

CHAPTER 4

EXECUTION OF THE REMOVAL PROCESS AND RESISTANCE ATTEMPTS BY THE BAKWENA BA MOGOPA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the methods used to remove the Bakwena ba Mogopa from Mogopa to Pachsdraai will be established and analysed. It will be investigated whether the Bakwena ba Mogopa were informed in advance about their removal. The unfolding of the process regarding the forced removal of the Bakwena ba Mogopa and attempts to resist the forced removal will be analysed.

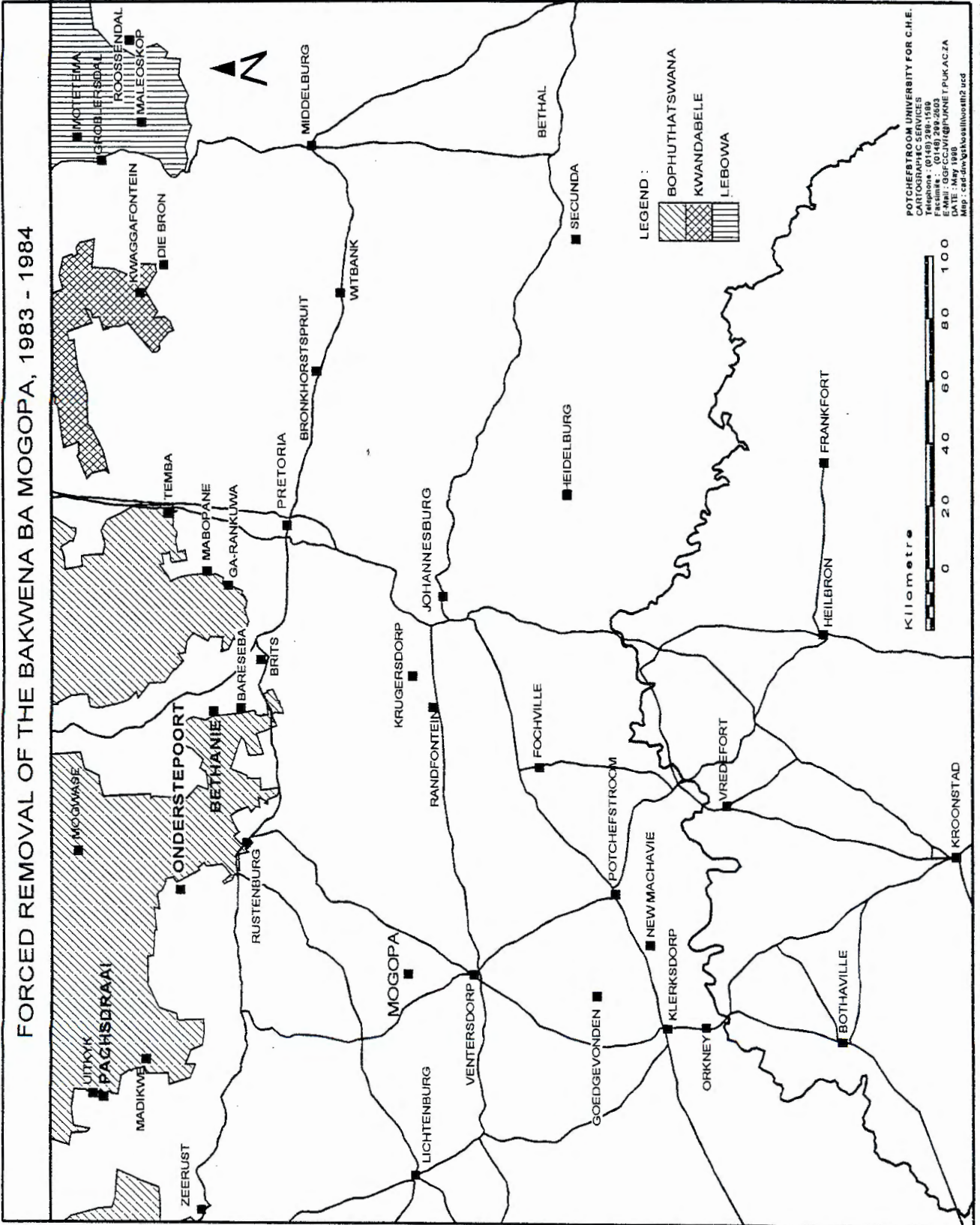
4.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO THE FORCED REMOVALS

