

These rather abstract categories of resistance partially reflect certain forms of conflict within society. As mentioned earlier, a number of factors make it difficult to analyse and monitor the nature and intensity of that conflict. Despite the limitations outlined above, the study of political trials enables us to form some impressions on resistance to the nature of South African society, as well as the degree of support enjoyed by banned organisations active amongst the dominated classes.

Onverwacht: 'ethnic' division and oppression

OUTSIDE Thaba Nchu in the Orange Free State, on the main highway to Bloemfontein, there is a sign marked Uitzicht, pointing to the south-west. The public road is wide, rough and heavily rutted. Long before it reaches Uitzicht, which is a small railway siding near the Rusfontein dam, it passes through a gap in a low ridge of hills crossing the western boundary of the Thaba Nchu reserve. Beyond that gap, 12 kilometers from Thaba Nchu town, lies one of the largest resettlement slums in South Africa. It is officially known as Onverwacht, but the people who live there also call it Botshabelo, Place of Refuge. It was barren veld in May 1979. Today it is still a vast parade of shacks and tents and numbered toilet stands, occupied by more than one hundred thousand people. Why?

The story of Onverwacht shows what has been happening throughout the rural areas of South Africa in the late 1970s. Black labourers and their families are expelled from white farms. Illegal 'squatters' are harassed by municipal police in 'white' South Africa (the hated 'blackjacks') and by bantustan police in the black reserves. The 'surplus appendages' of the apartheid state - the sick, the unemployed, the aged, the wives and children of migrant workers - are squeezed onto remote and isolated dumping grounds. Meanwhile political responsibility for the stagnant dustbins of white prosperity

is displaced from PW Botha to the bantustan leaders; a continuous rumble of discontent in the black townships is choked by 'sneeze machines' and the rest of the South African state's techniques of repression; and the international media speculate over hints of significant reform.

Because of its historical association with the Seleka Rolong, a branch of the Tswana people, Thaba Nchu is an enclave of BophuthaTswana and became 'independent' as part of that bantustan in December 1977. But the african population of the Orange Free State as a whole is predominantly Southern Sotho. Their official 'homeland' is Qwaqwa, otherwise the magisterial district of Witziesshoek, in the north-eastern corner of the Free State on the border of Natal. Qwaqwa is a tiny, mountainous and barren area of 48 000 hectares. Its de facto (actual) population in 1970 was 24 000, representing less than 2% of the 1,36 million people identified as members of the 'South Sotho national unit' and, accordingly, as citizens of Qwaqwa by law (de jure). Nearly 90% of this population were resident in 'white' South Africa; and 8,4% were in other bantustans than Qwaqwa, mainly the Transkei and BophuthaTswana. The estimated de jure population of Qwaqwa in mid-1978 was 1,79 million. But far more important than the absolute increase in numbers is the changes



1976: Soweto students demand release of detainees and an end to Bantu Education.

which have taken place within the last decade in the de facto distribution of this population.

In the first place, hundreds of thousands of people in the Orange Free State have been 'relocated', mainly from 'white' areas, both rural and urban, to the two established black reserves - Maseru and Thaba Nchu. These population movements have worsened the crises of poverty and unemployment which were already evident in the black reserves. Maseru in particular has experienced an influx on a staggering scale. Its estimated de facto population in 1980 is 300 000 people, so that average population density is now 622 people per square kilometer, compared with 54 people per square kilometer in 1970. Residents describe the place as one big location.

In the second place certain conflicts have emerged in Maseru and Thaba Nchu. These are the result of enforced 'ethnic nationalism' (ie the bantustan policy). Recent events in Thaba Nchu illustrate the vicious consequences of the fact that the pieces in the ethnic jigsaw simply do not fit; and the appearance of Onverwacht in 1979 represents a clumsy attempt to accommodate the various 'ethnic' groups in the area.

