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A F R I C A N  S T U D I E S  I N S T I T U T E

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Title: Gangs, Councillors and the Apartheid State: The Newclare Squatters Movements of 1952.

by: Deon Van Tonder

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# GANGS, COUNCILLORS AND THE APARTHEID STATE: THE NEWCLARE SQUATTERS MOVEMENT OF 1952*

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> They were bloody clashes but ... in the context of the time and the circumstances in that part of the world, they were relatively minor. Fighting was an absolutely common feature there every weekend without exception... Periodically these became more serious...instead of one or two murders, there'd be say, half a dozen, perhaps even more. But the violence was not exceptional...This was the normal feature of life in Sophiatown and particularly in Newclare...Newclare was a very tough area and like any slum ... you accept that there is violence constantly ... One must ... [also] ... remember that rioting and fighting was a form of amusement ... Young people stiff with boredom. 1

This was the judgement of W.J.P. Carr, former Manager of the Non-European Affairs Department of the Johannesburg City Council, when asked about the violence in Newclare during the 1940s and 50s. Yet, in 1952, this "relatively minor" type of clash erupted into one of the largest suburbian squatter movements that Johannesburg has ever experienced. Not only did some 300 African families move across the railway line to Northern Newclare to squat on Council-owned land, but they remained there for seven months while the Johannesburg City Council and the Central Government deliberated on ways of removing them.

Unlike the squatter settlements which sprang up around Johannesburg during the mid-1940s in protest to the shortage of housing and the Johannesburg City Council's apparent inertia to alleviate the situation, the Newclare squatters movement flowed out of a violent clash within the community itself. While officialdom viewed this as yet another inter-tribal conflict (which could later be used by Apartheid apologists and ideologues to justify ethnic segregation), the movement highlighted the underlying tensions and forces which were operating beneath the surface to shape this community. By 1952, Newclare had become an increasingly volatile area with tensions often expressing themselves in the form of unbridled violence and anti-social crime. Far from being a united and closely knit community[2] as has often been suggested by people like Don Mattera, Newclare's proletariat and lumpen-proletariat were divided into various groupings including vigilance organizations and gangsters. During the early 1950s two distinct sections falling into the latter categories could be distinguished: the Ama-Rashea, a group

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(* I am most grateful to Greg Cuthbertson, Albert Grundlingh, Hilary Sapire and Jane Carruthers for their valuable comments on earlier drafts of this paper.)

1. Interview with W.J.P. Carr, 7 December 1988.
2. Don Mattera, "Sophiatown" in D. Ricci (ed.), Reef of Time, (Johannesburg, 1986), p. 209, and Don Mattera, "Sophiatown: The New Political Frontiers", Talk given to African Studies Forum, UNISA, 5 April 1989.

of Basotho migrants who came to regard Newclare as its stronghold, and the Civic Guards, a vigilance committee who tended to rally large sections of the population there behind them , since they offered some protection against the gangster element.

Up until recently, gangsterism and anti-social crime has been a subject ignored in South Africa's historical literature. Apart from Van Onselen's two-volume work which gave exposure to the gangs which emerged out of various social transformations accompanying the industrial revolution on the Rand, much of the literature during the 1970s and early 1980s has ignored the important role which gangs and anti-social crime played in community struggles and black resistance.[3] This gap is however gradually being plugged by a whole body of literature which situates township gangs and "Tsotsis" firmly within the proletarianization process. Attention is also given here to the ways in which gangs form, the elements which bind them together and the notion of a "gang culture".

Don Pinnock's pioneering study on the gangs which formed in Cape Town's predominantly "coloured" districts, has seen gangsterism in the South African context as emerging not only out of the development of Apartheid but also out of the various problems experienced by the working class.[4] These include the fear of dispossession, violence and death. He shows how, for example, the state through a deliberate policy of social enginering, implemented the Group Areas Act which broke down the long established forms of social control. A natural outgrowth of this situation was the emergence of ganging, through which Cape Town's youth and working classes could build up new networks of associations and resort to whatever means guarenteed survival.

The work done on gangs on the Reef Townships tends to highlight the ways in which Pinnock's findings dealing with the Cape gangs can be applied to the Johannesburg context. Clive Glazer for example, has also shown how, through an appreciation of certain styles and rituals, working class subcultures such as the Tsotsi youth gangs on the Rand, challenge working class problems such as the exclusion from political power structures, low pay, unemployment, lack of property-ownership and overcrowded living conditions.[5]

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3. C. Van Onselen, New Babylon and New Nineveh: Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand 1886-1914, 2 volumes, (Johannesburg, 1982). The works which ignore the role of gangs in black resistance are those which deal with more institutional forms of protest such as Peter Walshe's The Rise of African Nationalism in South Africa, (Cape Town, 1987 ed.). Literature on the Western Areas in particular ignoring gangsterism are the articles by Deborah Hart and Gordon Pirie, "The Sight and Soul of Sophiatown" in Geographical Review, vol. 74, No. 1, January 1984, and "The Transformation of Johannesburg's Black Western Areas" in Journal of Urban History, vol. II, No. 4, August 1985.
4. D. Pinnock, The Brotherhoods: Street Gangs and State Control in Cape Town, (Cape Town, 1984).
5. C. Glazer, "Anti-Social Bandits: Culture, Hegemony and the Tsotsi Subculture on the Witwatersrand during the 1940s and 1950s", Paper presented to a Wits MA Seminar, August 1988, and "Students, Tsotsis and the Congress Youth League: Youth Organization on the Rand in the 1940s and 1950s", Paper presented to the History

In a sense, gangsterism is thus a way in which a rightless group can assert its identity and respond to its position under oppression. Unfortunately the literature on the Ama-Rashea gangs and the Civic Guard movement, is rather sparse, but as this paper will show, they too fit into the scenarios painted by Pinnock and Glazer. Both factions were representative of the different methods employed by Africans to survive in a hostile urban environment where everything was pitted against them. During the period under review, basic social amenities for the still ever-increasing African urban population were still inadequate. Poverty had risen dramatically in Newclare and the lack of housing with its resultant overcrowding tended to exacerbate misery and tension. Here, as in other townships there were various responses to these social evils. Illicit brewing, prostitution, hawking, gambling and gangsterism were all facets, albeit illegal ones, of the struggle to survive in the cities. The Newclare squatting movement emphasised these survival strategies.

While much of the literature on squatting has focused on the larger, more organised and more widely publicised squatting movements,[6] such as those which emerged in Orlando during the 1940s, Durban during the 1940s and 50s and Crossroads during the 1970s and 80s, the Newclare squatters movement of 1952 has gone virtually unnoticed by historians. Yet it was a movement of considerable significance.

While the origins of this squatter movement differed from similar movements in the past (such as those which sprang up in Orlando, Pimville and Alexandra in the period 1944-46 in response to the massive housing shortage which could not be alleviated by the Johannesburg City Council), the ways in which the squatter community organised itself was based on a set of political practises, the core components of which were generated by other such settlements during the 1940s. The nature of these political practises - the rudimentary policing of the squatter camp by members of the settlement, the election or self- appointment of representative leaders, the illicit brewing and selling of alcohol and the reliance on the law to plead their case - were all elucidated in a recent paper by Phillip Bonner,[7] and on closer comparison, the ties between the Newclare movement and those of the past are quite evident since the Newclare squatter's movement organised itself exactly along these lines.

Another reason why the Newclare squatters movement proved significant in the history of the Newclare township, was that it

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Workshop of the University of the Witwatersrand, February 1987.

6. See for example Alf Stadler, "Birds in the Cornfields: squatter movements in Johannesburg, 1944-47" in B. Bozzoli (ed.), Townships and Protest: Studies in the Social History of the Witwatersrand, (Johannesburg, 1979), pp. 19-48, Paul Maylam, "The "Black Belt": African Squatters in Durban 1935-1950" in Canadian Journal of African Studies, vol. 17, no. 3, 1983, and Josette Cole, Crossroads: The politics of Reform 1976-1986, (Johannesburg, 1987).
7. P. Bonner, "The Politics of Black Squatter Movements on the Rand, 1944-1952", Paper presented to the 12th Biennial Conference of the South African Historical Society, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, January 1989.

tended to fuel the fires of the Western Areas Removal Scheme. The continuing controversy over possible solutions to the squatting problem and the fact that it dragged on for no less than seven months, provided H.F. Verwoerd, Minister of Native Affairs at that time, with enough propaganda needed to argue the case in favour of the complete removal of the Western Areas of Johannesburg. Apart from this, the movement also
proved crucial in conditioning the relationship between Verwoerd and the Johannesburg City Council. Its role in determining the nature of Verwoerd's strategy in dealing with a recalcitrant City Council which was rather reluctant to remove the squatters and place them in the already overcrowded Moroka emergency camp, cannot be underestimated. In this instance, as with trying to get the Council to cooperate with the Resettlement Board in 1954 the threat to withhold all future funds from the Council, became an integral part of Council-Verwoerd politics.