Rumours that Mogopa village was under threat of removal, were heard in the 1960s. In 1964, during the rule of **kgosana** Noah More, the Bakwena ba Mogopa realised that the rumours about their removal might become a reality. During that period, some black tribes, mostly Batswana in the Western Transvaal, faced forced removals. Their areas were classified as “badly situated” areas (“black spots”) because they were outside areas designated for black occupation. These tribes were to be removed to clear the white areas of the “black spots”.¹

The circular released by the Department of Bantu Administration on 14 April 1965 made people whose areas were classified as “black spots” aware that they would be removed. It was stated in the circular that all freehold rights of

¹ **The Sunday Times**, 4 December 1983; Union of South Africa, **The Statutes of the Union of South Africa, 1936**, p.100; J.R. More, **personal interview**, 20 June 1994.

FORCED REMOVAL OF THE BAKWENA BA MOGOPA, 1983 - 1984



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the black tribes within white areas would be cancelled and such tribes would be moved to areas classified as released areas. These released areas were in the reserves or in areas which were about to be incorporated into the homelands (reserves).²

The forced removal of Batswana tribes from the Western Transvaal districts of Rustenburg, Ventersdorp and Lichtenburg strengthened the possibility of the forced removal of the Bakwena ba Mogopa. Some of the Batswana tribes removed were:

- a) The Bakubung of Ratheo from Molotestad (Boons) to Ledig near Saulspoor in the Pilanesberg district in 1966;
- b) the Baphiring of **kgosi** A.S. Mabalane were removed from their area Mabaalstad, also known as Rietfontein, and were settled at Lemoenplaas, 30 km north of Swartruggens in the Madikwe district in 1971;
- c) the Batlounge tribe was also removed from their area, Botshabelo (Putfontein), in 1977 to Ramatlabama near the Botswana border west of Mmabatho.³

Due to these removals around them, the Bakwena ba Mogopa became uneasy and suspiciously waited for their turn to be removed.

The Bakwena ba Mogopa were informed about their removal on 21 February 1979. The officials of the Department of Co-operation and Development informed them that they would be removed after the 1980 harvests. This was to give them time to prepare themselves.⁴ The removal did not take place at that time because the tribe did not accept the proposed compensatory land, Vlakfontein, in the Pilanesberg district. They claimed that it was smaller than

² G. More, **African people relocation in South Africa**, p.48.

³ L. Platzky and C. Walker (eds.), **The surplus people: Forced removals in South Africa**, pp.204-219.

⁴ **The Sunday Press**, 14 December 1983.

Mogopa and its agricultural value was doubted.⁵ In an interview, Shadrack More, the leader of the resisting group, denied the statement that the tribe had been informed about their removal. He claimed that the tribe only heard about their removal when they demanded the deposition of **kgosana** Jacob More in 1981.⁶ His claim revealed that he was not well-informed about the events and developments on the issue of the removal. The memorandum of the Department of Bantu Administration dated 9 October 1967 indicated that the removal of Mogopa had been part of the general discussion on the removal of black tribes from "black spots" since 1964.⁷

To summarise, the Bakwena ba Mogopa had been aware of their pending removal since the 1960s. The South African Government policy developments made it evident to them that their removal was unavoidable. The events of forced removal of the tribes around them were an indication of what would happen to them. The tribe was informed about their removal. The indication that some members of the tribe were against the removal does not remove the fact that they knew about their removal.

