

unable to go to school, until December 1979, when they were evicted by a new owner who did not want to farm his land as a labour reserve. His wife and children were arrested and fined R90.

He was able to arrange for them to go and stay in Onverwacht where his brother-in-law was already established with his family. Their stand is intolerably crowded as a result, and he was anxious to register at Onverwacht so that he could be allocated a stand of their own. His wife could not do this in his absence because the office would insist on seeing her husband's 'pass', and he could not risk remaining in his job at Welkom without his 'pass'. So in February 1980 he gave up his job and came 'home' where he was only able to find occasional piece work. They registered for a stand in June 1980, but were told, with everyone else resident at Onverwacht, that they were unlikely to be given a stand until August 1981, since the priority was to remove people from 'ethnic oppression' in BophuthaTswana. It was now extremely difficult for this man to find another job.

Despite all this, the people from Kromdraai in particular express some relief because they are no longer subject to arbitrary arrest and intimidation by the BophuthaTswana police. In the QwaQwa election of March 1980 they voted solidly for the ruling Dikwankwetla party because they believe that Chief Minister Mopeli persuaded the South African government to provide a refuge for the South Sotho who were being harassed in Thaba Nchu. Mopeli thus gained considerable political credit for leading his subjects "out of the land of Egypt into the land of Canaan". It remains to be seen how

quickly this credit will evaporate, since he is unable to provide land or jobs for them. One focal point of popular resistance is the schools, which are grossly overcrowded and where facilities are utterly inadequate: 600 students were reported to have stormed the police station on July 11, 1980. Another focal point of resistance is the forced auction of livestock which people brought with them to the D section from the Trust villages and elsewhere.

The tragic irony of this episode in the appalling story of South Africa's internal refugees is that, according to press leaks during 1979, Thaba Nchu has been excluded from the Van der Walt Commission's proposals to consolidate BophuthaTswana.

The idea of surrendering Thaba Nchu is certain to bring heartache to BophuthaTswana President, Chief Lucas Mangope, as it has been in the hands of the Tswana-speaking Barolong tribe for 150 years. Nearly 70 000 Basotho are reported to live in the area today (RDM, 27.09.79).

We still await the report of the Commission, and the government's reaction to it, but if the speculations are confirmed the boot will be on the other foot and thousands of Barolong are likely to be trekking far to the west, to the main areas of BophuthaTswana.



GENERAL NEWS

RDM, 03.09.80.

Resettlement 'slum' closed to the Press

By CHRIS FREIMOND
Southern Africa Bureau

THE Press has been barred from investigating conditions at the vast Onverwacht resettlement area, 70km from Bloemfontein, where community workers claim up to 100 000 people are living in a squalid slum.

The Chief Commissioner in the Department of Co-operation and Development in Bloemfontein, Mr H A Dreyer, said yesterday that the ban was a Ministerial directive.

An official at the department's Pretoria office, Mr Bill Meintjes, said a permit to visit Onverwacht could be applied for, but he doubted if it would be granted.

"At the moment they are resettling families and they don't want people running around there," he said.

It is reliably understood that a Government inter-departmental liaison committee — that meets regularly in Bloemfontein to discuss matters of mutual interest — has been most anxious that reports of conditions at Onverwacht do not appear in the newspapers.

Most of the people at Onverwacht are South Sotho who were removed from the Kromdraai squatter area at Thaba Nchu in BophuthaTswana, 10km away.

According to the authorities, the squatters moved voluntarily, but sources claim that alleged harassment by BophuthaTswana police at Kromdraai made their lives unbearable and they were relieved to move.

The area is hidden behind a range of low hills south of the Bloemfontein-ThabaNchu road and is not signposted. It will probably be incorporated into the QwaQwa homeland eventually.

The official figure of 51 000 people at Onverwacht has been disputed by community workers, who believe the true num-

ber may be double that.

Another 2 000 families — probably well over 12 000 people — still have to be moved there from white farms in the district.

In the next 20 years officials expect the population of Onverwacht and the neighbouring Vaalkraal township — to which people will begin moving from Bloemfontein next year — to reach 200 000.