This paper is an attempt to explore and analyse not only the nature of the Newclare squatters movement by showing how it fed into the Western Areas Removal scheme, but also to examine some aspects of the Newclare community itself during the early 1950s in the period prior to removal. By looking at Newclare a greater understanding can be had of how certain sections of the working class reacted to its environment and how its actions helped shape their community. What follows therefore is not only an exploration of how the clash between different sections of the Newclare community led to a squatting movement of some magnitude, but also attempts to look behind the scenes to see in what ways it served to determine and mould governmental and Council policy vis-a-vis the destruction of Sophiatown, Martindale and Newclare.

## THE NATURE OF THE NEWCLARE COMMUNITY BY 1952

Like Sophiatown, Newclare formed part of the farm Waterval 10 and was surveyed as a site for a future "non-European" township as early as 1905. In 1912 Newclare received official muncipal regognition with the sole intention that it would become an area for "Coloured" occupation only. By 1949 the township was however proclaimed under section 8 (1) of Act no. 25 of 1945, as an area predominantly occupied by Africans. In fact, by 1950 Newclare's African population totalled 14 561 while its "Coloured" population totalled only 1 069.[8]

Although it was inextricably part of the Western Areas of Johannesburg which also consisted of Sophiatown, Martindale and Western Native Township, Newclare had its own distinct character. Unlike Sophiatown with its more heterogenous class composition Newclare's population was predominantly working class: 55% were labourers (mainly on the mines close to the township), and 21% were factory workers.[9] The rest of the population consisted of washerwomen, domestic workers, craftsmen and the unemployed. (See Appendix A)

As a result of the low earning power of its population, coupled

8. City of Johannesburg Non-European Affairs Department, Survey of the Western Areas of Johannesburg, 1950. Copy housed in Municipal Library Johannesburg. p. 26.(Hereafter referred to as Survey.)
9. Ibid, p.50.

with a drastic rise in population during the 1940s due to the steady stream of migrant workers and their families into Johannesburg. Newclare rapidly developed into a worse slum than Sophiatown.[10] In 1950 housing conditions there were rated as of a much lower standard than in Martindale and Sophiatown. (See Appendix B) It was estimated that an average of seven families occupied each stand. A survey undertaken by the Non-Eurpoean Affairs Department of the Johannesburg City Council in 1950 showed that the 579 stands in Newclare (averaging a size of 50ft x 100ft) supported a population of no fewer than 16 980.[11] This meant an average of 29 people per stand. Most African home-owners who had to pay off their bonds could not do so without taking in tenants and letting every possible room in the house. Because these owners were hamstrung by high bond rates and exorbitant sewerage fees, money was not freely available and tenancy proved to be the only viable solution. This resulted in extremely unhealthy and crowded living conditions. Rows of four and sometimes six rooms, individual shacks made out of wood, zinc and hessian and double rows of rooms (making back to back letting possible) were built on almost every stand.[12]

As in the case of Sophiatown, the only evidence that can be relied on to give some indication of life and conditions in Newclare are the accounts given in the literature of the period which are often romanticised, Trevor Huddleston's descriptions in Naught for Your Comfort and various oral testimonies. Of these sources, two particular vignettes stand out:

> ...a different atmosphere hangs like the smoke from its thousand braziers over the squalid houses and over the "smart" homes which stand side by side in its unplanned and unchartered streets. You can go down any street in Newclare and suddenly without warning and without reason, find it has petered out into a field, grimy and grey... Or you can walk down a narrow alley between houses and discover an open yard, with a row of rooms facing it, doors open or half shuttered with old packing-cases to keep the children in, a single latrine, a single tap, and twenty families making their own community in that narrow plot.13

and

> The open coal brazier was an inextricable part of life in Newclare...To visit Newclare at sunset was like entering a city on fire. A thick cloud of smoke from an interminable line of open braziers, planted at short intervals in front of the hovels, hung over the township at that hour. They were not bothered by the obsession

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10. In 1937 the number of families living in Newclare numbered 1 691 and by 1950, this number had risen to 4 609 which meant that an average of 224 families were moving into the area every year. Ibid. p. 9.
11. Ibid, p. 27.
12. City of Johannesburg Non-European Affairs Department, Report on a Sample Survey of the Native Population residing in the Western Areas of Johannesburg, 1951, p.15.(Hereafter referred to as Sample Survey.)

> with air pollution those people. For them necessity dictated that it was more expedient to fill the chests of all with smoke fumes than go hungry for lack of somewhere to cook, or be cold in winter...It was... also ...the meeting place of urchins who sought the freedom the street offered from the imprisonment of one-room houses in the evening...14

Since Newclare formed part of the urban environment, it was also beset by similar problems facing other African townships. Constant liquour and pass raids, strenuous attempts at influx control and constant police harassment created a potential cauldron of discontent which was worsened by rumours of impending removal to Meadowlands. Liquor raids in particular, generated a great deal of animosity towards the police. In Newclare, brewing was the most common source of an additional income and was far more prevalent than in Sophiatown and undertaken on practically every stand.[15] The result was that the number of shebeens in Newclare was higher than in Sophiatown and hence, police raids occurred more frequently. During January and February 1950, numerous raids took place in Newclare. On 30 January 500 police entered the township and arrested 650 Africans of whom 175 appeared in court charged under the pass and liquor laws. On 15 February 250 Africans were again detained by police in another raid,on similar charges.[16]

The Result of this discontent was that by 1950 the black working class openly started to reveal its opposition, and tensions exploded in uprisings all over the Rand. Newclare was no exception and in fact proved to be an explosive political force. Prior to 1950, uprisings as a result of the proposed increase in tram fares, minor clashes between residents of the Western Areas and the white residents of the surrounding suburbs and various gang fights had taken place. In 1950 another riot was sparked off in the area by the attempted arrest of an African for being in possession of liquor illegally. The arrest was thwarted by a crowd which soon gathered and when police called for reinforcements the crowd retaliated with stone-throwing. Although it seemed a relatively minor skirmish between residents and the police, the Commission of Inquiry which was set up to investigate into this and other riots on the Rand, found other underlying causative factors. These had built up over a long period. Despite the Communist bogey which was held responsible for any political riot which occurred in South Africa at the time, it was antagonism to White Government on account of its strong heavy-handed control over all aspects of African's lives and strong anti-police feelings aroused by their role as government agents, which was cited as the major cause.

The nature of Urban Administration was also an area which elicited discontent, especially owing to Advisory Board elections, Lodgers' permits[17] and the inefficient bureaucratic nature of Location

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13. T. Huddleston, Naught for Your Comfort, (Glasgow, 1981 ed.) p. 76.
14. M. Moteane, "The Russians are Coming" in Children of the Twilight, (Johannesburg, 1987), p. 137.
15. Sample Survey, p. 13.
16. The Star, 30 and 31 January 1950 and The Rand Daily Mail, 15 February 1950.
17. These permits were however not rigidly enforced in the Western

Administration. Other less important and perhaps more questionable causes of township unrest were cited too. These included the influence of bioscope films, public utterances and statements in the press, intimidation, residential admixture of races and the "Tsotsis' Reign of Terror" in the townships.[18]

What is revealing, is the Commission's view that much trouble was being created by Tsotsi gangsters. Newclare in this respect was no different from other townships but again, it was to be its distinctive type of gangster that distinguished it from Sophiatown and Martindale. Whereas the latter areas were occupied by the "Americans" and "Berliners", Tsotsi groups fashioned along Western lines and who wore "American clothes, like Palm Beach, Palm Dale, Magregor shirts, Magregor trousers, Florsheims, °and@ Stetson hats,"[19]

Newclare was home to the Ama-Rashea or Russian gang. The early history of this gang is not well documented but it would seem that it first arose during the late 1920s as vigilance societies organised by members of different ethnic groups. By the late 1940s they had however transformed themselves into fierce social predators who preyed unhindered on township residents, naming themselves after the Russian victors in the Second World War.[20] Anthony Sampson regarded this group as the most sinister and notorious of the Johannesburg gangs:

> Unlike others, they were strongly tribal in origin; they were all Basutos, and had come from the poor, proud independence of Basutoland to the slum township of Newclare, near Sophiatown. Their uniform symbolised their predicament; they wore expensive gaberdine trousers and smart hats; but in the place of coats, they wore large blankets draped round them, defiant in their very design. A favourite pattern showed British fighter planes and bombs revolving round a crown, with "V" for Victoria, the great white Queen. The stately blanketed figures walked gravely up and down the slimy streets of Newclare, their tribal dignity still about them. 21

Like most working class sub-cultures which emerge as a response to the contradictions which develop in the hegemonic culture, the Ama-Rashea proved to be a distinct response to material conditions in

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Areas, having been relaxed by the City Council during the 1940s as a result of the housing shortage. See City of Johannesburg, Annual Report of the Manager, Non-European Affairs Department, For the period December 1944 to 30 June 1948, p. 5. (Hereafter referred to as NEAD Report.)

