



TRAC

Transvaal Rural Action Committee

Newsletter No 6 April 1985 • REPRIEVES

THE HUHUDI AND LEANDRA REPRIEVES

This newsletter deals with Leandra and Huhudi — both townships which have been under threat of removal for many years now. Recently both were given reprieves of different sorts by the government. The initial response was jubilation, but with time it has become clear that reprieves can be overturned, or can contain within their terms, conditions that will still keep life difficult and insecure for many people.

The limited nature of these reprieves needs to be contrasted with the recent statements by the Minister of Co-operation and Development, Dr Gerrit Viljoen, to the effect that he was reconsidering the policy of urban removals. For whilst many communities have welcomed his statement, their response is also one of 'wait-and-see'. In December last year when the people of Valspan, the Jan Kempdorp township were asked if they wanted to move to Pampierstad in Bophuthatswana, their response was an unequivocal **No**. The official response was not to contradict them, but rather to state that the rents in a renovated Valspan would be far higher than those in Pampierstad. Now that Valspan has received an official reprieve, it is not known what rent increases will be enforced. Reprieves, many communities feel, are inadequate if their consequences are merely different and more subtle pressures that nevertheless force people to move.

LEANDRA

Leandra is the Leslie township. It is situated in the Eastern Transvaal near Secunda and Evander. The township was originally made up of freehold plots, but these were bought out by the Administration Board in the mid-70's. Since then there have been a number of attempts to remove the township. In 1981 for example, residents successfully resisted attempts to issue them with five days notice to leave the township. The Administration Board is no longer trying to remove the entire population of the township. Instead, it has built a new township adjacent to the old in which only a section of Leandra's population will be rehoused. Only 712 houses have been built, and a little over a hundred sites

are to be made available for self-built housing. This number of houses was calculated on the basis of a survey done by the Administration Board in 1980. It clearly in no way reflects the real size of the present population which has been estimated to consist of over 18 000 people. It is also possible that even at the time when the survey was done it underestimated the numbers of people living in the township. This survey may have only counted household heads and ignored the fact that many of Leandra's homes have large extended families living in them. So that the largest of the corrugated iron homes may well have three or more generations living in them. The focus of the removal in recent months has thus been an attempt to divide the township into those who will get houses in the new township, and those who are deemed to be 'illegal' and will have to move to KwaNdebele.

Under the leadership of the Leandra Action Committee (LAC), the community has resisted these attempts to divide it, and has demanded that the entire population be allowed to remain in the township. Of particular concern were the 116 households whom the Administration Board had defined as 'illegal' and who were under direct threat.

On the 7th June 1984, the Leandra Community and the Action Committee received through their lawyers a letter from the Ministry of Co-operation and Development. This letter said that the 116 families who had been threatened with removal because they were illegal would be reprieved and would not be expected to move to KwaNdebele. (This permission to remain was granted in terms of regulations 7(1)(d) of Government Notice No. 1036 of 1968.)

The news of this reprieve was greeted with jubilation. For a time it seemed as though the struggle against Leandra's removal had been won. Yet, recent events in the township, and on-going evictions have brought into serious doubt whether this is true or not.

For two months late in 1984 the local administration board evicted individual families from their houses in



Leandra householders being evicted

the township. The registered tenants in these houses were allocated houses in the new township. All the other residents of the house, in most cases the extended family of the registered tenants then had to move. They were told to demolish their houses, take their building materials and move to a 'waiting place' that is near the township taxi rank. There are no facilities at all in this 'waiting place' — no toilets and no water. It is also at the base of a steep incline that runs down from the road. In the first torrential summer rains these hastily erected structures were completely flooded, leaving many with their possessions ruined.

The people in this waiting place are by and large residents of long standing in Leandra. Most are also people with Section 10 rights, as the following examples show.

