

"Unity in Participation"  
Huhudi: A case study in resistance to removal

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Through relocation, the black labour force has been arranged into 'settled' urban, 'settled' rural, and migrant or commuter labour. These divisions are maintained through the labour bureaux, and have encouraged the stratification of the workforce, not only on a rural/urban line, but within urban areas themselves. Through the above, the workforce have been divided in many ways. There is a larger percentage, for example, of semi-skilled workers in commuter towns, than in closer settlements, the latter being where workers (if employed at all) are largely unskilled migrants. According to Benbo, the total increase in migrant labour from all 'homelands' between 1975 and 1979 was 40 000, while the increase in potential migrants between 1970 and 1975 was almost 35 000 each year. (Benbo, Statistical Survey 1980, Tables 15 and 18).

"The pursuit of territorial segregation during the 1980's resulted, in practice, in the removal of only part of the surplus population from the cities and was accompanied by the rapid growth of a settled urban African population...entrenching the position of urban Africans, turning their exemption from a presence disqualification into a de facto right of permanent residence,...the dominant features of the changing composition of the African working people during the 1970's was increasing differentiation of both the active and reserve armies of labour, increasing market segmentation and the development of widening divergences in their conditions and circumstances of reproduction". (Hindson, 1983: 302-3).

From 1965, the Government began pouring money into building houses in bantustan townships such as Mabopane and Garankuwa, while putting a freeze on the building of houses in white areas. During the sixties the development of border industries and the massive increase in reserve population (most of which could not farm) resulted in a radical shift in the settlement pattern in which the population became concentrated in new rural "townships" which were mostly situated on or near borders of the "Homelands".

The 1970's were also characterised by urban resettlement, 'involving the removal of whole "locations" into the boundaries of a bantustan, eg., the removal of Lichtenburg township into Bophuthatswana (60 km away) or the redrawing of a bantustan border to incorporate a township. The workers thus became commuters.

"The government evidently regards 112 kilometres as a reasonable distance for a worker to travel to his job, this being the distance commuter transport can handle in one and a half hours, which the government says is accepted internationally as the amount of time a worker can reasonably be expected to travel to work each day (with another one and a half hours travel home)". (M. Horrel in Kane-Berman, 1982: 7).

Often the distance moved has exceeded 112 km.

## Community Resistance in an Urban Context

Resistance to relocation has occurred in the rural and urban areas, throughout the decades of this policy. I will focus on urban resistance, and its problems, as my case study is that of the problems faced by, and attempts at organisation of, rural areas, have parallels in the urban areas.

Community responses range from apathy and confusion, to organised, determined resistance. Many factors account for this, including government strategies, the variety of interests in a particular community, whether there has been a tradition of resistance in the community, etc.

### The problem of multi-class action, ie. a multiplicity of interests

The diversity of classes and economic interests in one community is a problem when efforts are made to establish a united front to combat removals. This is reflected in the issues and demands made by community organisations in South Africa, generally reflecting petty bourgeois interests, eg. housing in Alexandra Township

Tom Lodge shows in the resistance of Sophiatown how classes seemed united at meetings. However, when the move came, the people dispersed, with hardly a struggle. There had been no dwindling support at meetings, yet because of its petty-bourgeois leadership, with a material position to defend, there was no bloody confrontation with the state.

### Internal divisions

The strategy of the government in Sophiatown had been to 'peel off' the layers of the community, first moving tenants, then landlords, whittling away at resistance. This is a familiar strategy, used in rural and urban areas, where different sections of the community are alienated from each other - tenant from landlord, sub-tenant from tenant, 'legals' from illegals, and so on.

This poses a serious challenge to community resistance - how to overcome internal community divisions, in order to face the outside threat of removal, or else, for the most dispossessed to stand strong when the more affluent members of the community are co-opted, and not accept their leadership blindly. For example, in Leandra, a township near Springs, the community elected a committee (Temporary Community Council) to oppose the impending removal. This committee was offered 5 years rent-free housing in a new township being built, that will only house the 'legals' of the present community. (The rest will be moved to Kwandebele.) The committee accepted this offer, and started negotiating the move with the authorities. (Rents in the new township would be R50, as opposed to between R7 and R13 at present.) The community then responded, angrily, and elected a new Action Committee to combat the first committee. The Action Committee has responded to the move by making demands on behalf of the most dispossessed - in this case, the 'illegals' - by claiming that the latter should have first option to housing in the new township, thus trying to keep the whole community together. However, it is often the most dispossessed members of a community who are most tempted to submit to the proposed move, when faced with the possibility of owning a house, after living in a

shack, or being offered a piece of land after being landless (eg. Magopa). This decision to move might be, in spite of a prior commitment to resist, besides facing the prospect of increased difficulty in finding jobs once they are in a 'foreign' land.

