

PASSES & PLACES TO STAY

by L. F. Platzky

In the July 1981 edition of REALITY it was stated that the article "CROSSROADS : FROM CONFRONTATION TO CO- OPTION" had been written in the 'belief that it is crucial to understand the new "total strategy" in coping with resistance'. The article claimed to examine the more subtle enforcement of unchanged government policy. Since then the plight of the Nyanga squatters have highlighted the return of the old strategy of forced removals in spite of national and international protests.

In an attempt to understand current state strategy, it is useful to compare the Nyanga with the Crossroads issue.

NYANGA

In June 1980 people were evicted from a squatter camp above the Hout Bay Harbour. They were given refuge in the Langa barracks which were due for conversion into family housing for those 'legally' in Cape Town. In April 1981 they were evicted from the barracks. They were taken into church halls by sympathetic priests, but they could not stay there indefinitely and in May they moved to a site on the edge of Crossroads. The Crossroads Committee was not consulted before this move and confusion resulted in the community as the Crossroads residents thought an arrangement had been made with their representatives which could be detrimental to their agreement with Dr Koornhof that they would not allow more people into Crossroads. The Executive made it clear that they felt the Crossroads people should not become involved as, for better or worse, they still had an agreement with Dr Koornhof.

On 22 May 1981 55 women and children were deported to the Ciskei, but they had returned to Cape Town within a week. Dr Koornhof said that it was his duty to protect Africans legally in the Western Cape and he would see that the strongest action was taken against illegal squatters in the future.

It seems that, although no official statement was made, a number of the people involved at this stage were 'legalised' and allowed to put up shanties next to the Administration Board offices at Nyanga.

On 14th July 300 other Langa residents marched to the Langa Administration Board offices to demand accommodation and the right to be in the Peninsula. On 15th July 700 residents marched to the Nyanga offices with the same demand. Officials could not cope and closed the offices.

Late on the night of 15th July 1000 homeless people moved onto the land between Crossroads and the Nyanga offices of the Peninsula Administration Board (PAB) to join the Langa Barracks people. These were people who had been living in crowded conditions in hostels, zones, flats, other people's houses, and the people of Crossroads who had not been regularised in terms of Dr Koornhof's categories (see page 15 July REALITY). A small committee was elected that night.

At 03.00 next morning the PAB carried out a huge pass raid, arresting hundreds of people. The people did not resist but went into the vans singing. Those who were not arrested went to the Langa Courts later that morning to be with friends and relatives. Hundreds of township people joined in. The crowd sang and offered themselves for arrest — a scene reminiscent of the Defiance Campaign. Teargas was used to disperse the crowd outside the Court. Over the next week it was reported that 1134 people had been arrested, but those who came out on bail estimated at least 2000 had been arrested. The Langa Courts could not cope as lawyers were brought in to defend the accused.

On 20th July representatives of 21 organisations met to discuss how they could help the Nyanga Bush people. They called for the immediate and unconditional release of those who had been arrested and for the abolition of the pass law system ("We feel that this is their land and they should be given a place to stay here"). Twenty two more organisations sent representatives to a follow up meeting at which the "Bush Committee" failed to appear. It became increasingly clear that the Bush Committee would only relate to the churches and (predominantly white) support groups such as the Women's Movement for Peace, Black Sash and the Civil Rights League. In fact, once the Crossroads Executive had taken a decision to help the bush people, having seen their plight during the raids and how Crossroads people were also being arrested, the Bush Committee actually refused to work with them, saying they worked with the PAB.

On 27th July DIE BURGER reported that officials had to be brought from the rest of the country to cope with 1100 people charged with pass offences in the Langa Courts. Lawyers had offered their services defending those arrested during the raids of the past few weeks. The number of defended cases slowed the notorious pass courts. There had been some talk of not taking bail or defence at the beginning but it is not clear what happened to that strategy. Until Parliament debated the squatter position, the main news was the legal proceedings surrounding the bush people.

On 5th August DIE BURGER reported that Dr Koornhof had said South Africa would not tolerate a second Crossroads, and that the government had no intention of lifting influx control. On 8th August Dr Koornhof denied that shelters had been removed from those in the bush and the CAPE TIMES published a photograph taken on 17th July of a policeman removing shelter from an old lady.