- Elizabeth Shabalala is one of those who were pushed into the waiting place. She is unmarried, and has two children and Section 10(1)(a) rights in Leandra. Her parents were given a house in the new township and she and her children were pushed out.
- Steven Nxumalo is also a 10(1)(a) resident of Leandra. He and his two children and wife have always lived with his parents and brothers and sisters in their house in the township. His mother was told to move and allocated a house in the new township and Steven and children were told to move to the waiting place.

The people at the 'waiting place' have not been told why they are there or for how long they will be there. Enquiries as to these and other issues have met with little response from officials. The Action Committee's lawyer was told by one of the Administration Board officials that the people had moved there of their own free will. A journalist was assured by Mr Oberholzer, the Director of Housing of the Highveld Administration Board that no-one would be moved to KwaNdebele. Others who have made enquiries were told 'no comment'.

A series of meetings were held over two weeks between the Action Committee and various officials. Nothing conclusive has emerged from these meetings except for various assurances that people would not be moved to KwaNdebele. In addition, at a meeting held between the Leandra Action Committee, the Community Council, and various officials, Mr Van Dyk, the District Manager said that evictions of people from the township could not be halted because they were being moved to facilitate development of the township. To halt the evictions would mean that this development would have to stop and the board would lose money because it would have to pay money to the contractors for the time that would be lost.

Repeated complaints to the administration board as to the conditions of the people in the 'waiting place' seemed to have had success on Wednesday 17th October 1984, when Mr Van Dyk told Chief Ampie Mayisa of the Action Committee that the people at the 'waiting

place' would get priority housing in the new township and that no new evictions would take place. This raised people's hopes and the following day about 100 people from the 'waiting place' gathered at the administration board offices to get keys to the new houses that they had been promised. However, they were told by an administration board official that there was no place for them any more in Leandra and that they should go back to where they came from (i.e. the Bantustans. This is despite the fact that many of these people were actually born in Leandra.) The same day the Action Committee's lawyer was once more told in a telephonic conversation, that there would be no more evictions.

The problem clearly arises out of the fact that the Administration Board has tragically and belatedly discovered that the new township is far too small. Their way of dealing with the problem is to allocate houses to registered tenants only — those who would have been surveyed in 1980. It is their families and all lodgers who were not counted by the Administration Board who are literally being left out in the cold.

The other possibility is that if these people have to live long enough in these conditions it might even seem more attractive to move to KwaNdebele and try to establish a more secure existence there. In that case, the Administration Board would have succeeded in a 'voluntary removal'. The Leandra community is both angry and resentful about what is happening to them.

The Leandra township is extremely tense at the moment. All the residents are living in fear as to whether they are to be the next to be evicted. At the same time there is the wider fear as to whether the so-called reprieve for the people of Leandra has been withdrawn, and whether the current evictions are the beginnings of a large scale removal of the township.

Leandra Stop Press ...

The rising tensions in Leandra predictably exploded into violence. In November an angry crowd of township residents set fire to the house of one of the community councillors who support the attempts to move them. And on the 27th November, a crowd of people attempted to forcibly prevent the eviction of one of the township's oldest residents Mr Andreas Fakude. Mr Fakude was one of the original freehold landowners in the township and was expropriated by the Leslie municipality. As the eviction began a crowd gathered. Stones were thrown at the administration board officials and at black policemen. The administration board officials raced out of the township at speed, leaving the black policemen to fend for themselves. The driver of the bulldozer which had been brought into the township to demolish the house after the eviction, was forced to drive around in circles to avoid being stoned.

If this is an indication of the response to any future evictions it is clear that Leandra will only be moved amid much bloodshed and sorrow. Now, in February 1984, rumours are rife that more evictions are due to take place soon and that the level of conflict and polarisation will once again increase.

HUHUDI

Introduction

On the 15th October 1984, the township of Huhudi, for years under threat of removal, received a reprieve. This was granted by Dr Gerrit Viljoen at a meeting attended by the Huhudi Community Council, the mayor of Vryburg, representatives of the Vryburg Afrikaanse Sakekamer and Chambers of Commerce, and the local Nationalist M.P. The following history of Huhudi and the conditions of the reprieve will show why many of the residents are at present quite sceptical of this news.

