

PRETORIA BLACK SASH

REPORT ON WINTERVELD AS AT 1981-02-20

The so-called 'Winterveld problem' has during the last years become more and more a focus of attention. It is also one of the aims of the Winterveld Committee (more on this later) to make the name Winterveld as well-known as that of Crossroads both in- and outside South Africa. We intend it to become a household word so that its people and their plight cannot be forgotten.

Why is that? There are many squatter camps and resettlement areas probably very much worse off: more bleak, further away from urban areas and with even fewer amenities. I think the answer lies in the fact that Winterveld can be regarded as a microcosm of the South African situation. As an article in one of the most recent Work in Progress puts it: 'The dynamics that go to make up Winterveld, those of unemployment and labour control, render the place symptomatic of what is happening in S.A. today'. Added to this are the complications created by the Independence of Bophuthatswana (BT), of which Winterveld now forms part. The BT authorities are reluctant to take responsibility for the conditions in the area and feel the necessity to eliminate a non-Tswana population which may pose a political threat. There is also the desirability of reserving an area reasonably near to employment opportunities for Tswanas only.

The RDM of 29.5.1979 reported the BT Minister of the Interior as saying: 'The presence of squatters in BT was undesirable because the country was not a "dumping ground" '. That is of course exactly what a homeland is - only people must be resettled from one dumping ground to another so that they can 'preserve their identity'. The new KwaNdebele is such a place and does receive the majority of Wintervelders when evicted or otherwise driven away.

Before going into the events leading to the appearance of Winterveld families at a rate of 4 - 5 a day in places like Kwaggafontein, it might be useful to recap the events leading to their presence in Winterveld in the first place. Winterveld is situated ca 30 km. NW of Pretoria. It is actually the name of a farm, but we now understand the word 'Winterveld' to refer to a larger area of about 80 km. in diameter. The land is private and freehold belonging to Blacks (of all 'ethnic groups') who bought it as far back as 1938 from a land speculation company.

Apart from the farm itself, there are the 10 and 5 morgen areas Klipgat and Klippan, or Stahaneng, the latter being the more densely populated (185 persons per ha.). It is significant that Klippan is nearest to Mabopane, because its residents are made up to a great extent of those who could not find accommodation in the new townships Mabopane and Ga-Rankuwa. These in their turn were created to house those resettled from Lady Selborne, Eastwood, Eersterus and Riverside in Black Spot Clearances in the 60's. Many were actually brought by government lorries and left on the Black-owned land as a temporary measure. The very same people now find that the authorities refuse to put their names on waitinglists for housing in the nearby Soshanguve because they have a Winterveld stamp in their reference books, although they were brought there as an interim measure in the first place until accommodation was presumably available for them in the new townships.

/Others....

Others coming to Winterveld were labour tenants who had to leave White farms, or people evicted from mission land. Some also came from all over the Reef, victims of Influx Control, lack of housing etc.; some came because of the demolition of small freehold plots around Kempton Park, Benoni and Walmansthal near Pretoria.

In the end we have about 750 000 people, mainly non-Tswanas, living as tenants renting a house or a piece of ground on which a corrugated iron/ wood shack can be built, from the landlords. The land was originally set aside for agricultural purposes, but soon tenant farming became more profitable. If there is a borehole, the tenants pay for water as well.

In Winterveld the only laid-on amenities are the main, tarred road and an efficient bus service (this being in the interests of white S.A.); there is no waterborne sewerage system, no water-pipes or water-supply, except private boreholes. Often pit latrines are dug too near the boreholes, which creates a health hazard.

The best-known sight in Winterveld is the donkey-carts carrying water for sale - 2 cents for 20 l. There are no government schools, except for Tswanas, no recreation sites, no clinics or hospitals, except in Klipgat, Mabopane and Ga-Rankuwa, and those are seldom available for Winterveld people. The results can be imagined and cholera has already hit the Klipgat area.

There is, however, a police station. When the BT authorities in a bid to rid themselves of non-Tswanas started the evictions culminating in the Dec. 1978 raids, the arrests and fining of hawkers and the private school principals, fines were paid and charges laid at the S.A. police station in Mabopane. It is of interest here to note that the inhabitants of Winterveld are neither illegal nor squatters. By no existing legislation can Black land be illegally occupied and in legal terms it is only possible to 'squat' on White-owned land.

In order to clear up the question of legality of residence it is again necessary to go back into the history of Winterveld. After the establishment of the Winterveld Community Authority in 1967, workseekers' reference books were endorsed with residential stamps to which one provision was applied. Census and statistic forms were issued to the local people and tenants and landlords were told that only those issued with such forms could receive residential permits.

In March 1979, however, the Odi magistrate instructed the Winterveld Community Authority to help only those with a BT citizenship certificate. Tenants with reference books bearing residential stamps were given a certain period of grace pending their obtaining a BT citizenship certificate; if they did not, they would lose their work.

The citizenship question proved another Catch-22. It was reported that all those who wanted to stay legally should apply for citizenship. Thousands queued outside the magistrate's offices, but only those who could prove 5 years' legal residence could in the end apply and very few certificates were granted.