Mr Thomas Mandla, Chairman of the African Chamber of Commerce, said that those in Cape Town "legally" were not against the rest. "We'll share our crumbs of bread" he said in a statement to the ARGUS on August 10th

Next morning there was another pre-dawn raid. American Congressmen visiting Cape Town condemned the inhumane treatment of South Africans. By 13th August social workers, churchmen and relief workers were no longer allowed into

the camp. A fund was set up to raise money for the squatters. A petition strongly objecting to the recent evictions, arrests and intimidation signed by thousands of Capetonians was handed to Dr Koornhof, a mass meeting in the City Hall condemned government action and four Progressive Federal Party (PFP) Members of Parliament had a long discussion on 14th August. Ms Helen Suzman said that they had had 'no joy' from the Minister. News of the action was being published around the world. The Bush Committee was told to expect a visit from Dr Koornhof that night. He did not arrive and instead released a 'new deal' through the press: According to the statement in THE CAPE TIMES (15 August) Dr Koornhof had made an agreement with the Transkei government that:

*Uncontrolled squatting could not be tolerated and would not be allowed in the interests of the squatters themselves.

*No squatting would be allowed on the relevant site in Nyanga.

*The case of each individual apprehended on the site in question as from July 16 to August 3, 1981 would be considered on merit. Where the person was in employment, his position would be legalised. Housing would be taken up with the employer and, if accommodation was not available, the person would be accommodated on a single basis.

*The unemployed would be helped to find jobs elsewhere in the country. Steps had been taken to find them private sector employment in the Transvaal and Orange Free State where jobs were available. Women not having employment and men not willing to take up jobs offered could not be accommodated in the Western Cape.

He added 'The people can rely on me not to rat on or go back on what is written here, but we must have co-operation to resolve the problem'. Dr Koornhof repeatedly rejected criticism of recent actions, saying his department was trying to solve a difficult problem in as humane a way as possible.

On August 16th Mr Brian Bishop, Chairperson of the Civil Rights League said the deal was not acceptable as the people would not be able to take their families with them. He urged moderation and tolerance on both sides through discussion and added that 'if we can arrange a meeting we would be pleased to do so although we realise that this will place our credibility at risk'.

Meanwhile eight PFP MPs had spent the weekend visiting Ciskei resettlement camps. This was the first public attempt to broaden the issue to forced removals and the public was informed about the scale and conditions of relocation.

By 17th August 2 500 people had gathered at the bush 'no name' camp, having heard that Dr Koornhof was offering jobs. People interviewed say that they were told to go to the camp if they were looking for jobs or passes. One even said that an official had told her to stay at the camp as the authorities were coming around to 'regularise' the people. (This was the second time such reports were made. The first was the time when people gathered on the night of the 16th July. It is not impossible that this was a state strategy to gather many of those 'illegally' in the area in one place to be deported).

The Chief Commissioner explained Dr Koornhof's statement to the people on 17th August. A meeting was scheduled for the next day for the Bush Committee to report what the squatters felt about the deal. It was cancelled and instead the camp was raided by 100 police in 80 vehicles with dogs at 06.20. About 2000 people were arrested, taken to Pollsmoor and told to divide themselves into Ciskeians and

Transkeians. Many people regarded themselves as neither. Mr Nkoko said that 'in Transkei everything is nothing'. He had worked in Cape Town 13 years and was one of the 800 meat workers who were sacked for strike action in 1980. He said he knew he could get a job if he had a Peninsula stamp; he did not need to be sent to the OFS or elsewhere.

Meanwhile the Transkei Minister of Foreign Affairs and Information, the Revd G T Vika said on 18th August that the squatters had been incited. They had refused jobs offered by Dr Koornhof insisting that they be allowed to stay with their families. The same day the Urban Foundation made R10 000 available for relief work.

On 20th August 1059 people were reported to have been deported. They were taken by bus to the Transkei, then given train tickets to the station nearest 'their villages'. 1283 had been detained at the camp, six took job offers, 60 were legally in Cape Town and 74 had not been dealt with by the time of the report.

A meeting of 1000 people was held at lunchtime at St George's Cathedral to protest and demand rights for the squatters. It was followed by an attempted march to Parliament to hand a memorandum to Dr Koornhof. It was handed to the Minister of Police while riot police dispersed the crowd. For the next week Parliament was in uproar with the National Party accusing the PFP of taking part in illegal activity such as marches.

On 21st August the Transkei border was sealed and road-blocks were set up between Cape Town and the Transkei in an attempt to stop deportees from returning to Cape Town. On the 23rd Chief Matanzima accused South Africa of not recognizing the status of the Transkei by sending people 'back'. He claimed they were independent.

Next day diplomats in Cape Town tried to launch a joint protest but it was halted by the American representatives.

800 people were held in a pre-dawn raid on the Holy Cross Church at Nyanga on 26th August. Most were deported. The Langa Courts were no longer being used for those allegedly from the Transkei — they are deported in terms of immigration legislation, while those from the Ciskei are being tried in Commissioners' courts in terms of the Urban Areas Act (until, presumably, the Ciskei becomes 'independent' in December 1981).