Background

In 1970 the Government announced that Huhudi, the township of Vryburg in the Northern Cape, was to be moved. The proposed removal site was to be Pudimoe, 55 km away in Bophuthatswana. The residents of Huhudi (at present approximately 14 000 people) have lived under this threat for 14 years, filled with a feeling of uncertainty and anxiety about their future. They have also had to face various tactics by officials aimed at persuading individual families to move 'voluntarily'.

A freeze on housing was introduced (the last houses built by the NCD Board were in 1962) meaning that people were not allowed to extend their present houses or build any new houses on vacant sites. Residents were told that if they renovated their houses, the expense incurred in the process would not be compensated when they moved.

Services supplied to the township deteriorated (rubbish was removed erratically) while rents increased. Rent was R10,70 in 1980 for some houses and this rose to R25,37 in 1984. Huhudi Civic Association (HUCA) questions whether the increased rent money was being used to build Pudimoe since Huhudi showed no improvement.

In February 1983 a NCAB official announced that 462 houses in the township were earmarked for demolition (after a half-day trip through Huhudi). This would leave about 1 050 houses standing. The 462 were not demarcated visibly however, and residents had to go and ask the Administration Board official if they suspected their house was one of those condemned. Legally people were still allowed to build or repair, but faced harassment at every level if they tried to do so. One old man whose roof was falling down had been forbidden to renovate. He went to the NCAB offices three times and told the officials he had to repair his house. They tried to stall him with requests for plans, etc. When he eventually repaired his house, he was jailed for 5 months and fined R40,00. People were pressurised to move because of the housing freeze. Children who grew up and married and wished to build on to their parents' houses were told that they were not allowed to. Legally, there was nothing to stop them adding on, once plans of the proposed alterations were passed. However, plans submitted by tenants were indefinitely delayed. Children were therefore forced to become lodgers elsewhere in the township or move to Pudimoe and obtain a house there.



Huhudi — a decaying home. Residents were not allowed to renovate for many years

Problems with Pudimoe

Among the problems of being resettled in Pudimoe is that inhabitants lose their urban rights once they take up residence in a Bantustan. Their right to live and work in an urban area is denied and they can become **foreign** contract labour at any point. They then have to wait in the Bantustan and register at a labour bureau. If they are contracted to a job they become a hostel dweller or commuter. Family life is destroyed. South African Trade Unions are banned in Bophuthatswana and so workers' rights are weakened. Rents are more expensive in Pudimoe and busfare to Vryburg is yet another expense for people who at present can walk to work from Huhudi. All this, besides becoming a foreigner in one's place of origin, losing all **claim** to political representation in the future of South Africa.

Reaction

There have been many forms of protest against this removal from different quarters. In 1980 the Huhudi Community Council wrote a letter to the Minister of Co-operation and Development, Dr P Koornhof, protesting against the move. The Department's reply, dated 11/8/80, was that the move was definitely going ahead, according to 'the policy of the South African Government that residents of Urban Black Residential Areas

near Black States be settled, wherever practically possible, within Black States.' The Community Council then drafted a petition, objecting to the move to Pudimoe. This was signed by approximately 1 000 Huhudi residents and sent to Dr Koornhof.

This was the last strong action by the Community Council. As its effectiveness declined and it seemed to lapse into apathy following the absence of any positive response to the petition, another organisation, HUCA, was formed which became the main opponent to the removal.