By the early 1970s there was an ethnically mixed population in the Thaba Nchu reserve. The Basotho were probably in a numerical majority, but they were politically subordinate to the Barolong Tribal Authority. Many more Basotho left white farms, the small holdings around Bloemfontein and the small dorps all over the Free State, and drifted in to the existing villages known as Bultfontein I, II and III; and to the Barolong freehold farms and Trust villages. A large concentration

of illegal squatters developed to the north of Thaba Nchu railway station in an area which became known as Kromdraai. It had been demarcated as grazing land, but thousands of people moved there apparently because plots had been fraudulently 'sold' to them or because they had been led to believe that stands would be allocated to them. According to a press report

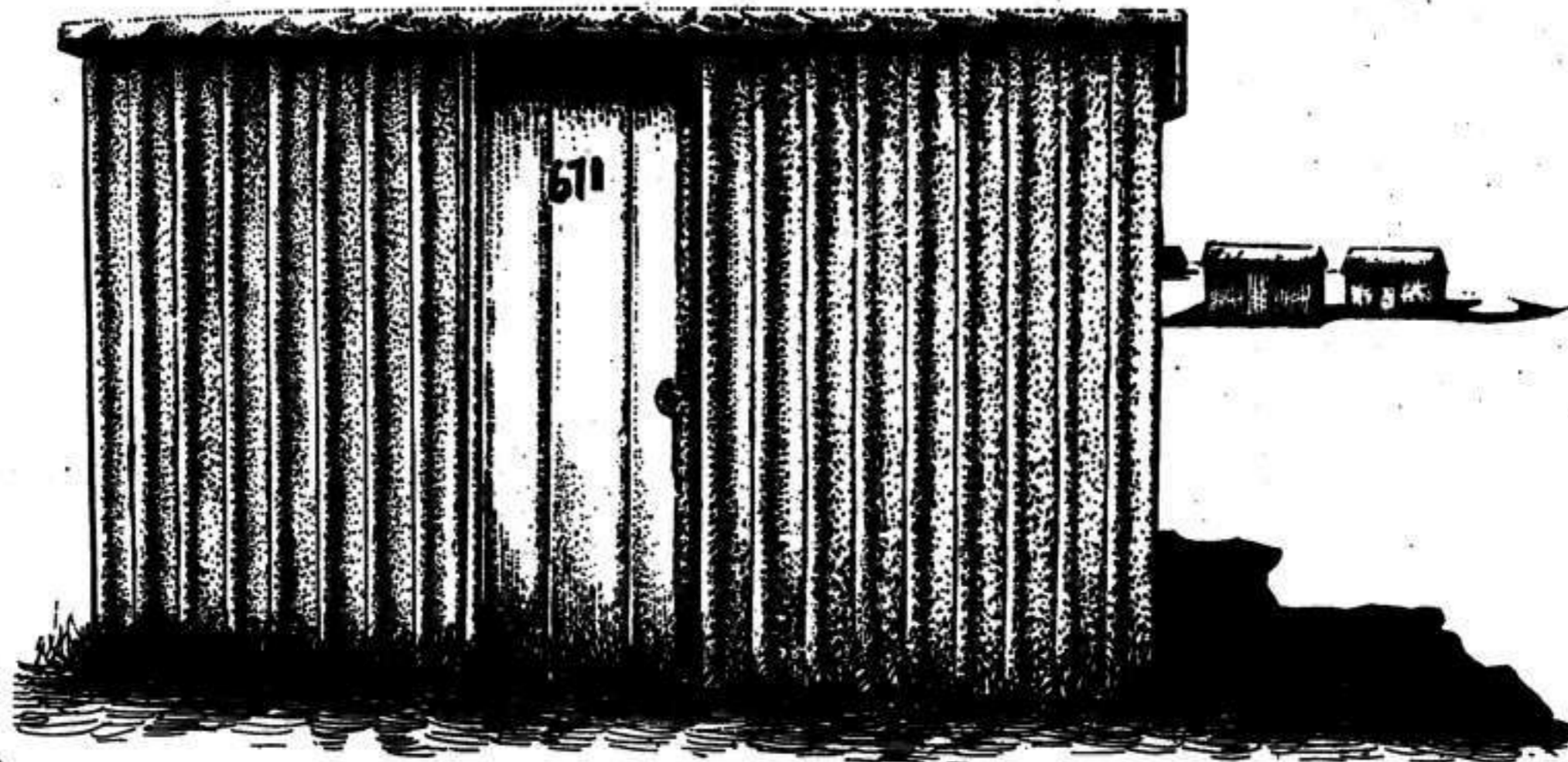
It is the rejected who come to Kromdraai - those who can no longer work, those who cannot 'fix up their passes' - from the small dorps and farms all over the Free State. The authorities of Thaba Nchu (in BophuthaTswana) do not want them and say they must go to their own place - Maseru. But Maseru is far away and overcrowded already. (Voice, 08.04.78).

