

https://dspace.org/

African and Coloured squatters in the Cape Town region: 1975-1978

Maree, Johann

1978-04-01T08:52:11Z
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/7933

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND The Library

AWS 264

MAREE

HISTORY WORKSHOP

THE WITWATERSRAND: LABOUR, TOWNSHIPS AND PATTERNS OF PROTEST

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

3-7 FEBRUARY 1978

AUTHOR: Johann Maree
(University of Cape Town)

TITLE: African and Coloured Squatters in the Cape Town Region: 1975-1978

INTRODUCTION

Squatting is no new phenomenon in South Africa. Jan van Riebeeck wrote in his journal on 10 February 1655,

> Only last night it happened that about 50 of these natives wanted to put up their huts close to the banks of the moat of our fortress, and when told in a friendly manner by our men to go a little further away, they declared boldly that this was not our land but theirs and they would place their huts wherever they chose.(1)

As a result of the struggle for and the dispossession of the indigenous inhabitants of their land, rural squatting of Africans took place on a large scale. But squatting was not restricted to the countryside. It manifested itself in urban areas as well. As early as 1836 many parts of the Cape Flats were unlawfully used and occupied by various persons.(2) By the turn of this century squatting was considered a problem by the Cape Town local authorities.

This paper focusses only on the squatter phenomenon in the Cape Town region(3) over thepast few years although it seems to have been a continuous occurrence and source of irritation and concern to the local authorities for the whole of this century.

CURRENT SQUATTER SITUATION

When dealing with squatters in the Cape Town Region it is necessary to distinguish between Coloured and African squatters. This is because some of the reasons compelling them to squat are different and because the authorities have adopted different attitudes and policies towards them as we shall see below.

Although estimations are hard to make there were at least 120 000, probably about 180 000, Coloured squatters and about 51 000 African squatters in the Cape Town region in SEptember 1977.(4) Before 1975 Coloured and African squatters tended to live in the same areas although there were some squatter settlements that were extremely African such as the squatter settlement in Ndabeni during World War I.(5) In about April 1975, local authorities, probably from the divisional Council, told Africans already squatting in Cape Town to move to Cross Roads. This they responded to and by 1977 there were from 18000 to 21 000 Africans living there. Predominantly African squatter settlements also sprung up in 1976 at Modderdam, Werkgenot and Unibell. At present most, but by no means all, African squatters are living in the Cross Roads. The others are scattered in small numbers amongst the Coloured squatter areas and in more remote areas such as Table View.

PROFILE OF SQUATTERS

Conventional wisdom, believed especially by authorities that deal with squatters, holds that squatters have streamed into Cape Town from outside. In the case of Coloured squatters they are alleged to have streamed in from the countryside while African squatters have poured in from the homelands, especially the Transkei. Bantu Affairs Officials also believe that virtually no Africans squatted in Cape Town before April 1975 when word went out that they could squat in Cross Roads. This according to them was the green light for wives and dependants of contract workers plus other "illegal" AFricans to pour into the area.(6) Coloured squatting is predominantly due to natural population increases in Cape Town. It has been calculated on the basis of past population growth and immigration figures, that between 3300 and 4300 new dwelling units are needed per annum in the decade 1970 to

2/.....

1980 to satisfy the need arising from the natural increase of the Coloured population in the Cape Town Region. However, the number of new dwellings required because of Coloured immigration is between 600 and 800.(7) Thus about 84% of the new housing required is due to natural population growth while about 16% is due to immigration. Further evidence is provided by the fact that in 1975, 61% of the men and 68% of the women in some of the Divisional Council squatter settlements, were born in the Cape Town Region. The Theron Commission also estimated that 75% of the Coloured squatters come from Cape Town.

A study of Coloured squatters at Klip Road in Grassy Park whose homes were demolished early in 1977 confirm these findings. The community consisted of 27 families and all but three of the parents were born in Cape Town while all the children were born in Cape Town. All but three of the families had also lived in Grassy Park for a considerable length of time. Before squatting, many of them had rented houses which they lost when the property was sold or the owners wanted it for occupation of family members.