Reaction to the removal came from the businessmen of Vryburg too. In August 1982 a white delegation from the town of Vryburg consisting of the mayor, members of the Afrikaanse Sakekamer and Vryburg Chamber of Commerce had a meeting with Dr Koornhof. Strong objections to the move were voiced in this meeting by businessmen who feared the loss of consumers and having to increase the wages of their labourers to pay for the cost of travelling from Pudimoe to Vryburg every day. The outcome of the meeting was that Dr Koornhof promised to compromise. 'Legals' would be allowed to stay, that is those who in terms of their Section 10 qualifications had urban rights and houses in a fit state

of repair would be allowed to remain, while lodgers and families from condemned houses would be moved 'voluntarily'. More hostels would be built and the Huhudi black residential area would be frozen within its present boundaries. Dr Koornhof then promised that the upgrading of Huhudi for the 'legals' would be undertaken. Koornhof's promise was never fulfilled. No development took place. In reply to their questions, HUCA received a letter dated 21/03/84 from the Secretary of Co-operation and Development which stated,

'According to a recent report by the Northern Cape Administration it may be economically more feasible for all Huhudi families to be resettled in Pudimoe.'

On May 28th 1983, HUCA was formed. Their constitution included a pledge to improve and develop the township through peaceful means and in the interests of the people. Sub-committees of HUCA were formed, including:

1. The Detainees Parents Support Committee.
2. The Huhudi Youth Organisation (HUYO).
3. An informal anti-removals sub-committee.

The Detainees Parents Support Committee was formed after 34 people were detained in Huhudi as a result of student action protesting the conditions at Bopaganang High School in Huhudi, at the end of July 1983.

HUCA and HUYO have taken up various issues, including:

1. The threat of the removal of the township.
2. Forced payment of lodgers' permits.
3. Poor conditions of workers.
4. Squalid conditions under which people live and intimidation of people wanting to improve their living conditions.
5. Rent increases.

On the 5th July 1984, over 1 000 residents voted at a meeting that HUCA be the official delegate of the people at the meeting with Co-operation and Development scheduled for October 1984. They were however, not allowed to attend, as the Community Council was regarded as sufficient representation of Black interests by the Department. Peter Soal, a concerned Member of Parliament and PFP M.P., was also prevented from attending the meeting.

The outcome of the meeting was that Huhudi would be reprieved. Dr Viljoen issued a statement that it had been decided to allow Huhudi to develop fully within its present borders. Open sites would be made available, and a 99 year leasehold scheme would also be allowed to operate for vacant and occupied sites.

Pudimoe, the township to which the residents were to be moved, would still be developed, and people who wished to, would be assisted to settle there. Upgrading of the township's facilities and habitable dwellings

would take place, and sub-standard dwellings would be demolished to make room for the building of new ones. However, the upgrading would be dependent on 'the readiness of the inhabitants to pay for such services'.

The reprieve brought jubilation and relief to many. HUCA however, was cautious in terms of what remained unsaid. They point out that:

- nothing was said of what will be done to cater for families whose houses are to be condemned and demolished, whilst new ones are being built;
- what will be the fate of people living in the township who are considered to be 'illegals', many of whom were born in Huhudi?
- placing the onus for upgrading the township onto the people, seems like a sting in the tail, seeing that the shabby state of the township is due to the freeze on building/repairing and the 14 years of erratic services. In addition, the increasing rents that Huhudi residents have had to shell out over the past 14 years, should have provided enough credit for the Department of Co-operation and Development to begin implementing the much needed development forthwith.
- that the township could not develop fully within its present borders, was another point raised by HUCA. Due to the freeze on housing, there was a great backlog in the demand for houses, and the vacant sites would only cater for a handful of families. HUCA pointed out that as population increased, removals would be inevitable, unless the township was allowed to develop beyond its present boundaries.

The Current Situation

At present, nothing has changed since the reprieve on the 15th October. People trying to build are told by the NCAB that the Board will not allow people to build until it receives an official letter from Pretoria stating the reprieve, in spite of Dr Viljoen's agreement with the representatives from Vryburg and Huhudi. This seems like a deliberate obstacle to development. The Board claims it is broke and cannot develop the township, yet a few years ago, when Koornhof promised a reprieve, R0000 was made available to Huhudi. What has happened to this money? The township of Huhudi has certainly never benefited from it.

