

TRENDS IN 'BANTUSTAN' POLITICS

by Sol Dubula

There are no grounds in history or in reality for the Nationalists to claim any part of South Africa exclusively for whites . . . Africans live in every part of our country; their labour has gone to develop its farmlands and its cities, its mines and industries, its railways and harbours; they claim every inch of South Africa as their homeland.

The Road to South African Freedom
(1962 Programme of the S.A.C.P.)

The Nationalists . . . are merely playing with the conceptions of self-determination in the hope of satisfying their critics with empty gestures. But . . . independence and self-determination are very explosive concepts in Africa today. In playing with these concepts they are playing with dynamite.

L. Legwa: Partitioning South Africa
(African Communist No.11, 1962)

South Africa's brand of internal colonialism is being given a new look. It no longer proclaims its purpose in the naked slogan of 'Die Kaffir op sy plek en die Koelie uit die land' but talks smoothly of creating 'sovereign independent Bantu States' and 'equal states for all races within their own territories'.

In support of these cliches the racialists have invented a view of history which exceeds all precedent for its arrogance and cynicism. According to the High Priests of apartheid the whites in South Africa have a natural and traditional right to the complete ownership of 87% of the land surface in which 99% of South Africa's productive wealth is situated. The 13% left over consisting of 81 dispersed tracts of rural, drought-stricken land has been allocated to the indigenous 15 million African people as their 'Homelands'. More land has been set aside for the Wild Animal Parks than the combined areas of 4 of the 9 so-called future 'states'.

It is crystal clear that the Bantustan partition scheme is today, as much as it ever was, a device to perpetuate white supremacy.

The nine projected 'Homelands' which are at different stages of



Bantustans

so-called self-government are: the Transkei, Ciskei, Tswana, Matshangana (Shangaan), Lebowa (North Sotho), Venda, Basotho (South Sotho), Swazi and Zulu regions. Apart from the Transkei, where the minority of the members are elected, the Authority in all the areas consists of officials who are in the last resort government appointees. Only the South Sotho 'Homeland' is a single unit. The others consist of a collection of geographically isolated units: viz. Zulu—29; Tswana—19; Ciskei—17; Matshangana—4; Swazi, Lebowa and Venda—3 each; and the Transkei—2. According to recent statistics provided by the government, almost 7 million Africans live in the 'Homelands', whilst slightly more than 8 million live outside. Of the latter, 4.4 million live in 'white' urban areas (more than the entire white population) and 3.6 million live in 'white' rural areas. Of those who live in the 'Homelands' the population distribution is as follows: Zulu—2.1 million; Transkei (including Ciskei)—2.2 million; Tswana—0.6 million; Lebowa—1 million; Basotho—0.15 million; Venda—0.25 million; Swazi—0.1 million; and Matshangana—0.4 million.

The pace of the government's Bantustan activities has been given priority rating. Preoccupation with 'Homelands' has not only been evident at legislative levels but has also taken up an unprecedented share of the political activities and pronouncements of government leaders including Vorster. Recent amendments to the South African Constitution (obtained by a two-thirds majority at a joint session of the Assembly and Senate) gave South Africa's 'black nations' the 'inalienable right' to have their own official languages in their respective areas. This was complementary to the Bantu Homelands Constitution Bill which gives the State President the power to advance the country's remaining Bantustans to Transkei-type self-rule by way of proclamation without prior reference to Parliament, and it seems that these powers will be used in the immediate future in relation to the other 'Homelands'.

Vorster recently made a propaganda tour of some of the 'Homelands' and this was much publicised as a sign that the government intended moving as never before in the implementation of its Bantustan policies. Dr. Muller, Minister of Information, said recently:

It is the policy of the South Africa government that the non-white nations of South Africa should become sovereign independent states in their own right exactly as free as Ghana, Nigeria and the U.K., with full membership of the United Nations if they so desire.

More African magistrates have been appointed in the Transkei and steps recently taken are preliminary to the handing over to Black administration of 26 towns within the Transkei.

Within one week of a complaint by Buthelezi that he as Chief Executive Officer of Zululand had never met the Prime Minister, Vorster arranged a joint meeting.

