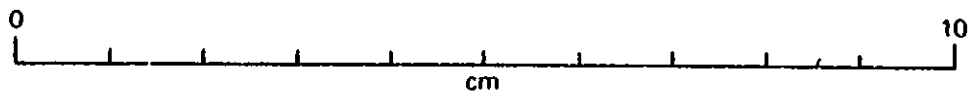
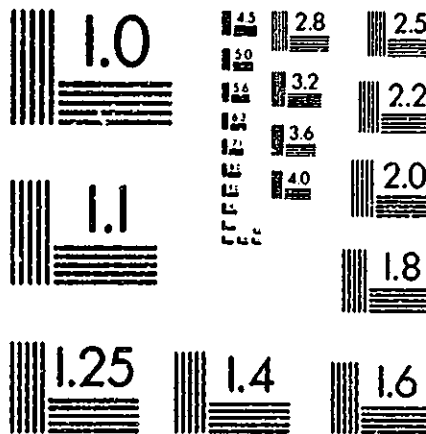


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Contents

by

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## Table of Contents

page/s

**Abstract**.....v

**Acknowledgements**.....vi-vii

**Abbreviations**.....viii-ix

**Note on terminology**.....x-xi

**Introduction**.....xii-xxvii

### Chapter 1

**BACKGROUND TO THE HOMELAND SYSTEM**..... 1

1.1. Segregation legislation..... 1

1.2. Apartheid legislation..... 4

1.3. Separate development policy..... 11

1.4. The constitutional development of the homelands..... 13

1.5. On defining independence..... 17

1.6. Recognition of statehood..... 20

1.7. Why independence?..... 23

## **Chapter 2**

<b>THE RISE OF KWA-NDEBELE.....</b>	<b>28</b>
2.1. The Transvaal Ndebele in historical context.....	28
2.1.1. The Transvaal Ndebele vis-a'-vis Mzilikazi's Matabele.....	28
2.1.2. The effects of the Mapoch war on Ndzundza unity.....	34
2.1.3. Further division of the Ndzundza.....	36
2.2. The Ndzundza-Mapoch Tribal Authority.....	37
2.3. The Ndzundza Regional Authority.....	40
2.4. The South Ndebele Territorial Authority.....	41
2.5. Legislative Assembly status.....	43
2.6. Self-government status.....	45
2.7. Kwa-Ndebele opts for independence.....	46
2.8. Why Kwa-Ndebele's belated establishment?.....	47

## **Chapter 3**

<b>KWA-NDEBELE AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF MBOKOTHO.....</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>Part one:</b>	
3.1. Background.....	53
3.2. Conditions in Kwa-Ndebele 1982-84.....	58
3.3. The 1984 elections.....	71
<b>Part two:</b>	
3.4. The establishment of Mbokotho.....	74
3.4.1. The 1984-85 era of protest.....	75
3.4.2. The rise of Mbokotho.....	81

## **Chapter 4**

<b>THE INCORPORATION OF MOUTSE INTO KWA-NDEBELE.....</b>	<b>85</b>
4.1. Disguised forced removal.....	85
4.2. The excision of Moutse from Lebowa.....	89
4.3. Proclamation R227 of 1985.....	93
4.4. Mbokotho's invasion of Moutse.....	97
4.5. Opposition to the Moutse transfer.....	99
4.6. A court ruling on Moutse.....	102
4.7. Why Moutse for Kwa-Ndebele?.....	105

## **Chapter 5**

<b>WAR AGAINST MBOKOTHO CHANGES TO WAR AGAINST INDEPENDENCE....</b>	<b>112</b>
5.1. Mbokotho on the rampage.....	112
5.2. The murder of Jacob Skosana.....	118
5.3. Protest mass meeting at the royal kraal, 12 May 1986.....	120
5.4. The funeral that triggered a rebellion.....	123
5.5. The report-back mass meeting at the royal kraal 14 May 1986.....	125
5.6. The rise of KWAYCO.....	129
5.7. Kwa-Ndebele work stay away June 1986.....	133
5.8. Kwa-Ndebele special emergency regulations.....	135
5.9. The politicised rural community turns radical.....	137
5.10. The second stay away July 1986.....	142

## **Chapter 6**

### **THE TURN OF THE TIDE.....147**

#### **Part one:**

6.1. The murder of Maqhawe Piet Ntuli.....147

6.2. Revocation of the independence decision.....154

6.3. The banning of Mbokotho.....159

6.4. The death of Chief Minister S.S.Skosana... ..163

#### **Part two:**

6.5. President Botha sets conditions for independence.....167

6.6. The Appellate Division's ruling on Moutse.....171

6.7. The Supreme Court invalidates the 1984 elections.....173

6.8. A replay of Kwa-Ndebele elections, 8 November 1988.....178

6.9. Majosi's further legal setback.....179

**Conclusion.....184**

**Source List..... 194-215**

## **Abstract**

Kwa-Ndebele was in terms of the state's policy of ethnic compartmentalisation of South Africa, the designated "homeland" of Southern Ndebele-speaking people. As a home for the ethnographer's "newly discovered" ethnic unit, it was conceived by the government only in 1972 and by 1986 it was already set on the road to independence.

This independence, the incorporation of Moutse and the creation of Mbokotho were basic issues underlying massive resistance in the homeland. However, these issues should be seen in the context of the country-wide unrest of the period 1984-87, in reaction to which Kwa-Ndebele used its Mbokotho and its police powers to restore order. In this effort, it was supported by the central government's security forces under the nation-wide state of emergency.

This enquiry, seeks to prove that the establishment of Kwa-Ndebele was motivated by the government's desire to bring together and control all surplus people irrespective of their ethnic affiliations.

### **Key Terms**

Bantustans; Homelands; National states; Independence; Violence; Resistance; Apartheid; Separate Development; Youth; Boycotts

## Acknowledgements

In the histories of recent periods, such as the period covered by this study, it is common and perhaps usual that names of persons still living should be distinguished from those of the dead by such prefixes as "Mr". The practice is surely a bad one, because it creates an entirely unreal line of division, and it hampers both the writer and the reader in their attempt to view the past objectively. Therefore I have here abstained from it. I hope that my decision will in no quarter be interpreted as discourtesy. To living people who have contributed their share in making Kwa-Ndebele history in the period covered by this study, many of whom I had the benefit of meeting and discussing the independence issue with, it should scarcely be a ground of complaint that they are treated here as historical figures.

No one could produce a work on such contemporary events without seeking information upon a host of particular points, such as Mbokotho from individuals competent to give it. My debts to such informants are exceedingly numerous, but believing that they will be content with the private expression of my sincere gratitude, I do not intend to display their names here like a row of scalps. By way of historical warrant, however, I ought to mention that the interesting pieces of information from Prince S.J.Mahlangu and Guy Mthimunye have been very helpful in this study. I would specially like to thank the former Kwa-Ndebele chief minister, Majozi George Mahlangu for sharing with me some information about Mbokotho, under circumstances which I need not particularise, but which nonetheless rendered his action particularly generous.



In printing this dissertation sincere thanks and gratitude are due to Mrs J. Theron, History Departmental Secretary at UNISA, for her preparedness even at the most inopportune times to offer her valuable assistance. I wish to thank the staff of the State Library in Pretoria, Transvaal Rural Action Committee Library in Khotso House, Johannesburg, the library of the Human Sciences Research Council, as well as the Unisa library for their friendly service. I owe much to the University of South Africa, whose financial assistance has made this study possible.

In writing this dissertation I am indebted to two scholars, Dr J.T. Pridmore, supervisor, and Professor J.P. Brits, co-supervisor, whose guidance and criticism together with their penetrating suggestions on points of style and substance, were more than I can hope to acknowledge.

## Abbreviations

<b>AD</b>	-----	Appelate Division
<b>ANC</b>	-----	African National Congress
<b>BAD</b>	-----	Bantu Affairs Department
<b>BENSO</b>	-----	Bureau of Economic Research
<b>BMR</b>	-----	Bureau of Market Research
<b>CONTRALESA</b>	-----	Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa
<b>COSAS</b>	-----	Congress of South African Students
<b>COSATU</b>	-----	Congress of South African Trade Unions
<b>DPRD</b>	-----	Department of Plural Relations and Development
<b>HSRC</b>	-----	Human Sciences Research Council
<b>KNG</b>	-----	Kwa-Ndebele Government
<b>KWAYCO</b>	-----	Kwa-Ndebele Youth Congress
<b>LMG</b>	-----	Labour Monitoring Group
<b>MOYCO</b>	-----	Moutse Youth Congress
<b>NAC</b>	-----	Native Affairs Commission
<b>NAD</b>	-----	Native Affairs Department
<b>NP</b>	-----	National Party
<b>NMNA</b>	-----	Ndzundza-Manala National Association
<b>NRC</b>	-----	Natives Representative Council
<b>NTA</b>	-----	Ndzundza Tribal Authority
<b>NMRA</b>	-----	Ndzundza-Mapoch Regional Authority

- PFPP**-----Progressive Federal Party
- PWV**-----Pretoria Witwatersrand Vaal
- SABC**-----South African Broadcasting Corporation
- SABRA**-----South African Bureau of Racial Affairs
- SADTU**-----South African Democratic Teachers Union
- SAIRR**-----South African Institute of Race Relations
- SNTA**-----South Ndebele Territorial Authority
- SRC**-----Student Representative Council
- TBVC**-----Transkei-Bophuthatswana-Venda-Ciskei
- TRAC**-----Transvaal Rural Action Committee
- TRC**-----Truth and Reconciliation Commission
- TUATA**-----Transvaal United African Teachers Association
- UDF**-----United Democratic Front
- CEPG**-----Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group

## Note on terminology

It is regrettably necessary to use different words to refer to people classified by the state as being **Indian, Coloured, White and Black (Natives, Africans and Bantu)** because the classification was the foundation of a policy that had given people vastly different life chances.

In this study however, the word **Africans** is generally used to denote people of black African descent who were grouped through state policy into varying territorial units within the borders of South Africa. However, in order to accommodate official usage in South African legislation the word **Bantu** is used here when reference is made to Black Africans in South African territories in the early, to mid-20th century.

It has also been necessary to refer to ethnic divisions within the African population, not because the official description of such divisions or the state policies flowing from them were accepted, but because they had an administrative reality, in that they formed the foundation of the bantustan policy. In this regard, the word reserves had changed with time through the aid of legislation to **territorial units**, then to **homelands** and more ambitiously to **national states** which the antagonists of the state's policies called **bantustans**. In this study these terms have not been used interchangeably, but rather each one has been used in its particular context notwithstanding the controversy surrounding their meaning, or their lack of legitimacy among the people to whom they were referring.

Similarly, the word **independence** has been used in this study to refer to constitutional autonomy

of the former four homelands within the borders of South Africa (TBVC), though without the necessary implication that I concede that such states really constituted “home” for the people who were forced to live in them or that they were really “independent” in the strictest sense of the word. As I have shown in chapter one, the use of this term with reference to ethnic territorial units within the borders of South Africa, did not conform with international usage.

Similarly, the word *comrades* has been used in this study to refer to young anti-apartheid activists, generally associated with the banned liberation movements in South Africa in general, and to the UDF in particular.

## Introduction

If the years could be still-born, the year 1987 would most certainly not have seen the light of day in Kwa-Ndebele, having succumbed to the serious congenital disorders, passed unrelentingly on by its predecessor member of the family, 1986.

Indeed in the year when the much acclaimed spectacle of our times, "Hally's Comet," was the damp squib of the century, the country-wide violent nightmare of 1984-85 was belatedly relived in the Kwa-Ndebele of 1986. In South Africa at large, the Johannesburg centenary (1886-1986) came and went before many people knew it was being celebrated. What dominated the politics of the day was the looming spectre of "UHURU" for the minuscule Kwa-Ndebele homeland, due on 11 December 1986.

The period from the second half of the 1970s to the early 1980s was characterised in South African history by the granting of "independence" to the homelands that had been created within the borders of South Africa. However, this process was brought into sharp focus by the failure of the Kwa-Ndebele homeland in 1986, in contrast to the success of the Transkei 1976; Bophuthatswana 1977; Venda 1979 and Ciskei 1981 to accept this status. Indeed, amidst one of the most dramatic episodes of the nation-wide unrest that had afflicted South Africa since September 1984, a massive popular uprising by Kwa-Ndebele residents in 1986 halted these constitutional designs.

I undertook this study basically because no academic study has yet been attempted on the subject and generally because the area has not been adequately examined by professional historians.

Admittedly, public information on the former Kwa-Ndebele homeland in contrast to its sister homelands is very scanty, even from official quarters. The only detailed study of note is that of the SAIRR's official researcher, Colleen McCaul's "Satellite in Revolt. Kwa-Ndebele: An Economic and Political profile" (Johannesburg, SAIRR, 1987) and the Transvaal Rural Action Committee's publication, "Kwa-Ndebele: The Struggle Against Independence", in W. Cobbett and R. Cohen, (eds), Popular Struggles in South Africa (London, Africa World Press, 1988). The two works have obvious limitations as historical sources. In the first place, they were not written by professional historians and are therefore no less than a chronological record of the events as they occurred in Kwa-Ndebele during the period under review. Based on this assertion, it is no exaggeration to assert that they do not purport to be scholarly works on the subject except for the book by R.L. Abel, Politics By other Means: Law in the Struggle Against Apartheid, 1980-1994 (New York, Routledge, 1995). The latter work is very useful especially on the legal challenges to emerging government contradictions regarding the establishment and sustenance of Kwa-Ndebele. For a useful and incisive journalistic portrait of Kwa-Ndebele, one may also consult the work of Joseph Lelyveld, Move Your Shadow: South Africa Black and White (London, Jonathan Ball, 1986). However, unlike them, the present enquiry seeks to prove that though many factors were at work in the crises surrounding Kwa-Ndebele independence, it was the bully-boy activities of the "Mbokotho" organisation's members that discredited independence at grassroots level.

As this study will show, it was basically against the background of the atrocities of the Mbokotho organisation that the people stood up and showed active resistance initially and it was this organisation that more than anything else successfully united, radicalised and politicised the once conservative communities of Kwa-Ndebele who only after the latter

attributes had been inculcated, did their struggle assume political proportions and they then opposed the planned independence.

I also undertook this study in order to expose the inconsistencies and contradictions inherent in the government policy of separate development in general and its application towards the Ndebele in particular. In this connection I will prove that the creation of Kwa-Ndebele was never motivated by a genuine government desire to consolidate an ethnic "unit" consistent with the Promotion of Bantu Homelands Act of 1959. Instead with regard to Kwa-Ndebele ethnic criteria were more and more sacrificed in favour of administrative and developmental concerns. The ultimate incorporation of a predominantly Northern Sotho speaking Moutse area into Kwa-Ndebele will provide full proof for this assertion.

This enquiry rejects outrightly the view that the influx of people into Kwa-Ndebele in the late 1970s and the early 1980s was in consequence to a "surging nationalism of the Ndebele nation" as suggested by the then State President, Marais Viljoen, when opening the Kwa-Ndebele Legislative Assembly. Instead, I argue that given its relative proximity to South Africa's major industrial complex, large numbers of "citizens" of other homelands have drifted to Kwa-Ndebele as the closest they could get to the industrial heartland, without incurring the risk of police harassment for infringement of the influx control measures such as the pass laws. In the light of this assertion, I will prove that the creation of Kwa-Ndebele as an "after-thought" in the policy of separate development, was functional only to South Africa's economic and political goals.



Furthermore, the enquiry seeks to prove that even by the ordinary homeland standards, Kwa-Ndebele was not a viable candidate for independence in 1986. Issues which I will address in this regard include: having being established in 1972 and thus barely 15 years old, Kwa-Ndebele lacked the necessary administrative experience for self-government, since more time was still needed for the negotiation of the new independence constitution, the holding of elections to determine who would take power under it; while on the other hand the infrastructural development in Kwa-Ndebele in 1986 did not justify independence; her economic dependence on the PWV area made her wholly economically dependent and finally, Kwa-Ndebele's claim to nationhood was also questionable because it was established on a piece of land arbitrarily carved out of the central Transvaal and therefore lacked any historical or ethnic justification as the traditional Ndebele homeland, the criterion that had been followed in the establishment of other bantustans.

Indeed, I consider the Kwa-Ndebele independence issue to be a particularly topical subject in view of the fact that it was an unprecedented occurrence that the state's homeland policy, at least in its traditional form, encountered one of the most serious setbacks, when the residents of the policy's newest creation, conveniently called "Kwa-Ndebele", responded to their impending "UHURU" with such a wave of spectacular and concerted resistance, thus halting Pretoria's constitutional designs for South Africa's youngest homeland. In this way, Kwa-Ndebele set some crucial precedents in the history of apartheid. For instance, it was the first homeland whose leaders had been told by the state to prove that its residents actually desired independence before that status could be conferred. It was the first homeland in which large sections of the traditional "beneficiaries" of "bantustan" independence, *viz*, chiefs, headmen, royalty and civil servants, have joined forces with those traditionally rejecting it, *vz*. "comrades." In this way,

it became the first homeland whose plans for independence had been halted by a wave of popular resistance. What makes this subject particularly topical is that in its aftermath, it became increasingly unlikely that any other homeland leader would ever find it expedient to consider the independence option.

Given a veritable mountain of literature on the subject of apartheid, it should be pointed out that its impact on the Ndebele nation has not yet been exhaustively analysed by historians and the events of 1986 around the independence issue, provide the basis on which such an analysis can best be made. Naturally, the scope of the enquiry does not permit an in-depth study of the distribution of the various ethnic groups in South Africa from which sprung the homeland system of which Kwa-Ndebele was a product, nor with the detailed history of the Ndebele tribe as such, for this has been ably done by C.J. van Vuuren, in "Ndzundza-Ndebele en die Mapochsgrotte," in South African Journal of Ethnology, Vol.8, No.2 (1985), and J.C.Coetzee in "Die strewe tot etniese konsolidasie en nasionale self-verwesenliking by die Ndebele van Transvaal" (D.Phil.thesis, Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education, 1980). Though I must say however, that Coetzee's evaluation of facts in this study, is done more from the standpoint of a white South African who just like government statesmen, represented the influx into Kwa-Ndebele as a desire for self-determination and identification with Ndebele nationalism. Such an analysis deliberately turns to ignore the Ndebeles' resistance to the government's policy of ethnic compartmentalization of the country, as demonstrated by those Ndebele in the Nebo district as well as those in Lebowa who did not yearn for the creation of their own homeland and were therefore content to live in that North Sotho ethnic unit. Naturally, the scope of an historical work is determined by the nature and extent of the questions that the historian asks of the past and which in turn are largely determined by the theoretical and philosophical

framework within which the questioner operates. Viewed in this light, there is no doubt that in Coetzee's work, some of the crucial questions about the Ndebeles during this period were left unasked, while those that were asked were phrased in a way that distorted the answers, solely in order to meet subjective criteria. I therefore feel that this study offers a different viewpoint to that of Coetzee in that, with the benefit of hindsight, it is clear that the Ndebele's quest for unity during the period covered in Coetzee's thesis, was totally different from what the government wanted to offer them in 1986, which is what Coetzee erroneously thought was their ultimate dream.

Another, though non-academic study of the Ndebele as a tribe was done by the Anthropologist, N.J. van Warmelo, in his early work, Transvaal Ndebele Texts: Ethnological publications vol.I, (The Government Printer, Pretoria, 1930). In spite of the fact that the work is too dated to be of value to this enquiry, it is nevertheless useful for background purposes and it has been frequently quoted by modern writers on the tribe. A more dependable work of note on the history of the Ndzundza Ndebele is that of Peter Delius, "The Ndzundza Ndebele: Indenture and the Making of Ethnic Identity", in Phillip Bonner, et al., (eds), Holding their Ground, (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1989). Though Delius also examined the earlier history of the tribe which does not have a direct bearing on this topic, it is also valuable because it provides a useful background to a people whose past had been full of struggle which then found further expression and continuity in the struggle against independence.

Whatever the ultimate interpretation of and the significance attached to apartheid regarding the South Ndebele by modern writers, it is hoped that by considering only the independence issue, an understanding of the functioning of separate development, particularly how it impacted on

the South Ndebele will be gained. Because the major focus of these writers has been the early history of the Ndzundza Ndebele, by focussing on recent developments such as the 1986 crises, the present study intends to add to this growing literature on these people who played such a crucial role in bringing about the collapse of apartheid structures in particular, yet whose contribution in the struggle against apartheid in general, has long been marginalised.

In compiling this dissertation, extensive use was made of the verbatim debates of the Kwa-Ndebele Government, official government documents consisting of correspondence between the central and the Kwa-Ndebele governments, reports of a routine nature, minutes of cabinet meetings which have not only provided detailed material on important aspects of the independence issue, but have also given insights into the sometimes differing and often conflicting views of the various cabinet ministers on such sensitive issues as the role of “Mbokhotho” and the unusual role played by both the Ndzundza royal family and the civil servants throughout the crisis.

One of the most serious aspects of political repression in South Africa’s homelands was the relative lack of media coverage. Observers have ascribed this to several factors, one being an unwillingness on the part of liberal press in South Africa to give credence to homeland “independence” by focussing on human rights abuses in these areas as distinct from the situation in the country as a whole. Another reason was perhaps the remoteness of many of these areas, the expense of placing a journalist there, and the unfortunate fact that the “white” press did not consider news in the homelands as of particular importance. One of the most important factors, however, has been the harassment and victimization of the press by homeland leaders. For instance reporters who have written about political repression or government corruption in the

homelands have frequently been harassed, detained, and ultimately expelled from these areas. Thus police in Kwa-Ndebele arrested and held a group of *Sowetan* reporters for more than four hours before ordering them to leave the area. During the heat of the independence crisis, two *Sunday Star* reporters, viz. senior reporter John Qwelane and the photographer Herbert Mabuza, including the driver Sam Mathe were detained in the early hours of 13 May 1986 while on assignment to report on the long hours travelled by Kwa-Ndebele workers between their homes and their jobs.

Two independent homelands which had most conspicuously acted against the press were the Transkei and Ciskei. In the Transkei, the prime targets have been newspapers circulating in the area, like the East London *Daily Dispatch* and two Xhosa language papers, *Imvo Isaziso* and *Isizwe*. For instance, the years following Transkeian "independence" were marked by government corruption, budgetary chaos and general ineptitude publicized in locally-available newspapers by an embattled press corps. In consequence, the Transkei Criminal Law Amendment Act provided that no public servant could disclose any information to do with the service without ministerial approval. On the other hand, journalists based in the Ciskei have also experienced a full array of that homeland's security system. For instance, in December 1983, two journalists for the Xhosa language paper *Imvo Zabantsundu* were detained after reporting the detention of former state security boss, Charles Sebe. They were held for six weeks before being expelled from the territory.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The bulk of the information on this subject is based on A Fund for Free Expression Report, Human Rights in the Homelands: South Africa's Delegation of Repression, (New York, June 1984).

In spite of the foregoing form of repression, newspapers have provided a wealth of comment on the independence issue and they have therefore also been an indispensable source of data. Since they have recorded the events as they happened on a day to day basis, I have quoted fairly extensively from them, because I feel that the words of the speakers themselves carry more weight than do some of the secondary sources which also relied on such newspapers. Because they were not only confined to recording events as they occurred, but also interpreted them, their interpretation has been very useful to me in formulating my own. Admittedly, the areas of permissible reporting had been steadily reduced by legislation and the state of emergency regulations. Consequently, it has become increasingly difficult to report adequately on prison conditions because of the restrictive nature of the Prisons Act and uncertainties about the precise meaning and interpretation of some of the provisions. In the final resort, the state had the power through the Internal Security Act to ban newspapers by proclamation as it did in the case of the English papers *The World* and *The Rand Daily Mail*. It is in view of this legal situation that there was a great reluctance to cover sensitive areas which would jeopardize the continued existence of the paper.

On the other hand, it is remarkable how the Afrikaans press failed over the years to report adequately on the hopes and aspirations, sufferings and frustrations of the black community, and therefore they were of little merit as objective sources and as such, their reports on government intentions in the period covered by this study, had to be treated with maximum circumspection.

On account of the nature of the enquiry into so recent and perhaps highly polemic subject, the bulk of the sources of data must almost by definition be sometimes informal and tentative. In this regard, I have occasionally conducted a great deal of formal and informal interviews and

held regular conversations with the real actors in the Kwa-Ndebele political drama, namely: former homeland politicians, Government officials, “Mbokotho members,” “comrades”, royalty and ordinary members of the community, the people who are not themselves significant actors in local politics, but whose lives, nevertheless are seriously affected by both national and local level political activity. Important especially in this context are Swartz’s comments on the deficiency of studying those who wield and implement power either nationally or locally, without considering the actions or non-actions of the public, for it is necessary to recognise that “...all cases of the effective social use of power or of the struggle for power will require the active or passive help of a public”.<sup>2</sup> This problem becomes very obvious when analysing the work of such writers as Stultz and Southall, from whom we learn much about the goals of those in power and how they manipulated their positions within government hierarchies to achieve these. On the other hand we learn next to nothing about the nature of the everyday life of the majority of those people whose lives were affected by Transkeian independence. As Mayer so aptly puts it, “relatively little attention has been paid to the ideas of the ordinary Black villagers in South Africa in the context of their material conditions and subjective experience at different periods. Data about the ideas of the powerful, and the motives behind these, are generally more accessible than are comparable data for the powerless, and this is so especially in South Africa”.<sup>3</sup> Even Streek and Wicksteed, who claim to be able to tell South Africans what independence meant to some three million Transkeians, are only able to make the most general statements and consistently tell us far more about the oppressors than the oppressed. For instance, in a chapter dealing with corruption they expose a number of corrupt deals and conclude that “what has

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<sup>2</sup> M.J.Swartz, (ed), Local Level Politics in Social and Cultural Perspectives, (Chicago, Aldine Publishing Company, 1968), p.228.

<sup>3</sup> P.Mayer, Townsmen or Tribesmen: Conservatism and the Process of Urbanisation in a South African City, (Cape Town, Oxford University Press, 1961), p.4.

emerged is a pattern of self-enrichment by the beneficiaries of Transkei independence at the expense of the masses, who languish under conditions of abject poverty in a region designed to serve the interests of those who proclaimed it independent".<sup>4</sup>

In the light of the foregoing analysis, it is clear that much of what has been written on homeland independence focuses on broad theoretical issues and in so doing becomes depersonalised and divorced from the reality of the day-to-day lives of ordinary "citizens" of these homelands. The emphasis in this study is therefore on presenting a people-centred approach to the crises that engulfed the homeland, by giving a voice to ordinary people in order to find out what their perception was, of "bantustan independence," which understanding could arguably justify their resistance. It is the purpose of this study to try and restore the recent past of one of the most neglected ethnic groups, the South Ndebele, and by doing so, to give them a voice and to give their past a content which situates them as active participants in the complex political development that has culminated in the collapse of apartheid. Indeed their gallant struggle against independence should actually be viewed as a struggle against not only independence in its simpler terms, but against the whole government imposed system of "Balkanising" South Africa.

It is very easy to be impartial when one is dealing with events which occurred several centuries ago, especially when the struggles of the past have been resolved and controversies extinguished and when those who played their part upon the stage of history are all dead. When however one has to handle events, as I have attempted, in which one has been involved in controversies in

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<sup>4</sup> B.Streek and R.Wicksteed, Render Unto Kaizer: A Transkei Dossier, (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1981), p.243.



which one had been compelled to take sides, one must exercise great care if one is to discover the truth without being led astray by passion and prejudice, but instead guided by the quest to write history, *wie es eigentlich gewesen*.