18. Union of South Africa, Report of the Commission Appointed to Enquire into Acts of Violence Committed by Natives at Krugersdorp, Newlands, Randfontein and Newclare, U.G. 47/1950, pp. 9-12.
19. Kort Boy in an interview conducted by the Junction Avenue Theatre Company and reproduced in P. Stein and R. Jacobsin (eds.), Sophiatown Speaks, (Johannesburg, 1986), p. 67.
20. David Coplan, In Township Tonight: South Africa's Black City Music and Theatre, (Johannesburg, 1985), p. 101.
21. A. Sampson, Drum: A Venture into the New Africa, (London, 1956), p.109-110.

Newclare and other Reef townships and the various contradictions posed by industrial development on the Rand. Faced by exclusion from political power structures, lack of property-ownership low wages and high rates of unemployment, life in the urban areas proved to be unstable and insecure. These problems were exacerbated by intense pressure and competition for every kind of urban service and resource. While the African urban population doubled between 1937 and 1952, housing remained scarce and at a premium.[22] All this created a social situation in the urban residential areas characterised by extreme poverty and misery amongst the African proletarian population. Many were forced to resort to whatever means they could in order to survive. Gangsterism was thus but one symptom of the negative social forces at work in the cities and can be regarded as part of what can be termed, a culture of survival.

During the 1940s and 1950s, gangs became an important feature of urban township life. The freehold areas of Sophiatown, Martindale and Newclare proved to be a haven for gangsters. Apart from the the rich shebeen and Marabi culture, these areas were free from Council administration which made the policing of these areas more difficult. Hence both survival and prosperity was made easier. Many of these gangs had different aims, strategies and characteristics. While some were organised along age lines like Don Mattera's "Vultures", some were more overtly ethnic in character like the Ama-Rashea. The most notable feature of this latter group was that it was an organisation of Basotho migrant workers seeking employment on the Rand. Their response to the alienating experience of urban life was to organise themselves into gangs based on their common historical and "traditional" background. My interpretation of the Russians has relied heavily on the arguments of Belinda Bozzoli. She has shown for example, that although the process of proletarianization has varied from region to region, the arrival of groups of migrant workers from particular areas such as the British protectorates, has often occurred in "cohorts".[23] The Russian gang which was essentially made up of Basotho migrants, tends to support this position, since they tended not only to ignore other ethnic groupings, but identified themselves according to their village of origin and based their fighting units firmly on their village identity.[24] Bozzoli further argues that "in the case of gangsters on the Rand, being a Basotho and being a gangster were coinciding points of

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22. In 1937 the population of the Western Areas of Johannesburg (Sophiatown, Martindale, Newclare and Western Native Township) stood at 35 150, but by 1950 this number had risen to 66 577. This resulted in a great housing shortage which the Johannesburg City Council could not alleviate. A NEAD survey in 1946 revealed that in Johannesburg, 40 000 families needed accommodation and that in 1948 this number would increase to 62 000. Nead Report, p.4.
23. Belinda Bozzoli (ed.), Introduction to Class, Community and Conflict: South African Perspectives, (Johannesburg, 1987), p. 23.
24. Jonathan Clegg in his article "Ukubuyisa Isidumbu - Bringing back the body: An Examination into the Ideology of Vengeance in the Msinga and Mpofana Rural Locations 1882-1944" in P. Bonner (ed.), Working Papers in Southern African Studies Vol. 11, has identified similar trends amongst different groupings in the Zululand region.

identity which served, perhaps to distinguish the migrant worker from his urban counterpart".[25] In this respect, what she has stated about the adoption of an identifiable set of motifs by a particular group of people with similar societal and cultural experiences,[26] also rings true of the Russians. It can be argued that their brightly coloured blankets was an emblem, a popular motif, signifying their ethnicity, and providing a way of negotiating an identity and a means of providing collective security.

While the "Russians" shared a common historical and "traditional" background, they were far from a united entity and during the early 1950s two distinct factions emerged: the Matsieng and the Ha Molapo.[27] It was these two factions which began to carve up the African locations of the Reef into separate spheres of influence, with the Matsieng led by S.S. Hlalele gaining dominance over and establishing its headquarters in Newclare. This division often resulted in the flaring up of so-called "faction fights" stretching all over the Rand from the Western Areas of Johannesburg to Benoni, Germiston and Evaton. Bonner has seen these conflicts as reflecting the deprivation of African working class life on the Witwatersrand with its urgent quest to secure and control the barest necessities of life, such as employment and housing in a situation where these resources were in desperately short supply.[28] Ironically, this competition manifested itself in the use of extreme violence which added to the harsh existence of many urban Africans. Often surging through Newclare extorting considerable sums of money on the pretext of offering physical protection ("We fight while you are asleep. We fight with our enemies and thus it is you we are fighting for"[29]), the Matsieng instilled fear into the hearts and minds of ordinary township residents:

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25. Bozzoli, Class, Community and Conflict, p.24.
26. Ibid. p.12.
27. These two factions reflected divisions within Sotho society itself. Matsieng was an area in Central Lesotho originally ruled by Moshoeshoe I's son, Letsie. Ha Molapo on the other hand, was an area in North East Lesotho and was ruled by his other son Molapo. The constant rivalry between these two princes forms a dominant theme in Sotho history. The rivalry in the Ama-Rashea which resulted in the split into the above-mentioned groups reportedly started because of a quarrel over a woman, but at the same time reflected the basic divisions within traditional Sotho Society. See J. Guy and M. Thabane, "The Ma-Rashea: A Participant's Perspective" in B. Bozzoli, Class, Community and Conflict, p. 446.
28. P. Bonner and R. Lambert, "Batons and bare heads: The Strike at Amato Textiles, February 1958", in S. Marks and S. Trapido (eds.), The Politics of Race, Class & Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa, (London, 1987), p. 344.
29. Johannes Rantoa, ex-Russian gang member in an interview with the Oral History Project of the Institute of Southern African Studies at the National University of Lesotho. Reproduced in J. Guy and M. Thabane's article, "The Ma-Rashea: A Participant's Perspective" in B. Bozzoli (ed.), Class Community and Conflict, p. 455.