#### Problems of help from liberal outsiders

Another danger in resistance is the intervention of liberal organisations eg. in Alexandra, where their resistance or protest was issue orientated. Often the community members came to rely on these liberal outsiders, who seem to sympathise with their cause. Linked to this is the reliance on the law - once a community takes legal action against a removal, on whatever grounds, there is always a danger of the people losing their strength as a community, in terms of allowing their organisation to collapse, while waiting for the outcome of the court case, or accepting a compromised outcome as a victory. The rank and file become alienated because they are not well rehearsed in legal procedure and this places the petty bourgeoisie, who negotiate with the lawyers in an increasingly dominant position. An article in WIP 18 (1981) demonstrates how lawyers and legalism actively broke unity in the case of crossroads people who were resisting efforts by the authorities to divide the community along the lines of a migrant/urban distinction. During their united resistance, outside experts (lawyers and academics) increasingly began to play a leading role in deciding demands and finally the terms of the agreement reached with the State. They tried to extract a concession from the State (because for them, any concession was better than nothing at all) and came to accept the State's legalistic categories of "legal" and "illegal" residents. Eventually a totally undemocratic compromise was reached where the community was "forced" and "persuaded" to accept it against their wishes. The result was that the so-called "illegal" residents were excluded from the "privilege" of being able to reside in their community (op. cit

14).

Limited concessions can be won through legal procedures, the value of which can not and must not be nullified - but this has to be seen in the context of the law not being neutral, and the community needs to build up its organisation all the time, and recognise the limits of the law. Concessions won, must be used to strengthen people's morale to fight for their rights, not bargains.

#### Educating around an issue for ongoing action

The need to go beyond ad hoc organisations, formed in times of crisis, and the need for political education on issues, is being realised. Involvement also needs to be sustained after an immediate campaign is over. The leadership of the organisation should consist of ordinary residents, not just young activists, and the pace of community action needs to be at a speed that most can keep up with ie. you need to start where the people are, and lead them forward through political education and action; not leave them behind. Instead of only organising around crises posed by the authorities, ie. evictions, rent increased, etc.:

"Organisers are starting to take into account the major on-going problems existing in a community and seek to highlight these prob-

lems and organise around them...For community organisations the importance of taking up these issues is that they are on-going problems faced by people, and are not dependent on a particular move by the administration board or the Community Council. The community organisation can take the issue up at its own pace and more carefully consider how to make long term gains." (LRC, 1983: p.37)

#### Huhudi - a case study.

##### A brief outline of the events surrounding the proposed move

In 1970, the department of Co-operation and Development first announced that the residents of Huhudi, the township of Vryburg, would have to move to Pudimoe, 55km away, in Bophuthatswana. A freeze was put on building any further houses in Huhudi (the last houses built by the Northern Cape Administration Board (NCAB) was in 1962), and the people were told that if they renovated their houses, the expenses incurred in the process would not be compensated when they moved. People wanting to renovate their houses had to sign documents to acknowledge this fact (Sunday Express, 9/8/83). By 1981 only 150 houses had been built at Pudimoe to accommodate families from Huhudi. At that stage, there was a housing backlog of 1000 houses in Huhudi (ibid). Despite the "freeze" on housing development, a new secondary school, costing R600 000 had just been built, and R200 000 was spent on installing telephone cables (which have never been used, according to Mr. Thor Conforth of the Vryburg Chamber of Commerce).

In 1980, the Huhudi Community Council wrote a letter to the Department of Co-operation and Development, Dr. P. Koornhof, protesting against the move. The reply from the Department on the 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 where practically possible, within Black States". The Community Council (CC) then drafted a petition, objecting to the move to Pudimoe. This was signed by approximately 1000 Huhudi residents in due course, and sent to Dr. Koornhof

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. (Prior to this a smaller delegation had met with their MP for Vryburg, to arrange this. Strong objections were voiced in this meeting and outcome was that Dr. Koornhof promised to compromise, to the effect that "legals" would be allowed to stay (ie. those that in terms of their Section 10 qualifications qualified as urban workers), houses in a fit state of repair would be allowed to remain, while lodgers and families from condemned houses (including "shack dwellers") would be moved "voluntarily". Those moved would retain their urban rights of working in Vryburg (this has still not happened in any urban removal, although it has been promised before), and housing of key workers would be considered individually on merit. More hostels would also be built. 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.