On 27th August 60 deportees managed to get through road-blocks to return to Cape Town to fetch children and belongings left in the chaos. Ms Kathy Lucket, a church worker, was trying to find 90 children of mothers stranded in the Transkei. Dr Koornhof announced in Parliament that about 43% of blacks in Cape Town are there 'illegally'. The government estimated a **de facto** population of 199 600 and **de jure** 114 164.

On 1st September Dr Koornhof announced that he would "always treat illegals this way". He named the Womens Movement for Peace, the Civil Rights League, the Western Province Council of Churches, the Black Sash and the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission as organisers behind the squatters, accusing them of inciting people and paying for them to return from the Transkei. The organisations denied the allegations. Dr Koornhof added that it was interesting to note that neither the Crossroads nor the 'legal' township people had become involved in the issue.

The deportees in Umtata were being sheltered by the churches, fed by the Transkei army. At the time of writing about 800 are still refusing to move until they can return to Cape Town. The Transkei government accused South Africa of not carry-

ing out its undertaking of legalising those people with jobs in Cape Town. Instead the South Africans had deported everyone. It seems that PAB officials may be sent to investigate this.

In Cape Town townships were surrounded by roadblocks, particularly during weekends with more than 300 people being arrested for pass offences on the weekend 5–6th September according to the Black Sash Advice office.

Having described the events surrounding the deportation of thousands of people to the Transkei, probably the first mass removal to that territory a brief comment of the current situation might be useful.

DEMANDS: PASSES & PLACES TO STAY

Going through press reports no demands of the bush people are to be found. A duplicated list of short and long term demands handed to the PAB reads:

SHORT TERM:

1. MORATORIUM in regard to all Board and Police action until negotiation resolved.
2. AMNESTY for those of community presently in prison or awaiting trial.
3. RECOGNITION that we are not criminals but ordinary people.
4. ERECT temporary shelters pending resolution.
5. FREE ACCESS to us for doctors, priests, lawyers, health and welfare services.
6. FREEDOM of religion and religious observance on site

LONG TERM:

1. RIGHT to live together as families.
2. RIGHTS to live permanently in the Western Cape.
3. RECOGNITION as citizens of South Africa.

Talking to people waiting for a meeting with the Chief Commissioner on 18th August, observers were told demands were "Passes and places to stay". At no stage were jobs demanded. Many people are employed in Cape Town 'illegally' so that what they require is the right to live and work in Cape Town and access to accommodation. Dr Koornhof offered jobs far from Cape Town where it is unlikely that family accommodation would be available. Unemployment in the Transvaal and the Orange Free State is just as bad as that in the Eastern Cape. If Dr Koornhof had really managed to organise over 1000 jobs, it is likely that the people of Onverwacht (a resettlement area of about 140 000 people outside Thabanechu, OFS) or Gannalaagte (a closer settlement in the Sannieshof district) or Kwaggafontein (a resettlement camp in KwaNdebele) or hundreds of other relocated areas in the bantustans would jump at the opportunity. The moment one group of people organises and has international media focussed on it (such as Crossroads), the government comes up with a 'deal', which attempts to make that group a little more privileged than the rest, thus dividing their struggle. But this time however rudimentary the organisation, the people refused his deal. They were summarily deported and now sit demanding their rights in the Transkei which disclaims them, saying it is South Africa's problem. South Africa's response is that they are citizens of the independent Transkei.

State strategy was successful in that having made a superficial attempt to negotiate, it could remove the people physi-

cally off the site and export the problem for the time being — out of sight and mind of the media. In spite of loose organisation over the last three months, the united stand of the people has been remarkable. They still demand to return to Cape Town. They have elected working committees to deal with day to day problems in the church halls and hospital in which they are staying in Umtata, but when the officials come to see them, they speak as one body. The bush Committee still exists in part in Cape Town. Most of them were never arrested.

The support group(s) strategy was not clear. Concerned individuals and groups poured food, clothing, firewood and moral support into the 'no name' camp. From the beginning there were tensions between those who saw their aid as humanitarian relief for people in terrible circumstances. There were those who saw the need for relief work, but felt that the issue was a political one and as such should be challenged by the Church, by concerned citizens of Cape Town, or both. The community with most experience in such matters, Crossroads, was excluded apparently at the wish of the Bush Committee. The township people and voluntary organisations that tried to get involved were also rebuffed. The supporters did manage to rally tremendous material and moral support among whites by petitions, a march, mass meetings, debates in Parliament but involvement could have been much wider and the squatters' stand could possibly have been sustained had those closest to them been actively involved.

The issue is not over. People are together in Umtata and morale is high. Influx control is not working and while the government may make short term gains, in the long term this episode had taught many a number of lessons:

*The State has the force to implement its policies and uses that power despite public outcry, promises of humane treatment, international rugby tours, foreign investment and the threat of sanctions, should it be critical for the survival of policy which protects political and economic privilege of the few.