> ...We came to associate the name "Russians" with violence. They would descend on the township in great battalions, clad in brightly coloured blankets, pants belted high, white shoes and the inevitable stick which was a deadly weapon in the hands of a Masotho...If you heard a whistle blow, you had to clear off the streets if you valued your life. They were insanely brave, those "Russians". It seemed to them violence was just a game.30

Since they fell outside of the sphere of organised gangster and crime syndicates, other tsotsis feared them too:

> Funnily enough, the greatest obstacles to these gangs is the behaviour of the "Russians" - the Basuto groups that will not combine with them, but often without warning attack them with sticks. The joke is that these "Russian" gangs are not primarily interested in organised crime. They do not care much for robbery and theft. They are just thugs that make life tough for ordinary people and gangsters alike...the "Russians" are an independent lot, very tribal, very proud. They resent being classed with the "tsotsis" and they prefer to beat them from the streets.31

In response to the ruthless grip exercised by the Matsieng faction over Newclare, a counter group emerged organised along the lines of a neighbourhood watch. Known as the "Civic Guards", they dedicated themselves to offering protection to all the residents in Newclare North by arming themselves with heavy sticks and patrolling the township at night, especially on weekends. It is difficult to gauge the Civic Guard's class and social character, as the only evidence which exists on this group are scattered newspaper articles and passing reference in Council and Advisory Board Minutes. Nevertheless, existing evidence does reveal that members of this movement were predominantly residents of Newclare, including property-owners, tenants as well as sub-tenants who were essentially opposed to the "tsotsi" element.[32] This so-called guard movement

was not an entirely new phenomenon and had already emerged during the war years in many urban townships. There is also substantial evidence to show that it had in fact been quite successful in combatting township crime. One example is a statement made by one of the members of the Jabavu Advisory Board, who said that by the beginning of 1952 there were no "tsotsis" in his area due to the activities of the "Civic Guards".[33] In many respects the Civic Guard had certain advantages over the police as they often knew the gangsters and could therefore track them down to their homes. In March 1952 the Guardian also reported that "where previously in North Newclare there

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30. M. Melamu, "The Russians are Coming", p. 139.
31. "Organised Gangsterism", Drum, December 1955, p.29.
32. See Kathleen Vundla, PQ: The Story of Philip Vundla of South Africa, (Johannesburg, 1973), pp. 30-31.
33. Intermediary Archives Depot, Johannesburg, West Rand Administration Board Archive (IAD WRAB), file no. 351/1 vol. 1, Extract from the Jabavu Advisory Board Minutes, 8 September, 1955.

was an average of ten rape cases on a Monday Morning and two or three corpses, since the coming of the Civic Guard there have hardly been any crimes of violence."[34] W.J.P. Carr, Manager of the Non-European Affairs Department of the Johannesburg City Council also spoke of how he encouraged the "Civic Guard" since it was "controlling the indiscriminate roaming around of criminals".[35]

On numerous occasions between 1952 and 1953, the Guard movement tried to get official recognition from the authorities whom they hoped would supply them with at least one policeman to help them with their reconnaissance in the townships. This recognition was, however, not forthcoming. The police refused to ally themselves with this movement at all. Two reasons for this have been advanced: residents were unanimous in feeling that the success achieved by the Guards in combatting crime and succeeding where the police had failed, placed the latter in a rather precarious position as a so-called law enforcement agency. The police could not acknowledge their apparent weakness and therefore became rather envious of a movement which had the support of the people. It seemed only natural therefore that they should refuse to give such an organisation official recognition and sanction.[36] On the other hand, the police viewpoint, expressed by Colonel J.C. Kriek, was that the Civic Guard would inevitably be penetrated by criminal elements and would degenerate into another "Native Gang", while at the same time having leaders which were well-known Communists.[37]

Despite all the animosity from official sources towards the Guard, which eventually resulted in its banning in 1953, the movement prospered but did not become a strong enough force to prevent the use of strong-arm tactics by the "Russians". The latent tensions between these two groups were openly revealed in March 1952 when violent clashes broke out between them. By June conditions in Newclare had become so bad that the residents from South Newclare, in open revolt against the intimidation of the "Russians", moved from their homes and trekked across the railway line to squat on Council-owned land.

## THE TREK ACROSS THE RAILWAY LINE

The violence which was to culminate in the Newclare squatting movement had begun on the weekend of the 9th of March 1952. Disturbances broke out on the Sunday morning when the Russians, who had for weeks before started extorting money from the residents of South Newclare, tried to cross the railway line to attack the Civic Guard in Northern Newclare. The latter retaliated which resulted in an escalating gang war. The next week saw sporadic clashes in which nine Africans were killed and many more injured. Although the police intervened, it seemed to many that they showed a more favourable disposition towards the Russians than to the Civic Guard.[38]

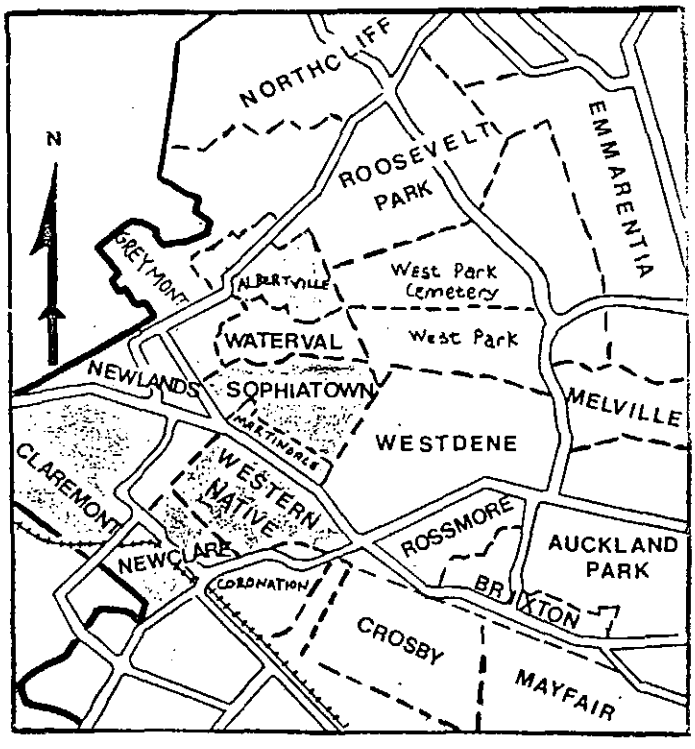
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34. The Guardian, 13 March 1952.
35. Interview with W.J.P. Carr, December 1988.
36. IAD WRAB, file no. 351/1 vol. 1, Extract from Jabavu Advisory Board Minutes, 8 Sept. 1955.
37. The Guardian, 27 March 1952.
38. See The Guardian, 13 March 1952 and T. Huddleston, Naught for Your Comfort, pp. 18-79. The question of police

Still, the Russians had an intimate knowledge of the terrain and in some cases managed to evade the police by hiding by day and prowling at night. The tactics which they adopted were to round up citizens late at night and during the early morning and forced the head of each family to pay one pound "protection" money. They were joined by the Basotho women who went about the township during the day demanding five shillings from each woman they met and threatening those who resisted with violence. The 1950 Survey showed that there was a considerable number of Basotho women in Newclare who lived either by themselves, or with a group of unrelated men and that apart from brewing, these women had no legal means of support.[39]

On the surface it seems that this extortion was simply a lumpen-proletariat's response to unemployment, but Johannes Rantoa, an ex-Russian, has a different explanation. While admitting that when collecting this money "we did not ask for it nicely", he averred that this money was needed for the largest item of Russian expenditure - the Lawyers whom they had to employ to defend their members against state prosecution.[40] This goes a long way to explain the causes of the Newclare violence, which clearly grew out of the exigencies of Russian life on the Rand. It was simply another facet of the working class's response to the hardships imposed by urban social control and the structures of domination. It was a struggle rooted in the realities of urban life and not simply another spontaneous flare up of "recreational violence" as Carr saw it.

THE WESTERN AREAS OF JOHANNESBURG




non-involvement was to be raised by many parties including The Johannesburg City Council throughout 1952 and 1953.

39. Sample Survey, 1951, p. 19.
40. J. Guy and M. Thabane, "The Ama-Rashea, a Participant's perspective", pp. 454-455.

Nevertheless, the impact on the Newclare community was profound. On the 28th May 1952, 300 African families hastily grabbed whatever belongings they could, left their homes in Southern Newclare and trekked across the railway line to find alternative accommodation in the Northern areas of the suburb where Russian influence was negligible. This was an entirely spontaneous movement and involved the mass movement of property-owners, tenants and sub-tenants. For a few weeks after the move, forty families squatted in the open on Lot 99 (also known as Reno Square), a piece of vacant ground owned by the Transvaal Provincial Administration while another forty families squatted on neighbouring territory, stands 431 and 432.[41] These numbers swelled almost daily. By 19 June they had established about 100 dilapidated wood, iron, hessian and cardboard shelters and it was also apparent that many more structures were in the process of being built.