It is difficult for a 1986 Kwa-Ndebele resident of today to speak or even write of Maqhawe Piet Ntuli or Majozi George Mahlangu with the same degree of detachment which he would otherwise bring to the study of chief Nyabela or chief Fene Mahlangu, who lived over a century ago. But that is precisely what the historian must and in fact should do, because he or she cannot, without forfeiting the name historian, write in a partisan spirit. The other danger inherent in the study of contemporary historical events is that one must rely extremely on oral sources which would sometimes be difficult to get in the light of the specific function for which the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was instituted. Those who believe that their involvement in vigilante activities such as Mbokotho, might make them guilty of gross human rights violations, tend to be reluctant when giving any information of significance pertaining to the enquiry and therefore any statement given under such circumstances had to be treated with the necessary circumspection. For instance, no more than twelve years have elapsed since the Kwa-Ndebele independence crisis. It is only natural that the reader should want more details about the occurrences of which he has been a witness, which he has discussed and which have produced consequences that to him are still matters of capital importance. Nor can it be forgotten that the last twelve years have witnessed in Kwa-Ndebele something very closely resembling a revolution and has been as rich in change as have any of the most dramatic moments of South African history in general.

Being a resident of Kwa-Ndebele and therefore having good command of the Ndebele language, was a major research advantage, because I did not need to enlist the services of an interpreter during my field work, which is a general research hurdle that often hinders the practice of history.

The “aborted” independence issue will not be understood without some familiarity with the background history of homeland policy, whose latest creation was Kwa-Ndebele. In the light of this assertion, my main preoccupation in chapter one will be to expose the inconsistencies and contradictions of the government policy towards the Ndebele, inherent first in the segregation, apartheid and then in the separate development legislations. I ventured into this description at the risk of losing sight of the contemporary nature of my subject, because without taking that risk the subsequent appraisal of the crises around the independence issue will remain incomprehensible.

Chapter two deals mainly with the rise of Kwa-Ndebele, but also starts off with the background history of the tribe which came to people the territory, with a view to distinguishing them from the other tribe with whom they share the same name, “Ndebele”. However, this chapter focusses mainly on the constitutional development of Kwa-Ndebele, in order to show that as a newcomer in the “South African family of nations”, Kwa-Ndebele was patently not ready for independence in 1986. Created in 1972, but already having been through all the constitutional changes laid down by the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951, the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act of 1959, becoming a Territorial Authority in 1979 and attaining Self-Government status in 1981, it was surely still an adolescent nation, very ill-equipped for independence in 1986.

Chapter three is divided into two parts. Part one focusses on the conditions in Kwa-Ndebele with the view to proving that given the general infrastructural development in that homeland, Kwa-Ndebele was still in many respects not yet ready for independence. In spite of official rhetoric in praise of development that had taken place in that territory, this chapter seeks to prove that even if the people had not resisted independence, it would have been very ridiculous of Pretoria to confer that status on Kwa-Ndebele in 1986 for the homeland hardly had a hospital, save Philadelphia in the then controversial Moutse district. Part two examines the political climate in the country as a whole, as a result of which the country witnessed the emergence of right wing vigilantes in various townships. In Kwa-Ndebele this new trend saw the establishment of the pro-independence Mbokotho organisation whose approach to politics I argue, discredited independence in that homeland.

Chapter four is more concerned with the incorporation of Moutse. While emphasis in this chapter will also be on the inconsistencies of the central state in the implementation of its policies, the central theme of the thesis, that it was to the Mbokotho that the people were opposed, will also come to light, because ahead of its official launching, Mbokotho was already making history in Moutse on 1 January 1986. This chapter also seeks to prove that Kwa-Ndebele was never created for the purpose of bringing together that which belonged together, but rather, it was created as an attempt by government policy planners to bring together and control those that its other policies had displaced or those that had been made surplus to the economy, and thus serving as a test case of the government's policies of 'orderly urbanisation' and regional development.

Chapter five deals more specifically with the massive uprising which constituted the actual popular opposition to independence, which manifested itself in school boycotts, bus boycotts, street clashes between local residents and Mbokotho, as well as the unusual alliances against Mbokotho, culminating in the declaration of the state of emergency.

Chapter six, which is divided into two parts, deals with the turn of the tide against the pro-independence group. Part one focusses on the setbacks suffered by the leadership of the bantustan culminating in the legislative assembly's decision to rescind the independence resolution as well as the banning of the Mbokotho organisation. This chapter seeks to examine what independence meant to ordinary members of the community, in order to prove that right up to its cancellation, many people still regarded their victory as victory against Mbokotho, not the state's homelands policy. As this chapter will show, the wider implications of homeland independence, as discussed by Southall and Stultz, were not issues for Kwa-Ndebele residents. What mattered most to them was the eradication of Mbokotho from the face of the homeland.

Part two of this chapter, which also constituted the turn of the tide against the pro-independence faction, deals with the legal setbacks suffered by the Kwa-Ndebele administration in its attempt to forge through the independence ideal in the face of determined mass opposition. Though it retraverses part of the ground covered in the preceding one, the emphasis in this part is on the almost unexpected legal successes of the opposition on both sides (Moutse and Kwa-Ndebele) to emerging contradictions in government policy as well as the unusual reliance and confidence in the judiciary by the rural communities when faced with state arrogance. This part proves in no uncertain terms that in spite of the principle of parliamentary supremacy as well as the fact that during that time of increased government repression, the courts were increasingly regarded

by blacks in the urban areas as part of the super-structure of apartheid, probably on account of the fact that the judiciary had remained all white, black communities in the rural areas still had some respect for the courts and could still turn to the courts for redress, because they saw the courts as independent institutions able to dispense justice and to protect communities against the executive and the legislature.

## CHAPTER 1

### BACKGROUND TO HOMELAND SYSTEM

#### 1.1. Segregation Legislation

The apartheid policy which the Nationalist government started to implement after 1948 grew around the forms of domination which had arisen from the time of the settlement in the Cape. Thus it may be said that if the word 'apartheid' was new, the idea which it was intended to express was not, because the separation of Whites and Blacks was a goal which had been pursued at many stages of the country's history.<sup>1</sup> It was not a unique set of ideas and practices that sprang full-blown from the heads of Afrikaner nationalists in 1948. Instead, it grew upon the segregation order which had developed along with the accelerated industrialization of South Africa following the discovery of diamonds (1869) and gold (1886).<sup>2</sup>

Sufficient historical coverage has been done as to how Blacks and Whites took possession of the land in the southern tip of the African continent, as well as how specific areas were eventually allotted to Blacks.<sup>3</sup> There is no need to repeat here in detail the historical facts around the same

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<sup>1</sup> R. Lacour-Gayet, A History of South Africa (London, Cassel, 1991), p.295. See also, C.F.J. Muller, (ed), Five Hundred Years: A History of South Africa (Pretoria, Academica, 1993), p.481.

<sup>2</sup> H. Giliomee and L. Schlemmer, From Apartheid to Nation-Building: Contemporary South African Debates (Cape Town, Oxford University Press, 1993), p.1.

<sup>3</sup> For an overview of this, see, M. Lacey, Working for Boroko: The Origins of a Coercive Labour System in South Africa (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1981), pp.12-50. and Muller (ed), Five Hundred Years: A History of South Africa, p. 481.

issues, save only that some salient highlights deserve brief mention, in order to illustrate my point.

In this connection, one may say, the boundaries of “reserves” which later became black “homelands”, were fixed by two pieces of legislation, namely, the 1913 Natives Land Act and the 1936 Natives Trust and Land Act. The 1913 Natives Land Act (Act no.27 of 1913) embodied the concept of territorial segregation of Blacks and Whites, by reserving the so-called “scheduled” areas totalling 9 190 010 hectares of land for exclusive occupancy by Blacks.<sup>4</sup> This Act also provided for the appointment of a commission to investigate and report on what areas should be set aside as areas within which Blacks would not be permitted to acquire or hire land. As Lacey, so aptly puts it, “There is another awful branch of this bad law, that a native is not allowed to hire a white’s farm by money, except by working for nothing, ‘Boroko’”.<sup>5</sup> Though the subsequently appointed Beaumont commission tabled its report in 1916, the recommendations which if accepted would have effected considerable consolidation as well as an increase in the size of these areas, were for various reasons shelved. With the benefit of hindsight regarding how Verwoerd came to treat the Tomlinson commission’s report, this is not surprising. The government initiative that a commission be appointed, only to negate its findings and recommendations had always confirmed the contradictions in the basic government policy since these formative years.

Twenty years later, the Natives Trust and Land Act (Act no.13 of 1936), based on the recommendations of the Beaumont Commission was passed. While this legislation amplified

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<sup>4</sup> Muller, Five Hundred Years: A History of South Africa, pp.395-394.

<sup>5</sup> Lacey, Working for Boroko, p.1.

the anti-squatting provisions of the 1913 Act, it provided that an extra 6 209 858 hectares of land be set apart for Black occupancy.<sup>6</sup> What is particularly informative about these acts is that after all the outstanding land had been added, the combined size of the homelands would be in the order of only 13% of South Africa's total land surface area.<sup>7</sup>

Much has been written about the changing purposes the reserves served in the development of South Africa's industrial economy. For the purpose of this enquiry however, what is important about the two acts is that although they provided the basis for the establishment of the homelands, it is only fair to argue that their intention was not for one moment that the "released" areas of 1936 together with the "scheduled" areas of 1913 to which they were added, were to be the territorial components of a number of fully-fledged Black states. For instance, neither in 1913 nor in 1936 did the concepts of homelands and national units exist. Thus to consider some fifty years later (1936-1986) that Kwa-Ndebele, a mere 300 000 hectares in extent was to be home for over 465 000 South Ndebele<sup>8</sup>, was inconceivable. Actually the homeland policy developed as a response to changed political and economic circumstances only in the second half of the 20th century.

After the 1948 election victory, the Nationalist Party realised that blacks were pressing for total integration and political rights and that this would be irresistible unless a new orientation was given to the political structure of the country. Consequently, they proposed that the traditional

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<sup>6</sup> Muller, Five Hundred Years: A History of South Africa, pp.434-435.

<sup>7</sup> Giliomee and Schlemmer, From Apartheid to Nation-Building, p.16.

<sup>8</sup> Transvaal Rural Action Committee, Kwa-Ndebele: The Struggle against 'Independence' (Johannesburg, TRAC, 1987), p.3.



segregation policies be extended to that of apartheid, which meant that Africans should surrender all claims to greater South Africa in return for autonomy in their erstwhile reserves which came to be called “Bantustans”. There were suggestions that in the long distant future these could become African states. In the light of this assertion, one may argue that although the first homeland proposals were advanced by the government in the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act of 1959, it was this “reserve” system of the segregation period which provided the basis for the homelands strategies of the apartheid period.

## 1.2. The Apartheid Legislation

“Race discrimination and exploitation in the style of all colonial countries, was accepted custom in South Africa for decades before the National Party came to power. It was only after 1948 that the traditional practice was codified and extended under the title apartheid”.<sup>9</sup> This observation by Helen Suzman sums up the most obvious difference between the traditional segregation and the intensification of it after the National Party take-over in 1948. This was however never universally understood by all South Africans outside National Party circles. No wonder the *Torch*, a Coloured newspaper, declared that the National Party victory in the 1948 election meant only that “segregation will now be called apartheid”.<sup>10</sup> Against this background, it is clear that the word “apartheid” proved to be as ambiguous as its predecessor, “segregation”.

As time went on however, it soon became evident that although it was built on segregation,

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<sup>9</sup> H. Suzman, In no Uncertain Terms ( Great Britain,Stevenson, 1993), p.xi.

<sup>10</sup> K.A. Manzo, Domination, Resistance, and Social Change in South Africa: The Local Effects of Global Power (London, Praeger, 1992), p.168.

apartheid tended to reaffirm its uniqueness rather than its continuity with its antecedents. One thing certain is that at the time when India and then Pakistan were decolonizing, the word “apartheid” connoted independence, not segregation. Creating a large state called “Bantustan”, was not the National Party’s intention in 1948 as Dr D.F. Malan himself had pointed out, “It is not the policy of our party and it is nowhere to be found in our official declaration of policy...total territorial segregation is impracticable under present conditions in South Africa, where our whole economic structure is, to a large extent based on Native Labour. It is not practicable and it does not pay any party to endeavour to achieve the impossible”.<sup>11</sup> In this way, Malan was adumbrating a purely critical attitude which if fully developed would have been the answer to his own objection. But because his party had always embraced the idea of racial inequality, when dealing with such matters he could mistake a fertile suggestion towards the improvement of race relations in South Africa for a demonstration that no such improvement was possible.

Contrary to his own view, Dr Malan undertook to separate not only white from black but also the black population itself on the basis of what Afrikaner nationalists claimed were distinctive cultural differences. In this regard, the key legislative enactment of the Party was the Population Registration Act, which purported to offer so-called objective or scientific criteria for differentiating whites from Coloureds, from natives, from Indians. This measure was intended as a machinery to designate the racial category of each person in South Africa,<sup>12</sup> as Wilson and

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<sup>11</sup> SAIRR, Annual Report, 1949-1950 (Johannesburg, SAIRR, 1950), p.2.

<sup>12</sup> The Union of South Africa, Government Gazette, vol.CLX 1. 7th July-September 1950 (Pretoria, Government Printer, 1950), p.3.

Thompson put it, "it clearly defined 'who' was 'who' and therefore entitled to 'what'".<sup>13</sup> Yet of all the attempts at massive social engineering that it entailed, the Act was in many ways a confused and internally inconsistent document, reflecting the lack of a clearly defined self in white society. First the races were defined in different ways. For instance, white and Coloured were defined by skin colour, native was defined by country of origin, while Asian, was defined by continent of origin. Any one of these criteria, viz. country, continent, colour, could have been applied consistently to differentiate the population, but consistency was not conducive to the requirements of white domination at the time. For instance, country of origin as a defining hallmark of race would have split the required common identity among whites. Continent of origin would have made the classification of Coloureds impossible, because it would be difficult to say whether they were European or African. While colour alone as the defining hallmark of race would have created a single black majority, in contradistinction to a white minority. To this effect, as Kathryn Manzo puts it, "the politics of social diversity as a way to maintain domination thus made inconsistency an imperative, not an oversight."<sup>14</sup>

Secondly, if the Afrikaners were a distinct nation separate from English speakers, why were they lumped together as white by the very people who insisted on Afrikaner essentialism? Identity for whites and difference for blacks were thus encoded within the very wording of the Population Registration Act. In terms of the NP's insistence that natives were a heterogeneous group of nations, it made sense to subclassify them as Sotho, Xhosa, Zulu, Shangaan and so on and this subclassification scheme was then used later to justify homelands.

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<sup>13</sup> M. Wilson and L. Thompson (eds), The Oxford History of South Africa II: South Africa 1870-1966 (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1975), p.402.

<sup>14</sup> Manzo, Domination, Resistance, and Social Change in South Africa, p.173.

In further implementing this policy, the Group Areas Act was adopted in 1950, with the expressed purpose of preventing racial integration. This measure made provision throughout South Africa for separate residential areas and community centres for each of the country's racial groups. It went so far as to control the sale of property from members of one racial group to another.<sup>15</sup> The Group Areas Act is considered to be one of the cornerstones of apartheid because it mandated separate residential areas for the different races and because it created a legal precedent for forcibly moving people not only from town to country as before but from one urban area to the next. Whereas previous Urban Areas Acts had sought to segregate white from African, Group Areas was to segregate all race groups from each other.<sup>16</sup>

In 1950 the Tomlinson Commission was appointed to look into the socio-economic problems of the reserves with a view to developing within them, a social structure in keeping with the culture of the Blacks, based on an effective socio-economic planning. Among other recommendations of this commission which later as Minister of Native Affairs Dr H.F. Verwoerd came to reject, was that white sponsored industries should be allowed in the "reserves" in order to increase their carrying capacity as well as to encourage Blacks to acquire skills.<sup>17</sup> The commission further proposed a reorganisation of the economic and social life of the reserves by estimating that 50 000 new jobs a year would have to be created in the reserves during the next 25 years.<sup>18</sup> And

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<sup>15</sup> The Union of South Africa, Government Gazette, vol. CLX 1. 7th July-September 1950 (Pretoria, Government Printer, 1950), p.47.

<sup>16</sup> Manzo, Domination, Resistance, and Social Change in South Africa, p.174.

<sup>17</sup> C.A.D., K20 Tomlinson verslag korrespondensie, werk stukke vol.3 file no. p/6/12.

<sup>18</sup> C.A.D. K20, Tomlinson Commission file no.61/1955,p.18.

in order to meet this need, the commission recommended an extensive development programme including the establishment of more than 100 urban townships.<sup>19</sup> For industrial development, the commission recommended that the government should expend about 104m pounds during the first ten years so that in 25 years time the reserve areas could be able to support a population of about 7 million persons.<sup>20</sup>

But because Verwoerd had never intended to develop the reserves into sovereign states, he rejected the foregoing recommendations on the grounds that they were contrary to the basic tenets of apartheid, and that they were erroneously based on the assumption that there would be large white owned industries in those areas and since this would not be the case, the recommendations no longer applied.<sup>21</sup> This rejection only served to confirm the view that the reserves were not created out of a genuine desire to produce the territorial basis of a just, if segregated society. Instead, their creation was in response to the expressed interests of white voters especially the farming community, then the dominant group in South African politics, for continued access to supplies of low wage labour.<sup>22</sup> The evolution of Black-run states was certainly never envisaged at this stage of South Africa's political history. On a whole one may say, while the primary object of the reserves was to segregate, the secondary object was to limit the number of Black families on White-run farms. Consequently, as overpopulated and increasingly impoverished reservoirs of labour, the reserves reproduced an accessible, cheap

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p.150.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p.206.

<sup>21</sup> C.A.D. Memorandum: Government decisions on the Recommendations of the Commission for the Socio-Economic Development of the Bantu Areas within the Union of South Africa, F-1956, Decision 10.

<sup>22</sup> J.D. Omer-Cooper, History of Southern Africa (London, David Philip, 1987), p.158.

migrant labour force for all sectors of capitalist production.

The 1940s and 1950s were decades when black workers began to show their potential for resistance. Thus ensuring that power remained firmly in the hands of whites became the task of National Party ideologues, who then developed and refined the theory of separate development during this period. Consequently, along with ruthless repression of the political struggles of the 1950s and the 1960s went a parallel process of reconstruction of the reserves, to retribalize their administration and to establish new structures of political control.<sup>23</sup> The Bantu Authorities Act of 1951 was the first step in the direction of incorporating tribalism into the system. This not only abolished the existing Natives Representative Council but also provided for the gradual implementation of a three-tier system of government, comprising the Tribal; Regional and Territorial Authorities in the reserve areas.<sup>24</sup> Although Dr Verwoerd claimed that this system would reintroduce traditional tribal democracy to African people, the truth was that only the first tier, consisting of tribal authorities, resembled the traditional system.<sup>25</sup> The next two levels, regional and territorial authorities, simply brought the local level bodies together on a spatial basis. Admittedly, one of the note-worthy aspects of this system was the crucial part played by the headmen in these three levels of government. The reason for this, it was claimed, was to base the homeland government on the traditional government systems of the Blacks. Yet this too was only part of the truth, which concealed the fact that by restoring the tribal system which was then disintegrating and by conferring power on the headmen, whose authority was crumbling,

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<sup>23</sup> G.L. Rutman, "The Transkei: An Experiment in Economic Separation", South African Journal of Economics", 36 (March 1968), p.138.

<sup>24</sup> Muller, Five Hundred Years: A History of South Africa, p.487.

<sup>25</sup> D.A. Kotze, African Politics in South Africa 1964-1974: Parties and Issues (Pretoria, van Schaik, 1975), p.26.

Verwoerd wished to ensure that he could count on the support of the headmen, in implementing the system of government which he was planning to introduce.<sup>26</sup> For instance, when the council system was replaced, the focus shifted to ethnic fragmentation of the African population.

In 1959, an elaboration of the Bantu Authorities Act, the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act was adopted. This was the legal cornerstone of subsequent homeland development because it was the first articulation of Nationalist policy creating separate black states.

In response to the changing South African economy as well as the need to defuse the growing Black militancy, the fundamental basis of apartheid policy began to change. In accordance with the new image that South Africa sought to present to the world, the word “apartheid” which had acquired a bad meaning in the world at large was increasingly being replaced by the term “separate development” whereby the reserves were now referred to as Black homelands with the racial composition of each homeland based on ethnic lines. The protagonists of the policy referred to it as a policy of “live and let live apart”.<sup>27</sup> However, the truth seems to be Tobias’ remark that, “Science provides no evidence that any single one of the assumptions underlying South Africa’s racial legislation is justified”.<sup>28</sup>

For instance, writing on ethnicity not as a cultural residue but a consciously crafted ideological creation, Leroy Vail states that, “African political leaders, experiencing it as destructive to their

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<sup>26</sup> Muller, Five Hundred Years: A History of South Africa, p.487.

<sup>27</sup> B. Turok, Patterns of Inequality, Inequality as State Policy: The South African Case (Great Britain, The Open University Press, 1976), p.15.

<sup>28</sup> P.V. Tobias, The Meaning of Race (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1961), p.22.

ideals of national unity, denounce it passionately. Commentators on the Left, recognising it as a block to the growth of appropriate class awareness, inveigh against it as a case of 'false consciousness'. Apologists for South African apartheid, welcoming it as an ally of continued white dominance, encourage it. Development theorists, perceiving it as a check to economic growth, deplore it. Journalists, judging it as an adequate explanation for a myriad of otherwise puzzling events, deploy it mercilessly. Political scientists, intrigued by its continuing power, probe at it endlessly. If one disapproves of the phenomenon, 'it' is 'tribalism'; if one is less judgemental, 'it' is 'ethnicity'.<sup>29</sup> Whatever its meaning and interpretation, the Nationalist policy of separate development was to rise and fall by this principle. In this way, it needs to be asserted that any move away from the ethnic factor in creating a black homeland would be at variance with the aims of the policy's founding fathers.

### **1.3. Separate Development Policy**

Before 1959 the intention had been that the furthest the homelands would be allowed to go was the development of a significant measure of local self-government along tribal lines under white trusteeship. However, in introducing the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Bill to parliament in 1959, Verwoerd argued that the "Bantustans" must be allowed to develop into fully fledged states which might eventually become fully independent nations and members of the United Nations. This sudden change in direction was actually an attempt by South Africa to adapt to the changing situation. For instance with the progress of decolonisation, many former European colonies were emerging as independent nations and were nominally accepted as equals in world

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<sup>29</sup> L. Vail, "Ethnicity in Southern African History", in L. Vail, (ed), The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa (Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1989), p.1.



forums. While South Africa, by openly embodying racism in law and increasing racial inequality by government action was moving in exactly the opposite direction from the rest of the world.

The characterisation of white South Africa as a colonial power vis-a-vis the country's African population was well established. As long ago as 1952 Leo Marquard wrote as follows in the conclusion of his book, *The Peoples and Policies of South Africa*: "Perhaps the strangest contradiction, and the one that explains a good deal of what is happening in South Africa, is that this union of four colonial possessions has become itself a colonial power, with all the problems that face those European states that hold dominion over non-European peoples".<sup>30</sup>

Thus by introducing the homeland concept, a new way of justifying the white monopoly of power in the economic heartland of South Africa was being prepared. This time instead of justifying discrimination against Blacks openly on grounds of race, it would now be done on the grounds that they were citizens of separate states. In this way, it was hoped that South Africa's policies could now be made to seem in line with worldwide developments instead of opposed to them, as Robert Davies et.al. put it: "instead of a system of increased segregation and discrimination, apartheid was to be presented as a system of internal decolonisation".<sup>31</sup>

Through this policy, the Nationalist government sought to claim: that there no longer existed an African majority in South Africa, instead it sought to prove that South Africa's population

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<sup>30</sup> Leo Marquard, Peoples and Policies of South Africa (London, Oxford University Press, 1952), pp.238-241. cited in N.M. Stultz, Transkei's Half Loaf: Race Separatism in South Africa (Cape Town, David Philip, 1980), p.138.

<sup>31</sup> R. Davies, et.al, The Struggle for South Africa: A reference guide to movements, organisations and institutions, vol. one (London, Zed Books, 1988.) p.54.

comprised of a whole set of ethnic minorities. Thus by dividing the Black people of South Africa into ten groups, each with its own distinctive culture and traditions, the government would claim that it was out of respect for these differences that each should be allocated its own "homeland" where it could develop culturally, politically and economically along its own lines. A successful implementation of this policy would therefore reproduce the decolonisation process that occurred throughout Africa in the 1960s.<sup>32</sup>

#### 1.4. The Constitutional Development of The Homelands

The first major step towards the constitutional development of the homelands came in 1963 when the Transkei was granted a considerable measure of self-government. Even then however, the Transkei was in reality not self-governing. The Transkei constitution Act of 1963 for example, made the sixty-four chiefs in the Legislative Assembly responsible to the government of South Africa, not to the Transkeian voters, because their appointments had to be approved by the state president. Any piece of legislation passed by the Legislative Assembly could be vetoed by the republic's government. No wonder critics of the policy have described homeland self-government as "sleight of hand," "fraud," and "toy telephones."<sup>33</sup>

Absence of real power therefore contributed to the lack of legitimacy of homeland institutions, but even if they had had any real power, it is doubtful whether people would have accepted them.

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<sup>32</sup> P. Maylam, A History of the African People of South Africa: From the Early Iron-Age to the 1970s (Cape Town, David Philip, 1986.) p.170.

<sup>33</sup> G. Mbeki, South Africa: The Peasants' Revolt (South Africa, International Defence and Aid Fund, 1984), pp.32, 49 and 73.

Built as they were upon the sands of a tribal affinity which did not reflect people's self-understanding, the homelands could not appeal to people who did not see themselves as citizens of "foreign states".

In spite of this however, a short while after the Transkei, other legislative assemblies were established in KwaZulu, Ciskei, Lebowa, Venda, Gazankulu, Bophuthatswana and QwaQwa. Some of the traditional leaders and their followers welcomed the change as they hoped it would reinforce and rehabilitate tribalism which was in the process of inexorable disintegration and thus enhance and restore the power of the chiefs.<sup>34</sup> For instance, at the inaugural ceremony of the KwaZulu Territorial Authority on 9 June 1970, the newly elected Chief Executive Councillor, Chief Gatsha Buthelezi declared that the policy of separate development must be made to work as soon as possible, "Humanity is so much on the march to-day when the moon itself has become merely man's next stop of call, that we cannot be expected to move towards self-determination and self-realisation at ox-wagon pace".<sup>35</sup>

Conspicuously missing from the above scenario, was the homelands for the Swazi and the Ndebele, whose political aspirations did not seem to be an urgent matter for the nationalist government during these early stages of separate development. As for the South-Ndebele, they were seen as being quite an insignificant ethnic unit to warrant a separate homeland. Initially it was hoped that they would find their political future in Lebowa, the homeland of the Northern Sotho group, while the other remnants of the Ndebele were expected to integrate with other

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<sup>34</sup> A. Rycroft, (ed), Race: And The Law in South Africa ( Cape Town, Chelsea Press, 1987), p.29.

<sup>35</sup> M. Horrell, Action, Reaction and Counter-Action: A brief review of non-white political movements in South Africa (Johannesburg, SAIRR, 1971), p.138.

ethnic groups until they “disappeared”.<sup>36</sup>

The insistence on political rights by blacks was in line with tendencies in the rest of Africa where independence was seen as a priority. But whereas colonial powers were ultimately willing to relent, this was inconceivable in South Africa, where the white “imperial power” had nowhere else to go. Demands for political rights were resisted fiercely and by severe repression. In the end however, the South African government decided to take shelter from the winds of change that were coursing through Africa from the late 1950s, by creating a semblance of independence for the indigenous people.<sup>37</sup>

In 1960 a “*Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples*” stated that all peoples have a right to self-determination and that inadequacy of political, economic, social or educational preparedness should never serve as a pretext for delaying independence.<sup>38</sup> To South Africa, this meant a different strategy of exclusion on the grounds of race. But closely analysed, it was the overthrow of the authoritarian regime in Portugal in April 1974, coupled with the dramatically heightened mass struggle within South Africa itself, that faced the government with a series of new internal challenges, in response to which bantustan independence was the solution. Though however, the creation of independent African homelands in South Africa was not motivated simply by a determination to divide and rule, to

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<sup>36</sup> Die Volksblad, 16 Maart 1979.