There are repeated promises of speedy steps to purchase land 'at the expense of the whites' and transfer the balance of the land still due in terms of the 1936 Native Land and Trust Act.

The number of posts in the public service in the Transkei filled by whites has dropped from 18.6% in 1963 to 7.9%. Smaller ethnic groups are being encouraged to lay claim to their own territorial units as Bantustan areas.

The Minister of Bantu Administration and Development has announced that steps were being taken to extend the powers of the 'Transkeian government' to include certain responsibility for police, prisons and health services.

On the economic front top priority is being given to decentralised industrial growth and more significant concessions are being offered to attract industrialists to the decentralised areas. The announced aim is to divert a significant slice of the industrial development to the 'Bantu Homelands', the 'border' areas, and other decentralised areas without of course harming 'the interests and needs of the existing metropolitan areas'.

A great deal of public debate and attention in South Africa is concentrated on these developments and the related question of separate institutions for the Coloured and Indian people. Both within the white camp and among the oppressed Black people a ferment has been evident which needs special and urgent attention.

The debate is, of course, not free. It is taking place within the strait-jacket of a police state. The issues given prominence are, in the main, those selected by a press which is controlled by the privileged minority. Above all, the true leaders of the people and their organisations are prevented from participating in the debate except through the limiting means of illegal propaganda. But one thing is evident and that is that the political torpor created by the terror and the smashing of the people's organisations in the immediate post-Rivonia situation is beginning to lift. Groups and individuals from

amongst the oppressed majority are beginning to act and to speak out publicly with a sharpness which seemed impossible only a few years ago. Clearly some of the militant-sounding outpourings are confused and purely demagogic. They are sometimes inspired by the desire of certain politicians to recapture waning public notice. But it is a demagogy which reflects pressures from below, a changing public mood and a growing impatience among the people. It also reflects some of the basic contradictions facing the racial state in its attempt to sell to the South African people and the world outside a substitute for real democracy.

At a time when the government's partition schemes were in their early stages, L. Legwa writing in the *African Communist* (Fourth Quarter, 1962) pointed with prophetic insight to some of the dilemmas into which the regime's Bantustan policies would be thrust. And of late there have been uncomfortable signs for the government.

Already there is evidence that each demagogic pronouncement (intended more often than not for external consumption) and each 'concession' raises the level of those aspirations of the people which can only be satisfied by endangering the very purpose of Bantustan policy which is, after all, the perpetuation of white supremacy by other means. Even government-orientated chiefs are, as Comrade Legwa forecast, 'subjected to constant pressure from the people among whom they live and work, while Pretoria is thousands of miles away'. Matanzima of the Transkei admitted as much when he apologetically warded off government attacks on him for making demands for more land, by saying: 'I am bound to express the sentiments and aspirations of my people and these do not always coincide with those of the electorate of white South Africa'.

SPARKING OFF DEMANDS

The promise of the government to 'honour its pledge' by granting more land under the 1936 Land and Trust Act is sparking off demands which reject the assumption that Africans are entitled to only 13 per cent of their country's land area. In the Transkei, claims have been laid to Mount Currie, Maclear and Eliot districts and to farms in the Matatiele and Port St. John's areas. The latest Transkei demand is for all land between the Fish River and the Natal border.

There is more and more talk that Port St. Johns itself should be handed over to the Transkei administration — it should be remembered that the 'Homelands' have been so planned as to include not a single harbour. Similarly, Chief Buthelezi has claimed Richards Bay as a seaport for the Zulus and has on more than one occasion dismissed the possibility of Zulu independence before Zululand is a state within a definable boundary.

M.C. Botha (Minister of Bantu Administration and Development) expressed the white man's outrage at these demands and Vorster replied unequivocally that after the purchase of an additional 7¼ million morgen of land this 'would be the end of all plans for more land' for the 'Homelands' including the Transkei.