*State officials are still state officials i.e. Dr Koornhof is Minister of Co-operation and Development, the department which implements the pass laws. He has clearly reaffirmed that he will not change the policy. Despite smooth talking to the contrary at times (e.g. April 1980: there will be no more forced removals), he is a Nationalist Cabinet Minister, not a frustrated liberal.

*The state does not always need to negotiate; it can gamble on using force. It lost in Crossroads in 1978, won in Nyanga three years later. Organised resistance from the people themselves makes the difference.

*Total strategy days are over — it is back to confrontation in Nyanga, Angola, the trade union movement, etc.

*The International climate is different with right wing leadership in the USA and UK particularly. South Africa need no longer be as careful about its 'overseas image'.

*Transkei is an agent of South Africa — forced removals cannot be refused by a bantustan.

*There is no substitute for organisation — demands should have been clearly stated by the people themselves, as they were in Crossroads, then outsiders could have related to demands rather than helping to articulate them.

*Resistance cannot be sustained without community support — the Bush Committee should not have refused support from 43 community organisations.

* Remarkable resistance and unity have been sustained for three months — in short term the people have lost for the right reasons (direct repression) rather than for the wrong ones (co-option in Crossroads).

It is not inconceivable that Dr Koornhof and the Cabinet could renege on their 1979 Crossroads agreement. Hundreds, if not thousands, were left off the survey and as Crossroads is cleared, not all the people are qualifying for houses in the New Crossroads. Some who have qualified are being given three months permits, then told to return to the Transkei. It is possible that Dr Koornhof could claim that the Crossroads Committee has not kept its side of the bargain

in not allowing new people into the area. The vast majority of those left off the survey (estimated over 3 000 by the Committee) have lived in Crossroads all this time and only become conspicuous as official sifting progresses.

Should the special status of Crossroads be withdrawn, it is unlikely that such a politicised community with a long history of organisations and experience from which to learn, would allow itself to be deported from the Western Cape. Crossroads leadership has reverted to holding general community meetings and is well in touch with township representatives. It would be an unwise state that tackles that alliance lightly.

POSTSCRIPT.

CROSSROADS:

REPLY TO ANOTHER VIEW

In writing "Crossroads: From Confrontation to Co-option" we stated clearly "This article is not intended as an attack on those who participated in the process. It has been written in the belief that it is crucial to understand the new 'total strategy' of coping with resistance". Both of us were members of the Crossroads Support Group, and, as such we recognise the need to evaluate the process. By naming and defending the actions of members of the delegation Ms Cleminshaw highlights the very problem in the strategy that was adopted, namely individual action which could be removed from the community base, rather than broad democratic struggle. We are evaluating the TACTICS used, not criticising the individuals.

Briefly, some comments on the reply:

We question whether "retaining residence, employment and shelter in Cape Town" was achieved on as wide a scale as was expected. The "letter and spirit of his (Dr Koornhof's) undertakings" had two sides to the coin: saving (many) Crossroads people from the bulldozers AND increased influx control.

The fact is that a number of people have not been getting houses in the new area (mainly lodgers and female heads of households) and there are still people on three month permits, despite assurances of longer periods and the establishment of an Appeal Committee, as cited by Dr Koornhof.

New Crossroads has been raided by BAAB twice, about seven people have been deported to the Transkei and heavy fines were imposed on owners of houses where "illegals" were found. Local officials have threatened to charge residents from other townships with trespassing, if found in New Crossroads.

Dr Koornhof himself stated that his proposals were "in the best interests of the Government". The very reason he involved himself in the Crossroads issue was reaction to mass struggle. The Urban Foundation had proposed a township to be built for Crossroads long before and when Dr Koornhof appeared, he took that advice. Once the State and big business had decided how to control the situation, the rest of us were pawns in the game.

Certainly the negotiators represented the delegation and the committees, but it cannot be denied that from the time Dr Koornhof appeared in Crossroads until the statement was released there was no broad community discussion let alone accountability. The proposals were never put to a vote.

Had the delegation and the committees been in touch with a significant part of the community, and they had all publicly decided to accept the deal, our judgement would be different. Far from being an "unwarranted reflection on the intelligence and commonsense of the Crossroads delegation and the people themselves", this is a sincere attempt to learn from their experiences, many of which were very positive. Other communities under threat of removal value the triumphs and pitfalls gleaned from Crossroads.

In conclusion, may we reiterate our belief that we should learn from experience, that we should publicly reflect on strategies, that heroes are often unsung and that we should attempt to build the future democratic South Africa now by not being ashamed to air our problems, by recognising our roles in different areas and making sure we learn from the enemy, the apartheid designers, that only through careful planning, precision implementation and reassessment will we win the struggle. □

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