The unofficial figure will probably be far higher.

Although the move to Onverwacht began in June last year, the vast majority of people still live in Government-supplied tents or wood and iron shanties.

It is understood that originally people were told they could only build houses with baked bricks, once building plans had been approved.

But Mr Dreyer said yesterday that people could build traditional-type houses with unbaked bricks or any other materials — but not shanties.

Fourteen cement-block houses had been or were being built.

He was confident that eventually everyone would build a permanent home, but could not say if or when this would be enforced.

He denied a claim by community workers that people were moved to Onverwacht before adequate facilities had been provided.

Buck's toilets were erected on each 15m-by-30m stand. At first local boreholes and tankers provided water, but there were shortages.

This year water pipes were laid and a tap provided for every fifth stand, but according to sources in Onverwacht, the supply is erratic.

After unrest there earlier this year, when pupils overran the local police post and rampaged through the area, there is a ban on open-air political gatherings.

As mentioned above, students at Onverwacht were reported to have attacked the local police station on July 11, 1980. The Star newspaper of that date reported the incident in this way:

A policeman was stabbed and a woman shot when schoolchildren at Onverwacht settlement near Thaba Nchu attacked the police station yesterday.

About 600 children boycotted the eight schools in the settlement and at about 9am moved through the streets setting alight vehicles, a shop and plundering two other shops, the Divisional Inspector of Police in the Free State, Colonel Fisher said.

The crowd then moved to the small police outpost and confronted the policeman on duty. The policeman was stabbed with a knife and while unconscious was robbed of his firearm, Colonel Fisher said.

A shot was fired with the firearm and a black woman was wounded. Police retrieved the policeman's gun. About 20 youths were arrested.

Resentment against Qwaqwa Chief Minister, Kenneth Mopeli, surfaced at Onverwacht on Sunday, September 14, when he addressed a crowd of about 2 000 at the resettlement area:

Two men, armed with a petrol bomb and revolver, were arrested by BophuthaTswana (?) Security Police while the Chief Minister of Qwaqwa, Chief TK Mopeli, was addressing a crowd of 20 000 at the Onverwacht resettlement camp near Thaba Nchu.....

The two men, who were apparently disguised as women, were arrested amid strict security precautions to protect Chief Mopeli after rumours of a possible assassination attempt against him at the meeting.....

Chief Mopeli proceeded with his speech and in an interview yesterday said he would continue to move among his people without fear, as they were in his protection. (Star, 18.09.80).

Rents: Soweto

IN PREVIOUS editions of Work In Progress it has been suggested that, in addition to factory floor issues, there are 'community' conflicts and matters which are of direct concern to working class organisation (see for example the editorials in WIP 12 and 13, the contributions on bus boycotts in WIP 13, and the debate on progressive community organisation which is continued in this edition). In the article that follows, this question is explored in relation to rents in urban african townships.

In almost all Transvaal townships rents have recently risen sharply; and in Soweto, for example, rent payments will double between August 1980 and April 1981.



Why are rents such a controversial and explosive issue in the townships? After all, payment for accommodation is something members of the working class are burdened with in all capitalist societies. To understand the way in which the payment of rental relates to the whole administration and control of the african working class, we have to go back to at least 1972/73, when the various Bantu Affairs Administration Boards were set up by the state to rule and manage african townships outside of the bantustan areas. Before this period townships had been under the control of local municipal authorities, and while this form of administration was deficient and unacceptable to township residents, there were aspects which were not as harsh as the subsequent rule of the administration boards.

A few municipalities subsidised their dormitory townships, both directly and indirectly. For example, in the last year that it was responsible for administering Soweto, the Johannesburg City Council directly subsidised Soweto to the amount of R2-m; there was also an 'indirect' subsidy in that part of the cost of township administration was absorbed by the City Council's own departments and administration.

During 1972/73 the central government removed control of african townships from local authorities, and placed them directly under 22 newly created Bantu Affairs Administration Boards (BAABs); from then on the administration of all african townships outside of the bantustans fell under these boards.

The principle that the BAABs were to be self-financing, and have no financial claim on the central state, was enforced by the government. In practice this meant that the