From the outset, conditions there were appalling. Without sanitation, squatters were forced to get water from neighbouring houses and to use any amenities available in nearby areas. By mid-June the squatting had spread to the municipal park known as Charles Phillip Square as well as to and stands 497 and 460. Soon these areas were filled with refuse and waste water and a genuine fear arose about the menace it posed to public health. With little protection against the elements and the harsh winter climate, misery and hardships became a feature of the Newclare Squatter camp:

> The women have a hard time of it. They try to get some order in the shacks, crowded with the articles they saved from their homes before the Russians appeared. Wardrobes, small miserable tables, basins, tins, shabby suitcases, and dozens of small articles lie in confusion all around them. They buy water at 1d. to 3d. a bucket from the houses in the neighbourhood. They go to these houses for their toilet...Misery everywhere...Six days ago Katie Nonzwaye gave birth to a child in a shack. ...She is weak. Katie lives with her husband and three children in this shack....In every shack there is the same story of degradation and misery. 42

These conditions provoked a massive outcry from both the press and the clergy, especially from Trevor Huddleston. As Newclare's shanty town grew steadily it became obvious that the Johannesburg City Council would have to formulate a coherent and detailed policy to deal with this squatting problem. But problem-solving of this nature was not one of the Council's strong points, as its dealings with the housing shortage and the Moroka squatters clearly showed during the 1940s.[43] The response to the Newclare settlement was also to be characterised by similar feelings of impotency which was increased by the reluctance of the police to provide protection for

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41. IAD WRAB, File no. 158/15, vol. 1, Letter from acting chief Health Inspector, I.J. Distiller, to Deputy Medical Officer of Health, 20 June 1952.
42. The Clarion, 26 June 1952.
43. See specifically Peter Wilkinson's paper, "A Place to live: The Resolution of the African Housing Crisis in Johannesburg, 1944-1954", paper presented to the African Studies Seminar, 27 July 1981.

the Newclare residents against the "Russian" menace.

## THE MUNICIPAL RESPONSE

Really perturbed about the situation, W.J.P. Carr telephoned the police who informed him that the squatters had already been instructed to return home and had been offered police protection. This offer was refused, presumably because of threats made by the Russians. With great difficulty, Carr then managed to arrange a meeting between the leaders of the two opposing factions in an effort to quell the escalating violence in the area. The "Russian" group was represented by Solomon Hlalele, Colley Seamantha and Edward Mohale, while the Civic Guard group was represented by December Madinyane, Ben Kenosi and John Ralintsi. Gideon Pott, agent for the High Commission Territories was also present at this meeting. He was asked to attend since it had been freely alleged that the Russians were from Basotholand.[44]

At the meeting Hlalele and Madinyane were informed that the authorities were gravely concerned about the continuing violence and prevailing lawlessness which was "severely hindering the social progress of the African population in the city". Carr also stated that their actions tended to give the "Native" population a reputation for violence and lawlessness and for forming and maintaining criminal gangs.[45] When asked about the causes of the violence in Newclare, each leader simply blamed the other and Carr therefore drew his own conclusions. Ignoring the deep underlying causes of the violence which had not been thoroughly investigated, Carr attributed the unrest to these two leaders whom he regarded as being locked into a struggle for supremacy and control of the illicit funds extorted from Newclare residents. His further response was to write to the Deputy Commissioner of the South African Police, suggesting that both leaders be arrested and brought to trial on grounds of public violence and rioting.[46] This was however, not done.

After this stalemate, the Non-European Affairs Committee debated at length as to what policy should be adopted towards the squatters. The main difficulty was that there was no alternative accommodation available for them. In the interim period, many houses formerly occupied by the refugees in South Newclare had been taken over by members of the Russian gang as well as their families.

Forcible removal became regarded as the only option open to the Council, but it felt that the courts would not grant an order for the expulsion of the squatters, in the absence of some alternative forms of accommodation. However, Brian Porter, the Town Clerk, was of the opinion that it was possible under the Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act of 1951 to take action against the African families who were squatting illegally in Newclare. The Act provided that whenever persons squatted on property either with or without the owner's permission under conditions which threatened the health and safety of the public generally, the magistrate could, after

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44. IAD WRAB, File no. 158/15, vol. 1, Non-European Affairs Department (NEAD) Report no 22/1952 of Manager of NEAD, W.J.P. Carr to Non-European Affairs Committee for its meeting of 26 June 1952.
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid.

consultation with the Local Authority grant orders to effect the immediate removal of such persons, transfer them elsewhere and demolish any buildings or structures which they had erected.[47]

The squatters were notified of Council intentions by means of notices which were posted up all around the squatter settlement on 30 June 1952. These stated that if the squatters had not evacuated the area by 3 July, the Council intended to make an application to the Magistrate of Johannesburg for an order requiring their removal and their return to the areas from which they had come.[48] The notice also informed squatters that they were entitled to legal representation before the Magistrate, either by members of the squatter's community itself, or by an advocate.[49]

On 29 of June, violent clashes between the Russians and the Civic Guard had broken out again. More than 500 Africans clashed at Westbury Bridge. Fourteen were seriously injured and treated, at the Coronation Hospital, mainly for head injuries.[50] The Russians were also involved in clashes in Germiston that same weekend, where six Africans were killed. It was evident that their power was spread over a wide geographical area. These clashes tended to give an air of permanence to the Newclare squatter settlement, because immediately afterwards, other members of the 242 families camped on lot 99, began making improvements to their shacks.[51] The number of squatters now stood at 1 200.

That the Johannesburg City Council had no solution to the squatting problem became glaringly obvious at a meeting of the Non-European Affairs Committee on 2 July 1952. Attended by representatives of the police, the Government and NEAD, Council members stated emphatically that since the Council had no powers to solve this pressing problem, the police should step in to remove the lawless element. They felt that the Council was being blamed unnecessarily for neglect, accusations which should be laid at the door of the police.[52] Numerous examples were cited where the police had refused to act against cases of intimidation, extortion and victimization of Newclare residents. Councillor A. Cutten suggested that the root cause of the Newclare problem lay in the inadequate protection afforded by the police in the area. When he had visited the township on 28 June he had seen 50 to 100 police at the Newlands police station, but had observed only one African policeman between 9 and 11 am in South Newclare. The squatters had informed him that gangsters had come into their houses, thrown furniture around and had told them to vacate their premises. When asked if they had complained to the police, he was told that the police had stood on the street corners and had taken no notice.[53]

It is very difficult to gauge the reasons for the apparent police

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47. IAD WRAB, file no. 158/15, vol. 1, Letter to the Manager of NEAD from the Town Clerk, 29 June 1951.
48. The Star, 30 June 1952
49. IAD WRAB, file no. 158/15, vol. 1, City of Johannesburg Notice to Squatters at Newclare.
50. The Star and Die Transvaler, 30 June 1952.
51. The Rand Daily Mail, 1 July 1952.
52. IAD WRAB, file no. 158/15, vol. 1, Minutes of the special meeting of the Non-European Affairs Committee in conjunction with the General Purposes Committee, 2 July 1952, p. 3.
53. Ibid, p. 4.

apathy. Trevor Huddleston saw in police reluctance to disarm the Russians a deliberate state strategy of "divide and remove".

By 1952 the Western Areas Removal scheme was finally crystallizing into shape and the continued unrest and tension in Newclare could be used as effective propaganda[54] to provide ultimate justification for removing these townships. Although this squatter movement was to eventually feed into the removal scheme, it is rather difficult to explain police action solely in terms of its being part of a general conspiracy to promote pro-removal propaganda. Evidence which might reveal possible links between the "Russians" and the police is lacking and consequently an alternative explanation has to be sought. Carr has perhaps given the most plausible answer to this question. He has argued that there was only a very small police contingent stationed in Western Native Township, and the only police station was situated in Newlands. With limited forces at their disposal and a vast area to cover[55], police power and influence was therefore quite restricted.

