

WINTERVELD

WINTERVELD - a name that like those of Crossroads, Thornhill, Glenmore, is becoming more and more common in the liberal press, that is beginning to elicit cries of outrage from the Progs, attempts at social action by the churches... Why? The question is neither idle nor facetious, for the building up in the media of an area as an emotive issue is all too common, and as I hope to show later, all too destructive.

The history of Winterveld that is to follow will isolate specific trends and processes, and hopes to show that like so many of the resettlement villages, squatter camps and other varieties of dumping grounds, Winterveld is not important in itself as an area to be focussed on to the exclusion of all the others. Rather, the dynamics that go to make up Winterveld, those of unemployment and labour control, of repression and ethnic ideologies, render the place symptomatic of much that is happening in South Africa today. The information presented here should be

seen as an attempt to analyse and illustrate these dynamics and is not intended as an exposé of an isolated incident (or an "unusual event" instead of an "on-going process" - see the article on "Glenmore Resettlement" in WIP 9).

Winterveld is a vast area about 35 km to the northwest of Pretoria and within the 'borders' of 'independent' BophuthaTswana. The place is private and freehold land belonging to African landowners who had bought it as far back as 1938 from a land speculation company. The company had sold it off in 5 and 10 morgen plots when it was declared a released area under the 1936 Land Act. The land is zoned for agricultural smallholdings, yet today it has a population of anything between 300 000 and 750 000.

The history of the origins of the Winterveld population is at once the history of the vast population upheavals and resettlements that constitute much of South Africa's history in the 1950s and 1960s. The mechani-

ization and capitalization of white-owned farming at this time meant that the last vestiges of a semi-feudal agricultural labour force, labour tenants and squatters, were evicted from the land. The rural villages in which many of them were resettled were far from employment, and no agricultural land was made available to them. It is many of these people who constitute the Winterveld population.

The second large group is yet another set of victims of resettlement: This time those who were moved from 'black spots' around Pretoria. The approximately 30 000 population of Lady Selborne, as well as the inhabitants of Eastwood, Riverside and Eersterus are included here. They should have received housing in the 'villages' of Mabopane and Ga-Rankuwa, but because so few houses were built, the over-flow ended up renting plots from Winterveld landlords. The same with those evicted from mission land.

The third group is those people who have moved to Winterveld because of lack of accommodation, overcrowding, endorsements out, etc, from other areas on the Reef. The demolition of the small freehold plots and squatter concentrations near Germiston, Kempton Park and Benoni, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, means that many Winterveld residents still work on the East Rand and travel daily from one end of the reef to the other.

Winterveld as a whole comprises an area of about 80 km in diameter. Of this only the 5 morgen plots, those closest to Mabopane, are densely settled. This area, commonly known as Stakoneng - 'close together', 'shantytown' - is estimated to have a population density

of 185 per ha. The further away one moves from Mabopane the more sparse settlement becomes. Yet there are very few smallholdings where there are no squatters at all.

It is also probable that once a smallholder has allowed tenants onto her/his land a process has begun that is very difficult to limit. Tenant farming is in many cases

more profitable than agriculture, and at times of drought (as at present) there is an added incentive to allow tenants onto the land and to secure a steady cash income. This is, of course, on a more fundamental level one of the results of the erosion of reserve agriculture.

'Squatters' pay between R3,00 and R5,00 per month for a plot on which to build.

However, should they move into a vacant house, or one that has been built by a landlord, rents will be considerably higher. Houses very greatly in size - from two to seven rooms; the majority are built of mud or home-made bricks and have zinc roofs. There are also large numbers of tin and wooden shanties.

Apart from the main road running through Winterveld and an extremely efficient bus service (to transport labour) there is no infrastructural development whatsoever. Water is bought from pumps belonging to landlords at 2c for 20 litres, or about 40c for a 200 litre drum. The pit latrines that do exist are often very close to the boreholes rendering high the possibility that water is unfit to drink. There are only 4 doctors in the area, and while there are clinics at Mabopane and Klipgat and a hospital at Ga-Rankuwa, these are often not available to Winterveld residents. Diseases such as dysentery, gastro-enteritis, bilharzia, kwashiorkor, bronchitis and VD that are related to poverty, malnourishment and unhygienic living conditions are common in the area.