The promises of more executive and administrative functions to the 'Homelands' which the authorities are forced to make are encouraging demands for powers which are causing apprehension in the white camp. Buthelezi said recently with exasperation: 'I am only the Chief Executive Officer of a Territorial Authority with as much power as a telephone'. The provisions in the Homeland Act of 1971, which prohibit the creation of armed forces or para-military units in the 'Homelands', have been attacked vigorously by Chief Buthelezi, who is demanding arms for his people. 'The prohibitions', he said, 'raise the whole question of white mistrust of a Black man with a gun'.

Not to be outdone, Kaizer Matanzima launched a broadside against the government for its slow pace in implementing the promise to transfer the departments of police and defence to the Transkei authorities. In quick response, the South African President announced at the opening of a session of the Transkei Legislative Assembly, that the government is preparing immediate steps to transfer the control of some prison and police services to the Authority. But on the question of defence, Vorster made it clear a few days later that this department would never be transferred to the African territories.

The fiction that every African, wherever he may live (and the majority live and work in 'white' areas and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future), is a citizen of his ethnic 'Homeland', has forced even those who have been thrust upon the people as 'leaders' to take up some of the cudgels on their people's behalf and to talk occasionally about independence in the all-African rather than the tribal context. This explains why some of the Bantustan leaders have

ventured outside the political kraal allocated to them, and have voiced far-reaching demands relating to the bulk of their 'constituents' in 'white' areas, including such demands as the rate for the job, relaxation of influx control, and free and compulsory education.

This also explains why the speeches made before so-called 'constituents' in the urban complexes usually have a more advanced and militant ring, reflecting, as they must do if any response is to be evoked, a basic rejection of the white man's schemes. Speaking to over 9,000 people in Soweto Chief Buthelezi, to the ringing cheers of the audience, said that every Black man in South Africa had to consider himself Black and nothing else; that white South Africa 'has never really governed us with our consent . . .' and ended, according to reports to shouts of wild jubilation, with the words: 'For God's sake do not allow whites to divide you on ethnic grounds. You are all Black. If you allowed this you would be the biggest bunch of fools the Almighty ever created.'

Recently students of the Ngoye Tribal University greeted Chief Buthelezi's arrival to address them with clenched fists and with slogans which included 'Down with a white government in a Black land'.

HEIGHTENED MILITANCY

Controlled levels of political expression have a habit of overflowing the bounds set for them. Whatever may be the intention at the top, the people warm to each genuine confrontation between some of the less sychophantic Bantustan leaders and the government, because this expresses, even if only in a restricted way, their hatred and mistrust of white rule and it stimulates political expression beyond the narrow issues under discussion.

Amongst the youth, especially in the tribal universities, there is a great deal of talk about Black self-reliance and the rejection of white domination in economic, cultural and social spheres. Urban Bantu Council leaders talk more and more of Black Power and the need for the oppressed to assert themselves as Blacks.

In the Coloured community there is a resurgence of an impressive organised militancy which regards Black freedom as indivisible, and of late there have been signs within the Indian community of all-Black solidarity and the need to recreate people's organisations such as the

Natal Indian Congress and the Transvaal Indian Congress.

The Coloured riots and bus boycott in Port Elizabeth and the increasing number of militant actions in African schools and universities are further indications of heightened activity and receptiveness, an upsurge of militancy among the oppressed.

The increased activities of the liberation movement inside the country (particularly the stepping up of propaganda activities) have made an important impact. But it is also true that (as the *Rand Daily Mail* observed) the plain speaking at the top in some of the Bantustans seems to be 'loosening tongues further down the ranks of the non-white leadership' and the Black voice in our land is 'beginning to speak with a fresh insistence and tone of demand'.

How dangerous is all this for the government? Mr. David Currie, deputy leader of the Coloured Labour Party, said:

The very Coloured Representative Council which the government created has become apartheid's severest critic. It (the government) has created platforms for people like Buthelezi, Matanzima and the Labour Party. Now comes the question: Who has gained most from the granting of political platforms under separate development – the government or its opponents? I cannot give you a simple answer.

The answer, although not simple, is to be found in the fact that despite the risks involved, the government is working with a new vigour, urgency and seriousness of purpose to create administrative entities with the usual trappings of the neo-colonial variety of self-rule.