Police reluctance to arrest the leaders involved in the Newclare disturbances once again placed the ball firmly in the Council's court. Calling for an emergency meeting of NEAC later in the afternoon of 2 July, the Council decided to invoke the provisions of the Illegal Squatting Act and ordered the population of plot 99 to leave the area and return home by midnight of the same day.[56] By 3 July, none of the 240 families had moved from their shanties in accordance with Municipal demands and the Council promptly applied to the Magistrates Court for an eviction order against the families.[57]

By 4 July 1952, it was clear that conditions in the squatter camp had deteriorated rapidly. Sickness began to take its toll: 20 people were hospitalised for various ailments. Robert Mgojo, secretary of the camp, felt that many more people were becoming ill because of bad housing, over-population, inadequate sanitary and cooking facilities, all of which favoured the rapid spread of infection.[58]

It was at this juncture that the Native Affairs Department (NAD) under its minister, H.F. Verwoerd, became involved in the struggle between the Council and the squatters. Representatives of NAD, the Council and the police became locked in trilateral negotiations in an attempt to find alternative accommodation for the squatters. The Council realised that despite the court order, there were legal barriers against demolition of shacks should the Council eventually wish to forcibly remove the squatters. Shacks could not be demolished without a court order which could only be obtained if it could be proved that alternative accommodation existed. In an effort to devise strategies to cope with the situation, a meeting was called

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54. T. Huddleston, Naught for Your Comfort, p. 86. This view was shared by one resident who even went as far as likening the so-called alliance between "Russians" and police with the use by the state of Witdoeke in the Crossroads disturbances of 1986.She felt that many Russians acted as spies for the police. Interview with Patricia Moetapele, 1 July 1989.
55. Interview with W.J.P. Carr, 7 December 1988.
56. The Rand Daily Mail, 2 July 1952.
57. Ibid, 3 July 1952.
58. The Star, 4 July 1952.

between the Council and officials from NAD on 8 July 1952.

At the meeting, representatives of NAD stated that Verwoerd was more in favour of the squatters being removed to an alternative site than their being forced to return to their homes in Newclare. He intimated that under the proposed Native Services Levy Bill presently before parliament, money would be made available to the Council for an alternative site and for the necessary services which would be required there.[59] The only land available to the Council was an area called Vukuzenzele but this was earmarked for rehousing the residents of the of the the Moroka Emergency camp who had waited for Council housing since 1947. Carr therefore suggested that a start be made with the Western Areas Removal Scheme (W.A.R.S.), since the government had already allocated land in the Meadowlands area for the rehousing of the Africans affected.[60]

Most of the Councillors concurred with Carr's views and after lengthy negotiations, it was finally decided by this meeting that the squatters from Newclare would be removed as part of the Western Areas Scheme, firstly to Moroka as a temporary measure and then subsequently to Meadowlands. The cost of this removal would be shared between the Council and NAD on an equal basis and the police would give the necessary assistance required.[61] On the same day, the eviction order was granted, which instructed all squatters to remove themselves and their belongings from Northern Newclare by midnight on 10 July. According to this order, if the squatters refused to move they would then be forcibly removed by the City Council to the Moroka Emergency Camp.[62] Furthermore, the City Council was also granted authorisation to demolish and remove all structures which were erected on the Newclare stands.[63]

SQUATTER RESISTANCE TO REMOVAL

After the Council decision became known, the squatters, who had refused to move, organised a petition to be presented to the Rand division of the Supreme Court in order to prevent the Johannesburg City Council from clearing them out of their temporary homes. The chief applicant was December Valashiya Dhlamini who assumed the leadership role in the squatters camp. Not much is known about Dhlamini except that he was one of the residents of Southern Newclare and one of the Civic Guards. He became self-elected leader of the squatters, once the movement got underway. Very much like James Mpanza in 1944, he soon appointed two assistants, Manyabi Moloi and Robert Radebe as secretary and treasurer respectively who

59. IAD WRAB, File no. 158/15. vol. 1, Notes of meeting held between officials of the Government Department of Native Affairs and officials of the Johannesburg City Council, 8 July 1952.
60. Ibid, p. 3.
61. Ibid, pp. 5-6.
62. This camp was established in March 1947 as a site and service scheme to deal with the wave of squatter movements in Orlando, Pimville and Alexandra. The camp which was to be only a temporary emergency measure, had by the early 1950s become almost permanent due to the escalating housing shortage.
63. IAD WRAB, File no. 158/15, vol. 1, Order of the Magistrate, Johannesburg in terms of Section 5 of Act 52 of 1951.

collected money for the legal representation of the squatters in court. During the court proceedings, the Counsel for the African families said that the squatters were prepared to return to their homes only on condition that they were afforded police protection against the Russians. The result was a Court Order staying their eviction from the camp and the granting of a rule nisi calling on the Council to show cause why the eviction order should not be cancelled.[64]

On 31 July the Council resolved to oppose the applications of Dhlamini in the Supreme Court.[65] But this was to be unsuccessful. When the case was heard in the Supreme Court on 18 August, the judge set aside the rule for eviction of the squatters because of a "gross irregularity" in the issue of the magisterial order compelling the squatters to leave Newclare. The evidence placed before the magistrate by the Council had been done so confidentially and therefore it was not authorised in terms of the Illegal Squatting Act. The squatters had had no opportunity of stating their own case and denying the charges. A further irregularity was that the magistrate had ordered the forcible removal of the squatters to Moroka while the notice originally posted by the City Council at the camp had stated its intention to return the squatters "from whence they came". The final ruling was consequently that it was now up to the Council to make a new application for the eviction of the squatters of Newclare.[66]

The failure to take decisive action and find a practical solution to the problem seemed to be a characteristic of the Johannesburg City Council's approach to African housing and squatting in general. The establishment of Moroka Emergency Camp in 1947 and the acceptance of a policy of controlled squatting had provided the Council with a temporary means of dealing with the squatter movements on the Rand, at least during the late 1940s. However, by 1952, even these temporary solutions were denied to it and therefore, as a last resort, it sought actively to engage the aid of the Native Affairs Department and Verwoerd in particular in its attempts to find a a way of terminating the Newclare squatter's movement.

## VERWOERD AND THE REMOVAL OF THE NEWCLARE SQUATTERS

In an effort to bring the violence to an end and force the squatters to return home, the Council appealed directly to Verwoerd to use his power to have the ringleaders in the two factions arrested. It did not wish to make fresh applications through the courts and became convinced that the only path left open was to take action against whoever was deemed responsible for the unrest. The direct entrance of Verwoerd into the struggle between the Council and the squatters ushered in a new, and certainly more decisive phase in the history of Newclare township. Firmly dedicated to the Stallardist principle that Africans could not have any political rights or freehold tenure in the "white" urban areas, Verwoerd's role in the social engineering phase during the 1950s designed to create

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64. The Rand Daily Mail, 11 July 1952.
65. IAD WRAB, File no. 158/15 vol. 1, Report of the Acting Town Clerk to the Non-European and Finance Committees. Joint meeting 31 July 1952.
66. The Star, 18 August 1952 and The Rand Daily Mail, 19 August 1952.

"apartheid" cities, was of paramount importance.[67] After the passing of the Group Areas Act in 1950, the touchstone of Apartheid, Verwoerd was to be personally responsible for a whole string of legislation which not only aimed at manipulating urban space so as to create separate residential areas designated for occupation by specific racial groups, but which gradually destroyed any existing rights which Africans might have had in urban areas. A clear example of this was the Western Areas Removal Scheme which he took over from the Johannesburg City Council, refined and started to implement from 1951 onwards.[68] The Newclare squatter movement therefore presented Verwoerd with a perfect chance to actively intervene in the Western Areas of Johannesburg in 1952, to thereby make a preliminary attempt to implement his more grandiose apartheid designs.

The meeting between a deputation from the City Council with the Minister of the Native Affairs Department, Verwoerd, and the Minister of Justice, C.R. Swart, took place on 6 September 1952, three months after the squatters settled on the vacant stands in Northern Newclare. The statements made by Verwoerd at this meeting tended in the main to reveal not only his thoughts on the general state of the Western Areas of Johannesburg and Newclare in particular, but also his views on the ultimate objectives of total apartheid: separate residential areas for Africans along ethnic lines in planned townships, where full control over the urban African population could be regained and manitained. This also revealed the extent to which NAD was to be primarily motivated by the wide-scale political mobilisation of the African urban population during the early 1950s.

