat on his waterless ground.



THE dam on a farm near Bushmans River village which was emptied by squatters in three weeks because of a water shortage. Pictures by Collin Urquhart.

Squatters at Bushmans River big headache

By JOHAN SWANEPOEL,
Herald Municipal Reporter

A MUSHROOM squatters' settlement on the fringe of Bushmans River village, near Alexandria, has residents and farmers up in arms, and the authorities perplexed.

All want them resettled, but the problem is where. Some of them came from nearby farms, others settled there after completing contract work in cities.

The squatters live on part of the 860 hectare farm Klipfontein held in trust for four coloured men who have lifelong use of it. It is an undivided property, but each man has control of about 215 hectares.

The usufruct was left to them in terms of the will of their grandparents, Mr and Mrs D. J. van Rensburg, which determines that usufruct goes to the eldest sons of the offspring of their four sons. The present holders are Mr Magnus van Rensburg, Mr Hans van Rensburg, Mr N. T. Fischat and Mr Jack Jacobs. They lease their ground to neighbouring white farmers.

Increased

The squatter problem increased more than ten-fold last year after one of the farmers, Mr N. J. Bessinger, who leased ground from Mr Magnus van Rensburg, tried to have 19 families evicted as trespassers.

The court found that they were not trespassing because they had Mr Van Rensburg's permission to live on the property.

A survey last month showed that the squatters had increased to more than 240 families numbering more than 1 000 people.

There is no water on the property. Farm dams and stock watering troughs are raided to supply their needs. Sanitation for some consists of primitive pit latrines. Firewood is obtained by stripping coastal forest reserve.

Although the people living on the property would not say how much it cost them to do so, Mr Moses Kani, of Kenton-on-Sea, said it cost him R10 and a bottle of wine to get a place for his son and his family on Mr Van Rensburg's ground.

This was denied by Mr Van Rensburg, who said he let the people stay on his property "out of the goodness of my heart".

He agreed that there was a water problem, but said that Mr Bessinger helped the people by allowing them to get water from a watering trough.

Dam

An indignant Mr Bessinger said there was no such arrangement. "If they draw water on my property, they are doing so without permission."

His property borders the farm, but is about two kilometres from the nearest shanties. The only other water is on the part controlled by Mr Hans van Rensburg, which is leased to Mr H. J. Potgieter. He

has built two dams to water his stock.

Mr Potgieter said one dam was emptied within three weeks at the beginning of the year by squatters. The water was not fit for humans, because of contamination by the cattle.

Whites in the area said the lack of proper facilities created a health hazard and they were surprised that there had not yet been an outbreak of typhoid.

Valuable grazing was being destroyed by the numerous goats and cattle kept by the squatters.

Mr Theo Crous has given up his lease because of the damage to the veld and Mr Bessinger is considering doing the same if the problem is not resolved soon.

Damage

A nearby farmer, Mr Chris Hattingh, who made a survey of the situation for the local farmers' association, said that at one stage the influx was four to five families a day. Many of them came from neighbouring farms.

When he recruited workers among the squat-

ters last week, some were former employees of his. When the workers were taken back at the end of each day, each took back cans of water, he said.

MPC

The MPC for Albany, Mr J. H. van de Vyver, said he had taken up the matter with his MP, Mr J. de V. Oickers, to try to arrange housing for the squatters in the Ciskei.

"Those who came from farms could go back if their former employers would be prepared to have them. Inquiries showed that some moved to Klipfontein in the mistaken belief that they could establish priority claims if an African township was established there."

He said negotiations were taking place with the four "owners" of the farm, and notices had been served on the squatters to find other homes. The Alexandria Farmers' Association and the Bushmans River Ratepayers' Association had objected to the possible establishment of an African township on coloured ground.

It had already been decided to establish a

coloured township on part of the farm and an African township nearby could lead to conflict because there was not enough jobs to warrant an African township. However, the local authorities in the area favoured an African township to house their own workers, he said.

The secretary of the Dias Divisional Council, Mr N. W. Anderson, said the big problem to be solved in planning a coloured township was a water supply. Negotiations to obtain ground for the township were in progress.

The Chief Director of the Cape Midlands Bantu Affairs Administration Board, Mr Louis Koch, said because of the objections, the Deputy Minister of Plural Affairs and Development, Dr W. L. Vosloo, recently visited the area and agreed to reconsider a decision to establish an African township on the farm. The lack of water would make it difficult to have two townships.

A survey had been made as a first step to resettle the squatters and it would help considerably if farmers could absorb some of them, he said.