The housing shortage and hence the need to squat, has been further exacerbated by the Group Areas Act as we shall see below.

Contrary to another commonly held view, most squatters are responsible workers. In surveys conducted of 3 794 squatter families in 16 squatter areas in 1975, the employment rate of the economically active adults was 79%. Their incomes tended to be low: 61% earned less than R120 per month in 1975.(8)

With regards to African squatters it is more difficult to draw a definite picture because what happens in reality is vastly different from the official version. In spite of rigid influx control laws and the determined enforcement thereof (in 1975 and 1976 there were 23 577 and 14 131 convictions respectively for pass law offences) it has been estimated that there were 90 000 Africans residing illegally in Cape Town in 1975.(9) This comprised about 44% of the total African population residing in the area. The complexity of the laws governing the legal status of Africans and their qualification to reside in the area plus the fact that more than half of the male labourers are contract workers, make it more difficult to sketch a profile of African squatters.

Three recent sample surveys of Modderdam Road, Unibell and Cross Roads cast some light on the matter. The relevant findings of these surveys are given below, but since all the surveys were done at great speed because the information was urgently required, there could be inaccuracies. The statistics should be of the right order though.

In Modderdam it was found that 35% of the AFrican squatters had previously lived in a residential area while 19% had squatted in Cape Town before, making a total of 54% who had not moved into Cape Town directly from outside. About 70% of the male heads of households (the breadwinners) qualified to be in the Region legally.(10)

In Unibell 31% of the families had squatted while 21% had resided in the Cape Town Region before, making a total of 52% who had not moved directly into the Region from outside. A further 33% of the heads of households had already been living in Cape Town, but their wives and children came to join them in Unibell for the first time. Only 15% of the families had migrated directly into Unibell from outside the Cape Town Region. The average length of time the heads of households and spouses had spent continuously in Cape Town was 12,6 and 5,2 years respectively In spite of this long period of residence relatively few of the Unibell inhabitants qualified to be in the area: 41% of the husbands and 89% of the wives were residing illegally in the area. Seventy five per cent of all the men qualified to

be in the area in terms of Section 10(1)b of the Bantu (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act by working continuously for the same employer for 10 years or residing legally in the area for 15 years. This right was lost in 1968 when only one year contracts were introduced. Thirty three per cent of all the men were contract workers. The unemployment rate in Unibell, defined here as economically active people not working in the formal (wage) sector but looking for work, was 42%, a very high figure.

In the case of Cross Roads, the only one of these three squatter settlements that has not been demolished to date, 30% of the families had previously squatted and 52% had resided in Cape Town before, making a total of 82% of all families that had lived together in the Cape Town Region before moving to Cross Roads. A further 16% of the heads of households had already been living in Cape Town before thier wives and children came from outside the Region to join them in Cross Roads. Only 2% of the families had come to Cross Roads directly from outside the Cape Town Region. The average length of time that the heads of households had spent continuously in Cape Town by December 1977 was 18,2 years of which 2,4 years were in Cross Roads and 15,8 years in other places of residence. Of this 15,8 years in former places of residence 18% of the time was spent in squatter settlements, 57% in African townships and 21% in other residential areas (the remainder being unspecified). The average length of time that the spouses had spent continuously in Cape Town was 9,3 years in all. About the same proportion of people qualify to be legally in the area as was the case with Unibell residents.