<sup>37</sup> W. Gebhard, Shades of Reality: Black Perceptions of South African History (Germany, Die Blaue Eule, 1991).

<sup>38</sup> “*General Assembly Resolution 1514(XV)14/12/1960*”, quoted in D.W. Wainhouse, Remnants of Empire: The United Nations and the End of Colonialism (New York, Harper & Row, 1964), pp. 148-9.

rid South Africa of the source of its political problems, or to cater for the changing economic interests of particular whites, these considerations undoubtedly also played a part, as Mbeki has argued, the government hoped that “by advertising its ‘gift’ of self-government to Africans, it would silence world censure of its policies and slow down the surge of an inclusive African nationalism in the rural areas”.<sup>39</sup> No wonder, in response to the growing crisis of the mid-1970s when a wave of mass strikes began first in Durban at the end of 1972 and the beginning of 1973 and subsequently spreading throughout the country, the Nationalist government pressurised the homeland leaders to accept “independence”.<sup>40</sup> Consequently, by the beginning of 1982 already four homelands had acceded to this master-plan by becoming nominally independent, viz. Transkei (1976), Bophuthatswana (1977), Venda (1979) and Ciskei (1981), while Kwa-Ndebele was destined to become the fifth in 1986. However, the other homeland leaders maintained that they would not seek independence for their territories and mutually agreed not to attend the independence ceremonies. Three of these leaders, those from KwaZulu, Gazankulu, and Lebowa, have been particularly emphatic that they would not consider abandoning their peoples’ right to share in the resources and political life of South Africa as a whole. They resented the necessary corollary of loss of South African citizenship<sup>41</sup> which went along with independence.

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<sup>39</sup> Mbeki, South Africa: The Peasants’ Revolt, p.22.

<sup>40</sup> Davies, The Struggle for South Africa, p.33. According to The Star, 2 March 1978, the Minister of Plural Relations Dr C.P. Mulder suggested a move away from the use of the word “homelands”, to self-governing states, because President Jimmy Carter had said that he wanted to give Palestinians a “homeland”, meaning an area that would not become an independent state. *“If that is the international interpretation of the term, then I want to move away from using it because the black areas of South Africa...are intended to obtain their independence,”* said Mulder emphatically.

<sup>41</sup> For an overview of the implications of homeland independence with regard to citizenship, see, G. Budlender, “Constitutional Issues in Kwa-Ndebele”, in G.Kruger and P. Rainey, Kwa-Ndebele -The Future? The proceedings of a forum organised by Lawyers for Human Rights and held at the University of Pretoria on 16 May 1988 (Pretoria, December 1988), pp.93-100.

Ironically, all over the world, particularly during the period of European decolonisation, people died fighting for the independence of their countries, yet in South Africa, oppressed peoples died resisting independence, declaring their allegiance to a white racist regime rather than their own ethnic homeland. Against this background, it is self-evident that “independence” in the South African homeland context cannot be used without some qualification.

### **1.5. On Defining Independence**

According to Brierly, the proper usage of the term “independence” is to denote the status of a state which controls its own external relations without dictation from other states. The exact significance of the term appears most strikingly in such a phrase as “declaration of independence” whereby one state throws off its control by or its dependence on another.<sup>42</sup> In 1953 the United Nations General Assembly ruled that, independence was indicated by full international responsibility for acts inherent in the exercise of external sovereignty and corresponding acts in the administration of internal affairs, eligibility for membership of the United Nations, power to enter into direct relations with other governments, sovereignty in defence and freedom from control by other states.<sup>43</sup>

The question to be asked at this stage, is not whether the tiny Kwa-Ndebele homeland hoped to

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<sup>42</sup> J.L. Brierly, The Law of Nations: An Introduction to the International Law of Peace (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 6th ed. 1963), p.123.

<sup>43</sup> D.P. O’Connell, International Law vol.1 (London, Stevens & Sons, 1965), p.371. L.B. Sohn, (ed) Basic Documents of the United Nations, pp.171-177 gives the text of the resolution.

become independent in this sense, but rather whether the four already independent homelands were indeed independent according to the criteria mentioned above. And certainly they were not, and to a particular extent it was this reason that lay in the centre of the resistance to Kwa-Ndebele independence, especially among the educated middle class who understood the wider implications of homeland independence. According to Michael Akehurst, a state established in violation of self-determination is a nullity in the eyes of international law. Since 1976 South Africa had purported to confer independence on a number of bantustans established on South African territory in pursuance of apartheid. Because the General Assembly of the United Nations regarded apartheid as a violation of the right of self-determination, the creation of bantustans was equally illegal and invalid because it represented the implementation of apartheid.<sup>44</sup>

For instance, in consequence to its external independence, a state can, unless restricted by treaty, manage its internal affairs according to discretion, in particular it can enter into alliances, receive diplomatic envoys, make war and peace.<sup>45</sup> However, Fawcett maintains that “independence” and “dependence” should not be thought of as absolute terms, but rather as terms which express the degree to which the rights of political communities are restricted or their obligations extended,<sup>46</sup> for an absolutely independent state is a fiction since all states are dependent on other states to

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<sup>44</sup> M. Akehurst, A Modern Introduction to International Law (London, Harper Collins Academy, 1991), p.298.

<sup>45</sup> L. Oppenheim, International Law vol.1 (London, Longman, 1961), pp.286-287.

<sup>46</sup> J.E.S. Fawcett, The British Commonwealth in International Law (London, Allanlane, 1963), p.90.

varying degrees.<sup>47</sup>

Notwithstanding this assertion, even if one looks at independence in these non-absolute terms in a desperate attempt to reconcile the anomalous position of entities such as the Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda and the Ciskei in a further attempt to find justification for the aborted attempt to grant independence to Kwa-Ndebele whose economy was entirely dependent on the Republic of South Africa, one can still not come to a convincing conclusion that independence in the South African homeland context was consistent with the definition of independence as it is understood in international law. That this was undoubtedly the case, finds confirmation in statements such as the one made by former Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Louis Nel that, the government could not afford to let any of the people it was leading on the road to independence fail, because should that happen it would affect all other independent states in the region like a “rotten fruit”.<sup>48</sup> The conclusion that one can deduce from such pronouncements is that homeland independence served the interests of South Africa more than of the people who were obliged to live in them, and the international status of independent homelands was completely incompatible with the independence of former British High Commission territories of Botswana, Swaziland and Lesotho, or any of the former colonies in Africa who became independent after the Second World War.

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<sup>47</sup> R.C. Winter, Blueprints for Independence: The New States and their Constituting Instruments (Amsterdam, Djambatan, 1961), p.248.

<sup>48</sup> The Star, 20 January 1984.



## 1.6. Recognition of Statehood

Closely related to independence as used in the present context is the question of recognition of statehood. It is often submitted that recognition of a state by other states is a *conditio sine qua non* for that state to be regarded as an international person subject to international law, and it has been argued that South Africa was violating international law by declaring that certain categories of persons within her borders should become citizens of homelands.<sup>49</sup>

Admittedly, no collective organic procedure for granting recognition based on established legal principles has been evolved by the international community, although the provisions of Articles 3-4 of the United Nations Charter regarding the admission of states to membership of the organisation may incidentally amount to a certificate of statehood. Accordingly, the recognition of a new state has been defined with some authority as "...the free act by which one or more states acknowledge the existence on a definite territory of a human society politically organised, independent of any other existing state and capable of observing the obligations of international law, and by which they manifest therefore their intention to consider it a member of the international community."<sup>50</sup>

Thus in order to determine whether Kwa-Ndebele would become a truly independent state, an examination of the requirements of statehood is necessary. Article 1 of the Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States provides that: "the state as a person of international law should possess the following qualifications; a defined territory, a permanent

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<sup>49</sup> G.N. Barrie, Topical International Law (Durban, Butterworths, 1979), p.59.

<sup>50</sup> J.G. Starke, An introduction to International Law (London, Butterworths, 1975), p.142.

population, a government and capacity to enter into relations with other states as well as a degree of permanence".<sup>51</sup> Closely analysed, central to these conditions is the concept of sovereignty. It therefore stands to reason that when colonial peoples demanded their independence from their former colonial masters, they were in fact demanding the right to exist as separate entities within the framework of international law. In short, one may argue that they were demanding the right to be recognised as sovereign independent states. With this in mind, it is hardly surprising to note that Rhodesia was unwilling to allow the Right of Appeal to the Privy Council to be inserted into any independence constitution, for it was argued that this would result in a form of second class independence.<sup>52</sup>

However, that Kwa-Ndebele independence would be exactly of this kind is evidenced by pronouncements such as the one made by the Commissioner General of Kwa-Ndebele Gerrie van der Merwe on 4 February 1986 that it was the "bottom line for the Kwa-Ndebele administration that their citizens could retain the South African citizenship after independence".<sup>53</sup> What is interesting about this statement is that Pretoria was so desperate to grant Kwa-Ndebele independence that attempts were made to create a new state whose population could be legal subjects and/or citizens of a foreign country (S.A.). On the other hand, the question whether Kwa-Ndebele would be recognised by the rest of the world was also well settled by the

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<sup>51</sup> C.N. Okeke, Controversial Subjects of Contemporary International Law (Rotterdam, Rotterdam University Press, 1974), p.87.

<sup>52</sup> W. Freidman, Law in a Changing Society (London, Stevens, 1959), p.470, points out that one of the results of the wariness of the new states to accept anything that suggested a lesser status was that "*however weak and poor, the new state must establish the apparatus and symbols of sovereignty, diplomatic representation, a government, a civil service and at least token armed forces*".

<sup>53</sup> C. McCaul, Satellite In Revolt, Kwa-Ndebele: an Economic and Political Profile (Johannesburg, SAIRR, 1987), pp.80-81.

predicament of the former president of an independent Bophuthatswana, L.M.Mangope on the occasion of his homeland's tenth anniversary celebrations in 1987 that, "...the Batswana of Botswana received their independence from Britain and world recognition as a nation, while the Batswana of Bophuthatswana received their independence from South Africa in 1977 without world recognition".<sup>54</sup> It would be remembered that the United States recognised Israel within a few hours of the proclamation of its independence, contrary to the view put forward by Oppenheim who argues that precipitate recognition of a rebelling colony, would be interference in the domestic affairs of the mother country.<sup>55</sup> To this O' Connell offers a different interpretation, by arguing that although premature recognition of a rebelling colony is interference in the affairs of the parent state, the parent's consent is not a precondition of statehood.<sup>56</sup>

Thus while it may be argued that the existence of a state is independent of its recognition, since the absence of a birth certificate does not mean that one is not born, it must be acknowledged that recognition does play an important part in establishing the claim to statehood of an entity like the Republic of Venda or the Ciskei that had broken away from another state, for as O' Connell puts it, "existence in fact may be controversial and in the last resort it is recognition which affirmatively answers the question whether the pretender to capacity has the qualifications for it".<sup>57</sup> For instance by an agreement made with the Gladstone government in 1884, the Transvaal was an independent state, though not permitted to conclude treaties with foreign powers without

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<sup>54</sup> A Nation on the March (Bophuthatswana, Hans Strydom Publications, 1987), p.17.

<sup>55</sup> Oppenheim, International Law, Vol.1, p.128.

<sup>56</sup> O' Connell, International Law vol.1, p.143.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, p.140.

British permission.<sup>58</sup> This shows that independence can be subject to certain limitations that may in the long run render the whole concept of independence valueless. For instance, unlike the position of the member states of the “South African Commonwealth”<sup>59</sup>, the member states of the British Commonwealth are fully independent states in every sense. In the field of external affairs autonomy is unlimited. They enjoy and exercise extensively the rights of separate legation and negotiation of treaties. Unlike the former T.B.V.C. states, the member states of the former British Commonwealth are also capable of being subjects of international disputes, and finally they may be separately or collectively neutrals or belligerents.<sup>60</sup> These actions by any state are a mark not only of its factual existence but also of its political independence. Yet from a historical point of view, it is clear that attempts to grant independence to an economically non-viable homeland such as Kwa-Ndebele in 1986, was more governed by political and administrative expedients than by economic considerations.<sup>61</sup>

### 1.7. Why Independence?

Most writers on homeland independence stress that independent states were certainly not economically independent and they simply could not exist without South Africa. As P. Laurence points out, “the single overriding reality of the Transkei on the eve of independence was its

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<sup>58</sup> G.A. Craig, Germany 1865-1945 (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1986), p.245.

<sup>59</sup> M. Wilson and L.Thompson, (eds), The Oxford History of South Africa II: South Africa 1870-1966 (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1975), p. 414.

<sup>60</sup> J.G. Starke, International Law (London, Butterworths, 1972), p.124.

<sup>61</sup> W.P. Kirkman, Unscrambling an Empire: A Critique of British Colonial Policy (London, Chatto and Windus, 1966), p.11.

almost total economic dependence on South Africa”.<sup>62</sup> On the other hand Newell Stultz, writing on Transkeian independence argues that Transkeian independence had brought with it certain benefits for all Transkeians such as the removal of apartheid laws within the territory, “...it is a change of incalculable importance for African dignity, whose positive consequences for African pride could flow beyond Transkei throughout the region”.<sup>63</sup> Even Matanzima’s own justification for Transkeian independence was that it enabled “several million Africans to free themselves from the discrimination of ‘the unjust society’”.<sup>64</sup> At the same time Stultz concedes that Transkei independence may be assumed to have entrenched racial discrimination in that the one million Transkei citizens who were permanently resident in South Africa had automatically and involuntarily ceased on 26 October 1976 to be South African citizens and on this score they would be denied full rights in the republic.

Similarly, Butler *et.al.* argue that whilst Transkeian independence was certainly only an extension of the widely hated apartheid system, it did nevertheless bring with it new political and economic opportunities for Africans. They concede that Transkei, together with all the other homelands was financially dependent on the Republic of South Africa and so could never achieve any true state of independence. However, they do suggest that in opting to support the policy of separate development, Matanzima had realised that more was to be gained for his people by supporting the policy than opposing it. He “showed that the logic of separate

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<sup>62</sup> P. Laurence, The Transkei: South Africa’s Politics of Partition (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1976), p.125.

<sup>63</sup> Stultz, Transkei’s Half loaf, p.77.

<sup>64</sup> G. Carter and P. O’Meara, (eds), Southern Africa in Crisis (London, Indiana University Press, 1977), p.115.

development could be exploited to African advantage".<sup>65</sup> More importantly, they argue that homeland independence gave the recipients of it some opportunity to bring pressure to bear on South Africa and so bring about change, thus " ...the homelands provide new and potentially beneficial leverage for Africans on the otherwise rigid politics of the dominant power".<sup>66</sup>

This was an overstatement since it could not be expected that the homeland leaders could manage to persuade the South African government to alter its policies towards the Blacks by simply supporting those policies. It was doubtful right from the beginning that the leaders of the independent homelands would be able to use the independence of their territories vis-a-vis South Africa in a manner that would benefit the disadvantaged majority. Precisely because South Africa wished to demonstrate the success of its homeland policy, it was unlikely that it would curb outspoken criticism of apartheid by independent leaders. For instance, Lesotho's economic dependence on the Republic did not limit her criticism of apartheid despite earlier expectations that it would do so. And it was South Africa's wish to make the homelands to appear to the outside world to be similar to the former High Commissioner territories(LBS).

On the contrary however, the homeland leaders were not in a sufficiently strong position to be able to put pressure on the South African government on behalf of their people. The legitimacy of such leaders was in doubt for in choosing the path of independence, had done little more than secured for themselves the material and status gains usually accorded to collaborators. Those in power in these homelands, were not only the "stooges" of the South African government, who

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<sup>65</sup> J. Butler, R.I. Rotberg and J. Adams, The Black Homelands of South Africa: Political and Economic development of Bophuthatswana and Kwazulu (Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1977), p.32.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, p.219.

by accepting independence had lent credence to the policy of separate development, but were men and women who had realised that independence vastly increased their opportunities to amass both wealth and influence. As Southall puts it, "...a number of Africans are finding opportunities of wealth, influence and in their own terms, prestige, which are available to them nowhere else in the Republic, and they are consequently prepared to accept the limited advantages that homeland development can offer them".<sup>67</sup> It is thus not surprising to find that homeland governments had tended to indulge in a massive expenditure on both bureaucratic expansion and on the trappings of independence such as presidential palaces, airports and stadiums. Paul Maylam points out that while these signs of prosperity might give the appearance of genuine independence to uninformed outsiders, they concealed the failure to inject much-needed capital into the development of the impoverished rural areas of the homelands.<sup>68</sup>

The recognition of the Transkei as a coherent whole and a country with bargaining power is clear in Stultz's work. His argument acknowledges Transkei's economic dependence on Pretoria but states nevertheless that the Transkei had the advantage of having been a political entity for a considerable period of time, of having government experience since 1963 when it was granted self-government status, and of enjoying cultural homogeneity save only for some 60 000 Basotho and that the country was free to do most of the things that states do.<sup>69</sup> If this was indeed the grounds on which homeland independence was to be based, then certainly Kwa-Ndebele was just out of question with regard to independence, for she lacked all the foregoing attributes. The

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<sup>67</sup> R. Southall, "The Beneficiaries of Transkeian 'Independence'", Journal of Modern African Studies, 15, 1, (1977), p.49. See also, Butler *et al*, The Black Homelands of South Africa, p.21.

<sup>68</sup> Maylam, A History of the African people of South Africa, p.171.

<sup>69</sup> Stultz, Transkei's Half-Loaf, p.43.

rather stale argument that homeland leaders opted for independence in order to free their people from race discrimination in South Africa, has already been rejected as a reason, for as Stultz puts it, “abhorrence of race discrimination is not the only conceivable reason for advocating race separatism in southern Africa. One can imagine an individual who is insensitive to the moral evil of race discrimination, but who nonetheless embraces separatism as a means of avoiding the possible consequences of discrimination in Southern Africa”.<sup>70</sup> There can be no question that for Kwa-Ndebele, like for the four already independent homelands, materially speaking, the benefits associated with independence would benefit only a tiny percentage of the population, and this group, which Southall called the ‘beneficiaries of independence’, would do everything in their power to defend the policy of separate development and ultimately to make independence work.<sup>71</sup> And it was basically in view of the material benefits of independence that even as late as 1986 the Kwa-Ndebele leadership had not considered it necessary to ask themselves whether bantustan independence was indeed a “fact” or “fiction”. Again they never considered asking whether independence indeed contributed to fundamental change in race relations in the region or whether it impeded that change. Interestingly however, notwithstanding all the benefits that went along with independence, Kwa-Ndebele did not become independent in 1986 as it was planned, and the reasons for this lay in the very nature of the homelands in general and of Kwa-Ndebele in particular.

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid, p.92.

<sup>71</sup> “Kwa-Ndebele: Assembly of chaos”, Financial Mail, 17 February 1989, p.48.



## CHAPTER 2

### 2. THE RISE OF KWA-NDEBELE

#### 2.1. The Transvaal Ndebele in Historical Context

Before dwelling on the brief history of the South Ndebele who in the early 1970s came to people the now defunct Kwa-Ndebele homeland, it will not be out of place to begin with a clear distinction between them and their namesakes, the Matabele of present day Zimbabwe with whom they are often confused.

##### 2.1.1. The Transvaal Ndebele *vis-a-vis* Mzilikazi's Matabele

There is a growing misperception that the Transvaal Ndebele are offshoots from Mzilikazi's tribe. This misperception is apparent in a great deal of accounts on the history of these people of which I will venture to quote but a few examples to prove the point. According to N. Haysom:

“Those Ndebele who did not follow the warrior Mzilikazi into modern-day Zimbabwe in the 1830's were fractured into several groups in the Transvaal. Defeated by the Boers in 1883, the Ndebele lost their autonomy and their land. The few Southern Ndebele that remained, were mostly clustered in the Roos Senekal district of the Transvaal.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> N. Haysom, Mabangalala: The Rise of Right-Wing Vigilantes in South Africa (Johannesburg, Wits University Press, 1986), p. 62.

The same misperception is also evident in the journalist J. Lelyveld's work who employs almost the same words that,

"Mzilikazi fled with his warriors across the Limpopo River into what became Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe. Several distinct remnants calling themselves Ndebeles remained in what became South Africa. As peace returned to the Transvaal these groups were partly re-absorbed by the various tribal groups Mzilikazi had crushed. Some who regarded themselves as Ndebeles discovered they were living in a country called Bophuthatswana, others discovered they were living in a state called Lebowa...."<sup>2</sup>

Another journalist, the renowned Allister Sparks, echos the same error that,

"... the Ndebeles were a marauder tribe who broke away from Shaka's Zulus and plundered the Transvaal for a few brief bloody years before Hendrik Potgieter's Trekkers drove them across the Limpopo into what is today the Zimbabwean Province of Matabeleland. That is their "homeland". They never set down roots in the Transvaal".<sup>3</sup>

It is on account of the prevalence of such misperception that one should start with a brief account of the history of the Transvaal Ndebele, because to misconstrue the history of something is usually to misconstrue the thing itself. In this connection one may say that although

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<sup>2</sup> J. Lelyveld, Move Your Shadow: South Africa Black and White, (Johannesburg, Jonathan Ball, 1986), pp. 133-134.

<sup>3</sup> The Star, 16 January 1986. See also, Eastern Province Herald, 18 January 1986. And Financial Mail, 22 August 1986.

the Transvaal Ndebele and Mzilikazi's people derive their origin in the main Zulu group in Natal, the so-called Transvaal Ndebele emigrated from there long before Shaka's rule and therefore in contrast to Mzilikazi's group their leaving was not occasioned by "difaqane".<sup>4</sup> There is sufficient historical evidence to support the view that they came into the Transvaal much earlier. A fairly recent study concludes: "Die Ndzundza van Noord-Oos Transvaal is 'n Nguni-Sprekende groep wat moontlik so vroeg as die sestiende eeu in Transvaal gevestig het".<sup>5</sup>

If this is correct, then it may surely be said that the Transvaal Ndebele must have been of the earliest Nguni immigrants into the Transvaal. For instance, when Mzilikazi invaded the Transvaal he found mainly Sotho tribes among whom there also dwelt the Ndebele tribes whose ancestors had already been in the Transvaal for so many generations that only the direction from which they had come, viz. South-East, was not yet forgotten.<sup>6</sup> The question why both tribes came to share the same name cannot be answered with certainty. The Anthropologist, N.J. Van Warmelo, suggests that since both tribes derive their origin in the Zulu group in Natal, the name Ndebele, could be the name of some legendary person who once lived centuries ago or it may be the term originally used for "Nguni" by the tribes of the interior.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> S.N. Phatlane, The History of the Ndzundza Ndebele: A Focus on the Mapoch Caves, (Unp. B.A.Hons. Essay, University of the North, 1988). In this study I have compiled a detailed history of the South Ndebele for whom Kwa-Ndebele was established, in line with the government's supposed policy of ethnic partition.

<sup>5</sup> F.A. Van Jaarsveld, Die Ndzundza-Ndebele en die Blankes in Transvaal 1845-1883 (Unp. M.A. thesis, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, 1985), p.246.

<sup>6</sup> N.J. Van Warmelo, Transvaal Ndebele Texts: Ethnological Publications vol.1 (Pretoria, Government Printer, 1930), p.7.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

However, the belief among some of my Northern Sotho informants that “Matebele”, whom they had always called “Matswitwa” for “Ndzundza”, must be the former cannibals referred to in fairy-tales like “Tselane and the giant”, who once lived in the “Kgwathlamba” (Drakensberg) mountains<sup>8</sup>, cannot be accepted for historical truth. I am not for a moment suggesting that testimony ought never to be accepted. I do not even deny, though I do not assert it that there may be cases in which a Ndebele might have killed a Sotho either for muti or for some other mundane reason. What I assert is that the knowledge we gain from such testimony cannot be historical knowledge because it cannot be vindicated by appeal to the grounds on which it is based, namely evidence. At best this would only amount to belief in testimony and we know that such belief stops where history begins.

Closely analysed, people who hold such beliefs were no doubt influenced by such writers as Solomon Plaatje, when referring to Mzilikazi’s Matabele in his novel, *Mhudi*. In this book one of Plaatje’s characters marvels as follows: *“What kind of people are the Matabele?” “...They are nearly all much blacker than ourselves. Their men go about stark naked even in the presence of children....Even in winter, they scarcely ever cloak themselves against the cold winds. Winter cloaks are the luxury of a few of their nobility. But in the summer months no Matabele ever puts on anything. They only carry spears and shields; for the rest they walk about just like children!” “...they are the kaal-Kaffers.” “...travelling in the country you will easily distinguish their footmarks from ours: unless the ground be very damp most of our men wear sandals, but not the Matabele. They nearly always go barefooted. Again if you examine individual footprints, you will find that the Matabele feet are much shorter, yet half as stout again as Barolong feet. When they kill cattle or game they leave only the dung. They will eat up every bit of the animal, including*

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<sup>8</sup> Interview with Mr S.D. Lekotoko, 14 April 1997.

*the offal. When they kill men, you will notice by the dead bodies that they are impartial in their killing. Old men, young men, boys, girls and babies-everybody is speared without discrimination.”<sup>9</sup>*

The first identifiable Ndebele chief was Mafana the father of Mhlanga. Their earliest settlement in the Transvaal was known as Emhlangeni near Randfontein. In contrast to Mzilikazi’s tribe the Transvaal Ndebele are offshoots from one tribe under chief Musi, the son of Mhlanga. Musi had six sons viz. Manala, Ndzundza, Mhwaduba, Dlomu, Mthombeni(Kekana) and Sibasa.<sup>10</sup> On account of a struggle for succession between the eldest son Manala and his brother Ndzundza, Musi’s tribe became divided into the Manala and the Ndzundza Ndebele. Though it is not known for certain what occasioned the branching off of the other groups what is known is that Mhwaduba branched off and eventually settled in the Hammanskraal(Moretele) district of what later became Bophuthatswana homeland. Dlomu moved back to “Lundini” their original residence in Natal, but according to Coetzee, “Dlomu het egter in Natal agtergebly toe die ander seuns na Transvaal verhuis het”.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Sol T. Plaatje, Mhudi, (London, Heinemann, 1978), p.86.

<sup>10</sup> Van Warmelo, Transvaal Ndebele Texts, pp.12-13. Historians are not in agreement as to the names of these sons. For instance, H.C.M. Fourie, Amandebele van Fene Mahlangu en hun religieus sociaal leven (Zwolle La Riviere & Voorhoeve, 1921), p.33. cited in Van Warmelo, Transvaal Ndebele Texts, p. 8. mentions only five names excluding Sibasa, yet he has Masombuka in the place of Mhwaduba. While C.J.Van Vuuren, in his Die Vestigingspatroon van die Suid-Ndebele, pp.12-13 mentions seven names including Skosana in the list.

<sup>11</sup> C.J.Coetzee, Die Strewe tot Etniese Konsolidasie en Nasionale Selfverwesening by die Ndebele van Transvaal (D.Phil.thesis, University of Potchefstroom for Christian Higher Education, 1980), p. 232.

Mthombeni(Kekana) trekked northwards with a number of followers behind him, thus becoming the founder of the Northern Ndebele now living in many parts of the former Lebowa homeland. The sixth son, Sibasa, moved to Venda.<sup>12</sup>

All these different branches of the Ndebele suffered heavily at the hands of Mzilikazi during the 1820's with the Manala section nearly annihilated until they sought refuge at the Wallmansthal Mission station. The Ndzundza regrouped under chief Mapoch, eventually settling east of the Steelpoort River. Here they established themselves as a regional power in the fortified strongholds of KoNomtjharhelo(Mapoch Caves).

Although the Ndzundza were relatively strong they were overshadowed by the more powerful Pedi kingdom to the north.<sup>13</sup> Though both tribes lived fairly peacefully with the Boer trekkers in the Eastern Transvaal, there were frequent disputes over land, labour and taxes. In 1877 the British took control of the Transvaal and set out to break the power of the African kingdoms. Consequently, after a long and bitter war, the Pedi kingdom was defeated in 1879. The destruction of the Pedi power left the Ndzundza even more vulnerable as the last obstacle to complete colonial control in the Eastern Transvaal.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Van Warmelo, Transvaal Ndebele Texts, pp.11-13.  
About the name Sibasa, Van Warmelo says that it must be an echo of the tradition that the present day Mphaphuli tribe in the former Venda homeland is known to have some connection with Musi.