By 1982, about 200 families had moved to Pudimoe, 60 moving in 1980 and others following. These were mostly lodgers. A HUCA spokesman, Mr. Makodi, speaking at a Black Sash Vigil on forced removals in June 1983 said

that these moves were not voluntary, in that the people had no choice: "The mere mention of housing at Pudumong made them run wild with glee...initially bus fares to from Vryburg, and rental tariffs were low. Several other Huhudians joined in the song."

The situation in Huhudi in terms of "reconstruction", remains stagnant. People repair their homes at an "owners risk campaign", risking fines or imprisonment. Rents have increased, eg. rates on privately owned homes (for site and services) according to the Chamber of Commerce in a letter to Koornhof, were:

1980 - R10:70 per month                      1981 - R16:15 per month

1982 - R19:22 per month

HUCA says that in 1983, the above had increased to R25:37. Thus in four years, rates have more than doubled with no improvements or benefits, except for the tarring of one street. In February 1983, a NCAB official had 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 in the future.

The only people who seemed unperturbed about the Community Councilors, two of whom in mid 1983, renovated their homes (Diamond Fields Advertiser 9/9/1983).

#### The Community Council's response to the threat of removal

In 1977 the first Community Council elections were fought in Huhudi. The elections fought in Bophuthatswana between the Bophuthatswana Democratic Party had been fairly recent and these factors were carried into Huhudi CC politics. There was a strong Seoposengwe support base in Huhudi and consequently the CC was dominated by the Seoposengwe candidates. The latter party officially rejects the bantustan system and the policy of removals. Thus, the CC strongly objected to the issue of removals and hence the letter to the Department of Co-operation and Development and the petition, protesting against removals.

The CC found its hands tied however, when it reported back that the matter had been irreversible according to the Department. "Mysterious pamphleteering" took place in Huhudi in August 1982, condemning the CC and its "ineffectiveness". At a public meeting in September 1982, the limitations of the CC were voiced, and the outcome was that 6 people were elected to attend CC meetings, accompany the CC to negotiations, etc. and report back to the Huhudi community. In September, these 6 accompanied the CC to a meeting with the NCAB (Another anonymous pamphlet described the 6 as a display "of hope"). At the meeting the CC and the 6 pushed for the termination of the removals programme and the right for people to build and renovate once more. The regional manager referred this matter to Pretoria and said the CC and 6, would be contacted in November. No response came. In January, 1983, 3 of the group of 6 approached the CC to call another meeting with the NCAB. It refused, saying it had not contract with the 6. At a public meeting these 3 reported that as the CC had failed to call another meeting, it failed to represent the interests of the people, and thus called for a vote of no confidence in the CC. The members of the community present at this meeting decided that a new group should be formed, of the remaining 3 out of the group of 6, and 3 more.

The remaining 3 nominated 3 others, and thus the HUCA executive was formed in April.

The response of capital and white politics to the move

The loud protests made by the white businessmen (supported by Indian businessmen) about the proposed move, demonstrates an interesting clash between short term economic interests of the capitalists, and long term political interests of the Government, which, in its view, will benefit long term economic interests. Here we have short term gain versus the threat of political instability and the ideology of separate development. In the words of one of the members of HUCA:

"In the midst of all this, some Afrikaners pressed that all the people of Huhudi be removed. This was met with strong resistance from some Vryburg businessmen who apparently feared to lose cheap labour and black purchasing power. The result was that the people of Huhudi were reserved for the time being." (Mr. Makodi, op cit, my emphasis).

For their meeting with Dr. Koornhof a summary and memorandum of the opinions held by the Vryburg Chamber of Commerce were compiled. Here the acceptance of the policy of separate development was expressed: "Our Chamber is not opposed to Government policy in this regard merely in principle and would not object at all, had the distance involved been less prohibitive for the reasons given in our memorandum." (Quote from summary). To prove this point, it was stated further on that "(o)ur Chamber would not object to the removal of blacks who do not have bona fide employment".

Concerning the fact that Vryburg is expanding economically, as an industrial centre, and the need for legal, stable labour was felt, the following opinions were expressed in the summary:

"Our Chamber is extremely concerned about the loss of revenue to town businesses which could result in the closure of a large number of businesses".