Employment and income was studied in more detail in the case of Cross Roads by examining the informal sector which includes a variety of self-employment activities in Cross Roads itself. These activities fall into three major categories: the production of foodstuffs, liquor and clothing items, self-run shops selling essential requirements such as vegetables and fuel to the community and the provision of services such as car repairing. Eighty one per cent of the heads of households are employed in the formal (wage) sector while 11% are in the informal sector. Forty six per cent of the wives are employed in the formal sector while 22% are in the informal sector. The importance of the informal sector in the economy of squatters becomes more apparent when considering the income earned from this sector. The average weekly income of heads of household engaged in the informal sector is reported to be R28 while those employed in the formal sector earn R24 per week. The spouses apparently earn considerably less: their weekly earnings in the formal and informal sectors are reported to be R10 and R9 respectively, but it appeared as if some information was being withheld when enquiries were made about incomes. These figures may therefore be inaccurate. Because of the inclusion of the informal sector in the economic life of Cross Roads squatters, the unemployment level of heads of households is only 6% and of spouses 30%, with unemployment being defined as not working in either the formal or informal sector but looking for work.(12)

The picture to emerge of Cape Town's squatters is thus that the great majority of Coloured squatters are born in the Region and have lived there all their lives. Many of these had previously lived in residential housing before, but were forced to squat as the overcrowding reached bursting point.

Only a very small proportion of adult African squatters are actually born in Cape Town. In Unibell 0,7% of the heads of households and 4,7% of the spouses were borners, i.e. qualified to be in the area because they were born and continuously resided there. In Cross Roads 4,8% of the heads of households and 5,3% of the spouses are borners. The overwhelming majority of African squatters have thus migrated into Cape Town. These come mainly from Transkei. In the case of Unibell 59% of the families who joined their families directly from outside came from Transkei. In Cross Roads 67% of the heads of household and 70% of the spouses resided in Transkei

4/.....

before coming to Cape Town. The other regions that most of the remaining squatters came from are the Eastern Cape and Ciskei. On the other hand, African squatters have lengthy periods of stay in the Cape Town Region as the above figures have demonstrated. One gains the impression that they have, in fact, come with the intention of settling in Cape Town. This impression is strengthened by the fact that 61% of the heads of household in Unibell and 67% in Cross Roads had resided continuously in Cape Town for more than 9 years while 40% of the spouses in Unibell and 65% in Cross Roads had resided there continuosly for more than 5 years. (13)

COMMUNITY LIFE OF SQUATTERS

The first impression of a squatter settlement is generally one of squalor. Rubbish lies strewn around, corrugated iron shacks - some no bigger than a middle class bathroom, but without windows - are crammed on top of each other, pools of stagnant water are interspersed amongst the houses and basic urban facilities such as domestic running water, sewerage, street-lighting and constructed roads are all missing.

A deeper look into the settlement reveals that its inhabitants manage to establish a community with a rich texture of life. Most of the settlements have committees - in some instances more than one committee that are usually at loggerheads with each other. The committees deal with the management of the community and with outside bodies such as the local authorities, lawyers, press, support groups and welfare organisation. The Unibell committee had its own "court of law" that dealt with petty crimes (serious crimes were reported to the police), the construction of houses, and even with serious family disputes that disrupted the community. Such a committee is fairly typical of other squatter settlements as well.

Further evidence of community life is provided by Unibell where the residents themselves built a school, the Nongwakazi School. It also served as a community centre in the evenings where, inter alia, a homecraft sewing industry was getting under way. The committee itself raised all the funds for the school by raising contributions from residents and obtaining donations from outside. The school was formally opened with public speeches and typically Xhosa celebrations. The press was in attendance. The opening took place in October 1977 when the threat of demolition was already hanging over the community.

Many other squatter settlements have their own community centres and schools. Cross Roads has at least three schools one of which was opened in December 1977. It also serves as a community centre.

There are many visible signs of the informal sector in squatter camps. Little vegetable stalls abound. In some cases large billboards proclaim the presence of a "cafe" or "bazaar".

Sport is sometimes played with great vigour and a sports club can provide the focus of a section of the community as in Vrygrond where gangsterism abounds. As a result taxis charge exorbitant fees at night time as do the the local "shops". In spite of that squatter settlements are generally characterised by less violence and crime than the townships.