<sup>13</sup> P. Delius, The Land Belongs To Us: The Pedi Polity, the Boers and the British in the Nineteenth-century Transvaal (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1983), p.24. See also, P.Delius, "Abel Erasmus: Power and Profit in the Eastern Transvaal", in W.Beinart et. al.(eds), Putting a Plough to the Ground: Accumulation and Dispossession in Rural South Africa 1850-1930 (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1986), p.178.

<sup>14</sup> For a full overview of the history of the period, see, Delius, The Land Belongs To Us, p.178.

When the Transvaal was returned to Boer rule in 1881, the new government was determined to end Ndzundza independence. It demanded that the Ndebele recognise the white settler's ownership of land, provide labour, pay rent and taxes. It was these demands which the Ndzundza, now led by a defiant chief Nyabela, refused. What actually ignited the already volatile situation between the Boers and the Ndzundza was chief Nyabela's refusal to hand over Mampuru who was being wanted by the authorities for the murder of his brother Sekhukhune. In retribution therefore Sekhukhune's followers with the support of the ZAR burghers sieged the Ndzundza stronghold for eight months until starvation led to their surrender. As Van Coller puts it, "Die honger word so erg gevoel dat sommiges verplig is om beesmis te eet en baie sterf van honger."<sup>15</sup> In this way the Ndzundza, like all other African chiefdoms, were defeated and subjugated to white rule.

Consequently the once strong Ndzundza chiefdom that had long been an obstacle standing in the way of achieving the Boer's ideal of owning all the fertile land in the eastern part of the Transvaal was removed. And it was therefore left to the ZAR to appropriate the land to those Boers who helped to bring the defiant Ndebeles to submission.

### **2.1.2. The effects of the Mapoch War on Ndzundza unity**

The effects of the Mapoch war were of far-reaching significance on the already divided Ndzundza. Besides the imprisonment of Chief Nyabela which robbed the tribe of the necessary leadership at the time it was needed so much, the ZAR feared that if the Ndzundza were left in

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<sup>15</sup> H.P. Van Coller, "Mampoer in die Stryd om die Bapedi-troon: die Mapoch-oorlog 1882-1883", *Historiese Studies*, jaargang 3, nr. 3-4 Oktober - Desember 1942, p. 128.

possession of their land the peace that ensued would be of a transitory nature. Consequently, on 20 July 1883 the ZAR resolved that the Ndebele would no longer be permitted to live in independence, but instead they were dispersed all over the Republic.<sup>16</sup> In implementing this resolution the Ndzundza were thus distributed among the Boer farmers as indentured servants for a period of five years.<sup>17</sup>

The end of the period of formal indenture in 1888 resulted in the Ndzundza moving from farm to farm since there was virtually no land set aside for Ndebele settlement. On the other hand their unity was made even more impossible by the squatter laws of 1887 which prohibited them from congregating on farms.<sup>18</sup> Thus deprived of both land and leadership, the Ndzundza entered the 20th century acutely disadvantaged as compared to the other African people of the Transvaal. And it is precisely against this background of Ndzundza history of dispossession that one should understand the origin of the later Kwa-Ndebele homeland.

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<sup>16</sup> F.S. Cillie, The Mapoch's Gronden: An aspect of the Poor White question (M.A. thesis, University of Pretoria, 1934), p.3.

<sup>17</sup> C.J. Van Vuuren, "Ndzundza-Ndebele en die Mapochsgrotte", South African Journal of Ethnology vol.8. No.2. (1985) p.44.

For the harsh terms of the Resolution of the Transvaal Volksraad of 20 July 1883 with regard to the fate of the thousands of Ndzundzas who survived the eight-months siege, see E.A.Schneider, Paint, Pride and Politics: Aesthetic and Meaning in Transvaal Ndebele Wall Art (D.Phil.thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 1986), p. 205 and Phatlane, The History of The Ndzundza Ndebele, pp.41-49.

<sup>18</sup> E. Ritchken, "The Kwa-Ndebele Struggle Against Independence", South African Review, vol. 5 (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1989), p.431.



### 2.1.3. Further division of the Ndzundza

Various attempts were made by the Ndzundza elite to bring the tribe together and to try and regain their lost independence and land, but all such attempts were unsuccessful, partly due to the squatter legislation that has been cited and sometimes mainly due to a lack of proper leadership. For instance, on 11 September 1919 in a further desperate attempt to forge Ndebele unity, the two principal tribes comprising the South Ndebele established the Ndzundza-Manala National Association with the expressed purpose of uniting all the Ndzundza and Manala clans as “children of the same father, to unite their financial resources in order to raise them as a nation among nations”.<sup>19</sup> In spite of these efforts however, various government commissions of the late-1910s failed to meet Ndebele requests for their own land.

At about this time Nyabela’s brother, Madzidzi had regrouped a section of the Ndzundza and settled at Kafferskraal, thus further dividing the already scattered “Mapokkers”. In 1923 chief Mayisha Cornelius Mahlangu managed to purchase a farm “Weltevreden” north-east of Pretoria in the Groblersdal district where he then settled with a section of his people.<sup>20</sup> In 1939 the Ndzundza section at Kafferskraal moved to trust farms in the Nebo district, east of Groblersdal.<sup>21</sup> Both branches of the Ndzundza still cherished the hope that they would one day return to their own land, Mapochsgronden. However these hopes were abandoned when in 1959 the Nebo

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<sup>19</sup> C.A.D. Ndzundza-Manala National Association 11/9/1919 File No.1016/19/f.

<sup>20</sup> D.N. James, Kinship and Land in an Inter-Ethnic Rural Community (M.A. thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 1987), p. 49.

<sup>21</sup> An overview of this group of Ndebele can be found in Deborah James, “Kinship and Land in an Inter-Ethnic Rural Community”pp.49-52.

section under the regent Chief Jack Mahlangu accepted recognition as a tribal authority within the Nebo Regional Authority in the Lebowa homeland. Members of this tribal authority started moving from farm to farm informing the people that land was available for Ndebeles in Nebo. It was this move which marked the permanent split with the Ndzundza section at Weltevreden who continued to insist that the only land that would be acceptable to the Ndebeles was Mapochsgronden.<sup>22</sup>

## 2.2. The Ndzundza (Mapoch) Tribal Authority

History has it that towards the close of the 1960s conditions on the farms were gradually becoming unbearable for the Ndebeles as farmers resisted any forms of 'westernisation' in their tenants. On the other hand, cash payments were replaced with payments in mealie meal, while influx control was tightened, making access to the cities almost impossible. The youth resisted farmwork and demanded access to education, a right which was denied to them on the farms. Over and above these there was an increase in the process of mechanisation on farms thus rendering more farm labourers redundant. This combination of redundancy and youth resistance to developing farm conditions resulted in constant evictions.<sup>23</sup> Those who were thus evicted could either try and find employment on other farms or settle in the already established homelands such as Lebowa and Bophuthatswana, since for the Ndebeles there was none, as Van

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<sup>22</sup> Coetsee, Die strewe tot etniese konsolidasie en nasionale selfverwesening by die Ndebele van Transvaal, p.409.

*It is interesting to note that since 1884 a tradition of meeting annually on 19 December at the site of the Ndzundza's defeat at "Erholweni" meaning "Mapoch-Caves" was established. The Ndzundza from all over the country attended the ritual where the battle was commemorated and the dream of re-establishing a Ndzundza state was rekindled.*

<sup>23</sup> Ritchken, "The Kwa-Ndebele Struggle Against Independence", in Review 5, p. 434.

Vuuren put it, “met die inwerkingtreding van die Wet op die Bevordering van Swart Selfbestuur (Wet 46 van 1959) is die Suid-Ndebele nie as 'n afsonderlike etniese eenheid aangedui nie”.<sup>24</sup>

In the meantime a number of Ndebele tribal authorities had been established in Lebowa and Bophuthatswana. And it was to these authorities that most of the Ndebeles who were evicted from the farms went. No wonder that on 22 November 1968 Mapoch also accepted recognition of the Ndzundza Tribal Authority in the Weltevreden area, thereby relinquishing any hopes of ever returning to Mapochsgronden, hitherto called “KoNomtjharhelo” by the Ndzundza.<sup>25</sup> Soon after the tribal authority was formally inaugurated, its first chairman S.S. Skosana “started to move among the Ndebele with a bicycle to try and organise them”.<sup>26</sup>

However, even in the late 1960s, after almost eighty years of their dispersal from the Mapochsgronden, the once formidable Ndebele chiefdom had never again known unity. They remained politically divided, economically weak and geographically dispersed. This condition confirmed the government’s position regarding a separate Ndebele homeland, and it was precisely at this stage in the development of the government’s policy of “divide and rule” that the government seems to have hoped that the hitherto scattered Ndebele would integrate into neighbouring homelands and thereby “disappear”.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Van Vuuren, “Ndzundza Ndebele en die Mapochsgrotte”, South African Journal of Ethnology, p.44.

<sup>25</sup> C.A.D., Notice No. 2143 of 22 November 1968 File 6/1/2/13.

<sup>26</sup> “Interview with S.S.Skosana”, cited in McCaul, Satellite in Revolt, p.4.

<sup>27</sup> Die Volksblad, 15 March 1979, cited in McCaul, Satellite in Revolt, p.4.

The foregoing notwithstanding, the Ndebele elites had through a host of various organisations including the Ndebele Ethnic Unit and the Transvaal National Ndebele Organisation, persistently called for a separate ethnic recognition, a demand consistent with the government's own policy of ethnic "Balkanisation" of South Africa.<sup>28</sup> The Ndebele even wanted the government to remove the Ndzundza Tribal Authority from the jurisdiction of Lebowa to the central government and to develop them as a separate unit. For instance, in a memorandum to the Commissioner of Bantu Affairs they stated emphatically that, "The Southern Ndebele can be moved to any place where they will very soon be allowed to establish themselves separate from any other existing Government service".<sup>29</sup>

By this time three other Ndebele tribal authorities had been established in Bophuthatswana, *viz.* Manala, Litho and Pungutsa Tribal Authorities under chiefs Alfred Mabena, Lazarus Mahlangu and Isaac Mahlangu respectively.<sup>30</sup> In a move which represented a change of policy towards the Ndebele, in March 1972 the officials of the Bantu Administration Department met with the leaders of the various Ndebele tribal authorities and discussed for the first time the possibility of creating a Ndebele homeland.<sup>31</sup> However, at this stage the government had not decided whether to use the Ndzundza land at Weltevrede or that in Nebo as the heartland around which the homeland would be consolidated.<sup>32</sup> However, in April 1973, BAD issued final plans for such

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<sup>28</sup> Van Vuuren, "Ndzundza Ndebele en die Mapochsgrotte", South African Journal of Ethnology, p.45.

<sup>29</sup> C.A.D. Memorandum to Bantu Affairs Commissioner, 5/4/70, File No. 11/2/2 (2) Part I.

<sup>30</sup> McCaul, Satellite in Revolt, p.4.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, p.5.

<sup>32</sup> SAIRR, Survey of Race Relations 1972, p.173.

a homeland located in the Weltevrede area.<sup>33</sup> I would argue, that in the light of the preceding information on the government's initial attitude towards an Ndebele homeland, this sudden departure from the initial policy was, unlike in other homelands, not driven by a genuine attempt to implement the separate development policy in its traditional form. The reasoning behind this new development will be considered later.

### **2.3. The Ndzundza Regional Authority**

In view of the "newly discovered Ndebebele ethnic group", the Department of Bantu Administration released draft plans for the creation of an Ndebele homeland in 1972. As a first step in this direction the size of the nucleus for such a homeland, that is Weltevreden farm, was enlarged by the addition of farms, Kliplaatdrift, Waterval, Pieterskraal, Kameelrivier, Vrieskraal, Mathyszynloop and Valschfontein, a total of 51000 hectares.<sup>34</sup> The latter farm, Valschfontein, originally belonged to the Bantoana section of Moutse.<sup>35</sup> At this time the Ndzundza Tribal Authority was excised from Lebowa's jurisdiction and was given jurisdiction over this new area. Being thus enlarged, it is less surprising to note that in terms of section 5 of the Bantu Authorities Act(Act 68 of 1951), on 5 July 1974 the Ndzundza Tribal Authority received the powers, functions and duties of a regional authority as a first step to the eventual formation of

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<sup>33</sup> SAIRR, Survey of Race Relations 1973, p.152.

<sup>34</sup> McCaul, Satellite in Revolt, p.5.

<sup>35</sup> C.A.D. Minutes of a meeting of Moutse Regional Authority, 22 November 1962, File No.11/2/2 (2). This point requires brief mentioning because it had future significance in the history of the Ndebele and of the Bantoane people of Moutse because when the latter area was incorporated into the Ndebele homeland in 1985, the Bantoane would not accept to be governed by people they regarded as newcomers in the area and who according to them were their subjects.

a homeland government.<sup>36</sup>

Various attempts were made by the Ndzundza elite to include the Manala Tribal Authority into this newly created Ndzundza Regional Authority and numerous representations were made to the Commissioner of Bantu Affairs to this effect.<sup>37</sup> However, on 20 May 1977 the government gazetted Proclamation R871 in terms of which the Mnyamana Regional Authority, combining the Manala, Litho and Pungutsa Tribal Authorities, was established. On 21 July 1977 the Amandebele-a-Moletlane Tribal Authority seceded from the Moretele Regional Authority in Bophuthatswana and joined this newly established Mnyamana Regional Authority.<sup>38</sup>

#### **2.4. The South Ndebele Territorial Authority**

In terms of the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951 territorial authorities could be established for two or more regional authorities. Such an institution would consist of all the members of the regional authorities concerned which in turn elected a chief executive councillor as well as other councillors. In accordance with this provision, on 7 October 1977 the central government gazetted Notice No.2021 which provided for the establishment of the Ndebele Territorial Authority.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> The Union of S.A., Government Gazette, No.4337 Notice No.135 (Pretoria, Government Printer, 1974), p.9.

<sup>37</sup> C.A.D. Letter to Commissioner of Bantu Affairs, 27/9/74, File 1-12/28 N.1/1/3

<sup>38</sup> SAIRR, Survey 1977, p.358.

<sup>39</sup> Ritchken, "The Kwa-Ndebele Struggle Against Independence", South African Review 5, p.437. See also, Colin Murray, "Displaced Urbanization: Rural Slums", in W. Beinart and S. Dubow (eds), Segregation and Apartheid in Twentieth Century South Africa (London, Routledge, 1995), p.243.

Proclamations, R253, R254 and R255 gazetted on the same day contain regulations combining the Mnyamana and the Ndzundza Regional Authorities, into this South Ndebele Territorial Authority.<sup>40</sup> This authority which fell in the Groblersdal area of the North-Eastern Transvaal did not involve the loss of land by the Lebowa homeland, though it was hoped that certain North Ndebele tribes would secede from Lebowa to join their Ndebele brethren in the south. However, no people were moved as the three tribal authorities in the Hammanskraal district seceded from Bophuthatswana, as the Mnyamana Regional Authority.

Opening the second assembly of the Ndebele Territorial Authority on 31 August 1978, deputy minister of Plural Relations and Development, Dr W.L.Vosloo, promised that legislation providing for the recognition of the South Ndebele as a national unit would go through parliament in 1979 and that the institution of a legislative assembly was receiving the attention of his department.<sup>41</sup> Earlier that year, Deputy Minister of Development Dr Ferdie Hartzenberg, said that during 1978 more than 9 000 families had settled in Kwa-Ndebele, and he further revealed plans to increase the territory's size by the addition of more land.<sup>42</sup> At the same time the escalating wave of harassment of the non-Tswanas in Bophuthatswana, where they were forced to accept Bophuthatswana citizenship as a condition for employment and to use Tswana as medium of instruction at schools, resulted in numerous mass meetings in which deliberations were made to defy the Bophuthatswana Government rather than leave the homeland.<sup>43</sup> According to the Ndebele spokesperson in the Hammanskraal area the Ndebele were not

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<sup>40</sup> SAIRR, Survey 1977, p.358.

<sup>41</sup> SAIRR, Survey 1978, p.296.

<sup>42</sup> SAIRR, Survey 1979, p. 320.

<sup>43</sup> Post, 15 December 1978.

prepared to go to the new Ndebele homeland which was being developed near Groblersdal.<sup>44</sup> This outright rejection to go to the area specially being developed for them belied the government's claim that Ndebele nationalism was behind the establishment of the new homeland. If one takes into consideration the stance taken by the Nebo section of the Ndzundza regarding the creation of Kwa-Ndebele it becomes clear that had the Ndebele in Bophuthatswana not have been harassed into taking the Bophuthatswana citizenship or leaving the territory for Kwa-Ndebele, they also would have preferred to stay. However, because of the new Bophuthatswana citizenship Act which came into effect on 1 December 1978, all residents of Bophuthatswana including the non-Tswanas were compelled either to accept Bophuthatswana Citizenship or were rendered stateless. This was so because these residents had automatically lost their South African citizenship rights when Bophuthatswana became independent in 1977.<sup>45</sup> Although according to section 4 of the Act citizenship should be optional, the Mangope administration made it compulsory and it was increasingly used in the allocation of resources.

## **2.5 Legislative Assembly Status**

Indeed the creation of a homeland for the Ndebele-speaking South Ndebele met with opposition among the Ndebele themselves. The government's proposal separated the South Ndebele from their brethren in the north. Various attempts at secession from Lebowa were made through the Northern Transvaal Amandebele Organisation, yet with ever-diminishing success. The Nationalist government however, convinced as it was that the Black nations of South Africa

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<sup>44</sup> The Star, 26 December 1978, The Citizen, 3 January 1978 and To The Point, 20 January 1978.

<sup>45</sup> Post, 24 December 1978.



should exist as distinctly disparate ethnic groups, each with a traditional homeland that served as the geo-political nucleus of the relevant group's national development, did not seem to regard the plight of the Northern Ndebele as of importance to the basic government policy.

After the Transkei Constitution Act of 1963, it was considered more satisfactory to introduce a blanket measure rather than a separate act for each territory. In this connection the Bantu Homelands Constitution Act was passed in 1971. Chapter 1 of the act dealt with the establishment of legislative assemblies to replace the territorial authorities, while chapter 2 dealt with a subsequent stage when a further degree of self-government would be granted. In the preamble of the act it is stated that "the government reaffirmed that it was its firm and irrevocable intention to lead each individual Bantu nation to self-government and ultimate independence".<sup>46</sup>

I would argue that to a great extent it was more because of this intention of granting each Black group independence, than because of any other reason that Kwa-Ndebele was established in 1972. That explains why on 1 October 1979, Proclamations R204, R205 and R206 of 1979 established the Kwa-Ndebele Legislative Assembly in terms of chapter 1 of the National States Act. This assembly replaced the territorial authority and the executive council for the Ndebele territory. In terms of the new status a legislative assembly with 46 nominated members made up of the four chiefs of the homeland, (Ndzundza, Manala, Litho and Pungutsa) and 42 nominated members of these four tribal authorities were established.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> SAIRR, Survey 1972, p. 24.

<sup>47</sup> Ritchken, "The struggle Against Independence", South African Review 5, p.437. *In terms of the new status the Chief Executive Councillor became the Chief Minister with increased powers such as the right to appoint or remove chiefs from the assembly. And*

Thus on 1 October 1979 close to 2 000 Ndebeles gathered at the Kameelrivier Stadium to hear the Minister of Co-operation and Development, Dr Piet Koornhof, officially inaugurating the Kwa-Ndebele Legislative Assembly. As could be expected, with obvious reference to the 10 000 families<sup>48</sup> who came to Kwa-Ndebele from Bophuthatswana and many others who were displaced by the government's other policies, many of whom were not necessarily Ndebeles, the minister said, "they wanted to return to their own home where they felt at home".<sup>49</sup>

## 2.6. Self-Government Status

On 1 April 1981 Kwa-Ndebele received the status of Self-Government in terms of chapter 2 of the National States Constitution Act of 1971. The new Legislative Assembly consisted of 46 nominated members and a six-member cabinet appointed by the Chief Minister to replace the Executive Council. The first Kwa-Ndebele cabinet comprised of:

S.S.Skosana--Chief Minister

Piet M.Ntuli--Minister of Interior

M.F. Mahlangu--Minister of Justice

Z.D.Mnguni-- Minister of Agriculture

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*it was abuse of this right which often put the chiefs on a collision course with the cabinet of S.S.Skosana.*

<sup>48</sup> Surplus Peoples Project, Forced Removals in South Africa, vol 5, p.57. as cited in McCaul, Satellite in Revolt, p.8. According to Mrs Norah Nkabinde who had moved to Kwa-Ndebele from Bophuthatswana, they were told by the Bophuthatswana authorities that if their children did not want to be taught in Setswana, they should go to Zululand, Post, 26 January 1978. And this is the reason why she left, not because of a new spirit of Ndebele nationalism, as suggested by the government of the day.

<sup>49</sup> Hansard, 21, col. 10735 (1983).

K.M.Mtsweni--Minister of Works

Prince C.N. Mahlangu--Minister of Education and Culture.<sup>50</sup>

As part of the State's propaganda at the time, in opening the Kwa-Ndebele Legislative Assembly, the State President Mr Marais Viljoen also erroneously referred to the influx of people into Kwa-Ndebele in the late 1970's and the early 1980's as subsequent to a "surging" nationalism of the Ndebele nation. "...As the flame of nationalism had burned strongly in Africa since the Second World War, how could it be wrong for the government of South Africa to acknowledge the human desire for unfettered freedom....Down the years your people have remained loyal to their language and their culture, thus ensuring that they were not swallowed up by the other black peoples, so that today they can maintain themselves as a nation in its own right with its own territory...Through the large scale migration of your people to their own country, the Ndebele nation is bringing together that which belongs together".<sup>51</sup> This assumption by the State President was belied by later developments in the territory.

## **2.7. Kwa-Ndebele Opts for Independence**

By 1981, the very year in which Kwa-Ndebele achieved self-governing status, it became clear that the leadership had already set the territory on the path to independence, by signing an agreement with Holiday-Inns, promising the group casino rights in an independent Kwa-

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<sup>50</sup> McCaul, Satellite in Revolt, p.6. See also, Kwa-Ndebele Monumente Komitee, The Ndzundza Ndebele and the Mapoch Caves, p1.

<sup>51</sup> Informa, September 1981. Cited in McCaul, Satellite in Revolt, p.6.

Ndebele.<sup>52</sup> This report was denied by South Africa's Commissioner General in Kwa-Ndebele, Mr J.H.Mills, that as a 'non-independent' homeland, Kwa-Ndebele did not have powers to legislate on matters of gambling and therefore the agreement was invalid.<sup>53</sup> However, this is enough to indicate at least how early the issue of independence was already placed on the agenda of the Kwa-Ndebele leadership. Only a year later the legislative assembly passed a motion requesting the state to prepare Kwa-Ndebele for independence.<sup>54</sup> As already indicated, Kwa-Ndebele had provided accommodation for large numbers of people rendered homeless by various aspects of apartheid. The government was only eager to oblige to this request, in view of the fact that independence would ensure that its responsibility for this population such as health-care, welfare and social services would be passed on to the new state. As Deborah James put it, "In view of its woefully meagre resources, its proposed 'independence' is perhaps more ludicrous than that of any of the other 'national states' in South Africa".<sup>55</sup>

It is against this background that one should very closely analyse the circumstances, both material and political that led to the ultimate establishment of Kwa-Ndebele, in order to prove that whatever the reasons, Kwa-Ndebele did not come about as a result of genuine government policy to create an ethnic unit, consistent with the policy of separate development.

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<sup>52</sup> The Star, 25 February 1981.

<sup>53</sup> SAIRR, Survey 1982, p. 433.

<sup>54</sup> Sunday Times, 30 May 1982.

<sup>55</sup> James, Kinship and Land in an Inter-Ethnic Rural Community, p.55.

## 2.8. Why Kwa-Ndebele's belated establishment?

To start with, one may say, if the establishment of Kwa-Ndebele was not in keeping with the government's traditional policy of "divide and rule", then we must look elsewhere for the reasons why it was established. In this regard I would argue that the emergence of Kwa-Ndebele was only coincidental, especially if we consider the various examples that have already been cited that the government had actually expected the Ndebele to integrate into other national states, and thereby disappear. Indeed, this was out of step with the government's policy of ethnic purity. According to the separate development theory, the government had not only to respect and conserve the ethnic integrity of each ethnic group in South Africa but also to prepare each nation for ultimate self-determination. In this way it was not surprising that in the government's formulation of programmes to regulate relations between the separate communities in the country, the ethnic principle and other ethnic considerations played a decisive role.

In attempting to provide a satisfactory answer to the question why was Kwa-Ndebele established despite the government's declared expectations, the following factors immediately come to mind: The idea of creating homelands for the different Black nations in South Africa was conceived as far back as 1959 with the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act, and consequent to that eight homelands were established. By 1979 when the government considered the advisability of creating Kwa-Ndebele already twenty years after the 1959 legislation, two homelands had become independent. Thus one factor that may be suggested for this new policy towards the Ndebele is the independence issue. Initially when the separate development policy was initiated it was never intended that the separate Black nations would ultimately become independent. So the government was content with the Ndebele integrated in other homelands,

but when the issue of independence was introduced, it became necessary to consider a separate territory for them as well.

Another factor that has already been cited, was changes in the practice of agriculture on white farms, such as an increase in the process of mechanisation which rendered many former farm labourers redundant. Consequently, it became counter-productive for farmers to house large numbers of tenants on farms who were rendered surplus by changed economic circumstances.<sup>56</sup>

Again the squatter legislation made it increasingly difficult for the Ndebele to congregate on farms without being attached to the farm by any labour contract. The result of all these was eviction of these ex-labour tenants whose movements from one place to another put pressure on the government, which inescapably realised that these people were also entitled to their own territory. This was a new problem which could not have been foreseen within the earlier versions of the 'grand apartheid' design.<sup>57</sup> Initially, these people had two places where they could go: first they could go and settle with the Nebo section of the Ndzundza in Lebowa; or alternatively they could move to chief Mapoch's place at Weltevreden.<sup>58</sup>

However, what made the provision of land for Ndebele settlement an even more pressing issue was the pressure which these people placed in the other homelands to which they went, such as Lebowa and Bophuthatswana. For obvious reasons, these governments could not afford to house

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<sup>56</sup> Ritchken, "The Kwa-Ndebele Struggle Against Independence", South African Review 5, p.434.

<sup>57</sup> James, Kinship and Land in an Inter-Ethnic Rural Community, p.51.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

these people without the government increasing their share in the allocation of resources to accommodate them. This is what led to the harassment of the non-Tswana people in Bophuthatswana with the further result that they looked to the government for a place to settle. As McCaul, referring to the 10 000 families that had been relocated in Kwa-Ndebele from Winterveld, concluded, "it was these hapless migrants, persecuted by the Bophuthatswana administration, who provided the social and demographic base for the separate homeland pursued by various Ndebele elites".<sup>59</sup> On the other hand, in pursuit and implementation of its own influx control measures the government's policies had displaced large sections of the people who were considered superfluous to white economic requirements. These people also needed to be housed somewhere, and the creation of Kwa-Ndebele was the quickest solution. The policy of clearing South Africa of the "Black Spots" has also contributed to the displacement of large sections of the population and Kwa-Ndebele became the dumping ground for these people. Of particular importance in this regard is that not everybody involved in this process was an Ndebele, a factor that would justify the eventual creation of an Ndebele homeland. If the requirement of ethnicity was considered determinative for settlement into Kwa-Ndebele, the government would certainly find it difficult to continue to ignore the requests of the Northern Ndebele to be joined with their brothers in the south.