Some of the publicly expressed misgivings in the white camp about the pace of Bantustan developments voice the fear that once the process is unleashed it cannot altogether be effectively controlled. On the other hand the government's internal and external needs compel it to give so-called independence a more credible content.

WHAT THE GOVERNMENT HOPES TO ACHIEVE

The contradictions which are implicit in any government attempt to hide the real mechanism of white rule should not be underestimated. But it would be equally foolhardy to underestimate the fact that the government is prepared to take a certain number of calculated risks because it hopes that, on balance, the outcome will help rather than obstruct white domination.

In what way will it help them? It is hoped by means of the Bantustans to reverse the international and African isolation of South Africa and to lay the basis for Vorster's 'outward-looking policies' which are designed to undermine the independent African states and to prepare the ground for imperialist incursions into the rest of the continent. For this purpose the projection of the Bantustans as real enclaves of African independence has become a major government priority.

Already there have been dangerous signs. Some of the less principled African leaders are manoeuvring to open avenues of contact with the white South, either directly (e.g. Banda) or by their encouragement of the idea of a dialogue, if not with Vorster, at least with the Bantustan chief executives who have in their turn spoken up in favour of dialogue and against the political, economic and social isolation of South Africa.

An appeal by Chief Buthelezi to the U.S. Congress during his visit there may well have been instrumental in the narrow defeat of the measure to end South Africa's 60,000 ton sugar quota. Senator Kennedy, prime mover in this direction, announced that he had retreated from his earlier firm stand of opposing American trade with South Africa. Chief Buthelezi also met Charles Diggs, Black U.S. Congressman touring South Africa, and announced: 'I told him personally I was against boycotts and in favour of dialogue in dealing with the South African government.'

Thus the risks taken by the government in giving more substance to the notion of ethnic self-rule must be seen against the essentially negative role which the Bantustan leaders are playing on the question of South Africa's place in the outside world and especially in Africa.

DIVIDE AND RULE

Internally the spread of ethnic politics has dangerous implications for the liberation movement. The very creation of the African National Congress in 1912 was an expression of the trend against tribalism. Without riding roughshod over the pride felt in group language and culture and other healthy local features based on history and tradition, the African National Congress has played a major role in creating a nation-wide African consciousness and a unity in the struggle against white oppression. Just as the national liberation movement saw in

African unity the key to its strength, so the rulers of South Africa came to realise that their survival was linked with a reversal of this trend. The time honoured device of divide-and-rule was being undermined by history and by political achievement.

Ethnic development within the framework of white domination may create the illusion of a recognition of some of the undoubted cultural rights of the different groups, but its main purpose is to break up the unity of the African people and to perpetuate their inferior status.

It would be naive to believe that the liberation movement has for all time won the battle for the unity of the Africans. The government's new-found vigour on the Bantustan front is designed to fragment the nation once again. In the process the regime is prepared to risk challenges of a limited character in order to pre-empt the real revolutionary confrontation which it would face from a united people.

Of course, the flowering of the varied cultures of the groups which make up the African people is supported by the liberation movement. But this flowering will only really become possible in a free, independent and united South Africa.

REFORMISM OR REVOLUTION

The emphasis on the Bantustans is used too to undermine support for the perspective of revolutionary armed struggle and to isolate the liberation movement from its base of support amongst the people.

Chief Mangope, head of the Tswana Territorial Authority, has appealed to his people to donate 10 cents each to a special fund to combat 'terrorists'. Chief P.R. Mpephu, Chief Councillor of the Venda Territorial Authority, said during Vorster's recent tour that his people appreciated what the government was doing and would do for them in the future. He announced (to murmurs of shock from the audience) that his people were going to help the government fight terrorists whom he described as 'trouble makers'. Ndamse of the Transkei declared that communists 'have no chance in hell of getting a foothold in our hearts'. Matanzima said recently: 'We call on the government to enlist Black men against their common enemy who threatens to use force against this country.'