4.3 METHODS USED TO EXECUTE THE REMOVAL

The Government used different methods to remove people. Some of these methods included persuasion, a method/policy of divide and rule, cutting off of services and the use of brute force. These ensured that removals were executed.

4.3.1 Persuasion and enticement

The Government provided some facilities in the areas identified to settle people to be removed to serve as incentives to motivate and persuade people to move. These included schools and health facilities that were often lacking

⁵ J.R. More, **personal interview**, 10 January 1994.

⁶ S. More, **personal interview**, 24 September 1994.

⁷ Land Affairs Department (LAD), Pretoria, Mogopa case correspondence, UB188/1716/7: Opruiming van Swartkol Hartebeeslaagte en Swartkop, Ventersdorp, 9 Oktober 1967.

in the present place. These were used to entice people to move voluntarily.⁸ A delegation from Mogopa was shown in 1982 some viable houses of white farmers at Pachsdraai. The Mogopa delegation comprised the following members: S.L.L. Rathebe, T.S. More, B.M. Rampou, J. Andrews (Rampa), A. Pooe, N. More, H. Mpshe, D. Kgatitsoe, M.C. Mooki, A. Rasweswe, D. More, J. Pooe and **Kgosana** J.R. More. The officials of the department who led the delegation to Pachsdraai and drove them around to see the area were L.A. Pretorius, S.J.M. Swanepoel and S.C. Vermaak.⁹

The Bakwena ba Mogopa were also promised a generous compensation of R8 000 per household. The Government built three large schools at Pachsdraai while at Mogopa there were only two schools. These amenities induced two hundred of five hundred families to leave Mogopa for Pachsdraai in June 1983 under the leadership of **kgosana** Jacob More.¹⁰ This move revealed a degree of success on the part of the Government in enticing and persuading people to move.

4.3.2 Divide and rule

The Government relied on the co-operation of the **dikgosi** and **dikgosana** to move their tribes. It was a common practice by the Government to appoint or accept a co-operative person as a chief (**kgosi**), regardless of opposition from the tribe or clan. This happened at Molote when the regent, Tshose Monnakgotla, resisted the forced removal of the Bakubung of Ledig.¹¹ He was arrested and demoted and the Government installed Catherien Monnakgotla as chieftain because she was not opposed to the removal. In the case of Mogopa, the tribe tried to depose **kgosana** Jacob More for

⁸ J.S. Motlhamme, **Forced removals in the people's memory: The Bakubung of Ledig**, p.14.

⁹ B.M. Rampou, **personal interview**, 24 May 1995; Mogopa Tribal Office (MTO), Pachsdraai, Tribal correspondence, Minutes of a meeting, 17 January 1983.

¹⁰ L. Platsky and C. Walker (eds.), **The surplus people: Forced removals in South Africa**, p.291; **The Citizen**, 4 December 1983; **Die Vaderland**, 17 December 1983.

¹¹ J.S. Motlhamme, **Forced removals in the people's Memory: The Bakubung of Ledig**, p.15.

alleged corruption and misappropriation of tribal funds and to replace him with Shadrack More. The Government did not accept the decision because **kgosana** Jacob More had agreed to move.¹²

The process of dividing communities by setting up and bribing leaders was generally effective. The leaders were given all facilities to allocate to the community members. They took the best facilities and accommodation such as the white farmhouses for themselves. Some families were split up as family members differed on whether to resist or collaborate with the Government. Once someone had agreed to move, the removal was carried out and the resisters were left utterly insecure and vulnerable.¹³