Thus given this background, it is beyond question that the people who ultimately came to settle in Kwa-Ndebele were not necessarily Ndebeles. Because of its proximity to the metropolitan areas of PWV, most people who were thus displaced preferred to trek to Kwa-Ndebele as the closest they could get to their work in these areas, without the risk of breaking influx control regulations. What this argument clearly negates is the government's suggestion that the

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<sup>59</sup> McCaul, Satellite in Revolt, p.8.

establishment of Kwa-Ndebele was motivated by the “surging” nationalism of the Ndebele people. This argument also challenges Coetzee’s conclusion that what the Ndebele nation actually wanted after all these years of dispersal, was “ etniese konsolidasie en nasionale selfverwesenliking”.<sup>60</sup>

Instead contrary to this view, there is persuasive evidence to prove that thousands of people who ultimately settled in Kwa-Ndebele since the 1970s, were mainly forced there by structural processes beyond their control. To illustrate this point, the main categories of relocations to Kwa-Ndebele can be classified into victims of rural and urban “Black Spot” removals, farm evictions in the wake of the abolition of the labour tenant system and refugees from Bophuthatswana which purged the homeland of non-Tswanas while many others came by choice, since Kwa-Ndebele was one of the homeland areas close to the industrial centres of the PWV.<sup>61</sup> There is therefore nothing that says that all these victims of the government’s policies were always Ndebeles.

Against this background one may say that the government’s establishment of Kwa-Ndebele, though ideologically consistent with its policy of ethnic “Balkanisation” of South Africa, largely reflected a desperate attempt to manage the socio-economic and political realities in the country through the simple application of an existing policy. As Richard Tomlinson had observed, “if there were freedom of association, freedom of movement, freedom of organisation, then Kwa-

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<sup>60</sup> In his comprehensive work on the Ndebele of Transvaal, C.J. Coetzee was at pains to prove that the Ndebele people were striving for ethnic consolidation and national self-determination, but future events (1986) negated this conclusion.

<sup>61</sup> Financial Mail, 22 April 1986. Even official population statistics indicate that perhaps 50% of the population were non- Ndebele and almost as many Ndebele lived outside their designated homeland.



Ndebele would disappear. In other words, if there were freedom of association in the economy, and people could move to the urban areas and settle, then Kwa-Ndebele would be a cure for which no disease exists".<sup>62</sup> And it was in recognition of this fact that, very soon after obtaining the self-government status, Kwa-Ndebele opted for independence. And the central government, which in reality was not interested in creating separate homelands for different ethnic groups, but simply interested in getting rid of as many blacks as possible from South Africa and handing them over to the political responsibility of some independent homeland, was more than willing to consolidate Kwa-Ndebele in an effort to make it more viable for independence.

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<sup>62</sup> R. Tomlinson, "The Socio-Economic Predicament of the Inhabitants of Kwa-Ndebele", in G. Kruger and P. Rainey, (eds), Kwa-Ndebele-The Future? The proceedings of a forum organised by Lawyers for Human Rights and held at the University of Pretoria on 16 May 1988 (Pretoria, December, 1988), p.111.

## CHAPTER 3

### KWA-NDEBELE AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF MBOKOTHO

#### PART ONE:

#### 3.1. Background

With Transkeian independence in 1976, the concept of a homeland as a political option that had only been available in theory, was taken to its logical conclusion. Indeed this eventuality no doubt gave credence to Nationalist assertions that the Whites were not a minority within a majority comprising mainly African people, but instead were a minority alongside other ethnic minorities which were constituted on a tribal and linguistic basis. For instance, in his so-called "Rubicon speech" in August 1985, P.W.Botha stated emphatically, "we are not prepared to accept the antiquated, simplistic and racist approach that South Africa consists of a white minority within a black majority...The nature of the population is 'multi-cultural and poly-ethnic.'"<sup>1</sup>

Ideally, from the point of view of Nationalist policy planners each of these peoples would in time gain their separate freedom in the same way that the Transkei had done, so that in the end the world-widely detested discrimination on the grounds of colour and race alone would disappear.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, it was argued that when all the remaining homelands had achieved their

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<sup>1</sup> J. Barber and J. Barratt, South Africa's Foreign Policy: The search for status and security 1945-1988 (England, Cambridge University Press 1990), p.322.

<sup>2</sup> Omer-Cooper, History of Southern Africa, p.212.

independence in this way, a South Africa reduced to its large and prosperous white core would remain with a legitimacy derived from the contrived process of internal 'decolonisation'. Thus in this white-constructed ideal world of the future, South Africa's relationship with its African peoples would have been transformed from a hierarchical pattern of domination and subordination in one society, to a mosaic of juridically equal states.<sup>3</sup> Though the truth was Davenport's observation that the Afrikaner nationalist's dream about the Republic of South Africa was, "an independent white dominated republic surrounded by a cluster of economically dependent and therefore politically impotent black client states".<sup>4</sup>

The successful launching of Transkeian independence in 1976 resulted in Bophuthatswana, Venda, and the Ciskei accepting this status in 1977, 1979 and 1981 respectively. However, perhaps to the dismay of the launcher, certain homeland leaders declared in no uncertain terms that they would not fall into the master-plan. Crucial to their decision, it would seem, was their realisation that in contrast to Stultz's conclusion that in pressing independence on Transkei, Kaizer Matanzima "has delivered more in the way of actual African emancipation from white oppression in Southern Africa than any other individual in history to date",<sup>5</sup> even if the terms of independence were more generous and made provision for continued and increased economic aid, they would still remain captive clients of the Republic, especially because of the issue of non-recognition by the rest of the world.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Davenport, South Africa: A Modern History, p.345.

<sup>5</sup> Stultz, Transkei's Half Loaf, p.167.

Again in contrast to Butler *et al's* conclusion, these leaders had also realised that by accepting independence they would not in any way increase their leverage in and on the overall South African system.<sup>6</sup> Especially vocal in this regard was Chief Buthelezi of Kwazulu who frequently argued for the maintenance of an undivided South Africa, conceding no more than a limited form of autonomy within a South African federation that encompassed the area then constituting the white heartland.

Another decisive factor in their rejection of independence was the homelands' almost total economic dependence on Pretoria. For instance it was well understood by Matanzima, Mangope, Mphephu and Sebe as leaders of the independent states that any show of opposition to Pretoria on their part could lead to devastating punitive measures such as curtailment of financial assistance or even repatriation of migrant labourers. The economic dependence prohibited 'homeland' governments from asserting any genuinely independent line of policy that might threaten white supremacy or the overall dominance of the South African government.

Their economic plight was best epitomized in the words of Chief Sebe during his objections to a proposal to amalgamate the two Xhosa states of the Transkei and Ciskei that, "I have often said that our people cannot eat flags or constitutions...Now I would ask you this, 'of what benefit would it be to the Ciskei to become part of an independent Transkei which at this very time has completely inadequate financial resources to provide for the development of the area it presently administers?'. Is any benefit to be found in one destitute family joining another to sit down on

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<sup>6</sup> Butler et al., The Black Homelands of South Africa, p.32.

an empty table?"<sup>7</sup> For instance, two years after independence, the Transkei, the most coherent and largest of the independent homelands, still had to be subsidised by the South African government to a tune of R113m, representing 75% of the homeland's total budget.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps the bitter words of a Transkeian official on the occasion of that bantustan's independence, best explains the point when he said, "South Africa has been charged by the world with race discrimination, judged and found guilty, but Transkei has been sent to serve the sentence".<sup>9</sup> No doubt it was basically with these considerations clearly in mind that most of the other homeland leaders have resisted the lure of independence, with the exception of apartheid's newest creation, namely, Kwa-Ndebele.<sup>10</sup>

I have already argued that the establishment of Kwa-Ndebele was necessitated among other things by the pressure within other ethnically defined homelands on people who were resident within those homelands, but who did not belong to those ethnic units, like the case of the non-Tswana minorities in Bophuthatswana.<sup>11</sup> The result of this pressure was evidenced by the eviction of this group who I argue, was not necessarily all Ndebele because they came to Kwa-Ndebele. Thus the working out of the logic of independence in one homeland was instrumental in the creation of another. I concur with Deborah James' view regarding this conclusion, that

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<sup>7</sup> N. Carton (ed), Ciskei: Economics and Politics of Dependence in a South African Homeland (London, Croom Helm, 1980), p.164.

<sup>8</sup> J. Seidman, Face-Lift Apartheid: South Africa After Soweto (London, International Defence and Aid Fund, 1980), p.7.

<sup>9</sup> Stultz, Transkei's Half-Loaf, p.162.

<sup>10</sup> "From dream to nightmare", Financial Mail, 22 August 1986. In this article Kwa-Ndebele is referred to as Pretoria's *laatlanmetjie* homeland that had become the most difficult offspring of the apartheid dream.

<sup>11</sup> For an overview of the plight of these people, see Post, 15 December 1978.

this factor could not by itself be determinative of government policy. Instead, aspects of the South African government's emerging homeland policy such as the pursuit of independence played a more decisive role in creating the need for a separate Ndebele homeland.<sup>12</sup>

It soon became evident that it was the pursuit of independence that accounted for Kwa-Ndebele's meteoric rise to self-government status in 1981. In 1982, hardly a year after self-government status had been achieved and ahead of the very first homeland type elections in the territory that could arguably have given them the mandate to do so, the legislative assembly passed a motion requesting the South African government to prepare Kwa-Ndebele for independence, with 1984 as the initial target date.<sup>13</sup>

The government, which for all practical purposes wanted to keep up the momentum of independence taking on the part of homelands was fairly enthusiastic about Kwa-Ndebele's request, but realised however, that the territory was too small and generally unviable for independence. Meanwhile it would be remembered that in the Congo, as O'Connel points out, there was doubt as to the existence, let alone effectiveness, of a central government, but despite this, it was admitted to the membership of the United Nations.<sup>14</sup> Against this background, it is clear that despite her inadequacies, Kwa-Ndebele's situation was incomparable with that of the Congo in that the need for her independence unlike for the Congo was not based on the freely expressed will and desire of its people.

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<sup>12</sup> James, Kinship and Land in an Inter-Ethnic Rural Community, p.55.

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Mr S.C Ntuli 12 May 1997.

<sup>14</sup> O' Connel, International Law, p.304.

It is to this question of viability or lack of it that I would like to return and to consider very closely, with special focus on conditions in Kwa-Ndebele at the time the independence decision was taken, to determine whether the territory was indeed viable or not for this political eventuality.

### **3.2. Conditions in Kwa-Ndebele, 1982-84**

“There are few other places in South Africa that are so depressing and dreary as the shanty-covered hills that constitute Kwa-Ndebele. The daily struggle for survival in this stony dry and inhospitable land is exhausting and dispiriting. Life is a never-ending round of work and travel interrupted by a few hours’ sleep”.<sup>15</sup>

As could be expected, the announcement in 1982 of the decision to opt for independence by the Kwa-Ndebele legislative assembly invariably focused attention on conditions in the homeland. The foregoing quotation was one of the many descriptions of the conditions in the homeland that were made by observers at the time. Closely analysed, none of the descriptions suggested that Kwa-Ndebele was a viable place to live in, and/or a better alternative to apartheid, as Stultz remarked, “The most dramatic accomplishment of Transkei independence is that the territory itself has been purged of apartheid regulations....”<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> TRAC, “Kwa-Ndebele: The Struggle Against Independence”, in Cobbett and Cohen, Popular Struggles in South Africa, pp.115-116.

<sup>16</sup> Stultz, Transkei’s Half Loaf, p.76.

For a successful racial partition, three crucial variables may be suggested, viz. physical resources, political consent and actual national liberation. For instance in a discussion with Dr H.F. Verwoerd in 1961, the then Secretary General of the United Nations, Dag Hammarskjöld identified three requirements which had to be met if South Africa wanted the homelands to be considered a competitive alternative to political integration. He suggested that there had to be sufficient and coherent territory for the homelands, there had to be rapid economic growth and industrial development in such homelands with the black people working outside these homelands returning home on a voluntary basis and finally, the government needed to make the homelands proceed fairly rapidly to full independence.<sup>17</sup> With Kwa-Ndebele being a classical example, it is interesting how the government ignored the first three requirements, especially on the land issue where the government made virtually no attempt to increase the land allocated to the homelands over and above the 13% laid down in 1936 when the government still had less ambitious plans for the homelands. I shall return to this aspect of land with regard to Kwa-Ndebele in a separate chapter.

A point of particular interest to several writers on any African state resulting from partition is that such a state should be economically viable, in the sense that it should be able to subsist without the aid of the South African government. On a whole this means that the residents of such a state should not have to find employment in the white areas, but should be able to work and prosper in the area of their permanent residence.<sup>18</sup> Probably it was on these grounds that it has been said that of the ten homelands Kwa-Ndebele was the least viable for independence.

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<sup>17</sup> Giliomee and Schlemmer, From Apartheid To Nation-Building, pp.100-101.

<sup>18</sup> Stultz, Transkei's Half Loaf, p.10.



Admittedly, viability has no generally accepted meaning, but I am inclined to believe that what most people have in mind about this aspect is physical independence, adequate employment options for the growing population, the ability to produce sufficient physical and human capital, enough autonomy to exercise tariff exchange and investment controls and the institutionalised capacity for self-sustained growth. Judged by these criteria, there is certainly no denying that Kwa-Ndebele, at least in 1982, did not meet any of the requirements for independence, nor any of the criteria for statehood set by the Montevideo Convention.<sup>19</sup>

In contrast to the foregoing requirements, the following description is even more telling to say the least: “Kwa-Ndebele was formed by buying 19 white farms, building an instant capital called Siyabuswa, finding a compliant member of the Ndebele tribe named Simon Skosana who was willing to play ball, making him chief minister of a nominated legislative assembly, then on his say so, declaring that the people of Kwa-Ndebele had opted for independence”.<sup>20</sup> This view was shared by various other newspapers of the time. For instance shortly after its establishment, it was disparagingly referred to as “the homeland of shattered hopes”,<sup>21</sup> and a land of “tin huts and hunger”.<sup>22</sup>

Initially, it was pretended that bantustans could support families at a subsistence level, but with Kwa-Ndebele as an example, it is clear that there was a dramatic decline in the productive power

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<sup>19</sup> Okeke, Controversial Subjects of Contemporary International Law, p.87.

<sup>20</sup> The Natal Witness, 16 January 1986.

<sup>21</sup> Star, 8 December 1980.

<sup>22</sup> Sunday Express, 31 May 1981. Both this source and the preceding one were cited in Haysom, Mabangalala, p.63.

of various homelands that this fiction was no longer believable even by its inventors. Consequently, as their inability to sustain families increased, bantustans became dumping grounds for the “unproductive”<sup>23</sup>, and a cheaper alternative to the development of a huge infrastructure of welfare that would be necessary for the bare subsistence of the unemployed.

The significance from Pretoria’s side of defining as decolonization the unfolding of South African race policy toward Africans was that in justifying that policy at home and overseas, Pretoria could plausibly argue that the test of the policy’s sincerity and success ought to be its similarity to the record of various European efforts at decolonization in Africa and elsewhere. Viewed in this light, it becomes critically important to ask whether Kwa-Ndebele was as worthy a candidate for sovereignty as were, say, Lesotho, Ghana or Nigeria at the time of their independence.

It would be remembered that there was also doubt about the viability of an independent “Republic of Venda”, yet by comparison Venda had a well defined and fairly substantial territory, with a population of over 350 000 when it was granted independence in 1979.<sup>24</sup> In contrast to this, on the basis of the 1980 census, by 1982 Kwa-Ndebele had an official population estimate of 200 000 people.<sup>25</sup> According to a 1984 survey, this number had grown to 261 875

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<sup>23</sup> According to Omer-Cooper, History of Southern Africa, p.216, *the category of “unproductive Bantu” included ‘the aged, the unfit, widows, women with dependent children and other superfluous Bantu resident in European urban areas’.*

<sup>24</sup> J. Dugard, “The Moutse Issue”, in Kwa-Ndebele-The Future, p.37.

<sup>25</sup> SAIRR, 1982 Survey, p.396.

people<sup>26</sup>, and it should be borne in mind that this was the year initially earmarked for the homeland's independence.

It has become customary to define and thereby measure the economic development of any country in terms of the number of people employed within its borders. It should be realised, however, that employment or lack of it represents only one part of the general problem, in view of the fact that mere provision of adequate employment opportunities would not by itself satisfy the widely divergent demands of the people. There is also a need for higher incomes, more and better health care services, education and training facilities, adequate transport services and other social amenities. Also judged by these criteria, Kwa-Ndebele was found extremely wanting. According to one report, there was almost no agriculture in Kwa-Ndebele in 1982.<sup>27</sup> While a research done by the Bureau of Economic Research (BENSO), found that in 1981, the year of Kwa-Ndebele self-government, the homeland's agricultural potential was very limited, with only 15 to 20 percent of the land being arable.<sup>28</sup>

In addition, the number of unemployed men between the ages of 18 and 64 had risen from 3 263 of the total population in 1979 to 8 263 of the 1984 total population, according to the BMR report of 1984. What is even more revealing is the fact that only 8% of all the economically

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<sup>26</sup> Bureau of Market Research, Income and Expenditure Patterns of Households in Kwa-Ndebele, 1984, Research Report No. 117( Pretoria, UNISA, 1984 ), p.4. Hereafter called BMR. It was estimated at the beginning of 1986 that the homeland's population had trebled since 1975. An increase in the rate of population growth of Kwa-Ndebele was due to a number of factors, both political and economic. For these see, The Weekly Mail, 10-16 January 1986.

<sup>27</sup> The Star, 29 June 1982.

<sup>28</sup> Star, 18 September 1985.

active people was actually employed within the homeland's borders while 92% worked outside it, predominantly in the PWV complex into whose regional economy the homeland was tightly woven.<sup>29</sup> For instance, of the average annual per capita income of R341 in 1982, only 12% of this was earned inside the homeland and R50 million of its R69 million budget came from direct South African aid.<sup>30</sup> Against this background of total economic dependence on a stronger neighbour, it is no exaggeration to say that "a slightest turn of a sleeping elephant in order to make itself comfortable, would annihilate the entire universe of a colony of ants".

In the long run, this integration of the homeland into the PWV labour market, coupled with the government's policy of driving as many blacks as possible away from the white area, created an unprecedented demand for large scale transportation to take commuters to and from work on a regular basis. Consequently, to meet this demand, the government preferred to subsidise these daily commuters so heavily that it has been argued that the Kwa-Ndebele bus subsidy was actually the government's largest single expense in the development of the homeland, with the subsidy higher than the homeland's actual Gross Domestic Product. According to Dr Van Zyl Slabbert, by 1984 the government was paying the Putco bus company which monopolised transport in the territory, a subsidy equivalent to R2 000 a year for each commuter.<sup>31</sup> "A negative social investment", says Joseph Lelyveld, "that went up in gas fumes, when it might just as easily have gone into new housing for the same black workers nearer the industrial centres,

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<sup>29</sup> BMR, Income and Expenditure Patterns of Households in Kwa-Ndebele, 1984, p.14. Thus the territory's residents were faced with the option of either obtaining employment outside the homeland or to starve. See Haysom, Mabangalala, p.56.

<sup>30</sup> Star, 18 September 1985.

<sup>31</sup> The Star, 6 June 1986.

if that had not violated the apartheid design".<sup>32</sup> As if to concur with this assertion, the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group (CEPG) report also observed that "in the economics of apartheid, the government prefers the high cost of subsidising such travel to having more blacks live in the urban areas."<sup>33</sup>

I have argued that most of the people who went to settle in Kwa-Ndebele were victims of the anti-urbanisation policy of the government and they were attracted to the homeland primarily by its relative proximity to the PWV complex, and because it was lying within commuting distance of Pretoria.<sup>34</sup> In other words Kwa-Ndebele was the closest they could be to their work places without the risk of harassment under the pass laws. For instance, it has been estimated that during the seventies the annual average of prosecutions for influx control offences countrywide was 542 000, more than one person every minute of the day and night throughout the year.<sup>35</sup>

Be that as it may, it should however be noted that the shortest bus ride from Kwa-Ndebele to Pretoria took about one hour forty five minutes, while the longest journey lasted for up to two and a half hours.<sup>36</sup> Some of those working furthest from Pretoria, boarded a bus at 2h30 a.m. and arrived at Marabastad at 4h30 a.m. and the process was reversed in the evening with some

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<sup>32</sup> Lelyveld, Move Your Shadow: South Africa Black and White, p.123.

<sup>33</sup> "Kwa-Ndebele: The tinderbox and the match", Financial Mail, 22 August 1986, Vol.101, No.8, p.30.

<sup>34</sup> Haysom, Mabangalala: The Rise of Right-Wing Vigilantes in South Africa, p.63.

<sup>35</sup> The Star, 6 June 1986.

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Mr S.M. Bafedi, 10 June 1997.

people arriving home at 22h30 p.m.<sup>37</sup> The buses virtually turned into moving bedrooms with not a single person awake after an hour's travel. Their plight was captured in one report as follows:

"It is 2.05 a.m. and Kleinbooi Mahlangu stands alone in the bitingly cold winter morning, waiting for the bus that will take him to work, a journey that will take nearly three hours...From time to time other people emerge from the darkness to join him in the queue for the 2h30 a.m. bus from Weltevrede in Kwa-Ndebele to Marabastad in Pretoria. Four and a half hours earlier, he and the other passengers had alighted from the same bus on their way from work, and he had only had three hours sleep...Many people have left the homeland to live with relatives on the Reef to avoid this torturous bus routine...The bus winds its way through the dusty streets of Kwa-Ndebele until it is finally full, with only standing room left...Conversation in the bus becomes muted after an hour's travel. One after another the passengers fall asleep with their heads resting on the backs of the seats ...even the people who were standing on the aisle have settled down on the floor of the bus...."<sup>38</sup>

No wonder in his vivid indictment of government policy, American journalist Joseph Lelyveld, remarked that the people of Kwa-Ndebele were "a nation of sleepwalkers".<sup>39</sup> "The distance they travelled annually", says Lelyveld, "came to more than a circumnavigation of the globe".<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> D. Goldblatt, "The Night-Riders of Kwa-Ndebele", in Omar-Badsha (ed), South Africa, the Cordoned Heart (Cape Town, Cape Gallery Press, 1986), p.34.

<sup>38</sup> "Sunday Mirror", Sowetan, 10 June 1984 cited in McCaul, Satellite in Revolt, p.33.

<sup>39</sup> Lelyveld, Move Your Shadow, p.127.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

Thus I argue, the prospects of a self-sufficient and independent Kwa-Ndebele under these circumstances were inconceivable. And I deliberately emphasize these appalling travelling conditions affecting quite a sizable percentage of the homeland's total work-force, precisely because I would want the decision to opt for independence by the homeland's legislative assembly and its ultimate rejection by the residents, to be viewed against this background of general strife and material deprivation. Over and above the Kwa-Ndebele leadership was hopelessly ill-equipped to deal with this situation of human misery and poverty. For instance, "in 1981, they excluded pensions and disability grants from the budget which left the aged, disabled and destitute without any state support, while the following year R4.3 million, more than half the amount budgeted for social services, education and agriculture was spent on an impulsive purchase of construction equipment".<sup>41</sup>

For practical reasons, one of the conditions for a country's independence is that there should be a sufficiently large number of educated politicians to whom power can be transferred. Yet in 1984 the homeland's Chief Minister, S.S.Skosana a former lorry driver, with a standard four education was one of the most highly qualified members of the cabinet,<sup>42</sup> while the actual highest education qualification in the cabinet was a standard eight certificate held by the Minister of Agriculture, Z.D.Mnguni.<sup>43</sup> Of the 1 900 teachers employed by the homeland's department of

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<sup>41</sup> TRAC, "Kwa-Ndebele: The Struggle Against Independence", in Cobbett and Cohen, Popular Struggles in South Africa, p.116.

<sup>42</sup> Murray, "Displaced Urbanization: Rural Slums", in Beinart and Dubow, Segregation and Apartheid in Twentieth Century South Africa, p.243.

<sup>43</sup> TRAC, "Kwa-Ndebele: The Struggle Against Independence", in Cobbett and Cohen, Popular Struggles in South Africa, p.116.

education and culture, 51% were unqualified in 1982.<sup>44</sup> I have dwelt a little on this matter of education because of its evident importance in equipping a nation with the manpower necessary for the effective management of the country.

With regard to Kwa-Ndebele, in 1984 the Bureau of Market Research conducted a survey of 581 households in the territory representing 3 375 people of all ages, indicating the level of education reached by the homeland's population. Indeed the results of this survey compare quite favourably with the findings of a similar survey of 573 households representing 3 807 people, conducted in 1980 by the Human Sciences Research Council. If the figures based on the BMR report below are anything to go by, then the Kwa-Ndebele population was largely illiterate and therefore incapable of understanding the legal implications of an imposed homeland independence. In the light of this assertion, it may therefore be argued, that if it were not for "Mbokotho" and the manner in which independence was introduced to the people, the history of Kwa-Ndebele would most certainly have been different.

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<sup>44</sup> Rand Daily Mail, 15 June 1982.



**Table 3.1.**Distribution of all household members by level of education<sup>45</sup>

Level of Education	Number	Percentage
No schooling	954	28,3%
Sub Std A-B	361	10,7%
Std 1-4	1052	31,7%
Std 5-6	515	15,3%
Std 7-8	321	9,5%
Std 9-10	116	3,4%
Studying for a degree/diploma	4	0,1%
Diploma	22	0,7%
Degree	1	0,0%
Unknown	16	0,5%
Other	13	0,3%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3 375</b>	<b>100,0%</b>

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<sup>45</sup> BMR, Report, p.22.

Over and above these figures, it is interesting to note that at the time it opted for independence, the homeland had only 132 schools.<sup>46</sup> At the risk of seeming to justify the independence of the former Bophuthatswana, which also in world standards possessed very few qualified people to provide the administrative, technical, economic and political leadership required to run a modern state but relied on expatriate white personnel from South Africa to provide the necessary expertise, I find it helpful to compare Kwa-Ndebele's situation with that of Bophuthatswana by picking the latter at random solely in order to prove the point.

It may thus be deduced that at the time it opted for independence, Bophuthatswana was better developed than was the case with Kwa-Ndebele. The inclusion of a non-independent Lebowa homeland in this comparison is even more revealing of Kwa-Ndebele's situation as the table below well illustrates.

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<sup>46</sup> McCaul, Satellite in Revolt, p.45.

Table 3.2

Infrastructural comparison between Kwa-Ndebele, Lebowa and Bophuthatswana<sup>47</sup>.

Institutions	Bophuthatswana	Lebowa	Kwa-Ndebele
Schools	921	1 277	132
Special Schools	3	2	-
Technical Colleges	3	5	1
Teacher Colleg	6	7	1
Clinics	130	131	7
Hospitals	10	17	-

I emphasize not only the lack of infrastructural development in Kwa-Ndebele but also the high rate of illiteracy in order to prove one point relevant to the argument that I will elaborate and defend as the enquiry proceeds, namely that it was more against the excesses of Mbokotho than it was against the proposed independence of their homeland that the residents of Kwa-Ndebele were opposed to, at least in the early stages of what later became the struggle against independence.

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<sup>47</sup> *Information on the above figures was compiled from the following sources for Kwa-Ndebele, Lebowa and Bophuthatswana respectively: McCaul, Satellite in Revolt, pp.49-51 (the figures represent Kwa-Ndebele's situation in 1986), Lebowa, pp.11-12. The latter was a glossy publication not unique to Lebowa but available in all the homelands produced with a view to tourists' attraction and it emphasised development in these bantustans. And The Republic of Bophuthatswana, p.21. The figures for Bophuthatswana represent the homeland's situation at the time of its independence(1977) while those for Lebowa represent the homeland's situation in 1984 which is the year in which Kwa-Ndebele initially wished to become independent. The figures for Kwa-Ndebele represent the homeland's situation in 1986.*

Though it cannot be denied that some of the residents from Bophuthatswana who were victims of the independence of that homeland because they were non-Tswanas<sup>48</sup>, did in fact understand what homeland independence implied, still their experience could certainly not have been determinative of the general attitude of all the people in the homeland towards their impending independence. Instead, I would argue that the Kwa-Ndebele war began as a spontaneous reaction to the brutality and violence of Mbokotho. Put rather differently, one may say Mbokotho was the actual spark which set Kwa-Ndebele alight, but the fire soon developed its own momentum when the fight against it was transformed into a fight against independence, thus involving thousands of the initially disaffected rural communities into boycotts, demonstrations, stay-aways and strikes.