FUNDAMENTAL CAUSES OF SQUATTING

The fundamental causes for squatting are of a political and economic nature. Coloured and African squatters are some of the most exploited workers with very low incomes as we have seen above. They are therefore in no position to afford to buy or live in economic housing even if it were available (which it is not). But they also belong to race groups that are denied political power at the national and at the local levels. As a result they

have no hand in shaping the housing policy that is handled at the national level by the Department of Community Development for Coloureds and the Bantu Affairs Administration Boards for Africans. Squatters are basically treated as labour units by the system: their labour is readily exploited, but their essential human and social requirements are ignored. At this level of abstraction it is not possible to make a detailed analysis. In order to do so it is necessary to consider the concrete situation of Coloured and African squatters separately.

CAUSES OF COLOURED SQUATTERS

As we have already noted above, most of the Coloured squatters come from inside Cape Town: about four-fifths of the new housing requirement is due to the natural population growth and the remainder is due to immigration. Because most Coloured squatters cannot afford to buy houses (76% earn less than R160 per month) they are dependant on the state, local authorities and employers to provide housing. Employers have done virtually nothing. Local authorities depend on state funds, so the provision of housing hinges critically on the allocation of funds to housing in the Budget. Because Coloureds are excluded from the political processes the funds have been inadequate and erratic. The government appears to have followed a "stop-go" policy with regards to Coloured housing. A dramatic example of this was provided in 1976 when, early in the year (March) the Minister of Community Development announced that the government was building 13 000 to 14000 houses a year for Coloureds in the whole country. Then there was a cut-back in Government funding and actual output for the year in Mitchell's Plain was 975 instead of an anticipated 6 000 houses.

A further way in which the low wages of Coloured workers created squatting is that many squatters can actually not afford the rent of Divisional Council housing. At Macassar and Scottsdene near Kraaifontein, residents had to leave the council housing and squat while the housing estates stood empty.

It would however be wrong to claim that low wages relative to high rents are the only cause of squatting. There was a minimum Coloured housing shortage of 36 000 dwelling units in 1977 indicating an absolute shortage in the provision of housing.(14)

A further political reason for the shortage of Coloured housing and hence squatting, is the implementation of the Group Areas Act. For instance, from 1971 to 1974 the City Council constructed 7 160 dwellings. However, only 3 581 of these houses were added to the housing stock because 3 579 of the new houses were used by the Department of Community Development for Group Areas resettlement. At times 80% of newly completed houses were used for Group Areas resettlements thereby severely limiting the supply of new housing.(15)

Immigration of Coloured squatters to Cape Town is due to economic pressure. Coloured people in the rural areas are overwhelmingly wage-labourers. It is clear that the growth of employment in the districts surrounding Cape Town has not kept up with the growth of the labour force. It has been calculated that between 1960 and 1970 roughly 30 000 to 40 000 Coloured men and women in 36 districts surrounding Cape Town became unemployed.(16) One of the factors creating unemployment is the growing mechanisation on the farms which has curtailed the demand for agricultural labour.

CAUSES OF AFRICAN SQUATTING

The causes of African squatting are deeply rooted in the country's early history. The dispossession of land used by Africans for agricultural production was the first significant event. But it did not stop there.

The penetration of mercantile capital into the Reserves underdeveloped these regions by extracting surplus value from the rural producers. These factors coupled with the pressure from population growth created an immense shortage of land and of the financial means by which to cultivate it productively, developed during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. As a result, most of the peasants eventually became migrant workers in order to support their families. This process has inexorably continued to a point where the great majority of rural families are virtually completely proletarianised. Amongst migrant workers in Cape Town from mainly the Transkei it was found in January 1976 that the monthly subsistence income of more than half of the migrant labourers was less than R8 while more than 80% of the families of migrant labourers produced less than R32 per month.(17) Coupled with this, a high level of underemployment also exists in the Ciskei and Transkei. In the latter half of the sixties simple surveys in 2 districts each of the Ciskei and Transkei revealed that the levels of underemployment were 10% and 22% respectively.(18) Therefore rural poverty plus the unavailability of jobs drives the able-bodied men and, to a lesser extent, women to the metropolitan areas in search of employment and money.