The officials of the Department of Co-operation and Development, realising that the issue of removal was not welcomed by the majority of the Bakwena ba Mogopa, decided to negotiate the issue with **kgosana** Jacob More. In October 1981 the officials of the Department of Co-operation and Development, Louis Pretorius, (assistant director for rural settlement), Louis Nel (Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Information), L.A. Pretorius, J.A. de Villiers (Ventersdorp commissioner), S.C. Vermaak and S.J.M. Swanepoel, conducted a meeting in which a planning committee of fourteen members was elected to negotiate the removal with the Department of Co-operation and Development. The committee consisted of S.L.L. Rathebe (chairman), T.S. More (vice-chairman), B.M. Rampou (secretary), J. Rampa, A. Pooe, D. Kgatitsoe, M.C. Mooki, A. Rasweswe, D. More, J. Pooe, J. Mpse, N. More and E. Kau. Kgosana Jacob More was automatically a member of the committee as an **ex-officio** member due to his position as the tribal leader (**kgosana**).¹⁴ This came as a shock to the majority of the people, as they had thought the meeting was convened to allow **kgosana** Jacob More to account for alleged misappropriation of tribal funds. Those who opposed the removal perceived

¹² Transvaal Rural Action Committee (TRAC), **Mogopa: Now we have no land**, p.2.

¹³ TRAC, **Mogopa: Now we have no land**, p.2.

¹⁴ B.M. Rampou, **personal interview**, 24 May 1995; MTO, Pachsdraai, Tribal correspondence: Minutes of a meeting, 17 January 1983; C.L. Peart, "Forced removals: One community's experience", **Arena**, 1994, p.2.

the planning committee as a rubber stamp of the Department of Co-operation and Development. They believed the committee did not have any say on whether the tribe had to be removed or not.¹⁵

The resisters called upon Shadrack More from Johannesburg to lead them. They claimed that they recognised him as their legitimate **kgosana**. Tension started between the followers of **kgosana** Jacob More and Shadrack More. Despite this problem, the department continued to negotiate the removal with **kgosana** Jacob More and the planning committee.¹⁶

Several meetings regarding negotiations on the removal were held between the department and the planning committee. At one of the meetings, held on 17 January 1983 at Mogopa, it was finally agreed that Pachsdraai had to be well-prepared before the tribe was to be moved in June 1983. Schools were to be built, and cattle were to be sold as it would be difficult to transport them to Pachsdraai. Those negotiations resulted in the agreement that the tribe should move. **Kgosana** Jacob More moved in mid-June 1983 with two hundred families to Pachsdraai. This paved the way for the intimidation of the resisting group. Eventually State bulldozers destroyed the community's schools, churches and houses of the families who had left Pachsdraai.¹⁷

The Government also exploited the position of the tenants and women. "Black spots" were densely populated because it provided a haven for people evicted from white towns and farms. Some of these people had lived as farming tenants. The Government enticed them to move by offering them access to land in new areas such as Pachsdraai. In cases such as Matjakaneng, tenants were moved before the original occupants (landlords), thus left the landlords more vulnerable. The same applied to women. Officials

¹⁵ TRAC, **Mogopa: Now we have no land**, p.2; S. More, **personal interview**, 24 September 1994.

¹⁶ TRAC, **Mogopa: Now we have no land**, p.2; S. More, **personal interview**, 24 September 1994.

¹⁷ E. Unterhalter, **Forced removal: The division, segregation and control of the people of South Africa**, p.116; MTO, Pachsdraai, Tribal correspondence: Minutes of a meeting, 5 December 1983.

visited the threatened areas during the week knowing that the men were away at work. They rejected the requests of women to come over the weekends. The officials intimidated the helpless women whose husbands were not there and the very old and very young children (whose parents were not there) to have their houses marked. On the doors of their houses numbers were painted and this was used as an indication that they had agreed to move. That is why in the case of Mogopa, the majority of the people who went to Pachsdraai were women. All this was done with the approval and help of the planning committee.¹⁸

4.3.3 Cutting off of services

If other methods failed to make people to move “voluntarily”, new harsher methods were implemented. One of these methods was the cutting off of essential services. In the case of Mogopa, old age and disability pensions were not paid, the annual labour contracts were not stamped and the shop-owners’ licences were not renewed. To make people suffer in order to force them to move (in what Dr. P.G. Koornhof called a “voluntary move”),¹⁹ the bus service to Ventersdorp was terminated. In January 1984, the leaders of the resistant group confronted the Ventersdorp Commissioner, demanding the payment of pensions owed and the stamping of the workers passes which had been refused. He conceded in order to lull them into a false sense of security so that no one would expect the pre-dawn police blitz and forced removal of 14 January 1984.²⁰ The forced removal was never put off, despite all the attempts by the resisting group and false concessions made by the Ventersdorp Commissioner.