### 3.3 The 1984 Elections

By the time Kwa-Ndebele opted for independence which was expected to take place as early as 1984, the homeland had not held its first elections yet. The decision to follow in the footsteps of the TBVC states by taking the independence option was therefore not sanctioned by the general populace. Instead the decision was made by a forty-six member Legislative Assembly and the six member cabinet which were all nominated bodies, the first by the tribal authorities

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<sup>48</sup> *After independence in 1977, the Bophuthatswana government waged a relentless campaign against non-Tswanas. The most common action was to deny non-Tswanas citizenship, residency and work-seekers' permits and to withhold pensions and other forms of social security. See, Post, 15 December 1978.*

and the second by the chief minister.<sup>49</sup>

However, between 15 and 17 November 1984, the year that was initially targeted for independence, thanks to the central government which stated that independence for Kwa-Ndebele would take a considerable time, the homeland held its first elections, yet still for only 16 members of the now expanded 72-member legislative assembly. The remaining 56 members were to be appointed by the tribal authorities, various chiefs, the urban boards and the chief minister.<sup>50</sup> During these elections one of the 16 constituencies was not contested while in the other 15 constituencies, 30 698 votes were cast and one of the candidates thus elected was Majosi George Mahlangu who later became chief minister after the death of Simon Skosana.<sup>51</sup>

A point with future political significance was the request made by the Kwa-Ndebele legislative assembly to the State President to amend the homeland's constitution to insert a clause that discriminated against women with regard to the right to vote. It stated categorically that only men above 21 years of age were eligible to vote while women were not allowed either to vote or to stand for election. On 6 July 1984 the State President duly amended the Kwa-Ndebele Constitution Proclamation and disqualified women as voters or candidates despite the fact that none of the remaining nine homeland constitutions discriminated against women in that way.

It is interesting to note that Kwa-Ndebele was but one of the only four countries around the

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<sup>49</sup> SAIRR, 1982 Survey, p.396.

<sup>50</sup> McCaul, Satellite in Revolt, p.9.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, p.94.

world where women were so discriminated against, namely, Yemen, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.<sup>52</sup> What is clear in this connection is that the government's claim that by opting for independence the homeland leaders were merely carrying out the mandate given to it by the electorate through the 1984 elections, was far from the truth since the decision to opt for independence was taken as early as 1982.<sup>53</sup> Most of my respondents on the independence issue say that they were asking themselves, "where was Kwa-Ndebele hurrying to"? "Why could it not wait for all developmental projects to be completed before taking independence?"<sup>54</sup> This in a nutshell indicates that if the post-elections independence decision was sanctioned by the electorate, the pre-elections decision was certainly not, because should everything have developed as planned, 1984 was supposed to have been the year of celebrations, notwithstanding the foregoing conditions in the homeland indicative of the extent to which the territory was underdeveloped. Perhaps more than any other homeland, the following description by Sheena Duncan of conditions in the homelands suits Kwa-Ndebele squarely, "In the bantustans crime, violence, war between landowners and the landless, between the haves and the have nots, corruption, ruthless and uncontrolled oppression, as well as hunger and starvation are the marks of many communities. Everywhere there is a vast, rootless, shifting population of displaced people living from hand to mouth, begging and stealing and fighting for tonight's shelter and tomorrow's bread".<sup>55</sup> This explains the situation in Kwa-Ndebele even better than the situation in any of its

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<sup>52</sup> G.Budlender, "Constitutional Issues in Kwa-Ndebele", in Kwa-Ndebele-The Future?, pp.93-94.

<sup>53</sup> MacCaul, Satellite in Revolt, p.8.

<sup>54</sup> Interview, with Miss S.B. Tshabangu, 14 August 1997.

<sup>55</sup> Sheena Duncan, South African Council of Churches, Home and Family Life Division, cited in A Fund for Free Expression Report, Human Rights in the Homelands: South Africa's Delegation of Oppression, June 1984.

sister homelands.

Another important factor in the basic structural dependence of Kwa-Ndebele was the imitative patterns of consumption set in train by its proximity to the affluent white society (PWV) which encapsulated it. For instance, Ndebele elites aspired to white standards and they in turn acted as trend-setters in consumption patterns, thus developing an interest in a standard of living which the homeland as a whole could not support without incurring dependency, because this could only be satisfied by borrowing the shortfall in capital and imported consumer goods. Admittedly, borrowing may be creative when undertaken to improve the infrastructure and increase the production potential of a region. But when it is ploughed into consumer spending as was the case in Kwa-Ndebele, it can only increase the degree of dependence.

Thus far it has been made clear that Kwa-Ndebele did not have an autonomous economy nor any prospect of one. Thus, come independence, the homeland would still remain a poverty stricken area in one of the less developed regions of South Africa, with its economic future firmly tied to the chariot wheels of the South African economy.

## **PART TWO:**

### **3.4. The Establishment of Mbokotho**

“We started this homeland with only R16.40 in our coffers and only 240 Ndebele people, with one school to our credit. We are now able to count our money in millions. I cycled all over getting our people together. Now that we have built expensive schools people want to burn

them. Mbokotho will deal with such people".<sup>56</sup>

These were the words of the chief minister S.S.Skosana on the occasion of the official launching of the Mbokotho Organisation, giving sweeping powers to the already notorious vigilantes. Though the official launching took place in 1986, there is persuasive evidence to prove that Mbokotho activity in the homeland predated 1986. For instance, as early as 1977 a member of the royal family, Makhosana Mahlangu, was assaulted by a vigilante group within the tribal authority for refusing to adopt a particular political position.<sup>57</sup> In 1980 a vigilante group in Kalkfontein was used to crush resistance to a change in the local administrative structure.<sup>58</sup> However, a clear understanding of the reasons for the establishment of Mbokotho can be sought in the general political climate in the country during the period 1984-85, which saw the emergence of right-wing vigilantes in the townships. Only a superficial appreciation of this trend will suffice to illustrate this point.

#### **3.4.1. The 1984-85 Era of Protest**

During 1984 South Africa experienced the most widespread black civil unrest since the Soweto disturbances in 1976. The underlying causes of the unrest were continuing dissatisfaction with African education, anger at the exclusion of Africans from political power, as well as the

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<sup>56</sup> Pace, 28 April 1986, p.24. See also, Sowetan, 28 January 1986.

<sup>57</sup> Ritchken, "The Kwa-Ndebele Struggle Against Independence", South African Review 5, p.427.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.



persistence of inflation and deepening unemployment.<sup>59</sup>

To this effect, Beinart writes, "If the renaissance of black opposition in the 1970's paved the way for political change, 1984 made the process difficult to reverse".<sup>60</sup> The year 1984 may be regarded as a watershed,<sup>61</sup> in the history of South Africa's black townships in that from then onwards, they were the site of chronic violent confrontation and at the same time, they have witnessed an unprecedented proliferation of extra-state organisations. Closely analysed, it was the introduction of the tricameral constitution and the exclusion of Africans from any form of participation in it, which provided the focus for the emergence of a whole new range of political activity which found expression in a number of new movements including the United Democratic Front (UDF). During this time education continued to be the centre of debate with renewed determination by pupils to change the structures of an authoritarian and "inferior" education system. To the politicized pupils, a curriculum geared for normal functioning in an abnormal environment betrayed the morality of learning.<sup>62</sup> It would be remembered that the National Party relied on Bantu education for the success of its project. Black schools were to write the past and present of South Africa in multiracial terms so as to strengthen the identification of Africans with the group to which they had been arbitrarily assigned. This policy explains the highly politicized and contested nature of black education since the Bantu

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<sup>59</sup> SAIRR, Survey 1984, p.xvii.

<sup>60</sup> W. Beinart, Twentieth-Century South Africa (Cape Town, Oxford University Press, 1994), p.236.

<sup>61</sup> Barber and Barratt, South Africa's Foreign Policy: The search for status and security 1945-1988, p.299.

<sup>62</sup> H. Adam and K. Moodley, South Africa Without Apartheid: Dismantling Racial Domination (Johannesburg, Creda, 1987), p.115.

Education Act of 1953.<sup>63</sup>

When elections ultimately took place in terms of the new constitution, Indians and Coloureds could elect representatives to a Tricameral Parliament with racially distinct houses. Rural blacks were expected to exercise their political rights in their homelands while urban blacks could participate in elections to an advisory municipal body, Urban Black Councils, which like the former 'Urban Advisory Boards', the author, Gary Baines questioned whether they genuinely represented a wider constituency or whether they articulated the self-centred interests of their class, the petty bourgeoisie. Furthermore, he questioned the wisdom of using institutions of such 'questionable legitimacy' to advance the community's political struggles.<sup>64</sup> Consequently, the political crisis that South Africa faced during 1984-85 was largely founded on the refusal of Black South Africans to accept these inadequate alternatives to effective political participation in the country. Black opposition to the new constitution was based on the fact that if an alien people like the Indians, a people who were never acknowledged to share any racial or cultural characteristics with whites could be incorporated into a common, though structurally separated central government, there was no longer any logical reason for excluding the black majority. At about that time, an important strategy developed within the country. The strategy held that participation in government created institutions led to collaboration with the South African government on its own terms and that such collaboration was thus unacceptable. The long

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<sup>63</sup> K. Manzo, Domination, Resistance, and Social Change in South Africa: *The Effects Of Global Power* (London, Praeger, 1992), p.181.

<sup>64</sup> G. Baines, "The contradictions of community politics: the African petty bourgeoisie and the New Brighton Advisory Board, c 1937-1952', Journal of African History, 35 (1994), pp.79-97. For further criticism of these urban institutions, See also, B. Kinkead-Weekes, "Donald Molteno and the politics of "Native Representation" in Cape Town, 1936-1948", South African Historical Journal, 25 (1991), p.105.

history of this strategy of non-collaboration has given birth to tactics such as boycotts (consumer, bus, rent, electoral and so on), stayaways and the development of “alternative” institutions such as area committees and people’s courts.<sup>65</sup>

Basically, it was the government’s initial strategy not to include blacks in constitutional reform that had a tremendous impact on order and stability in the country. And this provoked vehement reaction and gave rise to violence. For instance, in September 1984, the UDF launched a nationwide campaign of opposition to the exclusion of Blacks from the constitution. At about the same time, the economic climate in the country began to deteriorate as recession set in, thus increasing the already high levels of unemployment amongst the blacks. These developments coincided with a growing dissatisfaction regarding conditions in the townships, especially centering around allegations of council corruption and mismanagement. As could be expected, this development prompted resistance not only because corruption destroyed the image of responsible leadership on which the council system depended, but because it also coincided with rent increases which further contributed to unpopularity of the council. For instance, when the newly elected community councils imposed rent increases and other service charges, civic organisations began to orchestrate protest.

With this in mind, it is not surprising to note that resistance to the government during the period covered in this section was most widespread and national in scope in the mid-1980’s and it was then that urban and rural-based movements simultaneously engaged in armed rebellion. And the

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<sup>65</sup> S. Bekker, “Constitutional Negotiations in the Nineties: a Framework for Analysis”, in D.J. van Vuuren et. al. (eds), South Africa In The Nineties (Pretoria, HSRC, 1991), p.172.

one important characteristic of the political movements of the time was the youth factor. When the leadership of these movements were being detained by state action, thereby leaving the movements without effective leadership, the vacuum was often filled by youth leaders who had little experience and discipline.<sup>66</sup> Occurring within the context of further bantustan independence such as Kwa-Ndebele and continued forced removals as in Moutse, this resistance provoked an unprecedented amount of global pressure on South Africa in the form of capital flight, United Nations resolutions as well as increased economic boycotts.

Consequently, this confluence of political and economic factors resulted in widespread protests dating from September 1984 and continued without respite until 1986. Like in Kwa-Ndebele where the resistance to independence was viewed by the government of the day as sabotage and betrayal by its own people, in South Africa too, these protests and boycotts were portrayed as an attack on the institution of government and therefore more than ever deserving of retaliation. But it soon became evident that regardless of the success of the state of emergency in repressing protest, the state would never again be able to restore its authority on any basis other than coercion.<sup>67</sup>

Thus it is against this background of increasing popular support for organisations that were resisting apartheid policies and institutions as well as the spread of civic resistance to conservative rural regions of the country, that the “vigilantes” emerged and attempted to alter

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid, p.173. This point was corroborated by Mr Patrick Lekota on SABC: TRC Hearing, 1998 when he explained why the youth engaged in acts such as “necklacing”, of the people they accused as “informers” of the “system”.

<sup>67</sup> J.Seekings, “The Origins of Political Mobilisation in PWV Townships 1980-84”, in Cobbett and Cohen, Popular Struggles in South Africa, p.72.

the balance of power in these areas, "albeit under the slogan of 'law and order'".<sup>68</sup> For instance Skosana portrayed Mbokotho as a peace-keeping force, declaring that it was not even political, "they just keep the peace",<sup>69</sup> he said emphatically. This growing reliance on extra-legal methods and the emergence of unofficial organisations alongside the official security apparatus was a disturbing trend in various other homelands.

According to Haysom, these vigilantes were more suited for the purpose for which they were created and they proved more effective in dealing with popular organisations and progressive individuals than had police repression and detentions. He remarks that the police and the army as organs of the state, were limited by potential publicity and legal considerations in their ability to perpetrate the kind of deliberate terror and violence that was needed to combat popular protests<sup>70</sup>. Thus the vigilantes could act as surrogate police force unrestrained by legal limits. Proof of police approval and perhaps connivance with vigilantes was evidenced by police inaction when the victims of vigilante atrocities reported their frustrations to them with the hope that they would investigate and bring the perpetrators to book, as Haysom so well puts it, "The fact that they are believed to enjoy police support is very often all that binds the "A-Team", the "Phakatis", the "Mabangalala", the "Amadoda", the "Amazolomzi", the "Amabutho", the "Mbokotho" and the "Green Berets".<sup>71</sup> For our purpose however, it is to the Mbokotho vigilante

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<sup>68</sup> Haysom, Mabangalala: The Rise of Right-Wing Vigilantes in South Africa, p.7. See also TRAC, Kwa-Ndebele-The Struggle against Independence, p.121.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, p.121.

<sup>70</sup> Haysom, Mabangalala: The Rise of Right-Wing Vigilantes in South Africa, p.121.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, p.2. See also p.68, the literal refusal of the police to help Mr Dumakude of Ekanjala from Mbokotho vigilantes, is very apparent. However, the most naked police approval of vigilante activity was more illustrated in a report in The Star, 21 June 1985. See also G.Webster, "The destabilisation of Moutse", Sash, vol. 28, No.4. 28 February

group alone that we shall now return and examine very closely. In this respect, the focus will be on how it was founded and under what circumstances and pretext, since it enjoyed open government backing and membership more than any other vigilante group of its time.

### 3.4.2. The Rise of Mbokotho

Mbokotho,(which literally means Millstone)<sup>72</sup> was but a modern version of the old Ndebele tribal police force called “Mabangalala” who had been operating since the 1970's in the villages of what later developed into Kwa-Ndebele. According to Simon Skosana, Mbokotho was established in 1976 during the Soweto riots when the pupils challenged Bantu Education in the townships by burning school buildings and other government properties.<sup>73</sup> Since then instead of adopting a constructive response to genuine people’s grievances, the government adopted a security response. Hence the formation of such vigilante organisations as Mbokotho with the express purpose of stemming out the flood of anti-apartheid opposition.

On 29 April 1986, Majosi Mahlangu introduced a motion in the Kwa-Ndebele Legislative

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1986, p.27. and City Press, 9 February 1986.

<sup>72</sup> The ironically named “Mbokotho” has connotations of the force and power used to crush objects, like the millstone usually does to grind corn.

<sup>73</sup> TRAC, The Struggle Against Independence, p.13.

Assembly with the words, “I move that in the opinion of this legislative assembly, the advisability be considered of officially recognising a movement that will revive, promote and protect the culture of the Ndebele nation and the common interests of the peoples of Kwa-Ndebele. Furthermore, that the movement be known as ‘Mbokotho Cultural Society’”.<sup>74</sup> In the light of this assertion it can be argued that Mbokotho was projected as a cultural organisation, the likes of Buthelezi’s Kwazulu-based **Inkatha Ye Sizwe Cultural Movement**. A proliferation of similar organisations though they differed in aims and methods from “Mbokotho” increased in 1987. The same year witnessed the launch of **Thari ya Setshaba Cultural and Liberation Movement** by Lebowa’s chief minister Dr C.N. Phatudi in April. Though it was presented as a non-violent cultural organisation which would strive to achieve “African humanism”, its launch was boycotted as a result of pamphlets distributed throughout the Northern Transvaal calling on all people not to attend.<sup>75</sup> In view of Inkatha’s unpopularity among progressive forces, the *Sowetan*, referred to “Thari ya Setshaba” as Lebowa’s own “Inkathari.”<sup>76</sup> **Ximoko xa Rixaka Cultural Organisation** (The whip of the nation), had already existed in Gazankulu since 1982, formed and headed by the chief minister, Prof. Hudson Ntsanwisi.<sup>77</sup> Like Mbokotho, what was common to all these pseudo-vigilante organisations was that they were built on and maintained by coercion. For instance all government employees in Gazankulu were ordered to join “*Ximoko*” by 15 June 1987 or face disciplinary action.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Hansard, 29 April 1986, Second Kwa-Ndebele Legislative Assembly, Vol. 17 p.554.

<sup>75</sup> Sowetan, 4 May 1987.

<sup>76</sup> The Star, 4 May 1987.

<sup>77</sup> SAIRR, Survey 1987/88, p.LV.

<sup>78</sup> Sowetan, 25 May 1987.

Unlike all the others however, it is without doubt that the formation of Mbokotho was informed by the preconceived plans for Kwa-Ndebele independence. Apparently because it was clear to the launcher that in the light of the then political climate in the country, bantustan independence would not be accepted without resistance, Mbokotho would serve as an intimidating tool against any form of resistance. With Maqhawe Ntuli as the man in charge of the ministry that issued trading and taxi licences, no one would have his licence approved unless he was prepared to join and therefore identify with Mbokotho.<sup>79</sup> This befitted the definition of corruption as “the use of public powers to achieve private goals”.<sup>80</sup> This factor alone accounted for the overwhelming support for Mbokotho among the businessmen and taxi owners. Thus, the notion that every businessman in Kwa-Ndebele was a Mbokotho during this time, though with some exaggeration, was not entirely without some element of truth. This was again evidenced by the number of business premises, almost 70% that were later destroyed because of being Mbokotho property.<sup>81</sup>

The moral purposes for which political institutions exist may ultimately be reduced to two. The first and most important is security: to keep people safe from violence, and to provide them with reasonable opportunities to enjoy whatever benefits the resources of the country in which they live can make available to them. The second is the opportunity to express their own aspirations in the way in which that country is organised, at least in so far as these aspirations can be reconciled with those of others. In neither respect is the record of Kwa-Ndebele a good one. With a vigilante organisation formed and backed by the government for a negative purpose of crushing opposition to independence, needless to say the security expected from government to

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<sup>79</sup> Interview with P.K.Mahlangu, 14 May 1997.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Beeld, 15 May 1986. See also, The Argus, 15 May 1986.



its "citizens" was ironically threatened by constructs of the same government. Consequently, the state instead of being the solution to the problem of ensuring physical safety, became part of the problem. This was evidenced by its reliance on Mbokotho and the police, the primary instruments of violence. In a paper delivered at a conference organised by Lawyers for Human Rights and the Centre for Human Rights Studies of the University of Pretoria in May 1988, Mr Nick de Villiers of the Pretoria Legal Resources Centre pointed out that the Kwa-Ndebele administration viewed its opponents as a security threat and placed excessive reliance on the police to contain this perceived threat. He commented, "not only does the tone of the police leadership permit assaults, it positively encourages them".<sup>82</sup> In the final analysis, this executive reliance on the police to plaster over the lack of credibility and support for independence had established an acute dependency relationship. And this relationship essentially amounted to government by force and did much to undermine the interplay of the will of the people and the policy of the executive, which must be inherent to any sound government.

With this in mind, it is hardly surprising to note that on 29 April 1988 the Kwa-Ndebele administration passed an Indemnity Act indemnifying it retroactively against any legal action arising from the disturbances between 1 December 1985 and 11 June 1987.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> The Citizen, 14 April 1989. See also, SAIRR, Survey 1989, pp.101-102. *Torture at the Kwa-Ndebele Police Station, including details of assaults with pick-handles, was given much media coverage in 1987, based on the reports of three staff-members of the Sunday Star who were also detained there.*(SAIRR, Survey 1987/88, p.902).

<sup>83</sup> SAIRR, Survey 1989, p.103.

## Chapter 4

### THE INCORPORATION OF MOUTSE INTO KWA-NDEBELE

#### 4.1. Disguised forced removal

Indeed, nothing symbolized the oppressive nature of apartheid more than the massive scale on which population relocation occurred in South Africa. For instance, in the period prior to 1948 there had been nothing comparable to the forced removals which occurred between the 1960s and the 1980s.<sup>1</sup> Such racial policy was clearly enunciated as early as 1952 when Dr H.F. Verwoerd, then as Minister of Native Affairs, stated in parliament: "...black townships should be separated from white areas by an area of industrial sites where industries exist or are being planned; existing wrongly situated areas should be moved; everybody wants his servants

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<sup>1</sup> Giliomee and Schlemmer, From Apartheid to Nation-Building, p.107. For an overview of the history of "Forced Removals" in South Africa, see the following sources, though the list is in no way exhaustive:

\*Surplus Peoples Project, Forced Removals in South Africa, vol.4, Natal (Cape Town, January 1983). *Though this report focusses on the homelands as an instrument of repression in South Africa, this emphasis is not intended to suggest the absence of political repression by extreme means in South Africa as a whole. Rather it is the intention of this report to spotlight some.*

\*N.T.Sambureni, "Listen, Whiteman, You Have Launched a War you Cannot Win: Forced Removals and the Outbreak of Riots in Natal, 1959-1963", in Contree: Journal for South African Urban and Regional History, No. 38 (December 1995).

\*Desmond Cosmas, The Discarded People: An Account of African Resettlement in South Africa (Great Britain, Penguin Books, 1971).

and his labourers, but nobody wants to have a *native* location near his own”.<sup>2</sup> Small wonder, the government had repeatedly emphasised that it had stopped this policy, when it had in reality only substituted it by an equally dehumanising strategy of forced removal, technically called incorporation.

“Incorporation”, the process whereby Blacks and their land were transferred into “Bantustans” through the redrawing of boundaries, has had violent repercussions in South Africa over the years. It was carried out in terms of two pieces of legislation, namely, the National States Constitution Act which incorporated African land into non-independent “bantustans” and the Borders of Particular States Extension Act which enabled the excision of land from South Africa which was then added to an independent “Bantustan”.<sup>3</sup> However, unlike forced removal which could be easily resisted, forced incorporation could not, because it was not a tangible process, it was carried out in Pretoria in the office of the Government Printer.<sup>4</sup> The Moutse issue falls into this category, which Professor John Dugard, legal advisor to the Moutse people referred to as “a new and insidious form of resettlement”.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Speech cited in NA, Bantu Affairs Commissioner’s files(BAC), 0/3, BAC, Durban to the CBAC, nd. 1960, cited in N.T. Sambureni, The Apartheid City and its Labouring Class: African Workers and the Independent Trade Union Movement in Durban, 1959-1985, (Unp. D.lit.et Phil thesis, UNISA, June 1997), p.120.

<sup>3</sup> R.L. Abel, Politics By Other Means: Law in the struggle against apartheid, 1980-1994 (New York, Routledge, 1995), p.489.

<sup>4</sup> D. Newton, “Forced Removals in South Africa”, in South African Review 5 (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1989), p.406.

<sup>5</sup> Pretoria News, 10 March 1986.

It is impossible to discuss the history of Kwa-Ndebele in the period under review without taking Moutse into consideration. This is because the South African government seemed to regard the incorporation of Moutse into Kwa-Ndebele as a *conditio sine qua non* for the independence of that homeland.<sup>6</sup> However, in dealing with the incorporation of Moutse into Kwa-Ndebele, I do not intend to make an indepth study of the whole period of elite politics comprising a series of government commissions and public consultations dating as far back as 1975 during the early consolidation proposals for Kwa-Ndebele in which Moutse was first mentioned.<sup>7</sup> Instead I will deal with Moutse only in so far as it is relevant to my argument that, Kwa-Ndebele's establishment and its subsequent consolidation was not for one moment driven by an ethnographer's vision of an ethnic unit. On the contrary, the belated establishment of Kwa-Ndebele reflected the government's attempt to manage the effects of emerging economic and political dynamics in the region. For instance, following its creation, especially with the incorporation of a predominantly Sotho-speaking Moutse area into the homeland, ethnic criteria were increasingly downplayed in planning for the fledgeling bantustan's growth and development, while at the same time the separate development ideal of a national unit was more and more ignored in favour of geographical, administrative and developmental concerns. In this self-contradictory policy, I argue, lay the actual reasons for the failure of the bantustan to become independent as planned in 1986.

The incorporation of Moutse into Kwa-Ndebele and the resultant resistance to this eventuality by the area's residents, is important for our purpose in three basic respects. In the first place it

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<sup>6</sup> Dugard, "The Moutse Issue", in Kruger and Rainey, Kwa-Ndebele - The Future?, p.35.

<sup>7</sup> For an overview of the facts relating to Moutse and Kwa-Ndebele see, C.V.Bothma, Ethnological Report on Moutse (25 July 1983).

completely exposes the contradictions inherent in the government's own declared ethnic criteria in creating separate homelands for separate black groups. Because of Moutse's ethnic composition, its incorporation into Kwa-Ndebele contradicted government policy and at the same time confirms our argument that Kwa-Ndebele was not created in the traditional Verwoerdian spirit as a vehicle for zealously "bringing together that which belonged together", but instead the homeland served as a dumping ground for the victims of the government's application of other policies consistent with apartheid viz. Black spot removals, influx control, anti-urbanisation policy, etc.<sup>8</sup>

Secondly the incorporation of Moutse into Kwa-Ndebele best illustrates the extent to which the homeland administration could go, in its overt reliance on vigilantism, in order to break the flood of resistance to the government's unpopular Bantustan policy.<sup>9</sup> The third and perhaps the most important aspect than the foregoing two, the incorporation of Moutse into Kwa-Ndebele and the brutality with which the homeland administration carried it out through the sjambok-wilding "Mbokotho" vigilante group, served the purpose of uniting, mobilising, politicising and radicalising like never before, not only the initially placid Moutse community but also the traditionally conservative rural communities of Kwa-Ndebele.

When the culture of resistance to government policies was on the increase, the youth factor emerged on the political scene and consequently, the Kwa-Ndebele youth and their leaders swiftly transformed Moutse's war against incorporation into a struggle against their homeland's

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<sup>8</sup> Maylam, A History of the African People of South Africa, pp.174-75.

<sup>9</sup> J. Yawitch, "Kwa-Ndebele-A Rural Trojan Horse", Sash, vol.29, No.2, August 1986, pp.24-25.

impending independence. Indeed it was the growing youth militancy that became a major spur to the independence issue and it was first on the education floor that the youth effectively flexed their muscles.