Winterveld hit the headline in 1973 when the Pretoria News did an exposé of conditions there. The flurry of publicity resulted in a Department of Health survey of the area (unavailable) as well as the tabling of parliamentary questions about conditions in the area. At the time it was said that at least 12 temporary schools were being planned for the area; that hostel accommodation was being made available; that 10 000 houses were to be built in Mabopane East. The Deputy Minister of Bantu Administration, Mr TNH Janson, was reported to have said that;



The establishment of a police station in the squatter areas would be an important step in plans to control the development of the slums.

Now, five years later, there are still no services; of all that was said to have been planned only the police station was built. The question that has to be asked is why? What, if any, are the reasons for the fact that a city of half a million people has been neglected for so long and in such conditions? Liberal indignation about the situation in Winterveld cannot provide any answers. Nor can exposés of overcrowding and diseases, as well as the resultant plans and demands for 'squatter upgrading' produce any indications as to why Winterveld exists at all.

The answers are rather to be sought in the history of proletarianization: in the need

It has been argued that it is capitalist accumulation itself that constantly produces, in relation to its own energy and extent, a relatively redundant working population, i.e. a population which is superfluous to capital's average requirements for its own valorization, and is therefore a surplus population.

In other words, capital is only capital because it increases its mass (accumulates). This it does in that labour produces more than the value of its wages and this surplus goes to the capitalist. This surplus is then reinvested in more machinery and more labourers.

The surplus can also be increased in several other ways. For example, by increasing the length of the working day or by forcing labour to work harder for the same wages. However, increasingly capital is enlarging the surplus produced by the working class by introducing machines that allow each worker to produce more goods. Whereas previously 3 workers using 3 machines

to secure for industry a cheap labour force; in the need to control that labour force; and in an examination of the forms that this control assumes. It is in this context that it becomes explicable that of all that was promised to Winterveld, only a police station - an institution that has direct control functions - was built. It is in this sense too that the negotiations between South Africa and BophuthaTswana as to who is responsible for Winterveld, and the attempts to evict non-Tswana from the area become comprehensible. For this is one facet of the struggle between the South African state and its functionaries over delegation of responsibilities.

It is only in 1977 that Winterveld again becomes anything of an issue in the media. This time in the context of BophuthaTswana 'independence'. It was reported in the RDM of 77.12.07 that, "The South African and

produced 3 items, now 1 worker uses 3 machines to produce 6 items.

This means that workers are made redundant to the accumulation needs of capital. And new workers are unable to find jobs.

These unemployed people fulfil the role of an industrial reserve army for capitalism. They can be absorbed into employment during periods of rapid growth of the economy or when large projects such as railway lines, harbours, etc are undertaken. The industrial reserve army also serves to depress wages in that capital can always threaten those in employment with dismissal if they should strike for higher wages (see some of the cases discussed under Labour Action in this issue, and the Eveready Strike that was discussed in a previous issue).

It can, therefore, be seen that the surplus population or industrial reserve army is - functional to capital.

BophuthaTswana governments are to cooperate in the resettlement of thousands of blacks ...among the key targets are the squatters in Winterveld...and Thaba 'Nchu in the Free State". At the same time an agreement was made between South Africa and BophuthaTswana to the effect that South Africa would undertake to resettle all those who wanted to move, and that BophuthaTswana would let the rest stay there until provisions were made for them.

This agreement between the South African and BophuthaTswana (BT) authorities has at base two concerns. The one is the need to control and to remove an excessively large surplus population characterised by increasing poverty and rising unemployment, from too close proximity to the South African industrial centre. This is particularly so in the context of the dramatic increase in African unemployment in South Africa in the 1970s, and in the context

It has been pointed out that it is only by understanding the ultimate unity of interests between the employed and unemployed, and by combining in organisations, that the operation of this process of competition that is so useful to capital, can be counteracted.

The reserve army can, during periods of capitalist crisis, grow too large and pose a threat to political stability. The unemployed may even rise in a revolt of desperation and demand jobs, food and housing, or resist attempts made to remove and control them.

This process, originally written about in the nineteenth century is still occurring today. But a new factor has been added to the creation of a relative surplus population. Marx argued that the size of the industrial reserve army went through "violent fluctuations" as capital went through crises or expanded and grew. Recently, however, a new process has started, especially in

of the threat caused to the state by the 1976 disturbances.

The second is the necessity for 'homeland' authorities to eliminate a population that is both non-Tswana (and makes a mockery of nationalist claims to ethnic purity) and that poses a threat to political stability.