Verwoerd in particular, considered that the urban areas were a fruitful breeding ground for unrest, owing to the massive uncontrolled influx of Africans into the towns and cities. For this reason, his prime concern was not so much the settlement of disputes between the Russians and the Civic Guard, but the fact that the Council should do everything in its power to reassert its authority in the region and undertake the removal of the squatters. His advice therefore was that the Council make a new application to the Courts for a removal order. In effect, this proposal meant an immediate commencement on the clearance of all African residents as part and parcel of the Western Areas Scheme. Verwoerd further stated that his Department could not undertake the removal of the squatters itself but was prepared to offer the Council loans from the 800 000 pounds set aside by the Government for the Western Areas Scheme.[69]

In a subsequent statement to the press, Verwoerd went a step further in pointing out that the only real solution to the Newclare squatter problem was the removal of both South and North Newclare and

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67. For a detailed discussion of Verwoerd's policies, see Alexander Hepple, Verwoerd, (Penguin, 1967) and Henry Kenny, Architect of Apartheid: H.F. Verwoerd - An Appraisal, (Johannesburg, 1980).
68. The evolution of the Western Areas Removal Scheme from the 1940s through to the 1950s as well as Verwoerd's role in bringing the scheme into fruition, will be explored in greater detail in my thesis dealing with the Destruction of Sophiatown, Martindale and Newclare.
69. IAD WRAB, File no. 158/15, vol. 1, Report of what transpired at the meeting between a deputation from the Johannesburg City Council and Verwoerd, contained in Urgency Report no 31/1952 to Special Meeting of the NEAC, 11 September 1952.

the rehousing of their inhabitants in more controlled and ethnically planned townships. Not only did Verwoerd's statements to the press elicit strong condemnation from the press and Anglican clergy, but it also placed the Council in a rather difficult position. It was clear that Verwoerd was trying to force the Council's hand to remove the Newclare Community and thereby use squatting as a testing ground for implementing the Western Areas Removal Scheme. The Council on the other hand, in a display of open defiance against Verwoerd, regarded his "solution " as far from satisfactory let alone feasible.[70] Once again, as during the late 1940s, its desperation to find a solution to the squatting problems which beset the Rand, and this time to find an alternative to Verwoerd's proposals, were mirrored in its resolutions and its complete failure to implement them. On 11 September 1952 the Council resolved to declare the areas occupied by the squatters in Newclare as emergency camps and that all possible steps be taken to accelerate the solution of the Council's housing shortage. The City Engineer was thus instructed to proceed immediately with a programme to provide 2 500 houses a year.[71]

Verwoerd's immediate response to the Johannesburg City Council's refusal to implement his proposals, was to blackmail the Council by threatening to deny any future help and financial assistance to the Council unless it accepted his proposals for dealing with the Newclare squatters. This approach was to become a firm characteristic in his dealings with the City Council, especially in 1954 when the Council decided to withhold all assistance from the implementation of W.A.R.S.. Verwoerd's reaction was to threaten to withhold all funds for any future Council African housing schemes and to have the Resettlement Board designated as an urban Local Authority. The Council's retort in 1952 was that the Minister's actions were"childish" and irresponsible.[72] Nevertheless, Verwoerd's strong-arm tactics had the desired effect since they spearheaded the Council's reconsideration of re-applying for an eviction order from the Magistrate.[73]

From October to November 1952, the Council set about collecting as much information on the nature of the squatter community in Newclare as possible which it could use to substantiate its appeal for an eviction order in court. One of the most important pieces of evidence was a letter from the Superintendent of Western Native Township to the Manager of NEAD. In it he stated that on a visit to the camp, he found that 17 new shacks were being erected, new squatters were moving into the area and illicit liquor was being brewed and sold in the squatter camp.[74] At the same time December Dhlamini had assumed a definite leadership role among the squatters and had received money from new occupants as an entrance fee into the squatters' camp. Additional periodic payments by way of a levy

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70. The Star, 12 September 1952.
71. IAD WRAB, File no. 158/15, vol. 1, Extract of the Minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee to consider Verwoerd's proposals. 11 September 1952.
72. The Star, 16 September 1952 and The Rand Daily Mail, 17 September 1952.
73. IAD WRAB, File no. 158/15, vol. 1, Extract from the minutes of the Non-European Affairs Committee, 25 September 1952.
74. IAD WRAB, File no. 158/15, vol. 2, Letter from the Superintendent of Western Native Township to the Manager of the Non-European Affairs Department, 23 October 1952.

were also imposed on residents already living there.[75] In October it was also reported that he had informed squatters that he had been authorised by the Council to not only control the camp but to collect monies from the residents as well.[76] This development highlights the similarities between the internal political structure of the Newclare squatter camp and squatter movements of the past, especially that organised and led by James Mpanza and the Sofasonke Party in 1944. They also imposed an entrance fee on squatters in the Orlando squatter camp as well as a weekly levy for the right to erect shelters from whatever materials were at hand.[77]

Various Affidavits were consequently signed and posted around the squatter's camp to inform the squatters of Council intentions, and to prevent a recurrence of the failure of its earlier application for an eviction order on the grounds of submitting confidential reports. Carr's affidavit mentioned the complete absence of proper sanitary and health facilities as a reason for wanting the eviction order:

> In consequence of the lack of amenities, I am of the opinion that the health of the squatters themselves and the people in the vicinity is being seriously jeopardised, with a consequential danger to health of the public generally. A second serious defect lies in the complete absence of ordinary control measures, as is customary in a proclaimed Native Location. By this I mean that there is virtually no control over trading, preparation of and exposing of food for consumption and cleanly domestic facilities, and the prevention of illicit sale of liquor of all descriptions.78

On 8 December 1952 the Magistrate granted an eviction order stating that he was satisfied that public health was being endangered and removal of the squatters to Moroka was thus deemed necessary. On 17 December the removals started, thereby ending the troubled seven months in the community since the squatting movement had begun but not the controversy which was to rage over the removal of the entire area just three years later. Although the eviction order was a short victory for the Johannesburg City Council, the plight of the shack-dwellers was not alleviated, even though their living conditions were slightly improved at Moroka. In a move which was to mirror National Party apartheid strategy in the removals to Meadowlands, where in a deliberate policy of "divide and rule" the three communities were broken up and housing policy was instituted along ethnic lines, the Council destroyed the unity of the Newclare squatters. On arriving at Moroka the squatters were not housed together as a community but were situated amongst the Moroka

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75. IAD WRAB, File no. 158/15, vol. 2, Sworn Affidavit by Arthur Cleverley, Location Superintendent of Western Native Township, 4 November 1952.
76. IAD WRAB, File no 158/15, vol. 2, Message from W. Carr to the Newclare squatters concerning Dhlamini. 14 October 1952.
77. See Alf Stadler, "Birds in the Cornfield..."
78. IAD WRAB, File no. 158/15, vol. 2, Sworn Affidavit by William Carr, 4 November 1952. His affidavit was accompanied by others from the Medical Officer of Health, the Assistant Medical Officer of Health, District Health Inspector and a report of the Town Clerk.

residents themselves, including various Russian factions which were already established there. The Council's obvious intention was to break the existing power groupings forged in Newclare in an attempt to enforce its own control. The process of community development which took place among the squatters as a means of mutual protection against the Russians was thus shattered and individuals were left isolated and far more vulnerable to attack than they had been in Newclare.

## CONCLUSION

The Newclare squatters' movement of 1952 was clearly an important event in the history of Newclare township. It was catalytic in shaping the removal policies towards this area, particularly after 1954. Considering that this township also formed a part of the Western Areas of Johannesburg which was also earmarked for removal, the reverberations from Newclare were felt throughout this larger urban region. Here communities were riven by endemic upheavals caused not only by social banditry but also the larger designs of apartheid government.

The social fabric of Newclare and its internal struggles closely resembled that of other African townships in South Africa. And like Pinnock and Glazer, I have attempted to elucidate the particular survival strategies and responses of various sections of the Newclare community to similiar social, environmental and material conditions experienced elsewhere. The main argument is that although the squatter community was structurally similar to other movements in the past, its origins were slightly different. Unlike movements which grew almost exclusively out of housing shortages and influx control, the Newclare squatters movement also had its genesis in the widespread gang warfare of the "Russians", who exacted "protection" payments from the hapless residents. But it must be pointed out that gang development also had its roots in the lack of housing and miserable conditions faced by the urban poor.

This article thus also challenges Anthony Sampson's assertion that the Russian gangs were merely an "apparition of the antique Africa",[79] which fails to recognize the precise nature of the struggle for survival in a hostile urban complex where jobs, housing and livable salaries were at a premium. Naturally, the outcome of such hardships were often brutal and dislocating; they fractured township communities and created gangster impulses. Nowhere is this more vivdly illustrated than in the Newclare squatters movement, where ordinary residents became embroiled in conflict with the Russians. They were forced to leave their homes and trek across the railway line to squat on land ownned by the Johannesburg City Council.