After the Government lorries, known as GG lorries, had fetched the people who had agreed to move to Pachsdraai, the State bulldozers went on to

¹⁸ TRAC, *Mogopa: Now we have no land*, p.3; S. More, *personal interview*, 24 September 1994.

¹⁹ *Sunday Express*, 29 April 1984; P.G. Koornhof, *telephonic interview*, 11 July 1996.

²⁰ TRAC, *Mogopa: Now we have no land*, p.4; E. Unterhalter, *Forced removal: The division, segregation and control of the people of South Africa*, p.116.

demolish their numbered houses, all the schools and churches. Government officials removed the engines and water pumps. The resisting people also claimed that diesel was thrown in the remaining water in the reservoir. This claim was dismissed by **kgosana** Jacob More and there is no other evidence to support the claim. This did not break the resistance, as the resisting group installed new pumps.²¹

4.3.4 Use of intimidation and the legal process

One of the coercive methods to persuade people to move was intimidation. People were threatened that if they did not move voluntarily, the Government would remove them by force. In that case, they would lose all compensation due to them. Livestock would be impounded and they had to pay R2,90 per head to get them back. Mogopa leaders such as M. Kgatitsoe, S. More and I. More were detained in terms of the state presidential order of 10 November 1983. They were kept in the police van as it drove around to instill fear among their followers. This did not reduce resistance to the forced removal of the Bakwena ba Mogopa, as had been the case in the forced removal of the Bakubung of Ledig.²²

The Government resorted to instructions in the form of court orders and State President's orders. On 19 November 1983, the Bakwena ba Mogopa were served with the State President's order signed by both the State President and the Minister of the Department of Co-operation and Development, dr. P.G. Koornhof. It gave the Bakwena ba Mogopa ten days, that is until 29 November 1983, to leave Mogopa. In his reading of the order, the

²¹ TRAC, **Mogopa: Now we have no land**, p.4; C. Cooper et al., **A survey of race relations**, 1984, p.462.

²² D. Molefe, **personal interview**, 10 August 1997; J.S. Motlhamme, **Forced removal in the people's memory: The Bakubung of Ledig**, p.15; MTO, Pachsdraai, Tribal correspondence: Lasbrief aan alle offisiere en lede van die Suid-Afrikaanse Polisie, 10 November 1983.

Ventersdorp Commissioner, J.A. de Villiers, stated that if they have not moved by that day, they would be loaded up and moved by force.²³

The tribe tried to use the legal process to stop the forced removal. They tried to challenge the validity of the State President's order which did not meet the requirements of the Bantu Administration Act, no 38 of 1927, section 5(1)(b). They based their argument on the fact that no parliamentary resolution had been taken specifically for their removal. The Pretoria Supreme Court ruled that the removal was legal. Justice A.P. van Dyk stated that the State President's order for the Mogopa residents to vacate Mogopa by 29 November had been approved "in anticipation" by Parliament in 1975.²⁴ Their attempts to use the legal process to stop the removal were in vain, but the community's lawyers, Cheadle Thompson and Hayson Attorneys, then petitioned Chief Justice C.J. Rabie for leave to appeal. They won the appeal in 1985, a year after their forced removal had been executed.²⁵

The State President's order issued on 19 November 1983 instructing the Mogopa people to move to Pachsdraai within ten days, was not executed on the said date, although a Supreme Court application to have the removal stayed, was turned down on 25 November 1983. Immense publicity, locally and abroad, and concerted church opposition appeared to have delayed the execution of the order. Mrs. Hellen Suzman had telephoned Dr. Chester Crocker, United States assistant secretary of State for Africa to assist in halting the removal. Nothing happened on that day, and the officials of the Department of Co-operation and Development did not turn up as was expected.²⁶

²³ TRAC, **Mogopa: Now we have no land**, p.5; MTO, Pachsdraai, Tribal correspondence: Lasbrief aan alle offisiere en lede van die Suid-Afrikaanse Polisie, 10 November 1983.