Those men not 'fortunate' enough to obtain contracts nonetheless come to Cape Town. Not only is there a chance that they can be employed illegally, but also the informal sector offers an opportunity of earning an income. The result, as we have seen above, is that almost half the men in Unibell and Cross Roads were illegally in Cape Town, but most of them were receiving incomes. It is possible that the men falling into this category have become marginalised, i.e. they are so marginal to the capitalist system that they are being permanently excluded from it. To confirm this, more information about their employment histories would be necessary, given the high unemployment and underemployment, it is quite likely that many such men have been marginalised.

Since 1968 Africans from the homelands could only come to Cape Town on one year contracts without their wives, children or any other dependants. Contract labourers are housed in single "bachelor" quarters. In Langa, where the majority of contract workers are resident, the ratio of men to women is 11 to 1. At a workshop with Cape Town's migrant labourers in 1975, one group of them described their situation as follows:

> A wife is important to each husband; the enforced separation can lead to adultery. This means that the life of a migrant is not the life of healthy, normal people. All this means that migrant labour and a jail term, as far as our conditions are concerned, are not very different - for even in our residences we can hardly sleep because of the relentless raids by the police. All this means therefore that the day you are fortunate enough to get a contract, your life as a convict has begun.(19)

Therefore many of the contract workers, men qualifying for permanent residence in Cape Town under section 10(1)b whose families are in the homelands and men working illegally in the area summon their wives and children to join them. The wives, on their part, are very eager and determined to join their husbands because they are more assured of financial support and the marital fidelity of their husbands and because they can enjoy a family life together. Often the only way in which such a basic human need and right can be realised is by squatting.

Yet a further reason for African squatting which is of fundamental importance is the interaction of the separate development policy with the country's economy. In an attempt to implement its separate development policy, the government announced a policy in 1966 whereby Africans in the Western Cape would be reduced by 5% per annum. African workers in this area were in a double bind: not only did the grand design to ensure white domination require

7/.....

that africans should be resettled in the homelands unless their services were required in the urban areas to minister to the needs of whites place, but also the policy of giving employment preference to Coloureds in the region west of the Eiselen line made their presence in the Cape Town Region even more tenuous.

As a result of the intention to decrease the number of Africans in the Western Cape the provision of housing for Africans was cut drastically. In the first half of the nineteen seventies less than 300 houses were built in Gugulethu and Nyanga, less than a tenth of the houses built in the comparable period during the nineteen sixties. Since 1972 the provision of family housing was completely stopped. However, the natural population increase of the 10 000 African families in Cape Town creates an annual requirement of 250 to 300 new dwelling units per year.

At first the authorities were reluctant to construct accommodation for single men after their policy formulation in 1966. Due to severe pressure to allow more labour to come to Cape Town more single quarter "barracks" were built by the authorities and employers. Some of these "temporary" structures (they still stand) were awful buildings: one of them is so terrible that the occupants have built their own private shelters inside the building. In the 11 years to 1977 single housing has been constructed for 16000 to 17 000 contract labourers.

In spite of the policy to reduce the number of Africans in the Region and to curtail African housing, the number of African workers in Cape Town kept going up after 1966. The demand for labour due to economic expansion kept rising: over the six year period, 1968-1974, African labourers in the construction industry increased three-fold from 3 400 to 13 400. In the government sector, especially Railways and Postal Services, the number of Africans increased more than four-fold from 1 400 to 6 000 contract labourers. In spite of the recession there are now twice as many contract labourers in Cape Town than there were in 1968.(20)

Thus a contradiction exists between a racial policy to secure political domination on the one hand and the economic necessities to help maintain this domination by ensuring that sufficient revenue is generated by the government to enforce control. A consequence of this policy is the deliberate non-provision of housing for Africans whose labour is nonetheless essential to enforce their own subjugation.