Another important issue which has been raised in this article is the question of police complicity in the disruption of Newclare society. The police seemed ill-equipped and even reluctant to take decisive action against the leaders of the Russian gangs, apparently condoning their sorties in the township. The exact relationship between the police and the Russians is rather difficult to fathom however. Any suggestion of a formal alliance would be an exaggeration, but the refusal to control the activities of these

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79. Anthony Sampson, Drum, A Venture into the New Africa, p. 111.

gangs in their attacks on the "Civic Guard" insinuates at least cautious preference for the Russians. Owing to the inadequacy of policing in Newclare, it is clear that the gangs themselves served as informal agencies of social control in the community.

The third crucial point is the effect of Johannesburg City Council intrusion in Newclare. Its particular role and style of intrusion, is construed as being instigated by governmental pressure, specifically that exerted by the Native Affairs Department under Verwoerd. It is suggested here that the coupling of the Council and NAD ushered in a new phase of social engineering in Johannesburg which precipitated the removal for the entire Western Areas in 1955. It is evident that both Verwoerd and the Council intended to use the Newclare squatter settlement as the testing ground for the initial implementation of removal on a grand scale and part of the envisaged segregation of Johannesburg. Despite the collusion, however, relations between these two protagonists were not always cordial or co-operative. Each vied for its own workable strategy for the removal of the the Newclare squatters. It is nevertheless contended that the Council bowed to the reactionary programme devised by Verwoerd and NAD, primarily because of its dependence upon government funding for African housing within the municipality. Verwoerd's threats to withhold finances persuaded the Council to acquiesce in the Nationalist Government's removal plan.

Such material considerations also proved effective again when the Council finally agreed to co-operate with the Natives Resettlement Board, created to help implement the Western Areas removal scheme from 1954 onwards.

Thus, the complex network of Russian Activity, police vascillation and ineptitude as well as Council complicity with NAD chartered the course towards the removal of the Newclare squatters, which in turn, added momentum to the evolution of a wider removal scheme for the entire Western Areas of Johannesburg.

APPENDIX A

TABLE 1

DISTRIBUTION OF AFRICAN FAMILIES ACCORDING TO OCCUPATION AND TOWNSHIP:

| OCCUPATION | SOPHIATOWN % | MARTINDALE % | NEWCLARE % |
|---|---|---|---|
| LABOURER | 42 | 33 | 55 |
| WASHERWOMAN | 3 | 3 | 2 |
| DOMESTICS | 5 | 5 | 3 |
| FACTORY WORKER | 22 | 26 | 21 |
| CRAFTSMEN | 5 | 4 | 4 |
| TRANSPORT WORKER | 9 | 13 | 4 |
| POLICE/NIGHT WATCHMEN | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| PROFFESSIONAL/ CLERK | 3 | 4 | 2 |
| ITINERANT TRADER | 3 | 3 | 1 |
| FIXED TRADER | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| HOUSEWIFE | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| PENSIONER | 1 | 1 | 0.5 |
| OTHER | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| UNEMPLOYABLE | 1 | 1 | 0.5 |

EXACT UNEMPLOYMENT FIGURE WERE UNAVAILABLE AT THE TIME OF WRITING UP THE SURVEY REPORT IN 1950. FIGURES DID REVEAL THOUGH THAT ONE IN EVERY TWENTY HEADS OF FAMILIES WAS UNEMPLOYED. (SURVEY P.44)

TABLE II

FAMILY INCOMES UNDER 30 POUNDS IN SOPHIATOWN, MARTINDALE AND NEWCLARE:

| MONTHLY INCOME IN POUNDS AND SHILINGS | SOPHIATOWN/MARTINDALE % OF ALL AFRICAN FAMILIES | NEWCLARE % OF ALL AFRICAN FAMILIES |
|---|---|---|
| UNDER 2.10 | 1 | 3 |
| 2.10-UNDER 5.0 | 2 | 1 |
| 5.0 | 4 | 7 |
| 7.10 | 14 | 18 |
| 10.0 | 25 | 26 |
| 12.10 | 14 | 10 |
| 15.0 | 10 | 9 |
| 17.10 | 5 | 4 |
| 20.10 | 5 | 3 |
| 22.10 | 3 | 2 |
| 25.10 | 3 | 1 |
| 27.10 | 1 | 1 |
| ALL INCOMES UNDER 30.0 | 87 | 85 |

APPENDIX B

TABLE 1

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF AFRICAN FAMILIES IN THE WESTERN AREAS ACCORDING TO TYPE OF TENANCY:

| TOWNSHIP | OWNER % | TENANT | SUB-TENANT % |
|---|---|---|---|
| SOPHT/MARTIND. | 4 | 80 | 16 |
| NEWCLARE | 1 | 82 | 17 |
| W.N.T. | - | 87 | 13 |
| ALL TOWNSHIPS | 2 | 82 | 16 |

TABLE II

NATURE OF DWELLINGS IN THE WESTERN AREAS:

| CONSTRUCTION OF DWELLING | SOPHIATOWN | | MARTINDALE | | NEWCLARE | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | NO. | % | NO | % | NO. | % |
| IN ORDER/IN NEED OF RECONSTRUCTION | 5 764 | 52 | 1 100 | 52 | 1 887 | 41 |
| NEEDING DEMOLITION | 5 202 | 48 | 1 017 | 48 | 2 722 | 59 |

APPENDIX C

TABLE I

THE AFRICAN MALE AND FEMALE POPULATION OF THE WESTERN AREAS

| PERSONS | SOPHIATOWN/ MARTINDALE | NEWCLARE | WESTERN NATIVE TOWNSHIP | ALL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| NO. MALES | 21 317 | 7 452 | 6 202 | 34 975 |
| NO. FEMALES | 17 869 | 7 109 | 6 228 | 31 606 |
| ALL PERSONS | 39 186 | 14 561 | 12 830 | 66 577 |
| NO.IN ALL ETHNIC GROUPS | 44 096 | 16 985 | 13 341 | 74 422 |

TABLE II

DISTRIBUTION OF AFRICAN FAMILIES:

| TOWNSHIP | NO. OF AFRICAN FAMILIES FOUND IN 1950 |
|---|---|
| SOPHIATOWN | 10 966 |
| MARTINDALE | 2 117 |
| NEWCLARE | 4 609 |
| W.N.T. | 2 600 |
| TOTAL | 20 292 |

TABLE III

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF FAMILIES AND PERSONS ACCORDING TO LANGUAGE GROUPS AND SEX, AS FOUND IN A SAMPLE OF 303 HOUSEHOLDS THROUGHOUT THE WESTERN AREAS. 1951 SAMPLE SURVEY.

| LANGUAGE GROUPS | FAMILIES | | PERSONS | | PERCENTAGE OF SEXES | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | NO. | % | NO. | % | MALE % | FEMALE % |
| XHOSA | 50 | 11 | 135 | 11 | 55 | 45 |
| S. SOTHO | 59 | 13 | 201 | 16 | 47 | 53 |
| N. SOTHO | 39 | 9 | 123 | 10 | 48 | 52 |
| TSWANA | 139 | 32 | 408 | 33 | 51 | 49 |
| ZULU | 67 | 15 | 173 | 14 | 50 | 50 |
| SWAZI | 17 | 4 | 47 | 4 | 49 | 51 |
| SHANGAAN | 23 | 5 | 67 | 5 | 58 | 42 |
| VENDA | 11 | 3 | 29 | 2 | 62 | 38 |
| FOREIGN | 25 | 6 | 49 | 4 | 73 | 27 |

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## Footnotes

1. Cf. Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller," in Illuminations, Jonathan Cape (London), 1970.
2. The level of debate at the Gabarone conference on "Culture and Resistance" a few years ago seemed to reflect an inability to go beyond the old terms.

## Addendum

The above paper is the first part of what was intended as a three-part argument. In the second part, it was my intention to consider the story collection, Fools, in the light of Ndebele's critical writings, and, in particular, with regard to his notion of the storyteller. His discursive preoccupations with narrative perspective, sensitive characterisation, the interaction between subjective process and objective conditions, the relationship between the politicising intellectual and popular culture, and the involvement of non-politicised aspects of social life in the momentum towards a new society, are all strongly present in his fictional work as well. I intended particularly to dwell on Ndebele's way of dramatising social tensions in African townships.

However, my main critical point--picking up on comments briefly made towards the end of this paper--was that literary culture in South Africa has an essentially "middle-class" character, and privileges, in its focus on individual character, "middle-class" preoccupations, language and perspectives. Ndebele does not escape this bias of the medium, despite his sensitivity to some of its dangers.