

“BANTU INDEPENDENCE” the phoney clash

By Z. Nkosi

The run up to the April all-white General Election provided the occasion for further manoeuvres on the Bantustan question by white politicians and those appointed by them to run the so-called homelands. In the Transkei Legislative Assembly on March 25, 1974, the Chief Minister Kaiser Matanzima introduced a motion asking the South African Government to grant the territory independence within five years. A few days later, Prime Minister Vorster replied as though he had been waiting for the signal.

“We said time and time again over the years”, he told an election meeting at Heidelberg, “that the homelands would have independence if they wanted it. Our opponents said we were bluffing, that we were not honest, that we did not mean it”.

Vorster claimed he had always maintained he was ready to negotiate whenever requested to do so by a homeland authority.

“The Transkei have now said that they want to negotiate. I will negotiate with them and it is logical to accept that the Transkei

will become independent within the next five years. This is the logical outcome of the policy of the Nationalist Party”.

What Vorster did not tell his audience was that Matanzima's motion had asked for independence on certain conditions — that all the land promised under the 1936 Land Act be granted to the territory within five years; and that such a grant should not prejudice the right of the Transkei to other 'white' districts it had claimed, including Maclear, Elliot and Mount Currie in East Griqualand.

Matanzima also asked that a recess committee should be appointed, consisting of 26 members of his Legislative Assembly, with himself as chairman, to draft constitutional proposals to be tabled before the House of Assembly in Cape Town declaring the Transkei an independent state; to consider the financial implications of independence; to establish the boundaries of an independent Transkei; to consider the implications of independence on chieftainship, and the possibility of amalgamation with the Ciskei.

On the face of it, the conditions laid down by Matanzima would seem to make the grant of independence by the South African Government impossible. Time and again, Vorster and other Cabinet Ministers have made it plain that once the 1936 land promises have been carried out, not a further acre of land will be added to any of the homelands. The issue was raised directly with Vorster at the so-called “summit meeting” between him and the homeland leaders in the first week of March, 1974. Every single delegate stressed that they could not exercise independence unless they got more land. Vorster replied that he was bound by the 1936 Act. He is, of course, free to change the Act any time he wants to. But he was merely telling the delegates that he did not want to and would not — because of course he has his own party to answer to; and White landowners are already fiercely hostile to the Government's land consolidation proposals to fulfil the 1936 Act.

Not surprisingly, the official statement on the summit meeting stressed that, although Vorster had repeated the Government view that the homeland leaders were free to request independence at any time, “no such request was raised”. The plain fact of the matter is that the Government is making an offer which it knows the homeland leaders cannot accept; while for their part, the homeland leaders continue to demand 'independence' knowing that their conditions cannot be fulfilled. For it is not only Matanzima who demands more land.

For example, on March 24, 1974, KwaZulu's Chief Minister Gatsha Buthelezi emphasised "that even if the Republic gave KwaZulu all the land promised under the 1936 Land and Trust Act, the land would not be adequate to make KwaZulu a country which could stand on its own". (*Star* March 25, 1974.) He also demanded full control by KwaZulu of its coastline and territorial waters.

And again, on March 27, 1974, Chief Lucas Mangope of Bophutha-Tswana, told his Legislative Assembly that "the minimum conditions for independence included a 'more equitable' distribution of land and a greater share of South Africa's wealth". (*Rand Daily Mail* March 28, 1974.)

Nor is it only Vorster who has turned down requests for more land. In several election speeches, the Minister of Bantu Administration, Mr. M.C. Botha, has assured his white audiences that the Government has "no intention of handing more land to the blacks than laid down in the 1936 Land Act". (*Rand Daily Mail* March 1 and 29, April 4, 1974).

The Deputy Minister of Bantu Administration, Mr. A.J. Raubenheimer, has said: "We can't take the expanding African population into consideration. If we did we would have to continue handing over land until there was not enough left for the whites". (*Sunday Times*, February 3, 1974.)