#### 4.2. The excision of Moutse from Lebowa

The Moutse district near Groblersdal in the Mpumalanga Province was the home to some of the longest established communities with the Bantoane tribe claiming to have resided on the land since 1780.<sup>10</sup> Moutse comprised three sections, all totalling 66 000 hectares with a population of more than 120 000 people.<sup>11</sup> According to the 1980 census, 58% of its the population was North Sotho, 38% Ndebele and 4% of mixed origin.<sup>12</sup> The oral history of the people relates that in 1919 the Bantoane chief, Paledi Mathebe bought the farm Kwarrilaagte in Moutse 3 and later the tribe bought the farms of Elansdoring, Waterkloof and Vlasfontein. In the 1920's members of the Bakone Mashung tribe were given compensatory land on the farm Toitskraal after having been moved from Rust-der-Winter, while members of the Matlala tribe came to Moutse in 1945 after having been moved from land near the Loskop Dam which was expropriated by the government for soldiers returning from the Second World War.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> "Home Sweet Home", Financial Mail, vol.99, No.11, 14 March 1986, p.69. See also, Dugard, "The Moutse Issue", in Kwa-Ndebele - The Future?, p.38.

<sup>11</sup> J. Small and H. Winkler, Botho Sechabeng: A feeling of community, A description of forms of tenure in Transvaal rural communities (Johannesburg, TRAC, 1992), p.24.

<sup>12</sup> Bothma, Ethnological Report on Moutse, 25 July 1983.

<sup>13</sup> Small and Winkler, Botho Sechabeng a Feeling of Community, p.24.

As a result of the area's early settlement, 53% of the land was held under either individual or communal freehold tenure, while the rest of the land was Trust land since 1921.<sup>14</sup> In terms of separate development, the government recognised three tribal and three community authorities which together constituted the Moutse Regional Authority in 1970.<sup>15</sup>

In both language and culture, Moutse belonged to the North Sotho group. All its chiefs were North Sothos. Sixteen of the twenty members of the Moutse Regional Authority were Sothos, while four of the district's forty-six primary schools used Northern Sotho as their medium of instruction.<sup>16</sup> In the light of this background, it is not surprising that prior to the consolidation proposals of 1975, Moutse had always been included in the government's plans for the Northern Sotho national unit of Lebowa. For instance, it became part of the Lebowa Territorial Authority in 1962 and of the Self-Governing Lebowa Legislative Assembly in 1972. From 1962 to 1980 Moutse was part of Lebowa and it had four seats in the Lebowa Legislative Assembly.<sup>17</sup>

In 1979 the South African Government, contrary to its initial intentions, recognized the South Ndebele as a national unit also entitled to self-government, yet it consistently ignored the persistent requests by the Northern Ndebeles to be united with their brethren in the South. Indeed this would naturally be consistent with its own policy of an ethnic unit. In contradiction

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p.24. See also, McCaul, Satellite in Revolt , p.59. Trust land refers to land set aside for African settlement in terms of the Land Act of 1913, as amended 1936. It was this Act which entrenched the racial division of land in South Africa, and which has provided the cornerstone of the bantustan system.

<sup>15</sup> R.S.A., Government Gazette, No.2909, 30 October 1970.

<sup>16</sup> Pretoria News, 10 March 1986.

<sup>17</sup> Small and Winkler, Botho Sechabeng a Feeling of Community, p.27.

to this logic however, the government could not be persuaded to do this, claiming that the inclusion of the Northern Ndebele into Kwa-Ndebele could not be accomplished without massive resettlement, one of the most detested policies which the government claimed it had stopped as part of its reform package.<sup>18</sup>

Precisely because it was willing to travel the independence road, the government started giving Kwa-Ndebele preferential treatment particularly with regard to the allocation of land. Consequently, the Commission for Co-operation and Development recommended that in accordance with the 1975 consolidation proposals, the district of Moutse be excised from the legislative assembly of Lebowa and be added to Kwa-Ndebele. After this decision was taken numerous discussions took place between the minister of Co-operation and Development and the Lebowa cabinet, first in November 1979, then in June 1980 and twice in October 1980.<sup>19</sup> However, this chapter is not an appropriate place to discuss the details of these early government discussions involving Moutse and Kwa-Ndebele.

In spite of Lebowa's flat rejection of the proposal, on 24 October 1980 the State President, Marais Viljoen published Proclamation R210, which officially excised Moutse from Lebowa and provisionally placed it under the control of the Department of Co-operation and Development with effect from 1 November 1980.<sup>20</sup> Though Dr Koornhof, then minister of Co-operation and Development claimed that the excision was purely for administrative reasons, it soon became evident that the decision was actually informed by Pretoria's pre-conceived plans to incorporate

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<sup>18</sup> The Star, 3 January 1986.

<sup>19</sup> The Citizen, 4 January 1986.

<sup>20</sup> Small and Winkler, Botho Sechabeng a Feeling of Community, p.27.



the area into Kwa-Ndebele. At that time it was not possible for the government to take Moutse away from Lebowa and hand it over immediately to Kwa-Ndebele because then the latter homeland had not yet become a self-governing territory. Hence the government contemplated a two stage incorporation, first excision and then later incorporation.<sup>21</sup>

But even this, according to John Dugard, was politically mistaken because there was no precedent in South African history for excising the territory of one self-governing bantustan and placing it under the jurisdiction of another self-governing territory. Thus this could only be explained in terms of the “punishment/reward theory” for Lebowa’s refusal to take independence and Kwa-Ndebele’s willingness to walk that path,<sup>22</sup> as TRAC has noted that the transfer of Moutse was, “purely a cynical manipulation of land, taking it away from one group opposed to independence and awarding it to a more compliant group eager to benefit from the trappings of independence”.<sup>23</sup>

At about this time, developments elsewhere in South Africa forced the Department of Co-operation and Development to seriously reconsider the Moutse issue. For instance a 1982 court ruling nullified the government’s excision of the Ingwavuma district of Kwazulu.<sup>24</sup> In the light of this assertion it is beyond question that the DCAD was painfully aware of the possible implications that this ruling might have on Moutse. Furthermore, aware that Lebowa had

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<sup>21</sup> Dugard, “The Moutse Issue”, in Kwa-Ndebele - The Future?, p.37.

<sup>22</sup> W. Beinart and S. Dubow (eds), Segregation and Apartheid in Twentieth-Century South Africa (New York, Routledge, 1995), p.245. See also, The Cape Times, 1 April 1986.

<sup>23</sup> The Cape Times, 25 February 1986.

<sup>24</sup> Abel, Politics By Other Means: Law in the struggle against apartheid, 1980-1994, p.489.

solicited legal opinion regarding the Moutse issue, the government in a rather desperate move to avoid the repetition of the Ingwavuma experience, took precautionary measures by introducing legislation which would ensure that the legal standing of the 1980 Proclamation was placed beyond doubt. To this effect, in August 1983 the Laws on Co-operation and Development Act (Act No.112 of 1983) was passed which wrote into law the excision of Moutse from Lebowa, thus making it virtually impossible to contest the excision through the courts because of the principle of parliamentary supremacy. Section 16 of the act which applied retroactively to 1980 removed the Moutse Regional Authority from the scheduled area of the Lebowa Legislative Assembly. Section 17 terminated the representation of Moutse residents in the Lebowa Legislative Assembly. Section 18 deleted Moutse from the schedule to the Lebowa Constitution Proclamation. However, sections 17 and 18 only came into effect on 1 January 1986.<sup>25</sup>

In this way, Moutse's excision was now a *fait accompli*. But then, as a "black spot", Moutse soon represented an anomaly for apartheid, being a black rural community with some historical claim to land outside of the "bantustans". As such it consistently presented a political challenge to apartheid's planners. Therefore the government's logical response to remedy the situation was to incorporate the area into the Kwa-Ndebele self-governing territory as an obvious pre-lude to the latter's independence.

#### **4.3. Proclamation R227 of 1985**

From the outset, the residents and leaders of Moutse voiced their opposition to the proposed incorporation of their territory into Kwa-Ndebele. They held numerous meetings with a number

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<sup>25</sup> McCaul, Satellite in Revolt, p.60.

of ministers and their deputies, as well as the State President and they have called repeatedly for a referendum on the issue but to no avail. As compensation for the loss of Moutse, Lebowa would get Zebediela with the largest citrus estate in the world and the Immerpan/Saliesloot farms near Roedtan.<sup>26</sup>

From the point of view of policy implementation, it soon became evident that the Immerpan/Saliesloot farms were designed to be the resettlement camps for those Moutse residents who did not wish to be governed by Kwa-Ndebele. As a result of this, among the Moutse people, that Phatudi sold them out to Pretoria for land reasons is a fairly commonplace assumption, as one resident remarked, "we always suspected that Phatudi was having a double agenda in the whole matter. On the one hand, he opposed the excision of Moutse from Lebowa with us, yet on the other, he accepted Pretoria's offers of land in exchange for Moutse. It was difficult for us to make out exactly what his real intentions were".<sup>27</sup> The same suspicion of Phatudi's insincerity is apparent in Maredi Chueu's attitude, questioning Phatudi's silence after the final consolidation plans were released in September 1985, that Phatudi was conniving with Pretoria over their fate.<sup>28</sup>

In this regard however, the minister of Constitutional Development and Planning, Chris Heunis said, "in finally carrying out its conviction that this area can best be served by its incorporation into Kwa-Ndebele, the government was acutely aware that it asked for a sacrifice by Lebowa. It resolved in consequence that, as far as is humanly possible, Lebowa should be adequately

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<sup>26</sup> The Cape Times, 4 January 1986.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Mr P.J. Mashilo, 15 June 1997.

<sup>28</sup> The Financial Mail, 31 January 1986, p.60.

compensated for the loss of Moutse”.<sup>29</sup> No wonder therefore that in line with this reasoning, a consolidation package eminantly favourable to Lebowa was put together to silence Dr Phatudi. As could be expected, like all other homeland leaders who were in dire need of land, for Dr Phatudi any offers of extra land by Pretoria, regardless of circumstances and future political consequences, would definitely have been hard to ignore, even if this entailed selling out the 120 000 Moutse people.

Be that as it may, Phatudi is still remembered by many in Moutse for his humerous rhetoric in one of their meetings to resolve the issue, where to the surprise of everybody present as well as to the annoyance of those who were slow to understand him, he stated emphatically, “Moutse ga ke e nyake! Ke re Moutse ga ke e nyake! Moutse ke yaka”.<sup>30</sup> (This literally means, I don’t want Moutse! I say I don’t want Moutse! Moutse is mine).

What was clear at this stage was that Moutse’s incorporation into Kwa-Ndebele was no longer in doubt. The government claimed that this was the result of meaningful consolidation in general, in consideration of all the “relevant factors”.<sup>31</sup> However what was equally clear was that the principle of “ethnicity” on which rested the whole policy of separate development, was not included among such relevant factors, because the differing ethnic complexions of Moutse and Kwa-Ndebele precluded Moutse’s incorporation in terms of “homeland policy”. This disregard for the ethnicity principle created serious legal loopholes with future political consequences for the government.

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<sup>29</sup> The Cape Times, 15 February 1986.

<sup>30</sup> Interview with Mr. P.J. Mashilo, 15 June 97.

<sup>31</sup> The Star, 4 January 1986.

In spite of all protracted protests against the decision, on 31 December 1985 the central government gazetted Proclamation R227 which amended schedule 1 of the Kwa-Ndebele Constitution Proclamation R205 of 1979, by adding to it Moutse 1, 2 and 3. Proclamation R228 which came into effect on 1 January 1986 brought into effect sections 17 and 18 of the Laws on Co-Operation and Development Amendment Act of 1983.<sup>32</sup> Thus for better or worse the people of Moutse were resettled by the stroke of a legislative pen.

Viewing this as a new form of forced resettlement, Prof. John Dugard accurately observed that, “instead of moving people physically into another inhospitable area against their will, here we find that the inhospitable area is itself moved to them by the device of drawing a boundary or redrawing a boundary”.<sup>33</sup> According to him, in the same way as many Czechs were forced to become part of Nazi Germany by the incorporation of Sudetenland into Hitler’s Germany in the late thirties, so the people of Moutse were forced to become part of Kwa-Ndebele against their will.<sup>34</sup>

The challenge to this action by the residents of Moutse had serious political and legal repercussions both for the apartheid government and the government of Kwa-Ndebele for it soon became the subject of protracted court proceedings. The result was increased government repression, individual defiance and mass revolt, in a desperate attempt to force the government to reverse the controversial and therefore incomprehensible incorporation.

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<sup>32</sup> The Star, 3 January 1986.

<sup>33</sup> Dugard, “The Moutse Issue”, in Kwa-Ndebele - The Future?, p.40.

<sup>34</sup> Craig, Germany 1866-1945, pp.707-709. *See also*, Dugard, “The Moutse Issue”, in Kwa-Ndebele - The Future?, p.40.

The government's clear sacrifice of the "ethnicity" factor which had always been the guiding principle for separate development, attracted even international attention, as it clearly contradicted that policy, as Glenda Webster puts it, "it is a move which moreover flies in the face of the government's own stated policy of separate development on ethnic lines".<sup>35</sup> Helen Suzman concurs with this view when she states in astonishment, "the government makes great play of ethnicity when it is convenient. In this case it has deliberately and coldbloodedly ignored its favourite segregationist tenet and thrown together people of unsophisticated level and known tribal enmity...."<sup>36</sup> Closely analysed, this called into question the future of the government's attitude towards its homelands, with emphasis gradually shifting from ethnic to territorial units.

#### **4.4. Mbokotho's invasion of Moutse**

In what could only be described as a surprise invasion in the early hours of 1 January 1986, truckloads of armed vigilantes from Kwa-Ndebele entered Moutse villages of Moteti and Kgobokwane. This was in a bid to give physical effect to the previous day's proclamation which incorporated the area into Kwa-Ndebele. The vigilantes had white crosses painted on their foreheads, obviously for self-identification purposes and they were chanting Mbokotho slogans. As one resident has noted, "given our usual drinking habit on New Year's eve, on 1/1/86 you will understand that we were obviously still drunk from the previous day's partying and merry-making and we were therefore caught off-guards since we did not expect incorporation to take

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<sup>35</sup> G. Webster, "The destabilisation of Moutse", Sash, vol. 28, No.4, 28 February 1986, p.27.

<sup>36</sup> Pretoria News, 4 January 1986.

the form of a pre-dawn invasion".<sup>37</sup>

From this "blood-purge", at least three distinct battles could be identified. In the first battle, five men armed to the teeth travelling in a vehicle with Kwa-Ndebele registration, arrived at the kraal of Moutse's chief T.G Mathebe claiming that since Moutse was theirs, they had come to take possession. In the battle that ensued, four of these men were bludgeoned to death and the fifth was hospitalised.<sup>38</sup> In two other battles, panga and axe-bearing Mbokotho vigilantes abducted about 380 men from the Moutse villages of Moteti and Kgobokwane and transported them to the Siyabuswa Community Hall where they were tortured. As one victim points out, "we were sjambokked, kicked and humiliated in various ways including being forced to chant Mbokotho slogans while at the same time we slipped and fell on the floor covered with soapy water".<sup>39</sup>

What was unusual about this vigilante operation was that overseeing and participating in the assaults were the homeland's chief minister and his righthand man, minister of Internal Affairs, Maqhawe Piet Ntuli, who as deputy president of Mbokotho was the actual strong man behind the vigilante raids.<sup>40</sup> With this pre-dawn raid, the government irreversibly set in train a series

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<sup>37</sup> Interview with Mr A.M. Mahlangu, 15 June 1997. (*The informant is popularly known as Japan, in Moutse. As he relates the events around the Moutse-Mbokotho encounter, he exaggerates the seriousness of the hatred the Bantoane had for the Ndebele. He states that in one occasion, the Bantoane of Moutse would say as they saw Mbokotho trucks approaching for the ongoing conflict: "Matebele shiale a etla! A re ipolayeng re ba swabishe, ge ba re ba tlile go re bolaya ba re hwetse re setse re hwile". Meaning - there comes the Ndebele. let us kill ourselves so that when they arrive they should find us all dead already, and in this way they will be disappointed*).

<sup>38</sup> The Cape Times, 3 January 1986. See also McCaul, Satellite, p.68.

<sup>39</sup> Interview with Mr Daniel Mahlangu, 20 August 1997.

<sup>40</sup> Beinart and Dubow, Segregation and Apartheid in Twentieth-Century South Africa, p.243.

of resistance and violent confrontations with the local communities, which brought Moutse in the spotlight as the death toll increased by the day.

This invasion has been described by residents as the most dreadful chapter in the history of Moutse. Meanwhile among the Mbokotho intruders there were some who had no problem in admitting that they were engaged in the wholesale slaughter of innocent and defenceless people. As one former Mbokotho member puts it, Maqhawe never sought to conceal his part in it, and he could actually make jokes about it, “instructing us to go and rid Moutse of lice”.<sup>41</sup> While another former member of Mbokotho had this to say, “Mbokotho operated more on Maqhawe’s instructions than on any pre-arranged plan of action. He was feared by everybody including the chief minister. So whether what I was doing while serving in that “thug” organisation was necessary and right was a question upon which I had no right to express an opinion, for I lacked the necessary breadth of view. If Maqhawe himself had given an order, there was no question of considering its merits”.<sup>42</sup> This therefore illustrates in no uncertain terms the extent to which the homeland administration could rely on the vigilantes to realise their own political objectives.

#### **4.5. Opposition to Moutse transfer**

At this time the irony about Moutse’s administrative status was that although it was legally under Kwa-Ndebele administration, Mr Maredi Chueu and Chief T.G. Mathebe still represented its residents in the Lebowa Legislative Assembly. This explains why there was such a general

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<sup>41</sup> Interview with Mr M.J. Kabini, 10 July 1997.

<sup>42</sup> Interview with Mr X, 10 July 1997. (For the sake of confidentiality, the identity of the person interviewed cannot be disclosed)



determination to resist the incorporation which was regarded as grossly unreasonable, with the necessary readiness to take the matter to court in the same way that Kwazulu had done over the mooted Ingwavuma cession to Swaziland.

Some of the main reasons for their objection to incorporation were spelt out by Maredi Chueu and these included the fact that, they did not wish to lose their South African citizenship by falling under a potential independent homeland; they feared that their ancestral land which was mostly privately owned would be nationalised in an independent Kwa-Ndebele; Moutse women in particular feared losing their voting rights because according to the Kwa-Ndebele homeland's constitution women were not allowed to participate in politics yet in Lebowa they enjoyed this right. Over and above, there was a deep-seated resentment among the Moutse people to the possibility of being governed by what they tribalistically referred to as "*Matebejana*", which was a diminutive form for "Ndebeles", that is why they would rather be re-incorporated into Lebowa than transferred to Kwa-Ndebele.<sup>43</sup>

The fierce anger with which the Moutse community fought incorporation was borne out of their general hatred of the bantustan system as a whole. In the 1980's, unlike in the 1960's when the Transkei homeland was inaugurated as an experiment in separate development, there had developed among black South Africans a strong objection to the apartheid assumption that blacks should exercise their political rights in the bantustans. For instance, in addition to the reasons indicated above, the people of Moutse feared the material deprivation and violent repression that bantustan residence in general implied. Over and above, they feared that once incorporated, they would be frequently subjected to reprisals from Kwa-Ndebele authorities for their initial

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<sup>43</sup> Interview with P.J.Mashilo, 15 June 97.

resistance. And it is precisely on these grounds that the Moutse incorporation had been much more violent than most incorporations.<sup>44</sup>

Thus while the *de jure* transfer was now a *fait accompli*, the onerous task of Moutse's *de facto* transfer had just begun and the challenge to this was not confined to the residents only, but involved outside forces as well. For instance on 5 February 1986 Helen Suzman (PFP-Houghton) submitted a petition to the House of Assembly on behalf of Moutse MP's, Mr Chueu and Mr Mathebe to be heard at the Bar of the House in opposition to the controversial transfer. This petition is important because it was the fourth to be submitted in South African history. The last time such a petition was submitted to parliament was in 1976 when a group of white people in the Transkei requested to be heard at the Bar in connection with the protection of their properties after the homeland's independence that year (Transkei). On this occasion, the petitioners were however refused a hearing. The two previous occasions was in 1914 and in 1946 when petitioners were heard at the Bar of the House. In 1914 Labour Party leaders petitioned against their threatened deportation under the Indemnity and Undesirables Special Deportation Bill. While in 1946 an Indian delegation was also heard at the Bar in opposition to the Indian Land Tenure Bill.<sup>45</sup>

In the case of the recent petition the problem was that the Chief Minister of Lebowa Dr C.N. Phatudi had already instituted legal action contesting the excision of Moutse from Lebowa and therefore challenging its subsequent incorporation into Kwa-Ndebele. On these grounds, the speaker of the House, Mr Johan Greeff, ruled on 4 March 1986 that, "as the proclamation is now

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<sup>44</sup> Interview with A.M.Mahlangu, 15 July 97.

<sup>45</sup> Interview with Mrs Helen Suzman, 26/6/97.

going to be adjudicated upon by a court of law, the matter is *sub judice* and the honourable member for Houghton's notice of motion cannot be considered by parliament before the court has pronounced judgement".<sup>46</sup>

In a desperate move tantamount to a follow-up action, on 7 March 1986 the Moutse community called on the South African Government to test public opinion on the incorporation issue through a referendum, notwithstanding the costs, as Mashilo puts it, "we sincerely believed that if a referendum was a viable option for Dr H.F. Verwoerd in 1960 over the Republican issue, then it should be considered a viable solution to the Moutse impasse by the P.W.Botha government".<sup>47</sup>

In pursuance of this call for a referendum by the area's residents, a delegation consisting of Chief T.G.Mathebe; Mr M.W.Chueu and Mr Godfrey Matlala accompanied by their two legal advisers, Professor John Dugard and Mrs D. Mokgatle visited Cape Town to present a memorandum against incorporation to the House of Assembly and the House of Delegates, the highest legislative forum available to them. However, Dr Phatudi's legal action that has been cited above also precluded this initiative.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> E.P. Herald, 5 March 1986.

<sup>47</sup> Interview with P.J. Mashilo, 15 June 97.

<sup>48</sup> J.Le May, "Moutse leader calls for a referendum", in Weekly Mail, vol.2, No.9, 13 March 1986, p.2.

#### 4.6. A court ruling on Moutse

In affidavits presented before Justice Henk Van Dyk, Dr Phatudi submitted that the proclamation which incorporated Moutse into Kwa-Ndebele was of no “force and effect” because its amendment was based on a wrong proclamation promulgated in 1980. Senior Council Dr Gordon appearing for Dr Phatudi submitted that the proclamation did not amend Proclamation R225 of 1972 but Proclamation R156 of 1971, which latter proclamation governed the situation in Lebowa after the initial constitution of the legislative Assembly but before Lebowa became a self-governing territory in terms of Proclamation R225 of 1972 which had rendered Proclamation R156 of 1971 obsolete and of historical interest only.<sup>49</sup> “Even if your Lordship is convinced that this was not the intention of politicians, it was exactly what they achieved”<sup>50</sup>, argued Dr Gordon emphatically. Meanwhile Prof Dugard condemned the Proclamation as having been issued “in defiance of the statutory imperative of ethnicity and in pursuit of objects not mandated by statute”.<sup>51</sup>

Moutse lost this case both on 28 June 1986 and again on 3 December 1986 in the Pretoria Supreme Court, when Justice Spoelstra ruled that if any fundamental rights of the Moutse people to which the applicants had referred had been removed, that had been done by virtue of the 1983 Act of Parliament which legally excised Moutse from Lebowa, and not by the proclamation which incorporated it into Kwa-Ndebele. He emphasised that it was above his authority to

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<sup>49</sup> Pretoria News, 29 May 1986.

<sup>50</sup> The Sowetan, 29 May 1986.

<sup>51</sup> The Star, 26 November 1986.

determine the wisdom of the proclamation.<sup>52</sup>

Basically on account of the uniqueness of the Moutse issue, by being the first government attempt to incorporate so large a group of people to a homeland where they did not belong to the dominant ethnic group, leave was granted to appeal to the Bloemfontein Supreme Court.

For the purpose of this narrative however, the interesting part of the judgement was that, “although there was some mention in the statutes of ethnic considerations, these could be sacrificed for other goals and the State President could take geographical factors into account when drawing boundaries”.<sup>53</sup> Naturally, this sudden shift of emphasis from ethnic to geographical factors invited criticism from various quarters, as Nicholas Haysom so accurately observed, “the government played down the ethnicity factor merely because it expediently wished to embellish a particular homeland, by ceding to it a significant territory and a large group of people who had no connection with it”.<sup>54</sup> Undoubtedly, this only served to confirm the view that in its desperate move to create a viable Kwa-Ndebele, the government could risk policies which were shockingly irreconcilable with the argument that Kwa-Ndebele was the homeland for the South Ndebele ethnic group, in which all people of Ndebele extraction, including those permanently resident in the “white areas” of South Africa, were by law expected to exercise their political rights.

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<sup>52</sup> The Weekly Mail, vol.2, No.48, 11 December 1986, p.2 See also , Politics By Other Means, pp.435-6.

<sup>53</sup> Pretoria News, 3 December 1986.

<sup>54</sup> Business Day, 4 December 1986.

The loss of the court battle two times in one year, not only demoralised the Moutse people, but also wiped out every hope of a peaceful solution to the issue. Once again they approached the new year with a sense of fear about the future. For many of them the birth of a peaceful 1987 was hanging on the slenderest of threads, capable of being cut at any moment either by accident or by design, perhaps more by design than by accident, as Mbokotho had done on 1 January 1986. They genuinely feared that the dawn of 1987 would witness the repetition of the previous New Year's vigilante raids. Now with the recent court ruling in mind, it was quite evident that Kwa-Ndebele's attempts to impose its rule on the unwilling Moutse community could only exacerbate the existing conflict. Though at the close of 1986 it was clear in the light of the escalating violence and political instability throughout the country that it would take only madness to deliberately trigger another crisis at the opening of 1987, in Moutse and/or Kwa-Ndebele, a generation that had known Maqhawe Ntuli could certainly not discount madness in a dictator.

#### **4.7. Why Moutse for Kwa-Ndebele?**

Indeed for the government that had initially made ethnicity a non-negotiable article of faith as far as its planning and implementation of its policy of separate development was concerned, its incorporation of a predominantly Northern Sotho speaking Moutse district into Kwa-Ndebele, the homeland originally designed for the South Ndebele ethnic group, was not only surprising but one of the most absurd chapters in the history of apartheid in general and of separate development in particular. Actually, the reasoning of the government in this regard merits a closer analysis in order to unravel its basic contradictions.

Closely analysed, the whole incorporation issue was completely contrary to the letter and spirit of separate development. The government had always argued that separate development had a moral basis in that it ensured the right of a particular group to self-determination in its own area. However, by incorporating a predominantly Northern Sotho speaking community of Moutse into Kwa-Ndebele, the government abandoned the only moral claim that it could make for separate development because this was clearly contrary to the Verwoerdian spirit of ethnic purity.

Again, the government's transfer of Moutse into Kwa-Ndebele was a flagrant contradiction of one of the most central planks of President Botha's own reform doctrine in that, where he pledged in August 1985 in his so-called "Rubicon speech", that independence would not be forced upon anyone, some 120 000 South Africans in Moutse were being forced to become citizens of a potential independent Kwa-Ndebele. Again where Botha said that each group had the right to its own sovereignty and self-determination, own residential areas and own schools, the people of Moutse, many of whom were non-Ndebeles, were being lumped together in one political unit with the South Ndebeles with whom they shared no common culture and traditions and they hardly had any ethnic or linguistic compatibility. Over and above, where Botha had announced that the South African citizenship was to be restored to millions of Blacks who had lost theirs in the process of homeland independence, on 1 January 1986 the people of Moutse stood to lose theirs when by the stroke of the legislative pen they were converted to citizens of Kwa-Ndebele, the homeland whose independence was already due on 11 December that year. Had this incorporation succeeded in terms of government plans, a national state would have come into being with more than 40% of its citizens not part of an ethnic whole. This Moutse incorporation issue as a blatant contradiction of the ideological rationale of separate development and a cynical inducement to Kwa-Ndebele leaders to take independence, clearly flew in the face

of official rhetoric about rationalizing 'ethno-national' identities.

Undoubtedly, the government risked these contradictions solely in order to justify Kwa-Ndebele independence. It had become clear that without Moutse, it would be ridiculous to talk of independence for that tiny homeland. For instance against the background of the foregoing contradictions, one may enquire, why at a time when the government was trying hard to persuade the world that it had stopped forced removals, it was indirectly forcing some 120 000 people of Moutse to become part of Kwa-Ndebele?