CONCLUSIONS

The issues outlined above, and the stories of Leandra and Huhudi, raise many questions as to the significance of the reprieves that have been granted. In the case of Leandra, the reprieve has been no guarantee that removals will stop at all. Instead it signalled a brief respite in an ongoing war of attrition between the administration board and the Leandra community. In the case of Huhudi, it is perhaps too soon to make

categorical statements. Yet the fears outlined by HUCA are based on a careful assessment of what was left out of the reprieve. For it is in the grey and undefined areas and issues that the space still exists for removals to carry on, albeit in an altered form. And so the fear exists that 'reprieve' may in the long-term only mean 'delay' and open the way for individual removals.

In this process the issue of 'Development' is becoming a major question. For whilst the people of both Leandra and Huhudi would unequivocally welcome an

improvement in their living conditions and quality of life, it is another issue altogether if this is to be achieved at the expense of the old, the poor, and the 'illegals' being forced out. For both Leandra and Huhudi, development without removal is an essential principle.

The Leandra reprieve has been shown to be a hollow one. Huhudi fears this may also be their experience. In the interests of peace and stability in both these areas, it is essential that these fears are proved to be unfounded.

On the 1st February 1985, Dr Gerrit Viljoen, Minister of Co-operation, Development and Training stated that forced removals would be suspended pending a reconsideration of government policy. This is a response from communities presently under threat of removal in the Transvaal and Northern Cape.

PRESS STATEMENT FROM COMMUNITIES UNDER THREAT OF REMOVAL IN THE TRANSVAAL
3rd FEBRUARY 1985

We communities under threat of removal, and therefore in danger of losing our lives and property, can only be happy if the threat is removed and we are left to live in peace.

Therefore, if Viljoen's statement that removals will be suspended comes true we will be relieved. However, we are worried about many points in his statement

1. *Will it come true? The previous minister of Co-operation and Development promised there would be no more forced removals. And yet the people of Mogopa were loaded up by police and moved by force one year ago.*

We will judge whether this statement by the new Minister is different, by seeing what happens to the Driefontein people tomorrow, and to the Valspan people next week, in their meetings with government officials.

2. *It is not enough that the government says that it will re-consider some areas. All removals must stop. Both ourselves, as well as other communities under threat of removal have the right to stay where we are. We will fight for our future whatever reprieves or threats the government issues. We believe that it is our struggles until now which have shown the government that to continue with removals will cause bloodshed and fighting. The government fears the bad publicity which this brings to South Africa. But this is caused entirely by its own actions.*

3. *Dr Viljoen mentioned 25 - 30 black spots and the same number of townships. Yet there are still over 18B black spots in Natal alone. What about these people?*

4. *What does Dr Viljoen mean about squatter removals. We believe that the rural squatters are people who have lived on the farms for hundreds of years. In fact since before whites took these farms over. Now they are being pushed into the overcrowded reserves as 'squatters'. And urban -squatters' are often people with urban rights who have no houses because of the housing crisis.*

5. *What leaders are the government talking about when it says it will move the people whose leaders agree? Are these the chiefs and 'leaders' they have put over us, or our real leaders? Dr Viljoen says the leaders of Mogopa agreed to move. Yet we know that the people of Mogopa resisted desperately even after their schools and churches were demolished by the government. The person who agreed to move was a headman who had been democratically deposed by the tribe. The only leaders the government should speak to are those who have been democratically elected by the majority of the community.*

Finally, we say that no change by the government now will undo the terrible damage already done to the people of Mogopa and Rooigrond. and Vaalboschoek and countless other places by the policy of forced removals.

We propose that if the government is really sincere:

1. *Dr Viljoen gives a list of the areas he is talking about*

2. *That parliament changes all the government gazettes which list the areas to be moved*

3. *That the government starts relief measures to help re-establish all the communities which have already been moved.*

We the communities of Driefontein, Kwa Ngema, Daggakraal, Mathopestad, Motlatla, Huhudi. Valspan, Leandra, Machakaneng. Enthombe. Lothalr. Dicheoung, Winterveld, Rooigrond, Magogwane, Letaba, Gannalaagte, do not believe that we can relax our struggle because of what Dr Viljoen has said.

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