²⁴ **The Sowetan**, 14 December 1983.

²⁵ C. Murray and O. Oregon (eds.), **No place to rest: Forced removal and the law in South Africa**, p.21; C. Albertyn, "Forced removals and the Law: The Mogopa Case: More v Minister of Co-operation and Development 1986(1) SA 102(A)", **South African journal for human rights**, vol.2, part 1, March 1986, pp.91-97; C. Cooper et al., **A survey of race relations, 1984**, p.462.

²⁶ **Sunday Express**, 4 December 1983; **Pretoria News**, 9 February 1984; **The Star**, 9 February 1984.

Many of the tribe refused to give up and in early December 1983 they organised themselves under the leadership of Isaac More who acted on behalf of Shadrack More who was based in Johannesburg to repair and rebuild the destroyed facilities at Mogopa. They installed a new pump and collected money to build a new school. On 9 January 1984 they started to rebuild the school and to improve roads. Men and women left their jobs to work full-time in the reconstruction of Mogopa. They were convinced that the Government would relent and leave them in peace. Unfortunately the Government's last strategy was the most cruel one, brute force.²⁷

4.3.5 Use of brute force

After all the strategies to include people to move had failed, the Government resorted to the use of brute force as the final strategy to ensure that the Bakwena ba Mogopa moved. This was done in accordance with the State President's order issued on 10 November 1983 to the South African Police. The order stated that if the people of Mogopa refused to leave Mogopa, force had to be used and their leaders arrested. In the early hours of 14 February 1984, Mogopa was surrounded by an armed police force of ninety policemen with policedogs at their disposal.²⁸ At 04:00 the people were told through megaphones to load their possessions onto the Government trucks and to go to Pachsdraai. Nobody was allowed to leave his house. Leaders who resisted the removal, such as Mathews Kgatitsoe, Shadrack More, Isaac More and Daniel Molefe, were arrested and locked up in the police vans.²⁹ The Government labourers packed and loaded the possessions onto lorries and buses. People tried to run away, but their children and furniture were loaded and dispatched to Pachsdraai. Parents became desperate to find their

²⁷ TRAC, *Mogopa: Now we have no land*, p.5; C. Cooper et al., *A survey of race relations, 1984*, p.462; M. Kgatitsoe, *personal interview*, 3 April 1996.

²⁸ D. Molefe, *personal interview*, 3 April 1996; MTO, Pachsdraai, Tribal correspondence: Lasbrief aan alle offisiere en lede van die Suid-Afrikaanse Polisie, 10 November 1983; C. Murray and C. Oregan (eds.), *No place to rest: Forced removals and the law in South Africa*, p.22.

²⁹ S. More, *personal interview*, 24 September 1994; C. Cooper et al., *A survey of race relations 1984*, p.462.

children and got into the buses to Pachsdraai to go and look for their children.³⁰

Without any discussion, the houses were broken down by Government labourers and bulldozers. People found standing together outside their houses were beaten up by the police using batons. Those who wanted to go to Bethanie rather than Pachsdraai, were told to organise their own transport and that they would lose compensation for their property.³¹

All the events of 14 February 1984 took place under strict police control. No outsiders (except the police, white farmers and black journalists), were allowed in the area. Journalists, diplomats, priests, lawyers and members of the Black Sash were turned back at the entrance of Mogopa. Those who managed to sneak in through backways were caught and charged with trespassing. The police initially said Mogopa was an "operational area", but later corrected this and said since it was a black area, no whites were allowed to enter the area.³² That was surprising, because black priests were also prevented to enter the area. Only the police and the white farmers who had free access in and out to buy livestock were allowed in the area.³³ Black journalists were allowed access only under police escort, which effectively restricted them from speaking freely to the people.³⁴

Major A. Scheepers denied any victimisation of people by the police. He claimed that the ninety policemen armed with dogs were at Mogopa to protect the officials of the Department of Co-operation and Development and to maintain law and order. This claim was confirmed by Inspector K. Kole of the Ventersdorp police station. Major Scheepers further reported that on the first

³⁰ TRAC, *Mogopa: Now we have no land*, pp.5-7; C. Cooper et al., *A survey of race relations, 1984*, pp.462-463.