Dr. C. Mulder, Minister of the Interior and tipped as Vorster's successor, has told an election meeting that even consolidation of the homelands is physically impossible, adding that it is not really necessary. "As for the homeland leaders' present demands for more land, we will never go beyond the terms of the 1936 Act", he said.

DEADLINE TO WHAT?

Nevertheless, that five-year deadline to 'independence' set by both Vorster and Matanzima introduces a new element into the situation. It would be as well for democrats both inside and outside South Africa to take another hard look at the possibility that the Bantustans may well have some sort of 'independence' foisted on them whether they or we like it or not. It may become necessary both for the credibility of Vorster and the Bantustan leaders themselves, with their own followers.

It may become necessary if South Africa is to have any hope of staving off international action against her.

The Transkei is likely to be the first victim of the 'independence' experiment. It is the oldest Bantustan, having received so-called 'self-government' in 1963. Though not a single tract of land, it is not as badly fragmented as, for example, KwaZulu. It at least has a 'capital' city, Umtata, with some buildings in it, unlike most other Bantustans which have nothing which can be shown to curious visitors as a symbol of statehood. Were Vorster to confer 'independence' on the Transkei in five years time, however farcical, he would bring off a coup which would have profound national and international repercussions. In the words of the Foreign minister Dr. H. Muller in a speech last March: "the homelands could play a vital role in turning back the tide of hostile world opinion." (*Rand Daily Mail*, March 5, 1974.)

Meaningful independence for the Transkei is, of course, out of the question. For one thing, the Transkei itself couldn't afford it. At the session of the Legislative Assembly at which he introduced his independence motion, Matanzima also introduced a Budget providing for the expenditure of R70 million — a 25 per cent increase over the previous year. Of this R70 million, less than R10 million is raised from domestic sources; the rest comes from the South African Government.

And the Minister of Bantu Administration, Mr. M.C. Botha, made it clear at a Nationalist Party meeting in Maritzburg on April 4, 1974, that the Government would withdraw its subsidy to any 'independent' Bantustan that adopted policies unacceptable to the South African Government. (*Star*, April 5, 1974.)

Furthermore, the Minister said before any Bantustan Government was granted 'independence', it would have to sign a treaty giving the South African Government powers to steer developments along lines it approved of. As for United Nations membership, he said: "If they want to join the United Nations they are at liberty to do so. But if they decide not to, and want us to represent them, we will do so." Once again, the implication is clear that, because no Bantustan could afford to maintain a UN representative in the face of South African displeasure, the Vorster Government expects the 'independent' Bantustans voluntarily to ask it to represent them at the UN.

And the prospects of economic development? Not surprisingly, M.C. Botha said the Bantustans and South Africa would always be economi-

cally 'interdependent'. In a publication earlier this year, South Africa's Industrial Development Corporation boasted that from 1960 to June 1973 it had authorised R163 million for industrial establishment and development in 'decentralised areas' (i.e., border areas as well as homelands), creating 60,000 jobs of which 48,000 were filled by residents of African homelands. In the homelands themselves, Mr. M.C. Botha told Mrs. Suzman in the House of Assembly last February, R4,582,000 was invested in 1973 by private entrepreneurs on an agency basis. Most of this went to the Transkei (R2.2 million), BophuthaTswana (R1.2 million), and KwaZulu (R709,000). In the process, 3,828 jobs were created, mostly in the Transkei (875), BophuthaTswana (1,776) and KwaZulu (592).

"Decentralisation can't even keep up with homelands job creation requirements", the *Financial Mail* commented on January 18, 1974. "The net effect of the first decade (1960-1970) of conscious decentralisation was to increase the proportion of manufacturing employment in border areas and homelands by a mere 1% (from 11.8% to 12.8%).