Initially, an attempt was made to deport the squatters to Maseru. But mass immigration continued, and the issue developed into a confrontation between politicians of BophuthaTswana and Maseru respectively. A Maseru cabinet minister complained that South Sotho in Thaba Nchu were discriminated against in respect of work permits, residence rights and language of instruction in the schools. In turn, he was accused of interfering in the internal affairs of BophuthaTswana (see the Seta/Ngake correspondence in The Friend, 27.09.76, 05.10.76, 18.10.76, and 30.10.76).

By 1978 the population of Kromdraai was estimated to be 38 000 people. They were living in poverty and squalor, in shacks roughly constructed from mud-bricks and corrugated sheeting. They were regularly harassed by the BophuthaTswana police as 'illegal foreigners', and this pressure was intensified shortly after 'independence'. Several massive raids took place in 1978. On April 24, for example, 301 people were arbitrarily arrested, their children

intimidated, their livestock dispersed and impounded: some people were shot, others raped. Those charged and convicted for squatting were fined R40 or imprisoned for 40 days in Bloemfontein jail, by arrangement with South Africa. Another big raid on December 21, 1978, led to R50 fines or 60 days imprisonment. The practice became lucrative for the BophuthaTswana authorities. On several occasions, indeed, the South African police intervened to persuade the BophuthaTswana police to behave more moderately. Basotho tenants in the Thaba Nchu 'locations' also complained of exploitation and harassment by Barolong landlords.

During 1977 and 1978, various negotiations took place between BophuthaTswana and Maseru and the South African government over the provision of land for the relocation of Basotho from Thaba Nchu. A land swap was arranged by which 25 000 hectares of compulsorily purchased white farms on the east bank of the Modder river would be used both to enlarge the Thaba Nchu enclave and to create a South Sotho city to the west of it. Removal of the Kromdraai squatters to the area known as Onverwacht began in late May 1979 - in winter - and was completed by December of the same year. People were provided with numbered toilet stands and had to build their own accommodation from whatever materials they were able to obtain. Most of the shacks are haphazardly constructed from corrugated sheeting - secondhand, scarce and expensive - and they are extremely hot in summer and bitterly cold in winter. Basotho were also removed from the Bultfontein settlements, such as Ma Ntseang near Waghorn station in the east of the reserve, Paradys in the north and Dipudungwana in the south.



People are still pouring into Onverwacht from elsewhere in the Free State, courtesy of GG (GG refers to the South African government, being derived from the numberplates of official vehicles). Many people use Thaba Nchu as a staging post, so that the areas in the reserve from which Basotho have already been removed have rapidly filled up again. They qualify for stands in Onverwacht by producing

1. a Qwaqwa citizenship card,
2. a valid reference book,
3. a marriage certificate

and by paying R1 for the allocation. But Sotho identity is not an indispensable credential for obtaining Qwaqwa citizenship, with the result that there is a significant

Xhosa minority in Onverwacht. Chief Minister Kenneth Mopeli of Qwaqwa is acknowledged not to practice discrimination in this respect.

Conditions are very bad. Most families are grossly overcrowded. They live in tents or shacks on plots of 30 x 15 meters and share a bucket toilet which may be emptied by lorry twice a week. There is no privacy. Water is scarce, despite the provision of pipes and tap outlets in three of the four sections occupied by July 1980 (A, B, 'Singles' and D; toilet stands in E had been laid out and dumping of people began there in July 1980). There was an outbreak of typhoid early in the year. This was denied by officials in Bloemfontein and Pretoria. On July 9, 1980, there were 258 'adult' graves and 269

'children's' graves in the cemetery: a stark indication of high infant mortality.