³¹ E. Unterhalter, *Forced removal: The division, segregation and control of the people of South Africa*, p.116; G. Rampou, *personal interview*, 11 September 1996.

³² *Rand Daily Mail*, 24 February 1984; TRAC, *Mogopa: Now we have no land*, p.7.

³³ TRAC, *Mogopa: Now we have no land*, p.7; *Rand Daily Mail*, 24 February 1984; C. Cooper et al., *A survey of race relations 1984*, p.463.

³⁴ *Rand Daily Mail*, 24 February 1984.

day (14 February 1984), twenty-seven families were moved and on 16 February 1984, 162 families had been taken to Pachsdraai. An unknown number had left with their own transport, but not for Pachsdraai.³⁵ Most of these people went to Bethanie, the land of **kgosi** Mmamogale who was accepted by all the Bakwena ba Mogopa as their **kgosi**. An agreement was reached between him and Isaac More on 29 November 1983 to accommodate the resisting group if the Government should remove them.³⁶ By February 1984 all the families had been moved.³⁷

The events of 14 February 1984 and the following days crowned all the previous strategies, as they exposed the brute force used to remove the Bakwena ba Mogopa from their ancestral land, Mogopa, to the unknown land, Pachsdraai. The Government had ultimately managed to move the Bakwena ba Mogopa.

4.4 CONCLUSION

The Bakwena ba Mogopa knew about their planned removal in the 1960s. Although they had not been officially informed by that time, the removal of the tribes around them indicated to them what could happen to them. Tribes such as the Batlounge, Bakubung and Baphiring, were forcibly removed from their ancestral lands. These removals were in the Lichtenburg, Rustenburg and Ventersdorp districts. The Bakwena ba Mogopa were officially informed about their removal on 21 February 1979.

The forced removal of the Bakwena ba Mogopa was carried out by means of a number of strategies. The Government succeeded in persuading some people through incentives to move to Pachsdraai. Some of the people were allocated better accommodation. They were also promised compensation of

³⁵ C. Cooper et al., **A survey of race relations, 1984**, p.463; K. Kole, **personal interview**, 26 November 1996.

³⁶ S. More, **personal interview**, 24 September 1994; **The Citizen**, 30 November 1983.

³⁷ C. Cooper et al., **A survey of race relations, 1984**, p.463.

R8 000 per household. Some people could not resist these attractions and were enticed to move to Pachsdraai.

The other effective method used by the Government to get people to move, was by dividing them by setting up partners or collaborators. The Government had successfully exploited the division within the Bakwena ba Mogopa. It ensured that a planning committee was established from **kgosana** Jacob More's group. Shadrack More's group in vain tried to stop the negotiations which they claimed were not inclusive. The Government succeeded in getting Jacob More's group to agree to move to Pachsdraai.

The cutting off of services and use of brute force were cruel methods used to remove the resisting people. Schools and churches were destroyed, the former to deny the children of the resisting group education. Water pumps were also removed. The stopping of the payments of old age pensions hit those who depended on it hard. The use of brute force on 14 February 1984 and the following days exposed all the sufferings endured by the Bakwena ba Mogopa. The fact that the forced removal took place under strict police control (almost a state of emergency) in an attempt to prevent or hide publicity, indicated that the government used unacceptable methods to remove people. This effectively proves that there is no question that the Bakwena ba Mogopa moved voluntarily, but that they were forcibly removed.