/So we....

So we have the spiral of no legal residence - no citizenship - no residence permit - no work. Therefore people leave Winterveld daily, trekking mainly to places like Kwaggafontein in KwaNdebele. Evictions, raids and general harrassment are no longer necessary. The victims are their own executioners. And where we previously thought conditions in Winterveld were bad, we now find that we wish people could stay there even without improvements. The reason for this is that conditions in the only areas they can move to are even materially worse, as Sheena Duncan's report on her visit to KwaNdebele bears out, and the greater distances from urban areas would mean the choice of either travelling over 200 km. every day or becoming a migrant worker.

The latest development of the past year is the creation of the BT-S.A. Intergovernmental Management Committee on Winterveld for the upgrading of the existing Winterveld/Klippan area. A working committee, headed by K. Finlayson, is based at the National Buiding Research Institute of the CSIR. Their activities such as the survey of Winterveld, and investigation into local economic activity, building industry and land use, have caused some alarm and increased the ever-present feeling of insecurity. The landowners are especially perturbed after actual surveys of land with the purpose of its being cut up into plots. They feel threatened by expropriation and their Association is presently seeking a court order to stop the land surveys.

An ad-hoc Winterveld Committee, on which the Black Sash is represented, was established 2 years ago. The Committee is now constituted under the Pretoria Regional Council of Churches. One of its strengths is that meetings are held in Winterveld at night, enabling people directly involved, tenants as well as landlords, to take part. A memorandum was sent to the Intergovernmental Management Committee in Dec. 1980, asking for clarification on points such as:

"(A) AREA: What area specifically it is proposed to be developed, i.e. the location of the area/s and the extent. Is it only the Odi/Moretele district which is in mind? What is the number of proposed housing sites? Is it envisaged that this be a site-and-service scheme or will housing be provided by a local or central authority?

(B) PEOPLE: For whom is the 'upgrading' envisaged: Tswanas only or also non-Tswanas? What is envisaged for those who have lived there for a long time, i.e. since before independence and are not 'legally' qualified (although occupation of African-owned land cannot be termed 'illegal squatting' according to any existing legislation)? Or is it to be understood that non-Tswanas will be resettled from Winterveld and others (i.e. Tswanas) moved in?

(C) LAND: Where is the land for building to come from? Much of the land is, it is understood, privately owned. Have the plot owners been adequately consulted and been given individual options as to whether they wish to relinquish their land? Will the plot owners be compensated, and how? What about agricultural areas? Will there be provision for those who seek to continue as farmers? Will the agricultural areas be developed and will the landowners be compelled to develop these areas? Will there be alternative agricultural land offered to those plot owners who wish to farm? Will new home owners have freehold rights?

Will the area remain part of Bophuthatswana, or will it revert to the common area (R.S.A.)? This last question concerns vital issues, such as:

/(a) Social...

(a) Social pensions: Information is available concerning many cases involving people (both Tswana and non-Tswana) who have been paying taxes to South Africa during their economic activity and who have not been able to secure pensions, either from the government of South Africa or Bophuthatswana. With whom can such cases be raised and brought to a satisfactory conclusion?

(b) In regard to citizenship, can it be ascertained in particular whether non-Tswanas will be allowed to remain in the Winterveld area, whether they wish to exercise the right to seek citizenship of Bophuthatswana or not, i.e. will they be issued with residence permits entitling them to remain with full access to the benefits citizens enjoy?

(c) Re work rights: There is concern regarding procedures relating to the granting of work permits and the right to continue as work seekers in the 'common area' (i.e. R.S.A.). Will people from the Winterveld area who have forfeited their Section 10 rights be allowed to retain their rights to work in this area; will non-Tswanas from the last-mentioned group be able to apply for residence in Soshanguve (Mabopane East)? "

This resulted in an informal meeting in February 1981 between representatives of the working committee of the Intergovernmental Management Committee and the Winterveld Committee. It seems that the working committee is looking at the redevelopment in terms of housing and amenities. However, what emerges is that the working committee is now aware that they can do nothing until political decisions are taken.

Neither BT nor South Africa has indicated a willingness to accept responsibility for the situation. This leads to confusion between their respective policies, for instance in the case of children from the Winterveld area who apply for reference books at the age of 16. They apply first in Soshanguve ('South African area'). They are then referred to Ga-Rankuwa ('BT area'). In Ga-Rankuwa they are told that as their parents have no BT papers, they may not take out reference books there. Consequently the children are in a limbo, without any hope of getting work.

In addition there are contradictory decisions being made by the BT authorities themselves. In December last year, according to newspaper reports, the BT authorities said that non-Tswanas could apply for permanent or temporary residence permits. However, at the same time, all the villagers of a village in Odi have been told to move.

The Intergovernmental Management Committee has been told that it must accept as a fact that the people of Winterveld are living there permanently. The most important factor in the problem, as over 90% of these people are non-Tswanas, is that the Winterveld area should never have been incorporated into BT in the first place. The Commission on Consolidation must recommend that the area revert to 'South Africa'. The ball is now in the court of the Intergovernmental Management Committee.

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