Unemployment is also very high. Local opportunities are confined to a few temporary construction jobs for GG at rates substantially lower than for similar work elsewhere. Few white employers visit Onverwacht for contract labour; those who do often go back on the terms and wages offered for employment. People bitterly resent the bureaucratic vicious circles which prevent them (1) from seeking work at all (the soekwerk stamp) and (2) from seeking it outside Onverwacht. Even when men are contracted through the local office which serves as a labour bureau, they are seldom offered, irrespective of their qualifications and experience, anything

other than unskilled manual labour ('pik en foshel') at rates which cannot feed their families. Men trudge daily to the offices of the labour bureau, an ex farmhouse several kilometers away from the slums, and despair of any prospect of improvement. Many others do, however, commute daily to Bloemfontein: at peak times 50 buses carrying at least 70 people each way may be seen. The journey takes one hour each way and costs R1 single or R10 for a monthly ticket.

Women are far worse off than men. It is not uncommon to hear of a domestic servant who, as her household's sole breadwinner, rises at 4 am in Onverwacht to travel to her employer's house in Bloemfontein, and works a 6 day week for which she is paid R25 or R30 a month. Out of this she must find R12 for the monthly bus ticket before starting to feed her family. Women are also stopped from engaging in their own small scale domestic enterprises such as brewing beer or hawking anything from knitted hats to sheep's entrails.

Residents of Onverwacht spend an enormous amount of time, energy and money in overcoming or avoiding the bureaucratic checkpoints that limit access to residential sites, to reference books, to workseekers' permits, to jobs, to local services, to pensions. Three examples of this follow. Of course individuals' particular circumstances differ, but the experience of the impediments described is general and widespread.

A. A man who had worked for seven years on annual contracts for Dorman Long in Vanderbijlpark, earning R42 a week in 1980, found that, once his family had been moved from a farm near Tweespruit to Onverwacht in late 1979, he could no longer afford to

maintain himself in the Transvaal and send his family adequate remittances. So he left his job on July 2, 1980, and began the search for new employment nearer home. He went immediately to Bloemfontein, where he found a job, illegally, as a driver for a transport delivery company, and was also 'endorsed out' of town under the 72-hour rule. On July 9 he was at the Onverwacht office to get a work-seeker's permit, so that he could return to his prospective employer to get registration forms, which must be filled in at Onverwacht and then returned to the 'pass' office at Bloemfontein so that he could be given a stamp permitting him to live and work in a prescribed area. This involved at least three return journeys between Onverwacht and Bloemfontein, at his own expense, and further queues and delays at every stage of the transaction. And he would be very lucky if it all worked out.

B. A woman who was born at Bloemfontein in 1910 had spent much of her adult life on one of the smallholdings outside the town, near Ferreira station, working on and off as a domestic servant. She moved to Onverwacht in July 1979 with some of her family who had, since 1974, rented a place to live in Kromdraai. On her arrival she applied for a pension at the Onverwacht office but was told that she was "too young". So she returned to the Ferreira smallholding "where she had grown old", and enlisted the help of her daughter's employer in Bloemfontein in making a pension application there. By May 1980 they had received some papers which had to be completed at the Black Affairs Commissioner's office in Bloemfontein, and then returned to Pretoria. This involved a further indefinite period of

uncertainty and delay. Meanwhile the old woman returned to the Ferreira smallholding to await the approval of her application, and had to beg the present owners for permission to stay with a black family employed by them. She was still waiting there in July.

If her pension came through and she was able to return to her family at Onverwacht, she would still have to travel from Onverwacht to Ferreira to receive it every two months, since an attempt to transfer payment to Onverwacht would not be worth the further trouble and delay that they knew from experience would arise. Only one member of a household of ten - one of the old woman's daughters - was in regular employment, as a domestic servant. She had to leave her husband and young children in order to stay in Bloemfontein, visiting home once a month, because she could not afford the daily bus fare from Onverwacht. Little as it is at about R50 every two months, a pension is a vital source of income for such families.

C. A man born in 1942 began his working life as a farm labourer, moving with his family from the Dewetsdorp district to farms in the Brandfort and Jesselsbron districts. At the beginning of 1974 he took a mine contract at Welkom, paying R14 a month to rent a place for his family to stay on a white farm outside the town. In addition, his wife had to work for the farmer without payment in the weeding and reaping seasons. At the end of 1975, through knowing some of the workers there, he was able to get a job with Boart Drilling for R120 a month, compared with his earnings at the mine of R70 a month at that time; and he was able to 'fix up' his pass accordingly. His family remained on the farm, his children

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.