THE STATE AND BUREAUCRATIC RESPONSE TO SQUATTERS

Current squatter policy is a continuation and intensification of earlier policy although a clearer distinction between Coloured and African squatters has been drawn - Coloured squatters are to be tolerated but strictly controlled whereas African squatters are persona non grata and to be eliminated as soon as possible.

Thus the authorities decided to "freeze" the squatter population by condoning the erection of squatter shanties completed before 15 November 1974. These "shanties" were recorded, numbered and diligently measured (to prevent additions), and de facto recognition given to their existence. In addition a service charge of about R8 per month was instituted in return for services such as refuse disposal, night soil removal and water supply points to various squatter settlements.

Since then any unauthorised structures or additions have been demolished in many areas such as Phillipi, Hout Bay, Kommetjie, Bellville and Grassy Park. It was however the settlements that had mushroomed after November 1974 at Modderdam, Werkgenot, Unibell and Cross Roads which were predominantly African that stuck in the throats of the local bureaucrats. By hanging tenaciously onto the limited legal rights accorded to them the squatters effectively thwarted the attempts of the authorities to prevent an increase in their numbers.

As a result the Prevention of Illegal Squatting Amendment Act of 1976 was passed. It contained provisions enabling landowners, local authorities, the Department of Community Development and the Bantu Affairs Administration Board to demolish unauthorised structures without a court order. In the case of these authorities, they can take this step without the consent of the owner of the land, and at his expense. There is also no obligation on authorities who demolish squatter structures.to furnish alternative accommodation. In spite of these draconian powers, the squatters still fought a hard rearguard action that restrained the authorities even though there is evidence that the authorities acted in flagrant disregard of the law from time to time. On 7 March, 1977, squatters at Modderdam Road obtained a Supreme Court order restraining the Public Works Department (whose land the squatters were living on) from demolishing their shanties because the notices of demolition were possibly illegal.(21) The next move of the government was to remove even this last legal right by a further amendment of the Prevention of illegal Squatting Act in 1977.

Now the coast was at last clear for the bureaucrats. Coloured squatters were removed from Modderdam, Werkgenot and Unibell and resettled at Rifle RAnge. The Bantu Affairs Administration commenced with the demolition of Modderdam and Werkgenot. The result was an outcry in the local press and overseas. Sixteen theologians and ministers from the Dutch Reformed Church wrote a letter to Die Burger condemning the demolition. The transkei ambassador and prime minister voiced their protests on the grounds that Transkei had no accommodation or jobs for the people being evicted. As a result of negotiations between South Africa and Transkei, the authorities stayed their hand on Unibell until the end of the year, but Unibell too has now fallen under the front end loaders' destruction.

Only Cross Roads remains as a thorn in the flesh of Bantu Affairs bureaucrats. In February 1976, they were unable to prove in the Supreme Court that the Bantu Affairs Administration Board was either the legal owner or occupier of Cross Roads and so a squatter's appeal against a conviction for being on the land was unsuccessful. The Divisional Council who are the legal owners of the land, subsequently declared Cross Roads an emergency camp on 29 June 1976, and decided to provide basic services in return for a rent payment. The situation at present therefore is that Cross Roads is being run by the Divisional Council although Mr F Botha, the Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner, has committed himself in writing in saying that Cross Roads must also be eliminated.

An interesting feature of the authorities' policy is that they clearly see the restriction on squatting as a form of influx control of both Africans and Coloureds into Cape Town. In a meeting with members of the Divisional Council in 1975, the Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town reported:

> It became very clear, however, that the Divisional Council is not well disposed towards this [site and service] method of procedure because it would encourage people from country areas coming to town. They are quite deliberately taking a hard line in order to discourage migration from the rural to the metropolitan areas.(22)

In an interview with Bantu Affairs Officials the same theme emerged: they stated that they could no longer enforce influx control of Africans because of an agreement with Transkei to allow its citizens a two week period in Cape Town without a permit, so the only way they could prevent the uninhibited flow of Africans into town was to severely restrict available accommodation. The purpose of Section 3C of the Prevention of Illegal Squatting Amendment Act is also to introduce a form of influx control on Coloureds. It has been made an offence for an employer in the Cape Town Region, Stellenbosch, Paarl, Somerset West and Strand to employ Coloured people from outside unless the employer obtains a certificate from a local authority that "proper housing" is available for them.