The issue of political stability and the necessity to remove and control unemployment so as to achieve it, is a dominant theme of the Riekert Commission report (see WIP, 9) and many of its recommendations are aimed precisely at this. Going further back in time it can be argued that one of the key functions of the entire policy of 'homeland independence' is aimed at the decentralisation and the removal from direct South African jurisdiction of the control of the unemployed.

The BT government would like to withdraw from its function of control and statements such as the following by the BT Minister of the Interior (RDM, 79.05.29) are indicative of this: "The presence of squatters in BophuthaTswana was undesirable because the country was not a 'dumping ground'".

countries where a labour force for capital was rapidly and violently created (Africa, Latin America and Asia), and where the largest proportion of production is accounted for by multi-national corporations or very large locally-owned companies.

These 'monopoly' companies rely for their technology and machinery on what is being developed in countries such as the USA, Germany, etc, and, therefore, apply capital-intensive (machinery rather than people) techniques in the 'Third World' countries where they operate. When these companies expand they do not absorb/employ the industrial reserve army, or only absorb a very small section.

Yet the reality of the situation is precisely that: the country is a dumping ground, and all that the South African state as its responsibility is to move a section of the population from one dumping ground to the other in the interests of ethnic purity. It is in these terms that the setting up of the new Ndebele 'homeland', many of whose inhabitants are ex-Wintervelders, can be understood. Over the past year a process has been set in motion of pushing Winterveld residents out of the area through a variety of means. It is the details and dynamics of this process that will now be examined.

In August, 1978, BT police launched a series of raids on Winterveld residents. Plot owners and tenants who were arrested were fined R30 or thirty days for not having permits, and for thus being 'illegal squatters'. Two issues, that of squatting and illegality, as well as that of permits need to be examined in more detail. Firstly, the Winterveld population is in fact not illegal, nor are its inhabitants squatters. Winterveld people are living on rented land with the willing consent of the

Smaller, labour-intensive operations, could absorb the unemployed during periods of growth, but they account for an ever decreasing proportion of productive activity as they get squeezed out or taken over by the 'monopolies. Or else they are forced to employ exactly the same capital-intensive techniques to be able to compete with the very large firms.

The implications are that a section of the relative surplus population are not only unemployed but unemployable by the dominant large-scale, capital-intensive section of the economy. They have been marginalised.

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owners of that land. In no way is their occupation illegal. Why then are they stigmatised as squatters?

Legally, squatting in African areas is a phenomenon that does not exist. No existing legislation incorporates the possibility of illegal occupation of African-owned land. (The 1935 Land Act defines squatting on white-owned land only; while the proclamations relating to land tenure in the 'homelands' (R192/67, R188/69) contain no description of squatting. In a study of BophuthaTswana done by the Potchefstroom University Instituut vir Streekbeplanning it is finally decided, using the definition of the BT secretary for Internal Affairs, that squatting occurs

as gevolg van die vestiging van Bantoe wat van elders afkomstig is en nie volgens wetlike voorskrif geskied het nie, dit onmoontlik is om ordelike beplanning te handhaaf ("...because of the settlement of Bantu coming from elsewhere and not according to legal prescription, it is impossible to maintain orderly planning").

Winterveld then becomes a squatter area primarily because its residents moved there by themselves and were not settled by the state. This implies that those who are 'squatters' are evading attempts at control. It is in such attempts to escape bureaucratic control that the conception of Wintervelders as "illegal" has its origins. With these two ideological notions of "squatters" and "illegality" goes that of impermanence. The rationale goes thus: Because they are squatters they are illegal and because they are illegal they will have to be moved. Further, once they are only there temporarily there is no need to provide housing or

services.

However, the provision of Wintervelders with a stamped residence permit in their reference books, until at least half way through 1977 seems to belie the above. This is not in fact so. For while a residence stamp does mean a degree of official recognition of the existence of Winterveld, its importance lies more in its relationship to employment than to legal accommodation. For what the significance of a residence stamp is, is that it allows people to register as work-seekers. Once residence stamps are no longer issued people can no longer get legal jobs. It is in the refusal to issue residence stamps that the first indications of the process of exclusion of the people of Winterveld from access to jobs and the beginning of what I shall term their marginalisation can be seen.