"Calculations based on the 1970 census are that 59,500 African males enter homeland labour markets each year. It's also been calculated that industries employing 16,000 Africans could decentralise each year, which would mean 34,500 jobs needed each year in other spheres."

The only other spheres available are South Africa's mines, farms and industries, and both the Bantustan leaders and the South African Government know this very well. A paper presented to the Institute of Race Relations' annual conference last January by Natal University Research Fellow Gavin Maasdorp pointed out that the true measure of development is the scale of poverty, unemployment and income inequality – not the number of foreign-owned factories. Poverty is widespread, he emphasised, more particularly in rural areas – in the Transkei and Ciskei 88% of household incomes are below the poverty datum line. Malnutrition and infant mortality are rife.

The practical effect of promoting the Bantustans to independence, said Maasdorp, would be "to transform almost half the African population into residents of less developed countries, thereby shattering any hopes they might have had of a more equitable share in the economy they have helped to develop".

There are many in the Transkei, of course, who see through this independence double-talk. Mr. Joseph Kobo, general secretary of the oppo-

sition Democratic Party of the Transkei, stated that the Transkei independence plan proposed by Matanzima could result in economic disaster for the territory.

Mr. Kobo said independence, at a time when the Transkei's unemployment figure was estimated to reach half-a-million, could be regarded as the "second national suicide of the Xhosa people in South Africa's history". He claimed this was the predominant view of Transkeians to whom he had spoken on a tour of South Africa's urban areas. Independence for the Transkei, he said, could only come about when the territory had reached some measure of viability.

"After seven years the Transkei is still not near that objective and it will not be near it even in 10 years' time. Of what use will independence be when the Transkei is still completely dependent on grants from the Republic? The Transkei cannot afford to rely on guarantees given by white South Africa, because promises have been made in the past and nearly all of them have been broken." (*Star*, April 9, 1974.)

Perhaps he had in mind those policies and promises Matanzima set out in his election manifesto in August, 1973, when preparing for the Transkei's third election.

"I submit that the policy of separate development, now the basis for future development of all homelands, has demonstrated that if carried out to its logical conclusion it will demonstrate to the world that black and white in South Africa can live together peacefully."

To achieve this goal, he said, certain principles would have to be accepted by all races: that South Africa belonged to black and white equally and all its wealth should be shared without discrimination; that homelands should be developed to full independence; and that the allocation to each homeland of territory proportionate to its population is basic to such independence.

Clearly, in the light of his own independence motion in the Transkei Assembly as well as the declarations of the Vorster Government, these principles have already been consigned to the scrap heap.

But it is not only as economic units that the Bantustans are not independently viable since they constitute an inseparable part of the South African economy. It is also as political entities that they are not viable. Let us record a few hard facts.

The whole Bantustan concept was imposed by the whites on the blacks, who were never consulted in any meaningful way.

Not a single Bantustan government has come into being as the result of a free and fair election, and not a single Bantustan leader came into power by popular vote.

All the Bantustan assemblies have a majority of Government-appointed and Government-paid chiefs to ensure that Government policy is adhered to. In the case of the Transkei, at the last election only 42 per cent of the electorate bothered to go to the polls. Matanzima was elected Chief Minister by his Assembly by 78 votes to 21, with support from 53 of the 65 nominated members, but from only 25 of the 45 elected members.

In the case of nearly half of the Bantustans, including KwaZulu, so far no election of any kind has taken place. Chief Gatsha Buthelezi may be a very popular man, given maximum publicity by the South African press as though he were the natural spokesman of South Africa's black people; but to date not a single vote has been cast for him and he has no claim to a popular mandate of any kind.

Most of the Bantustans are police states, in which the South African security police hold sway. The Transkei has been under emergency rule ever since the Pondo revolt of 1960, and Matanzima has regularly asked for the emergency laws to remain in force, admitting that without them he would be unable to remain in office. At the request of Buthelezi emergency law was introduced in the Msinga area of KwaZulu. Buthelezi stated that the white police were acting as his government's agents to resolve an "intolerable situation", the nature of which was never made clear.