Since the Department of Co-operation and Development has not started upgrading the town, as it promised, the Chamber has submitted letters to the press, protesting about conditions in Huhudi:

"The screws have been turned on the people living in the township - rents have been raised and no benefit from this increase can be seen in conditions in the township - they remain appalling...". (Stellalander, January 19, 1984).

However, one must bear in mind that this is a purely economic, profit-based protest, which could endanger the unity of the people of Huhudi, since the 'legals' might feel greatly supported by these 'white allies', and unite with the latter to save their plight; but as far as the 'illegals' go, in the same letter to the press it was stated in no uncertain terms that,

"(i)llegal immigrants to Huhudi will be treated with no mercy - they will have to get out, and rightly so, this was made clear by Dr Koornhof...".(ibid)(my emphasis).

It has recently been announced that 200 houses are to be erected in Pudimoe during the 1984/5 financial year.(DFA, January 10, 1984). 250 houses already exist. Twenty per cent of the people who are to occupy the houses will be from other parts of Bophuthatswana and the remainder will be from Huhudi, Mr du Plessis (NCAB) reported. He also said that R200 000 will be set aside for a 'self-build scheme' similar to the Ithuseng self-help scheme in Galeshewe.(ibid).

An anonymous leaflet was handed out to residents (compiled by the NCAB), beginning, "Why should I leave Huhudi?", and giving reasons such as poor housing, extremely costly development of the present township, no hope of land ownership, poor health facilities, etc. The next page, entitled "What can I expect at Pudimoe?", expounded the virtues of attractive dwellings, modern amenities, health services, schools, political participation, education (because of one new training college!), continuance of work in Vryburg while still being with the family at night. The total cost of accommodation and transport was estimated between R29 and R33 a month.

One old man interviewed, whose roof had been falling down, had been forbidden to repair it. He went to NCAB three times and told the officials he had to repair it. They tried to stall him with requests for plans, etc. When he eventually repaired it, he was fined R40 and jailed for 5 months.

No formal police force exists in Pudimoe as yet, and residents complained of harassment by volunteer vigilantes, eg. people were fined R10 for hanging their washing on a fence (no clothes lines are provided), and others were fined R10 for climbing the fence between them and a neighbour! People were also told not to be seen in groups of three or more in the streets after 9 p.m. or they faced arrest. People from Pudimoe who commute to Vryburg every day, sometimes tried to stay in Huhudi overnight. If caught, they were harassed.

#### HUCA

On May 28, 1983, HUCA was formed. Later on in the year, an official launch took place. Over 400 people attended the rally. The crowd was addressed by speakers from Huhudi, the United Democratic Front (UDF), the Black Sash, the Anti-Community Councils Committee, the South African Council of Churches (SACC), the Soweto Youth Congress (SOYCO), Kudumane Youth Unity, and the Huhudi Youth Organisation (HUYO).(Saspu National, October, 1983). Speakers spoke out against removals, Community Councils, and apartheid.

HUCA's constitution included a pledge to improve and develop the township through peaceful means and in the interests of the people. The motto is, "Through Unity in Participation". The structure speaks of sectional meetings to be held to recruit members, operated by sectional organisers, who will conduct house to house meetings to explain issues at stake, and

give feedback to the executive committee. Sub-committees of HUCA which have been formed so far are:

- 1) the Detainees' Parents Support Committee (formed August 1983);
- 2) Huhudi Youth Organisation (formed September 1983);
- 3) an informal Anti-removals sub-committee.

The Detainees' Parents Support Committee was formed in response to the 34 people detained when students rose up against injustices 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 lodgers permits,
- 3) poor conditions of workers,
- 4) the squalid conditions under which people have to live,
- 5) Intimidation of people wanting to improve their living conditions.

In 1984, the executive intends to spend more time building up its support in the community and to establish how strong its support is. Until the present, HUCA meetings have drawn over 300 people on average. A strategy of house meetings is now being planned, including door-to-door visits.

HUCA has very strong ties with the UDF. The UDF has gained support fairly rapidly in this region, and has had rallies recently in the Northern Cape, preparing for the launching of the Northern Cape branch of the UDF.

UDF, HUCA, and GAWU have become somewhat conflated in Huhudi. People with work problems come and tell Mr Galeng that they 'want to join', and are surprised when told the three are different groups. Any form of resistance or protest or township problem is usually taken to Mr Galeng, either in the context of HUCA or UDF. HUCA and GAWU are both affiliated to the UDF.