The police raids on the Winterveld 'squatters' continued with increasing intensity from August until at least November, 1978. Press reports reveal that as harmful as the continual necessity to pay the R30,00 admission of guilt fines, was the degree of insecurity that resulted amongst the population as well as the institutionalisation of their 'illegal' status. Even today it is not clear whether the police action taken was in fact 'legal' - the poverty, isolation and insecurity of the people concerned as well as fears of victimisation meant that at no stage was the right to raid rent-paying tenants ever challenged. (An interesting aspect of the incidents, and one that still characterises Winterveld today, is the cooperation between the BophuthaTswana and South African police. For while the actual land raids are

a BT affair, the administrative aspect - charges, payment of fines, etc - all takes place in the South African police station at Mabopane. There could be no clearer indication that the fundamental function of control is crucial and that ultimately it makes no difference who carries it out).

There are a number of other issues that developed around the raids, as well as considerable confusion due to the unclear legal position.

Firstly, four landowners, instead of paying admission of guilt fines, allowed themselves to be charged. The charges were a) harbouring people who had no residential permits, and b) subletting plots without permission from the local chief magistrate (Post, 78.11.06). The case was postponed at least twice and there are no indications at all as to whether it was ever heard, or what the outcome was. At the same time it became apparent that the BT authorities were using "Catch-22" tactics to make the situation for Winterveld people an impossible one. Post (78.10.22) reported that "(Chief Lucas Mangope) had...given the assurance that his aim was not to throw people out of the country and that went for people in Winterveld no matter what their nationality. All he asked of landlords was that they should regularise the position of their tenants by getting permits for them." A local landlord's response to this reveals the cynicism of such a statement: "We tried to do that, but the local office is not cooperating. We have been told permits will no longer be issued" (Post, 78.10.22). The same strategy was used at the time of BophuthaTswana 'independence': It was

reported that all those wanting to stay legally in BT should apply for citizenship. Thousands of Winterveld people did so. They were not, however, informed that to qualify for citizenship they were to have lived legally in the area for at least 5 years, and that anyway the granting of citizenship was at the discretion of the local magistrate who certainly was not sympathetic to the applications from Winterveld people.

The raids culminated in December, 1978, with reports of eviction orders being served on thousands of people in the area. (The Nation, Dec, 1978). At the same time it was reported that people were fleeing Winterveld and settling on Trust farms in the vicinity (Post, 78.11.16); furthermore it is now that people start moving to areas such as Kwaggafontein, Hammanadrift, etc, where resettlement camps had been set up by the South African state in the new Ndebele 'homeland'. The publicity that the raids had received (due mainly to excellent press coverage in Post) finally resulted in seven 'homeland' leaders sending a telex to Dr Koornhof, Minister of Plural Relations and Development, "appealing to him to stop the removals of non-Tswana in areas in BophuthaTswana" (Post, 78.12.15). A moratorium was then declared until a meeting between South African and BT authorities in February to discuss the situation.

I have not been able to discover what the outcome of the February meeting was. Yet, an account of events in Winterveld since then reveals that there seems to be no intention either by South Africa or by BT to attempt any resolution to the situation. Squatters have not been raided since December, 1978,

but more subtle and insidious forms of pressurising people to leave the area have been devised.

The success of these measures is indicated by the statement in Parliament on 21st February, 1979, by the Deputy Minister of Plural Relations Dr Hartzenberg, that "the government had resettled about 6 000 families from the Winterveld area of BophuthaTswana", and that "...extra land is being made available for resettlements" (Post, 79.02.22).

The refusal to issue residential permits to Wintervelders has since 1978 extended to the exclusion from access to the bureaucracy in its entirety. The Dube labour office is to all intents and purposes closed. Winterveld people seeking anything from reference books to applications for driver's licences are told to go to Ga-Rankuwa. There they are turned away on the grounds that they are from Winterveld. This was told to me by numerous Winterveld people, but official confirmation was made in a report that appeared in Post (79.05.03) when an officer at the Qdi magistrates court in Ga-Rankuwa said that, "A large number of people who call at the offices to renew their workseeker permits and contract endorsements are turned away unhelped daily". He added that, "This office does no longer cater for squatters". The article quotes at least three cases of people being rendered 'unemployable' because of such action.

The double-dealing and crooked talk of officials is again revealed with reference to this issue. G Nkau, BT's secretary for Internal Affairs, said that President Mangope had made it clear that "squatters would enjoy

the homeland's privileges (including the ability to seek work) only if they took out the country's citizenship" (Post, 79.05.07). The same article contains a report of a statement by the chief magistrate of Qdi, PW van Niekerk, saying that "the BophuthaTswana government had deceived squatters by giving them an impression that the acquisition of the country's citizenship would help them". The refusal to actually grant the 'squatters' citizenship has already been discussed.