THE SQUATTER RESPONSE

The response of squatters to the threats of demolitions has been, as we have seen above, to make use of the courts of law. With the aid of committed lawyers they achieved some success in staying execution until the last vestige of legal rights was stripped from them, in 1977. Subsequently they still relied on a similar strategy: their problems are still being dealt with by lawyers. They make use of petitions and consult with authorities. They negotiate and communicate instead of confront. They liaise closely with the press and receive reasonably sympathetic reporting although the papers are often over-cautious and unwilling to print stories of alleged official atrocities. The Modderdam committee was once going to appeal to the United Nations Human Rights Committee, but on the advice of their lawyer, they decided against it.

The squatters have not resisted by open defiance, nor have they ever used the strike threat against demolitions. No worker organisation or other workers have promised support or acted in solidarity with squatters. There have been rumours and unconfirmed accounts of intended defiance and indirect resistance. It is alleged that men in Modderdam were going to attack the demolition squad with pangas, but their wives restrained them by singing hymns, clapping their hands and dancing. During recent demolitions squatters were alleged to set fire to rows of squatter houses next in line for demolition in order to prevent the front end loader barging them down. Glass was buried in the sand in order to try and puncture the vehicles' tyres. Allegedly a large hole was dug inside a squatter house shortly before it was due to be demolished with the intention of trapping the front-end loader but the hole was discovered before the loader charged the house! Possible reasons that could explain the strategy adopted by squatters are the following: squatters were made extremely aware of the respressive power of the state. With the demolition of Modderdam at least twenty police vans and trucks were pulled up by the side of the road out of which poured about 100 armed riot police with dogs in attendance. Even in earlier days when the Public Works Department was pulling down individual "unoccupied" structures, they were accompanied by Coloured policemen while white riot police hung around on the fringes of the settlement. An act of direct defiance on the part of squatters would probably have been suicidal.

It is also possible that there exists a cleavage between squatters and other workers. Coloured artisans living in reasonably comfortable homes could well resent squatter structures in their neighbourhood. The serious conflict between migrants in Nyanga and residents in Gugulethu during Christmas, 1976, could have driven a wedge between the urban and rural based African proletariat. There also exist a social distance between the permanent residents and migrant workers.

On the other hand, the nature of many of the support groups working with the squatter communities favour and advocate the strategies adopted by squatters. The Cape Flats Committee for Interim Accommodation, the Foundation for Social Development, University of Cape Town's SHAWCO, UPRU (Urban Problems

Research Unit), the SHELTER Fund started by the Cape Times and the Athlone Advice Office of the Black Sash plus lawyers and academics are all organisations and individuals that operate within the law and favour negotiation with authorities rather than defiance and confrontation.

Finally, the generally strong public sympathy for squatters when their homes are demolished could also determine their strategy. The destruction of squatters' homes plus the potential disruption of family life and the hardship experienced by the people after the demolitions of their homes, generates widespread human sympathy which the squatters can exploit to their advantage. They are therefore careful not to adopt a strategy that could possibly alienate their public support which has been influential. Just how influential it has been is probably a debatable question.

CONCLUSIONS

The origin of African squatting in Cape Town has its historical roots in the dispossession of land and subsequent underdevelopment of the Reserves. Empirical evidence demonstrates the enormous extent to which the African squatters have been proletarianised and have come to Cape Town with the intention of remaining there. Basically, it is a matter of survival for the husbands and their wives and children. Starvation stares them in the face if they return to the homelands.