CCAWUSA has no formal links with the UDF or HUCA. The branch of the union was formed in Vryburg in September 1983 when a black woman working at one of the local clothing stores was unfairly expelled. She went to Johannesburg as a hawker and, hearing of the unions, approached CCAWUSA, who took up her case. The outcome was that she was unconditionally reinstated. CCAWUSA has less contact with the community struggle, as it is formally dealing with working class and work-place matters only. It feels the working class in Vryburg, black and 'Coloured', need to be united and organised first. HUCA's reaction to this is that workers have to be organised in their community as well.

#### Implications of the present organisation and resistance in Huhudi

The SPP comments that organisation in the case of resettled communities, or communities under the threat of removal, is generally poor, particularly in isolated areas; "relocation can be seen as a process of disorganisation, as well as of dispossession". The responses are normally helplessness, or anger and frustration, turned "against one's neighbour, with whom one is competing for scarce resources, and not channelled into organisational forms". (SPP, Vol. 1, : 19). HUCA has helped the



community to move beyond this individual frustration, yet many lodgers had already left, prior to its organisation. The fact that HUCA draws as many as 300 people to meetings is promising, but will a similar thing happen here as happened in Sophiatown, where the attendance at meetings did not flag, yet when the move came, there was no united, concerted resistance?(Lodge, 1983: 108-10).

The need for political education is necessary, and hopefully more time will be spent on this in the future, through house meetings, etc. In community organisation in isolated places, working against removals, people resist for many different reasons. Some because of very conservative, traditional reasons, eg. they have lived in the area for many years, the graves of their ancestors are there, they do not want to change; others resist because they realise that the overall policy will cause them to lose certain rights, economic opportunities, etc. Here, political education is necessary to reconcile the different understandings of the situation.

Potential splits in the fight against removals in Huhudi are between the owners of the 1050 'safe' houses and the 462 condemned houses, between legals and illegals, and between tenants and lodgers. Time needs to be spent on organising logers and 'illegals', drawing them further into the formal HUCA organisation. When fighting against something, for the survival of the community, class differences are mystified and communities seem united. But who is making the decisions, or participating in discussions? Who is merely listening at meetings? Is there a small group of activists and a large passive community? If there was a police-swoop on the leasers, would the masses submissively 'give in' to the authorities and move? The necessity of house meetings is realised here. What are the demands being made? Are they only demands for better living conditions?

So often, in fighting for better standards of living in a community, working class people are alienated, because they cannot afford the rising costs of higher lining standards, eg. home-ownership (see Mabin and Parnell, 1983). If the government does decide to upgrade Huhudi, the resultant increase in rents will force many to leave as they will not be able to afford the rising costs, unless the community as a whole unites to fight this, and pensions' rents are subsidised, etc.

SPP concludes their section on the Northern Cape on a challenging note:

"The only hope for the relocated people of the Northern Cape is their determination in some cases, to organise. The people of Valspan, Saltpan and Huhudi are under threat of removal as communities. They have more chance of resisting than isolated farm workers.... If people of the Northern Cape see relocation as a period in their history, they should be able to rise to future relocation for reconstruction".(SPP, Vol. 3, op. cit: 136).

As the government becomes more ruthless once again in its strategies, as seen at Magopa (and which will be outlined further on), in some cases combined with increased bribery of the 'chosen few' who are allowed to remain (ie. the 'Permanent Urban Residents' - the future co-opted black urban elite), as seen in Leandra, where the government is attempting to divide the community, I feel that communities need to be organising as quickly and as thoroughly as possible; since in so many cases that have preceded, the communities have been caught unawares, and leaders have had to make spontaneous decisions, detrimental to the policy of unity and democracy in decision-making.

The people of Magopa were brave and strong in their resistance, and although they were moved, the community has learnt a lot about organisation, unity, and democracy through their experience. One old woman remarked that the community had become human through their suffering. Let's hope that not every community has to suffer as they did, in order to unite, or that not all will be moved at gun-point. The struggle of communities under threat of resettlement is often a disillusioning one, since they have little or no bargaining power, and hence, in spite of publicity, attempts at legal action and determination from the community to stay put, many communities will possibly still face removal. In their struggle, however, skills can be learnt, of democratic procedure, self-confidence and unity in action. Through political education, their experiences can be used to ensure that the community can respond to a call to rise against all the injustices of the South African regime, beyond their own immediate problems.

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