There are two, but inter-related, processes at work in Winterveld today. The one is the control of employment and the regulation of access to jobs - in the case of Winterveld, its population's exclusion from jobs. The second is the pressures used to physically remove people to more remote and less visible dumping grounds.

The 1978 raids were the crudest manifestation of this. Since then police pressure has taken two main forms: (i) raiding of illegal traders, and (ii) pressure to close down 'private' schools.

Raiding of traders: As unemployment in Winterveld has become worse and worse, more and more people have taken refuge in the 'informal sector'. I do not want to launch into a detailed discussion of the informal sector, merely to say that it consists of the self-employed and all those engaged in non-wage earning activities, ie all those occupied in the non-formal sector of the economy. It is by now fairly generally accepted that the informal sector with its low levels of capital accumulation, unprotected working conditions, illegal status and job insecurity is often the most exploitative sector of the economy. At

its base is the situation where the working class is providing goods and services for itself, out of its own meagre wages and with no subsidies by capital. Essentially it means that the working class is feeding off itself in an ever downward spiral of poverty.

Of course, not all of those engaged in informal sector activities are poor. In Winterveld, as I have said before, the informal sector is not uniform and its 'successes' are manifest in terms of those who have managed to monopolise scarce resources - water, land, building materials, education skills, etc. The majority of people however do not form a part of this relatively privileged group. They are the roadside sellers, the water-carriers, shoe-shine boys, etc.

The sellers, particularly, are often women. The others who scrape together meagre cents for their hard labour, often children. It is they, the poorest of all Winterveld people, whom the police have attacked the hardest. The fairly large roadside markets that were a common sight last year have disappeared. Today, only a few people will sell together, their wares exhibited on the ground so that escape may be swift should the police arrive. These people do not wish to be illegal, but their numerous applications for licences have all been dismissed.

The absurdity of the situation was made clear when a blitz on street vendors was reported in the RDM of 79.08.15: The officer in charge of Mabopane police station, Captain Molope, said that "there were four licenced grocers serving about 500 000 people in the Winterveld district and that there were no licenced street vendors." Those arrested

paid admission of guilt fines ranging from R10,00 to R50,00, and it was denied that their goods were set alight.

It does indeed seem that the non-collection of rates from Winterveld residents is made up for by the creaming off of money in numerous fines and bribes, paid to secure the inhabitants' miserable existence.

The same situation exists with regard to schools: There is no formal schooling structure in Winterveld. Instead schooling has become part of the informal sector with individuals who have access to some education starting schools in corrugated iron shacks. The schools are expensive (up to R8,00 per year) and the education is often inadequate while conditions are horribly overcrowded. Often the teacher-pupil ratio is something like 1:100.

Yet in the consciousness of Winterveld people education is what counts. Parents unanimously believe that education will facilitate, if not for them, then for the children, movement out of the ghetto in which they are trapped.

I do not intend to discuss 'squatter consciousness' here, merely to state that an attack on schools is often the last straw that forces families to take a decision to move. In March this year four of the largest schools were raided and, in familiar style, the principals fined. An important issue here is the institutionalisation of ethnicity. The great majority of Winterveld population is non-Tswana, and the schools reflect the great diversity of language found. It is this, and the consequent attempt to force people to accept Tswana as the medium of instruction that is a prevalent feature of these raids.

Lastly, and most significantly, it would seem that attempts are being made by the BT authorities to devise a new strategy to deal with the 'Winterveld problem'. The squatters will not all move. For every one family who goes, thousands more remain. The recognition of this is reflected in the attempt to impose the responsibility for dealing with Winterveld people onto the landlords. In March this year (Post, 79.03.24) Chief Mangope told the plot-owners that "they had robbed the squatters of thousands of rands" and "they did not care about the welfare of the squatters who needed proper housing, roads, schools, fresh water and sanitation."

Since Winterveld's inception capital has abdicated any claims to responsibility for the welfare of the unskilled labour force housed in Winterveld. So too has the South African state and now BophuthaTswana. More serious are threats to expropriate landlords. Already the seeds of a serious struggle are developing, not only over issues such as that of compensation, but on a more fundamental level over the implicit attempt to move the function of control one step further away onto the shoulders of the landlords themselves.

It is impossible to predict the ultimate fate of a place such as Winterveld with any degree of certainty. It is not something that I would attempt to do. Yet, certain patterns, certain processes, certain structural constraints are becoming ever more clear. It is these that will be dealt with in the last section of this article.