Even Buthelezi, for all his militant speeches, has felt obliged on more than one occasion to publicly reject force as a solution. 'I don't think violence is the answer to South Africa's problems,' he said, 'and I would like to attend an OAU summit to argue with them on the issue of violence.' And on another occasion he said: 'Inclinations which say 'fight' must be resisted in word and deed. This is . . . simply being realistic . . . The role I am now playing is that of bringing about a change *within the framework of present government policy*.' This sort of approach gives papers like *The World* an opportunity of proclaiming editorially that the Black youth should not 'indulge in fantasies of violent revolution as men like Chief Buthelezi have pointed out'.

Whatever their motives, and however grudging their support for the government may be, the Bantustan leaders are in effect serving to sidetrack the aspirations and revolutionary ardour of the masses. Hopes that radical change can be achieved through partition are raised, and contrasted with the allegedly 'unrealistic' policy of the African National Congress and the liberation movement. This type of illusion must be challenged, for it could lay the basis for a new-style reformism more dangerous than that which Congress successfully overcame in the forties and fifties.

A DEPENDENT CLASS

The move to make their fraudulent 'self-government' more credible holds other compensations for the white state. In each 'Homeland' a bureaucracy of politicians, office-holders, administrators, officials of various sorts, etc. is being created which gives a small sector of the traditional rulers and a group from among the intelligentsia a special place in separation politics at the administrative level, and helps the white state to govern more easily through Black officials.

The iniquitous Proclamation 400 is being carried out with a certain zeal by the Transkei administration, and recently there have been fresh detentions. George Matanzima, the Transkei Minister of Justice, refused to answer questions in the Transkei Legislative Assembly about these detentions. A total of 23 people are reported to have been served with removal orders by different Transkei chiefs in terms of Proclamation 400. Transkeian Black magistrates are administering the Pass Laws and some of the proceedings are conducted with an inhumanity and arrogance reminiscent of the Fordsburg pass courts.

The government is also encouraging the growth of the business and middle classes in the 'Homelands' who, by the very nature of things, will be wholly dependent for their economic survival and expansion on the state or the white bourgeoisie.

True, the status and physical comfort which go with government office, and the advantages of private economic enrichment by the few, do not always guarantee permanent conformity. Pressure from their people and the individual frustrations which will emerge when their power and advancement are inevitably barred beyond a certain point, could ultimately encourage some in these privileged upper echelons to use their status to challenge government policy. And indeed a few have already done so. But the creation of administrative and business classes with a vested interest in working within the system and dependent upon it for its privileged status and economic advancement can, on balance, be of advantage to the government.

In some of the projected Bantustans (e.g. Venda and Lebowa) notice has already been given by the government-appointed traditional rulers that no political opposition (even Transkei style) would be allowed to exist because, so they claim, the one party state is rooted in their traditional political systems. In this way the illegalisation of the liberation movement and the prevention of political activities are secured on the pretext of an appeal to alleged African 'tradition'.

UNDERMINING THE UNITY OF THE WORKING CLASS

It is hoped to create ethnic-style divisions amongst the African working people, to move the fulcrum of political activity away from the towns and into the separate 'Homelands', and thus to emasculate the united working class as a political force in the areas most vital to the enemy — its industrial complexes.

The centre of gravity of resistance to white domination in the modern period has understandably been in the urban complexes. The Black proletariat has a political consciousness and a history of militant struggle which places it in the vanguard of our democratic revolution. It is mainly in the urban areas where objective conditions have helped to break down tribal barriers and where a new national African consciousness was formed which not only cut across tribal divisions but also created strong links with the other oppressed Black minorities

— the Coloured and Indian people. The upsurge in the fifties which embraced the country areas had its inspiration in the political ferment which was taking place in the main urban centres.

Despite over twenty years of so-called 'Bantu Homeland' development, the majority of the African people — over 8 million — live and work in the 'white' areas. The heightened tempo of repatriation to the 'Homelands' in the last few years is making little significant impact on the population distribution as between Blacks and whites in the towns. Today there are still more Africans in the urban areas than whites. This position is likely to remain materially unchanged for a long time to come.

The stepping up of the Bantustan programme with the trappings of ultimate state sovereignty gives institutional backing to the white regime's doctrine that urban Africans are no more than temporary sojourners in the towns and that they owe ultimate allegiance to their respective ethnic 'Homelands'.

