

BANTUSTANS  
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# Bantustans — a cynical smokescreen

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*From an address by Mr Pogrund, Assistant Editor of the Rand Daily Mail, to the Pretoria Branch of the Black Sash early this year.*

**I**N October this year South Africa will change fundamentally, perhaps irreversibly, when the Transkei becomes independent. This will bring about far reaching changes and consequences. Does South Africa realise it? It is of basic concern to all of us to explore the subject — to spark meaningful debate.

In 1948 the National Party came into power on the crude Apartheid-Baasskap platform, which the Afrikaner intellectual felt to be inadequate. There was a strong feeling among many Afrikaners that a moral basis was essential. This was developed by the South African Bureau for Racial Affairs under the then leader, Nic Olivier.

In the late 50s Dr Verwoerd, then Minister of Bantu Affairs, clashed with SABRA but took over its policy of separate development which culminated in the Promotion of Self Government Act in 1958.

The '60s saw a period of consolidation, with the accent on tribalism. The policy of "divide and rule" was coming into its own. School children attended schools of their ethnic groups and all tribal functions assumed an importance they had lacked before.

About this time, too, the idea was evolved that Africans were temporary sojourners in the "White" cities, and actually "belonged" to their respective homelands. Pressure was applied to the Government to get Africans to accept tribal authorities.

Dissident chieftains were quietly removed from office. Buthelezi explained cogently that he had no authority to tell his people what to do — they instructed him in the path he should take. Matanzima, on the other hand, was a willing party all along to the structure of tribal authorities, regional authorities, territorial authorities and legislative assemblies.

It is intended that White South Africa retain 86 per cent of the land, while the nine Bantustans control the remaining 14 per cent. Each Bantustan is at liberty to claim total independence if it wants it.

This means, to the Nationalist way of thinking, that overnight their racial problems will

be solved and the world will get off South Africa's back.

"Foreign" workers from the Bantustans will come to South Africa by courtesy of the South African Government. The bitterly resented pass will become a passport (carried as it is by the migrant workers in Europe, e.g. the Turks in Germany).

There will be no question of franchise for these people as they are "foreigners", nor will they be eligible for inclusion in "White South Africa's" sports teams. In short, what the Whites decide to do in White South Africa will be their own business.

The picture then emerges of a White South Africa surrounded by mini-states which are hopefully friendly.

An effective partition or Balkanisation will have taken place, which has its precedent numerous times in history — notably in the cases of Pakistan and Ireland.

But the division is grossly inequable — 14 per cent of the land for 75 per cent of its population is plainly unfair. The Whites fall heir to all the established industrial areas and all the ports with the exception of Port St Johns.

The argument that the Whites merit all this because the country advanced because of White skills and White money is erroneous, as it has always been firmly bolstered by Black skills as well.

The patchwork quilt effect of the respective homelands makes a mockery of the very term. The Transkei is composed of three pieces of land, KwaZulu will have 10 separate chunks of land (at present it has 48 plus more than 100 "Black spots"), while others, too, are much dispersed. The intricacies of establishing rail links, telephone lines, water supplies and police forces are legion.

Even a limited consolidation of the homelands involves a movement of people on a staggering scale. The cost of the moves and the scale of suffering are inestimable.

The present distribution of population is against the policy. Forty-nine per cent of the African population is permanently resident in

the White urban areas and farming areas. The homelands simply do not have the resources to accommodate all these people.

The abysmally low quality of life in urban townships with poor, overcrowded schools and houses and the multiple ills of migrant labour are brushed aside by the Government with the platitude that since every African is a citizen of a homeland where he can own his own home, the above difficulties are irrelevant.

The accent on ethnic grouping is largely artificial and, had it not been actively fostered by the Government, it would probably have died out of its own accord. Mr Justice Snyman, in the report on his one-man investigation into trouble and unrest at Turfloop University, found that the majority of students rejected ethnic grouping.

The comparison drawn between the Turks in Germany and the Blacks in White South Africa is misleading as the Turks can do what they like in Germany within the confines of the law. After a five year sojourn they may even become citizens. The leaders of our Blacks may use the international hotels but no rights accrue to other Blacks, especially that of citizenship.

None of the Bantustans can exist economically without South Africa. The application of the homeland policy has obscured the pressing need of South Africa to decentralise — in a country where three quarters of the population is heavily dependent on the Vaal River. Because decentralisation has political overtones it obscures the valid economic need for it to take place.

The enormous sums of money spent on controlling migrant labour, administering the pass laws, policemen's, magistrates' and warders' salaries and the costs of prosecutions could be far better spent on developing the Bantustans.

In short the entire Bantustan policy is an elaborate device for racial discrimination. It is a vast, cynical, smokescreen to hand South Africa's troubles over to the Bantustans. They will have the responsibilities of the ethnic universities, hotbeds of unrest, the labour problems and the worry about massive unemployment, and the resentment of their own people eyeing White South Africa where the grass is certainly greener.

The only point that can be advanced in favour of the Bantustan policy is that some change has been injected into the South African racial scene, which was in a state of logjam and stalemate.

The launching of this elaborate policy coincided with the banning of African political organisations. African leaders, assuredly, can speak out from the homelands thereby further entrenching themselves in the system to which they give an ironic validity.

With the Transkei to be declared independent in October, and BophutaTswana to follow shortly

afterwards, ushering in a period when White South Africa will be surrounded by a series of mini states, what will the effects be for the future?

The emergent states have pledged themselves to the doctrine of non-racialism which will be a salutary lesson to White South Africa. If the Bantustans were to provide sanctuary for terrorists and guerrillas against South Africa, and Pretoria were to move in, there would be international repercussions. The Coloureds and Indians will remain in a state of suspended limbo — with no valid role at all to play in the entire situation.

That the Bantustan policy will be pushed through to its logical conclusion is necessary in the psychological climate existent after the recent events in Mozambique, Rhodesia and especially Angola.

To buy time, more restrictive legislation is unhappily on the cards. The Parliamentary Committee on Internal Security, and the amending of the Suppression of Communism Act will give the Government much wider scope of action. The stress on patriotism will provide the emotional validity.

Chief Kaiser Matanzima contends that a better deal for the Blacks does not necessarily threaten the Whites; it is necessary to create areas where Blacks can exercise political rights; the homeland policy offers the hope of economic advancement of these areas which will halt the flow of young Blacks into the cities — with their attendant ills; and the policy will restore the personal dignity of Black and Brown South Africans to an extent that the Whites will find them acceptable.

Perhaps, in favour of the homeland policy, some sort of viable federation might develop. In any event, we are about to enter on a hazardous period of our history. Who, for instance, will be prepared to stick their necks out sufficiently to recognise the Transkei? Zaire and Zambia, in desperate financial straits, might have South African diplomatic pressure brought to bear on them to recognise the independent bantustans.

Things will undoubtedly change, but only under the ceiling of separate development. Nothing will penetrate that confining influence. These changes are about to usher in the end of South Africa as we know it, attended by uncertainty regarding the political future of the land.

**Collection Number: AK2117**

**DELMAS TREASON TRIAL 1985 - 1989**

***PUBLISHER:***

*Publisher:* **Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand**

*Location:* **Johannesburg**

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