In my introduction I tried to make clear that I considered it dangerous to focus too sharply on any one area to the exclusion of

others, or to fail to recognise the overall conditions which cause squatter concentrations and resettlement camps to emerge. I have tried to show that places like Winterveld are symptomatic of structural features of South African political economy. Here a major element is that of structural unemployment and underemployment. The increase in mechanization that characterized all levels of the South African economy in the 1960s and 1970s increasingly means that the large and unskilled reserve army who gather in such areas as Winterveld are increasingly redundant to the immediate needs of capitalism and become a threat to political stability which has to be controlled. Earlier I spoke of marginalization - on the most concrete level it refers to the process of exclusion from direct economic participation, to the gross under-employment of women, to the phenomenal rates of youth unemployment.

Yet it operates on a myriad of levels. The constant decrease in the amount of cash circulating in areas such as Winterveld means that in effect the informal sector is shrinking - the ability of a community to live off itself declines.

The deterioration in diet and health that I have witnessed over the past 9 months is testimony to this. Vegetables and fruit are the first to go, then meat, then tea... until families' staple diet is that of mealie meal and watered down milk. Obviously malnutrition is on the increase, but so is the level of resistance to disease decreasing. Another example, less children can afford to go to school - fewer and fewer are able to learn even the most rudimentary of skills needed

for an industrial labour force. Lastly, the neglect in the provision of any infrastructural facilities whatsoever, becomes a feature that is more and more harmful over time. The piles of rubbish do not go away, the water does not become less polluted with time.

The conclusion that can be drawn from the descriptions are not pleasant. Genocide is not a pretty word, not even if its effects are going to take 50 years to be felt. Yet one's conclusions can go beyond this. It is at this point that I return to my introduction, to the resurgence of interest being shown in Winterveld.

Calls like those of Mrs Suzman, for an 'urgent solution on the legal status of the area's people to be negotiated by the South African and BophuthaTswana governments' (RDM, 79.08.25) do not help anything, nor do health-education projects, at least not until people have the means to attain the material conditions (food and housing) that would allow such schemes some validity. So too plans for 'squatter upgrading'. For in the last analysis, until people have jobs, until they have the political and economic rights that will allow them to make their voices heard, there is no solution.

The solution to Winterveld is thus not a superstructural one, not a cosmetic one, not something that can be carried out in isolation, but is an integral part of the process of restructuring that will deal with the basic problems of the structure of South African political economy.

The POLITICAL ECONOMY of SURVIVAL

THE UNEMPLOYMENT CRISIS AND INFORMAL INCOME OPPORTUNITIES IN SOWETO.

"When you're out of luck and out of work, you can always go to Johannesburg."

Elvis Costello, 1979

"I've been in Jo'burg two years, and haven't got a job yet; I survive by relying on relatives and friends for handouts, and when things are really bad, I scrounge for food in dustbins ..."

Nqutu Migrant, 1979

THE tale I have to tell is not a dramatic one; it will not have the majesty of that unforgettable day when, on a murky smoke-filled morning, twenty thousand young Soweto school-children marched in anger against yet one more item of oppression, giving expression, perhaps even birth to, a whole new consciousness and spirit of resistance in Soweto and South Africa. What I have to tell is the more mundane story of how people, faced with the same material conditions as those school-children, being subject to the same conditions of oppression and exploitation, take the alternative, long-suffering path of resistance and, at rock bottom, survival. Many of the

causes, of which Soweto '76 was a symptom, are the same ones which structure political and economic life in Soweto today; not much has changed; indeed, much may be worse. So the story here told is both a simple and complex one; it is of how ordinary people, faced with awesome odds, eke out an existence in conditions of poverty and unemployment; how they help each other... and how they exploit each other.

But first, some primary information is necessary: Soweto is a compact, yet sprawling city, covering 88 sq.km, with 102 000 houses and 10 hostels (the latter housing 45 000 people). Officially, there are 800 000 people in Soweto; unofficial, and more accurate assessments put the figure at nearer 2 million. A Bureau for Market Research survey in 1977 showed there to be an average of 10 persons to a house (of which 70% are 51/6, i.e. 4 rooms in toto). The population density is 100 per hectare (Johannesburg is 23). BMR estimates that 350-400 000 people in Soweto are economically active (i.e. in some form of formal wage employment), and commute to work in Johannesburg each day. But this raises a problem,