There are already signs that publicly, at any rate, officially-sanctioned Black politics have become mainly Bantustan politics, and the public debate is monopolised by the Bantustan leaders and the government. It is hoped to stifle the voice of the working class, and although the process cannot so neatly be contained by the government, the present ferment of activity and its limited confrontations are centred in and revolve round the problems of the dispersed rural 'Homelands'.

TOWARDS REAL NATIONAL LIBERATION!

These then are some of the dangers and pitfalls for the revolutionary forces. In the absence of a strongly organised liberation movement the masses can be misled to support reformism rather than revolution; to form tribal allegiances rather than national ones, and to tolerate unprincipled compromises with the white regime. On the other hand, properly utilised, the situation which is developing can create fresh possibilities of struggle and confrontation with the government, and new prospects of combining legal with illegal activity.

It must be recognised that those who stand at the head of the Bantustans are not all made of the same mould and are subject to contradictory pressures. On the one hand they are helping to make the

system work and the logic of their position tempts them to accept compromises and to engage in the sort of negative diplomacy which harms the people's cause. On the other hand their motivation is complex and varied. Some may be prepared to play the white man's game solely in order to gain and retain office and the privileges which go with it. But there are others who are guided by their limited understanding of South African 'reality', and a political pessimism which makes them doubt real prospects of nation-wide revolutionary change. This leads them to proceed on the basis that 'a half a loaf is better than none'. But most of them are, to a greater or lesser degree, sensitive to the mood and pressures of the people whose immediate interests they believe to be advancing.

It is well known that the liberation movement uncompromisingly rejects the government's territorial 'solution' as completely unacceptable and asserts the historic right of the African people to the whole of South Africa.

Those selected by the government to run the 'Homelands' are by no means the chosen representatives of the Africans. The liberation alliance headed by the African National Congress is the true voice of the oppressed and its leaders whether underground, in gaols or in political exile, are their authentic spokesmen. Dialogue which does not incorporate this principle is a device to turn back the clock of history and to confuse the world outside.

It is understandable that the people should respond favourably to those actions by a few of the Bantustan leaders which are calculated to create even limited confrontations with the white regime and which help to lay bare the ultimate fraud behind the Bantustan plan. But they reject and will continue to reject the negative 'diplomacy' of the Bantustan leaders and actions which spread reformism, accept tribal isolation and undermine the growing hostility of the world towards Vorster's policy of domination by separation.

At the moment a fair number of the issues facing the people in the Bantustans are being fought out mainly at the top — the government's chosen ground — in the form of a mere verbal confrontation between the government and a few of the more outspoken Bantustan leaders. This will be transformed into a more meaningful confrontation only when the people, by their actions, come into the picture.

It is not the purpose of this article to elaborate in detail the tactics of revolutionaries in South Africa in relation to Bantu 'authorities' and other apartheid institutions. Firmness of revolutionary principle must be combined with Leninist flexibility of tactics, and a detailed study of complex factors which vary from one area to another and within each community among the oppressed African, Coloured and Indian people. No doubt revolutionaries cannot adopt an unvarying attitude of abstentionism which might in some cases serve to isolate themselves and leave the field to collaborators. It is necessary to strengthen patriotic elements and tendencies, expose stooges, encourage progressive demands for land and rights, even on a local scale, and fight against tribalist and separatist manifestations. In the course of these aims, some members and supporters of the revolutionary movement may even find it expedient to make use of apartheid institutions to be able better to destroy them. Such problems must be, and no doubt are, the subject of constant review and consideration by all sections of the liberation movement.

But we must be on our guard against the numerous traps which the search for tactical advantages can create. In present-day South Africa the only path to freedom lies through preparing the ground for mass revolutionary transformation including armed struggle. This is a protracted process and it is all too easy to lapse into reformist tendencies at a time when a break-through may not appear to be imminent. Consistent with its general policy the liberation movement will reject tendencies which exaggerate the extent to which the government can be 'embarrassed' by its own brain-child and which underestimate the harm which can be done to the cause of struggle by ill-judged, tactical embraces of institutions (and their leaders) set up directly in defence of white supremacy.