Coloured squatters are also workers without rights, but with the distinction that the overwhelming majority of them are urban born and bred. The remainder come from the countryside where a process of marginalisation could also be at work.

The response of the local bureaucrats bears the stamp of acting with a deeper political motive. While squatters in their area anger them to the extent that they want to get rid of squatters, their actions show deeper motives which are to retain white political control and to keep the capitalist economy going.

This is born out by the extensive prosecution of influx control offenders and determined hostility and extensive elimination of squatting and African family life, but a very mild prosecution of employers who engage African workers illegally. In 1976 the number of employers prosecuted for employing Africans illegally was only one-tenth of the number of Africans prosecuted under thepass laws (1 535 as opposed to 16 099).

Squatters have shown no overt defiant acts against officials who have demolished their homes. Nor have other workers demonstrated any open support. This does not mean that squatters in Cape Town have been submissive. In the face of strong state repression resistance or defiance could well have been suicidal. On the other hand the act of squatting itself is a form of direct action and defiance by the squatters. The act of nailing together a corrugated iron house is itself a statement showing a determination to work and live together as a family in Cape Town. When asked what they intended to do in the event of their homes being demolished, 72% of the Cross Roads inhabitants responded that they would try to erect a house elsewhere.

Squatting, it seems, shall be with us for quite a time to come in Cape Town.

31/1/78
/hdm

NOTES

1. Quoted in J Davenport and K Hunt (1974), The Right to Land (David Phillip), p. 11.
2. G Ellis, D Hendrie, A Kory and J Maree (1977), p.114.
3. The Cape Town Region is defined as the magisterial districts of Bellville, Bape (Town), Simonstown and Wynberg.
4. Ellis, et al. (1977), p.6.
5. Dr Oscar Wollheim, "State is also Guilty", Argus, 25 Aug. 1977.
6. Die Burger, 27 Julie, 1977. Survey by Theoniel Potgieter and David Bishop.
7. Ellis, et al., pp.21-2.
8. Ibid., pp.8-10,105.
9. Estimate by the then Deputy Minister of Bantu Administration, Mr Punt Janson, Cape Times, 26 Sept. 1975.
10. W H Thomas (1977), Tables 4 and 5.
11. J Maree and J Cornell (1977), Tables 98, 12.
12. J Maree and J Cornell (1978), Tables 2-4, 6-12.
13. J Maree and J Cornell (1977), Tables 3,5,6,9B,11; (1978), Tables 2,13-15.
14. Ellis, et. al., pp.29-34.
15. Ibid., p.24.
16. ibid., pp.105-6.
17. J Graaff and J Maree (1977), p.47.
18. J Maree and P J de Vos (1975).
19. Education Workshop organised by Extra-Mural Studies Dept of the University of Cape Town, January 1975.
20. Francis Wilson, "Die Plakkers: wat se ons vir die vader?" Rapport, 14 Augustus 1977.
21. Ellis, et.al., pp.37-43.
22. Memorandum, Archbishop of Cape Town, 12 June, 1975.

REFERENCES

G Ellis, D Hendrie, A Kory, J Maree (1978), The Squatter Problem in the Western Cape, Some Causes and Remedies (S.A. Institute of Race Relations).

J Graaf and J Maree (1977), "Residential and Migrant African Workers in Cape Town", Saldru Working Paper No. 12, University of Cape Town (UCT).

J Maree and J Cornell (1977), "Sample Survey of Squatters in Unibell, September 1977", Saldru Working Paper no. 14, UCT.

J Maree and J Cornell (1978), "Sample Survey of Squatters in Cross Roads, December 1977", Saldru Working Paper No. 17, UCT.

J Maree and P J de Vos (1975), Underemployment, Poverty and Migrant Labour in the Transkei and Ciskei, (S.A. Institute of Race Relations).

W H Thomas (1977), "Opname van Plakkergemeenskap van Modderdam" (Institute for Social Development, University of the Western Cape).