The emergency laws which apply to the Bantustans include powers to arrest and detain without trial, to order the banishment of recalcitrants and the destruction of their homes, to prohibit meetings — in other words, to stifle and smash any opposition. At its meeting in November 1973, the Transkei Assembly passed a motion asking the South African Government, as a matter of urgency, for powers to maintain law and order and to combat 'subversion' without consulting the central government.

RULE WITHOUT POWER

The Bantustan Governments are a mere facade behind which the South African Government's seconded white officials continue to hold

the reins of power. Even in the Transkei, each of the seven departments of state falling under the authority of the Transkei Assembly is still ruled by a white secretary, though each department also has a black minister who makes the speeches on the floor of the Assembly. In the Bantustans, no black is able to exercise any authority over any white.

A Lebowa Government commission of inquiry into the employment and grading of Lebowa's civil servants and into the human relations between black and white officials, tabled its report in the Lebowa Legislative Assembly on April 17, 1974. This was another revelation of the fact that this so-called 'self-government' in the Bantustans is merely a facade for continued white rule.

The report stated that the commission's original terms of reference had to be abandoned after the Minister of Bantu Administration, Mr. M.C. Botha, told the Lebowa Government that it was not competent to investigate the employment and grading of *white* staff, and forbade *white* officials to co-operate with the commission.

One reason for the investigation was that since Lebowa was given 'self-government' towards the end of 1971, no fewer than 11 African graduates and 50 matriculants had resigned from the Lebowa civil service.

The commission reported on working conditions in five of the six Lebowa Government departments — the inquiry into the Education Department had not at that stage begun.

It questioned 532 African civil servants and found that —

- 19 had been assaulted by white officials seconded to Lebowa from Pretoria;
- 124 had had 'serious quarrels' with white seconded officials;
- 231 of 759 resignations in all grades were because of 'ill-treatment' by whites;
- More than one third said relations with white seconded officials were bad;
- Three quarters said that the whites were not preparing blacks to take over white jobs;
- Only one quarter had received any form of training while in the service. ('Star', April 17, 1974.)

More than half of the African population of South Africa live and work in the white areas, and even on suspect government figures, at least one third may be taken as permanently resident there. The claim of the Bantustan leaders to represent *all* Africans belonging to their tribal

group, even those permanently resident outside the Bantustan, has no basis in reality, and is leading to new division in the ranks of the African people.

In the Transkei elections, the bulk of the abstentions came from the voters in the white areas. In addition, such African leaders as are allowed to speak in the towns repeatedly reject the authority of the Bantustan leaders. Typical is a speech by Mr. Michael Ranthe, a social worker, who in an address to a meeting of Verligte Action in Pretoria last March, stressed that urban Africans "dream of a united African nation", reject the ethnic division on which the Bantustans are based, and can never accept homeland chiefs as their real leaders. (*'Star'*, March 29, 1974.)

Those Bantustan leaders whose voices are heard in South Africa today are the licensed practitioners of apartheid, however much they may protest their opposition to it in theory. Buthelezi is allowed to criticise apartheid only in return for condemning 'terrorism', the 'boycott South Africa' decisions of the United Nations and the O.A.U.; and for calling repeatedly for foreign trade with and investment in South Africa.

Dismissing white voters' fears that independent Bantustans will constitute a security risk, Vorster told an election meeting in April that there was not one homeland leader who was not opposed to communism and terrorism. "They know that not only our throats will be cut, but also the throats of their chiefs and headmen", he said. (*'Rand Daily Mail'* and *'Star'*, April 5, 1974.)

Addressing the Transkei Assembly a few days earlier, Kaiser Matanzima expressed his government's "unshakeably strong attitude" against communism and terrorism. The terrorists, he said, "call themselves freedom fighters. But who do they want to free and if anybody is to be freed why then by violence and revolutionary means?"

This from a man whose own position is based on both the violence of the white South African Government and the violence of his own black government!

Yet, the statements of Vorster and the Bantustan leaders do help to make their strategy clear. The United Party has often criticised apartheid because it prevents the development of a black middle class which would have a vested interest in maintaining the South African way of life, and would support the white man boss against any threat from a revolutionary black proletariat. But Vorster is busy creating such a

class in the Bantustans — not a social class in the marxist sense, but a gaggle of government ministers and officials, of petty shopkeepers, garage owners and the like who benefit from 'separate development'. In advertisements in the foreign press, the Government says: "The road to independence is not reserved for politicians. The Bantu Investment and other corporations (all white — Ed.) are promoting black capitalism in these homelands with direct financial assistance", and claims that the Bantu Investment Corporation has in the past 10 years assisted more than 1,000 'Bantu concerns' with direct loans, and approximately 2,000 through commercial credits. (One such advertisement headed "Habakuk Shikwane is a Black Capitalist" was published in the London *'Evening News'* on February 19, 1974.)

It is to these people that Vorster looks to defend the Bantustan set-up and the white government behind it against the freedom fighters, and against the masses who look to them and their banned organisations, the ANC and the Communist Party, to lead them to real freedom.

Matanzima is not alone in condemning terrorism. In April Chief Filemon Elifas, the Chief Minister of Owambo — where SWAPO supporters, men and women alike, are publicly stripped and flogged into unconsciousness by tribal police acting on his orders — announced that his government had "voluntarily donated R30,000 to combat communism and terrorism". (*'Rand Daily Mail'* April 4, 1974.) The Coloured Council of South West Africa, another of Vorster's stooge organisations, passed a unanimous resolution on the same day attacking terrorism and condemning any form of aid to terrorists in Southern Africa. (*'Rand Daily Mail'* April 5, 1974.)

Vorster outlined his grand strategy in a speech in the House of Assembly in Cape Town on February 4, 1974:

"It is clear that South Africa is so situated geographically that it is in the interest of all here that a power bloc should be created. It will have to be a bloc of independent states which will not be subservient to one another politically or constitutionally. I foresee — and here Chief Lucas Mangope, head of the Tswana homeland, also thinks as I do — an economic power bloc, a power bloc against communism".

The Prime Minister said there would always be mutual economic independence between the states of Southern Africa; and Rhodesia, Botswana and other neighbouring territories, as well as the Bantu homelands in the Republic, would have a role to play.

It is in pursuance of this white supremacist 'power bloc' that the Transkei is being pushed towards some form of 'independence' in five years time, with the other Bantustans following suit as soon as some sort of workable apparatus can be fashioned for them.

Against that plot against the interests of the people of South Africa — black and white — the Communist Party has counterposed the real alternative — not phoney 'independence' of puppet Bantustans, but real liberation of the country by struggle against apartheid. In the words of a recent Central Committee statement:

"Unity of the oppressed Black people is a fundamental pre-condition for liberation. There can be no compromise with a policy which serves to turn the clock back and divides the people once again along ethnic lines. Change in our country depends upon the mobilisation and action of our oppressed people with the Black working class as its most advanced instrument; it cannot be brought about by those who hold office at the pleasure of the white state. Their limited horizons lead them to confuse their own impotence with that of the people, and to spread despair, timidity and unprincipled compromise . . .

On the whole, especially in the context of the growing mood of militancy and resistance, the record of the Bantustans shows that to a greater or lesser degree each one of them is playing a harmful and diversionary role. They will continue to do so unless the people led by their movements take a hand — as they did in Namibia, where the Ovambos almost unanimously and contemptuously rejected the Bantustan proposals in the recent elections when only 1.6% of the total electorate voted . . .

We must reject totally the ideology which sees the Bantustans as enclaves of independence from which further advances can be made."