And since then there had been a number of forced relocations, the most significant being that from Crossroads to Khayalitsha. With regard to Moutse the state had strategically changed its emphasis from forced removal to forced incorporation whereby the people and their land were simply transferred into a foreign bantustan through the redefining of that bantustan's boundaries.<sup>55</sup> Those who did not wish to be integrated in one political unit with the Ndebeles were given the option of relocating themselves to the Immerpan/Saliesloot relocation camps in Lebowa. While the government claimed that this could not be equated with a forced removal, the Moutse MP, Maredi Chueu clearly understood this to be equivalent to "telling people sitting in a truck that you are not taking them anywhere, but are just driving the truck to its destination".<sup>56</sup> This new strategy meant that some subtle pressure could still be exerted to force the people to move on their own accord and therefore the government would emerge unscathed from the criticism that normally accompanied forced removals. For instance, when this indeed happened when 764 Moutse families were resettled in the Immerpan/Saliesloot area by the

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<sup>55</sup> The Argus, 7 February 1986.

<sup>56</sup> "Moutse Erupts", Financial Mail, vol.99, No.2, 10 January 1986, p.36.



Department of Development Aid in February 1987, the relevant minister, Dr Gerrit Viljoen had the courage to state that they were so resettled “at the request of the heads of the families themselves”,<sup>57</sup> when in fact the truth was that they did so precisely because the status of the land on which they lived was being changed under their feet. In this way, a massive relocation of people could be presented as voluntary, a strategy solely designed to deflect public outcry against forced removals both locally and internationally.

Again one may further enquire, why at a time when the country was grappling with widespread political unrest which had led to the declaration of the state of emergency, the government had gratuitously created a new trouble spot in a previously conservative rural area? For example, the arrest of Godfrey Mathebe under section 29 of the Internal Security Act of the state of emergency, obviously related to his part in the resistance to the incorporation issue, had forged an unusual alliance between bantustan leaders, traditional chiefs, militant youths and organised workers. Nowhere else in the country did these forces work together against apartheid, yet at the behest of the government, they were made to co-operate and thereby defy the logic of resistance to the system.

For instance Godfrey Mathebe was typical of the kind of conservative traditional leadership the Moutse community had known. He was deeply respectful of the local chief. He had accepted the homeland system and he represented Moutse in the Lebowa Legislative Assembly. In other words, he was part of the government’s administrative machinery. He was what the militant youths would disparagingly call a “puppet”, a “stooge,” and/or “collaborator” of the system,<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Hansard (A) 4q col 305, 23 February 1987.

<sup>58</sup> Mare and Hamilton, An Appetite For Power, p.39.

a political position which chief Buthelezi was at pains to justify when he stated that, "co-operation was not acceptance of the apartheid system but evidence of a desire to progress within whatever system was imposed upon them."<sup>59</sup> To the "comrades", Mathebe was the kind of person who was the primary "target" in the past. But when he was thus detained, the radical youths started to view him differently and they accepted him as an ally against what they regarded as a common enemy, namely, government. In this way, the policy planners in Pretoria had through their implementation of a self-contradictory policy, technically turned the once conservative Mathebe into a radical.

In spite of opposition and the human costs involved, the government proceeded with the incorporation of Moutse into Kwa-Ndebele. But this time, perhaps more than any other time in the past, it became clear to government policy planners that the process was more and more becoming politically expensive and increasingly difficult to justify in the light of the reform measures that had already been announced.

In trying to make sense of these contradictions, one can hardly escape the following tentative conclusions: In the first place, it may be suggested that by incorporating Moutse into Kwa-Ndebele the government was trying to boost Kwa-Ndebele's slim chances of viability for independence, as Suzman points out, "the consolidation smacked of a reward system for states which accepted independence".<sup>60</sup> And this did not help but confirm the view in opposition quarters that, the government's pronouncements that apartheid was dying, were only cosmetic

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<sup>59</sup> B.Temkin, *Gatsha Buthelezi: Zulu Statesman*, (Cape Town, Purnell, 1976), p.118.

<sup>60</sup> Interview with Mrs Helen Suzman, 26 June 1997. See also Abel, Politics By Other Means, p.460.

public relations exercises designed to disarm critics and to appease the outside world, especially the disinvestment lobby.

Again one may say, with the incorporation of Moutse the surface area of the tiny Kwa-Ndebele homeland would have been greatly expanded by some 66 000 well developed hectares of land, which included tarred roads, more than 58 schools, churches of various denominations, the well known Philadelphia Hospital which was destined to become the only hospital in the entire homeland, as well as prospects of mineral wealth for which a major mining company had already applied for prospecting rights.<sup>61</sup>

Since Moutse adjoined Kwa-Ndebele, it was hoped that those residents who were willing to stay in the area irrespective of who governed them, would be easily incorporated into the homeland's structures without the hassles and criticisms which usually accompanied physical removals. But perhaps more important in this regard, it would seem from the view of policy implementation, the incorporation of Moutse into Kwa-Ndebele would have allowed the government the unusual luxury of increasing the homeland's size without having to purchase white farms with its attendant fiscal and political costs.

With the help of hindsight however one may say, by his own admission, in incorporating Moutse into Kwa-Ndebele the State President was not motivated by a genuine desire to add the South Ndebele of Moutse to their brothers in Kwa-Ndebele, but instead the motives were administrative, since it was hoped that a larger continuous area would be more easily

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<sup>61</sup> Webster, "The destabilisation of Moutse", Sash, vol.28, No.4, p.27. See also, Cape Times, 25 February 1986.

administered than separate areas under different administrations.<sup>62</sup> Finally, one may conclude that, as an area historically open for African occupation, the policy planners in Pretoria clearly realised that the incorporation of Moutse into Kwa-Ndebele would not affect the Transvaal's quota of African land allotted by the 1936 Native Trust and Land Act and neither would it affect the total land size(13%) reserved for African occupation in the whole country in terms of the latter and the 1913 Land Acts.

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<sup>62</sup> Justice Grosskopf allowing Moutse's challenge to incorporation, from the judgement in the case of *Mathebe v the Governments of the RSA, Kwa-Ndebele and of Lebowa*, Appellate Division of the Supreme Court (1988) cited in Dugard, The Moutse Issue, p.39. and Abel, Politics By Other Means, p.436.

## CHAPTER 5

### WAR AGAINST MBOKOTHO CHANGES TO WAR AGAINST INDEPENDENCE

#### 5.1. Mbokotho on the rampage<sup>1</sup>

At this stage it is important to reiterate the argument that the Kwa-Ndebele war against independence only began as a spontaneous reaction to the brutality and violence of the Mbokotho vigilante group. This organisation sought to suppress dissent and general political activism in the homeland. Undoubtedly, it was the approach of this mafia-type hitherto “cultural organisation”, which became more pronounced in the Moutse affair on New Year’s Day of 1986 and found expression in wanton attacks, abductions and assaults on the defiant Moutse residents, that later transformed the Kwa-Ndebele population from a relatively conservative<sup>2</sup> and thus politically unorganised community, into a militant force for the government to reckon with. Subsequently, it was now this politicised group which spontaneously counter-attacked Mbokotho and effectively wiped it out, thus halting Pretoria’s constitutional designs for that fledgeling homeland.

Though the chief minister had already announced as early as February 1986, that Kwa-Ndebele would become independent on 11 December that year,<sup>3</sup> the territory’s Commissioner General,

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<sup>1</sup> *This phrase was used quite often by the press when referring to Mbokotho activities especially after the invasion of Moutse by the vigilantes. See The Sowetan, 5 January 1986 and The Star 15 May 1986.*

<sup>2</sup> Delius, “The Ndzundza Ndebele: Indenture and the Making of Ethnic Identity, 1883-1914”, in Bonner, Holding their Fground, p.227. *According to the author, the “tribe” holds to its “tribal” conditions closer than any other natives.*

<sup>3</sup> Minutes of a cabinet meeting, 16 February 1986. *Since this was not the first time the chief minister made this announcement, it can safely be said that it was the first official*

Gerrie Van der Merwe had allayed the residents' fears by assuring them that this was highly unlikely, in the light of Kwa-Ndebele' state of development and also in view of the fact that the proposed capital of Kwa-Mhlanga as well as other independence projects would obviously not have been completed by that date.<sup>4</sup>

Against this background, it goes without saying that the fluid political situation in the homeland in the early months of 1986 was strictly speaking, not the result of a conscious reaction to the independence issue *per se* by the homeland's residents, but on the contrary, it was the consequence of the people's expression of their antagonism to Mbokotho arrogance and atrocities. Actually, by that time, the independence issue was still an elite concern, though slowly yet surely, news that it impended on Kwa-Ndebele was already the subject of media debate.<sup>5</sup>

Consistent with the objectives that gave it birth,<sup>6</sup> Mbokotho felt duty-bound to uphold their own kind of discipline on school children, whom it identified as potential threats to the proposed constitutional plans for the homeland. With this in mind, it is not surprising that, pupils and

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*admission by S.S. Skosana that in spite of initial denials, his administration was indeed committed to this constitutional eventuality.* (See, The Star 14 January 1981)

<sup>4</sup> McCaul, Satellite in Revolt, p.9.

<sup>5</sup> *Admittedly, during this time, the average Kwa-Ndebele resident was not aware that the government administration had set the homeland on the road to independence. However, this topic had already been touched on by The Star, January 1981, Pretoria News, 12 August 1982 as well as several SABC Radio Stations e.g. Radio Lebowa, (now Radio Thobela), after Holiday Inns had signed an agreement in April 1981 to develop a casino in the homeland after independence.*

<sup>6</sup> Hansard, Second Kwa-Ndebele Legislative Assembly, 29 April 1986, vol.17, p.554, *contains the reasons that were advanced by Majosi Mahlangu for the establishment of Mbokotho.*

youths became a special focus of repression and harassment. However, the place of the youth in the grand narrative of South African history is relatively well known: brought into an education system which prepared them for little more than manual labour, they gradually became politicised. Their political power was first recognised in the Soweto uprising of 1976. After this, the youth became a key constituency in the armed struggle. In the 1980s they became the comrades who challenged apartheid manifestations even in the rural communities, particularly, the incorporation of Moutse and the Kwa-Ndebele independence issue.

Ahead of the Moutse skirmishes, Mbokotho's first encounter with the youth was on a Christmas Day of 1985 when a group of Mamelodi youth was attacked while on a picnic in Kwa-Ndebele.<sup>7</sup> The youths were vaguely accused of being members of an equally detested COSAS, whose presence in the homeland was perceived as a threat to state security, in the light of the preconceived constitutional plans for the territory.<sup>8</sup> Mbokotho's clear yet unstated aim was to use this as an opportunity to demonstrate its power and might to the local residents, a strategy well calculated to intimidate the possible opponents of independence. Consequently, Mbokotho assaulted these youth on the dubious grounds that they had come to influence the youth of the homeland to boycott classes.<sup>9</sup> The strategy backfired in that it served the counter purpose of mobilizing the youth in the area like nothing else before.

There is persuasive evidence to prove that during South Africa's most troubled times, the Kwa-Ndebele youths had not really participated in any political uprising of any significance. Hence,

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<sup>7</sup> The Sowetan, 27 December 1985. See also, The Cape Times, 26 December 1985.

<sup>8</sup> Interview with Miss S.B. Tshabangu, 12 October 1997.

<sup>9</sup> Interview with Miss L.M.Dlamini, 12 October 1997.

parents from South Africa's most troubled townships preferred to send their children to attend school in the homeland on account of its apparent political tranquility and/or educational stability.<sup>10</sup> At the behest of Mbokotho however, students at some schools began to gather on their own impetus to discuss strategies of dealing with their common problems which were in the main Mbokotho related. This development naturally awakened them to the need for SRC's in order to realise these objectives.

The first of the schools to come head-on in collision with Mbokotho was Mmashadi High in Siyabuswa. On 28 February 1986 the school principal called Mbokotho to intervene, as pupils gathered with the objective of forming the SRC at her school, a body which was perceived then as the force behind the educational ills that beset Black education in the townships.<sup>11</sup> In no time, government vehicles ferrying Mbokotho members entered the school premises, whereupon they arrested and sjambokked students and some teachers.<sup>12</sup> Teachers were later forced to teach the injured pupils under Mbokotho supervision.

It would be remembered that before and during this time, some teachers had through their membership of the most conservative teacher organisation, "TUATA", lost the respect of some of their pupils due to a combination of incompetence and political docility.<sup>13</sup> Until the advent

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<sup>10</sup> *It is remarkable how in the early 1980s boarding schools in Kwa-Ndebele became inundated with pupils mainly from the PWV areas. The most notable of these were Mayisha and Mabusabesala High Schools in Waterval and eNkosini respectively. This point will be elaborated further in this chapter.*

<sup>11</sup> The Star, 29 February 1986.

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Mr I.M. Ntuli, 17 June 1997.

<sup>13</sup> *As a teacher organisation, TUATA always operated on the notion that a teacher who participated in politics was guilty of misconduct and therefore certain school principals*



of SADTU, as rightless objects of a feared bureaucracy, the teachers had become conditioned to blindly following the orders listed in circulars or issued by authoritarian inspectors. No wonder then that some principals could find no fault in calling the vigilantes into the school upon the slightest provocation.

Two months later, pupils at the neighbouring high school, Bonginhlanhla, also boycotted classes in protest against the shortage of books. Such protest was not unique to the school in question, but was a feature of student action country-wide. What was unique was the way the school authorities handled the matter. Instead of convening a meeting with the pupils and the school committee, at the invitation of the school management, carloads of Mbokotho members armed to the teeth and in a fighting mood, entered the school premises and assaulted the pupils.<sup>14</sup> Following this Mbokotho-pupils encounter, ten pupils were later captured at an Mbokotho roadblock, and tortured for the next two days with electric shocks at community halls in Kwaggafontein and Siyabuswa.<sup>15</sup> In the aftermath of these events, there was an increase in tension in the homeland while many people developed a fearless determination to fight Mbokotho and all that it symbolised. It is in this context of rising popular opposition to Mbokotho that the following events at Mandlethu High School in Vlaklaagte No.1 took place. These events focused around student grievances related to Mbokotho actions and were to have tragic and far-reaching consequences that inevitably fed into the constitutional uprising that was simmering.

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*abused their powers in their dealings with teachers because they knew that teachers had no recourse to a union that would represent them against unfair labour practices by the authorities.*

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Mr D. Ramashala, 25 July 1997.

<sup>15</sup> SAIRR, Survey 1986, part 2, (Joannesburg, SAIRR, 1988), p.656.

At Mandlethu as at many schools then, it was customary for pupils to study communally in the evening so that they could share the textbooks that were in short supply. However, since Mbokotho's involvement in the affairs of the schools in the region, it had declared such a practice a punishable offence, vaguely alleging that the practice created an opportunity for pupils to form SRC's which in their view "encouraged class boycotts".<sup>16</sup> Consequently, it became a declared Mbokotho policy that anybody found in the school premises after dusk ran a serious risk of being arrested by vigilantes for the usual torture.

However, what seemed to have added fuel to seething discontent was the prohibition of female pupils from wearing their compulsory school track suits, because of Mbokotho's insistence that girls should not wear trousers.<sup>17</sup> This was another example of Ndebele oppression of the woman on the grounds of gender. On the other hand, this showed a clear conflict of interests between the school authorities and Mbokotho. For the pupils there was no middleground. They had either to disregard the school management and be subjected to reprisals for lack of respect for their authorities, or to obey them and wear track suits at their own peril, because Mbokotho would not tolerate disobedience in this regard.

Under these circumstances, in a desperate attempt to resolve this problem, on 18 April 1986 a group of Mandlethu pupils marched to the local Induna, Samuel Mahlangu, to bring their grievances to his attention. The chief was asked beforehand to convene a meeting of residents including the two known Mbokotho members in the village, namely, Skosana and Ngoma. At

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<sup>16</sup> Interview with Mr D. Sibanyoni, 14 May 1997.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

this meeting, various grievances against Mbokotho and related issues were highlighted and the two men promised that Mbokotho would attend to their grievances and reply in a week's time. Contrary to expectations however, on 28 April as the people awaited a response, Mbokotho surrounded the school and started beating pupils in a bid to get hold of the so-called "ring-leaders".<sup>18</sup> "Those who were captured were locked up in an Induna's shack near the school, thanks to the quick arrival of the police who freed them and ordered the crowd to disperse"<sup>19</sup>. The arrival of the police did not deter Mbokotho from going on the rampage. In the late hours of the day the entire village was in turmoil, with parents trying to find and protect their children from the marauding Mbokotho.<sup>20</sup> The press kept readers throughout the homeland informed about continuing harassment by Mbokotho and this increased resentment of the organisation by the community.

## 5.2. The murder of Jacob Skosana

The first parent in the village to taste the bestial retribution of Mbokotho's might under these circumstances, was Jacob Skosana. Told that his primary school daughter might have been captured by the vigilantes, like many parents then, Skosana went out for a search while voicing his indignation and demonstrating his antagonism to the vigilantes. In reaction to this, Mbokotho forced its way into his house, captured him and took him to the Kwaggafontein place of torture, "emagezini," from where he emerged lifeless.<sup>21</sup> This cold-blooded murder of Skosana, so

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<sup>18</sup> Interview with MR K.N.Masango, 12 June 1997.

<sup>19</sup> Interview with Mr P.K.Mahlangu, 14 May 1997.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with Mr D. Sibanyoni, 14 May 1997.

<sup>21</sup> SAIRR, Survey 1986, Part 2, p.657.

outraged the local community that the public outcry led to the arrest of about 20 Mbokotho members on charges of murder. However, on account of the allegation that the police condoned Mbokotho behaviour, it came as no surprise to learn that the docket for the case went missing from the police offices.<sup>22</sup> Isaac Ntuli sums it up so well as follows, “ from 1986 it has cost the Kwa-Ndebele police, the trust of the homeland population in general as well as of the student community in particular, while producing no quantifiable countervailing good around which a ribbon of approval could be wrapped”.<sup>23</sup> “It soon occurred to us that it is the enemy which determines the rules of the war, and having learned that, we were determined to stop at nothing but to eliminate Mbokotho from our midst”.<sup>24</sup>

Slowly yet certainly, a revolution was brewing throughout Kwa-Ndebele. It soon became evident that it was only a matter of time before the once placid homeland could be turned into a no-go area by the forces which it had itself created. As general discontent grew, and dissatisfaction against Mbokotho spread, a culture of resistance and mass defiance unknown to the territory before, was fast developing among the youths. Thus one may say, through its tactless involvement in school affairs as an attempt to intimidate its opponents and thereby suppress perceived student activism, Mbokotho was unknowingly begetting the very thing it genuinely sought to destroy. On the other hand, by openly supporting and encouraging Mbokotho to take the law into its own hands, the homeland administration was also unknowingly unleashing forces which it would find extremely difficult to control. This conclusion does not however necessitate a rejection of the influence of criminal activity in the violence of the 1980s

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<sup>22</sup> Interview with Mr P.K.Mahlangu, 14 May 1997.

<sup>23</sup> Interview with Mr Isaac Ntuli, 17 June 1997.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Mr T.S.Masango, 14 July 1997.

throughout the country, nor the socio-economic factors which fuelled it.

### **5.3. Protest mass meeting at the Royal Kraal 12 May 1986**

In spite of numerous resolutions which expressly opposed the proposed independence of the homeland by the territory's residents,<sup>25</sup> in February 1986 a cabinet minister, K.M.Mtsweni proposed that the minister of Constitutional Development and Planning, Chris Heunis should be asked to expedite the issue.<sup>26</sup> For instance a general meeting of all Headmen, Tribal and Village Councils as well as Community Authorities had already been called for 20 February 1986 to announce to them the independence decision.<sup>27</sup>

On 7 May 1986, after a joint meeting between the representatives of the South African Government and the Government of Kwa-Ndebele, the State President made the long awaited announcement that Kwa-Ndebele would take independence on 11 December 1986.<sup>28</sup> It is interesting to note that the Minister of Internal Affairs, Maqhawe Ntuli, said that there was no need to refer the decision to a popular vote because "independence was implicit in Kwa-Ndebele's acceptance of self-government".<sup>29</sup> Since the murder of Jacob Skosana in April, Kwa-

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<sup>25</sup> Resolution of the Ndebele National Organisation on the Kwa-Ndebele Independence issue held on 27 June 1982.

<sup>26</sup> Minutes of the Kwa-Ndebele Independence Working Committee Meeting held on 19 February 1986.

<sup>27</sup> Minutes of the Kwa-Ndebele Independence Working Committee Meeting held on 19 February 1986.

<sup>28</sup> Hansards, Kwa-Ndebele Legislative Assembly Debates, vol.14, May 1986, p.51.

<sup>29</sup> Mc Caul, Satellite in Revolt, p.9.

Ndebele had virtually degenerated into a powder magazine in which the dropping of a lighted match either by accident or by design, was sure to result in a gigantic conflagration. The political situation in the homeland had remained so fluid that it needed only a spark for revolt to flare, and this announcement of the independence date indeed became such an instantaneous spark to existing tensions. At that time, a delegation of government officials had already paid a visit to the "Republics" of Venda and Ciskei with the purpose of gaining experience on how to make the necessary preparations for such an eventuality.<sup>30</sup>

During this time, the Ndzundza royal family was continually confronted with complaints related to Mbokotho. Though it was part of the traditional leadership that commanded a large support in the region, it had been more and more undermined by the development of more modern kinds of leadership such as bureaucrats who were fairly ambitious, simply because of the royal family's unconcealed antagonism to the independence idea.

This seems to have been a rather recurring trend in all bantustans. History has it that even Zulu King Goodwill Zwelithini was effectively kept constitutionally and politically on the periphery by Khief Buthelezi during the first five years of the existence of the Kwazulu homeland.<sup>31</sup> In Kwa-Ndebele, Mbokotho took it upon themselves to protect the interests of this bureaucratic leadership against all the others and they did it so vigorously that it had a counter-effect of politicising and mobilizing the initially conservative community against it. No wonder, in their fight against Mbokotho, the youth found that their only recourse in the circumstance was to align

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<sup>30</sup> Report on the Venda and Ciskei Visits: Recommendations to the Chief Minister.

<sup>31</sup> G. Mare and G. Hamilton, An Appetite for Power: Buthelezi's Inkatha and the Politics of 'Loyal Resistance', (Cape Town, Ravan Press, 1987), p.76.

themselves with the marginalised Ndzundza royal family, perhaps in recognition of the principle of “the enemy of my enemy is my friend”.<sup>32</sup> It was this “alliance of convenience,” that was to play a key role in facilitating the success of the opposition, because the royal family had the capacity to call mass meetings, they could easily meet with the “comrades”, they had contacts with the civil service, and they also had the necessary authority to meet and make representations to senior South African government and security force members.

In response to mounting pressure from residents to deal with the ever-present threat of Mbokotho related violence, the royal family called a mass meeting on 12 May 1986 at the Royal Kraal, with the view to finding ways and means through which Mbokotho could be checked. Though the entire cabinet was invited, only three members showed up, namely, Minister of Justice, Law and Order M.F. Mahlangu, Minister of Works K.M. Mtsweni and the Minister of Health, Welfare and Pensions, Prince C.N. Mahlangu. Yet an estimated crowd of 20 000 residents were in attendance.<sup>33</sup>

On 6 May 1986 the Kwa-Ndebele parliament had taken a resolution to close the Ndzundza - Mapoch Tribal Office and the decision was announced over the radio and duly implemented. Against this background, it was only natural that amongst other demands the meeting wanted an explanation for the closure of the tribal office and further resolved that Mbokotho should be disbanded, the independence decision should be revoked and that the whole cabinet and Legislative Assembly members should resign.<sup>34</sup> Because the chief minister was not in the

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<sup>32</sup> Interview with Mr S.D Lekotoko, 14 May 1997.

<sup>33</sup> The Star, 15 May 1997.

<sup>34</sup> Affidavit of Prince S.J. Mahlangu, p.5.

country at that time, the acting chief minister, K.M. Mtsweni promised a response to these demands at a report-back mass meeting which was then scheduled for the 14 May at the same venue.

#### **5.4. The funeral that triggered a rebellion**

The 13th of May was the date for the funeral of the Mbokotho victim at Vlaklaagte No.1, Jacob Skosana. As could be expected in times of political unrest, especially when an unrest victim's funeral had to take place, the local magistrate imposed ludicrous restrictions on the funeral proceedings. These included amongst others, that only 50 family members should attend and ordered that the funeral should be held during mid-week. The magistrate had further ordered that no television photographers should be present at such a funeral with the usual conviction that their presence incited mourners at the unrest related funerals.<sup>35</sup>

Perhaps to the dismay of the restrictor, thousands of people not only from within, but also from without the magisterial jurisdiction of Vlaklaagte No.1, turned up for what was destined to become a "hero's funeral", in spite of the restrictions. As could be expected, the police also arrived and after warning the mourners that they constituted an illegal gathering and therefore ordering them to disperse but to no avail, they started firing teargas cannisters, birdshot and rubber bullets as thousands of the hitherto peaceful mourners went beserk.<sup>36</sup> Indeed a people made desperate by despair and oppression would use desperate means. Later after the dust had settled, the 19 year old Sarah Mthimunya from the neighbouring Tweefontein village emerged

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<sup>35</sup> The Star, 15 May 1986.

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Mr D.Sibanyoni, 14 May 1997.



as the victim of that day's confrontation, having died after falling under a bus whose passengers had been teargassed.<sup>37</sup>

Before these relatively new political developments, the homeland as a whole was generally deemed to be 'quiescent' and to have avoided the patterns of popular unrest and conflict which had engulfed almost the whole country since 1984. Since that day it soon became evident that this was never again to be. In a retaliatory spirit to what the people regarded as unprovoked attack by the police and Mbokotho, they went on the rampage, destroying by any means possible Mbokotho property, especially the business premises. Since there was an implied suggestion that Mbokotho property was 'sacrosanct' and that its destruction deserved righteous retaliation, road blocks were set up all over the place and the situation remained one of violent confrontation for the whole day and night of 13 May.<sup>38</sup>

Those apprehended at such road blocks were taken to "emagezini" for torture, as one victim explains, "we were made to walk bare-foot on burning coal while at the same time we were sjambokked and spat at. It was terrible. I don't want to remember that day's torture".<sup>39</sup> Notwithstanding the foregoing, one thing clear even to the most feared Mbokotho leader, Maqhawe Ntuli, was that from that day, the spirit of resistance and mass defiance previously unknown to Kwa-Ndebele, was irreversibly set in motion.

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<sup>37</sup> Interview with Mr K.N. Masango, 12 June 1997.

<sup>38</sup> The Sowetan, 15 May 1997.

<sup>39</sup> Interview with Mr S.D. Lekotoko, 13 May 1997. It seems Mbokotho was using the same method of torturing its victims because irrespective of where the victim was held the method remained the same. Victims from Kwaggafontein relate the same stories as the victims from Tweefontein or Waterval.

### 5.5. The report-back mass meeting at the Royal Kraal 14 May 1986

Following the funeral of Jacob Skosana on the 13th and confrontation between the comrades on the one hand and the security forces and Mbokotho on the other that accompanied it, it indeed became very clear that life in Kwa-Ndebele would never be the same again. The spirit of resistance took a different complexion as parents joined the youths in calling for the dismantling of Mbokotho. From this day the population of the tiny homeland became divided into two clearly definable opposing camps, namely, the people opposed to independence on the one side and Mbokotho and the security forces on the other.

Against the background of the violence that took place that has been essayed, it was not surprising that when Prince S.J. Mahlangu requested permission to hold a report-back meeting the following day, such permission was refused by the local magistrate J. Theron.<sup>40</sup> However, the notice calling off the meeting was too short to deter people from converging in their thousands on the morning of 14th May. Actually, there was a spontaneous stay-away on that day as buses were hijacked, instead of transporting their daily commuters to Pretoria, they were ordered by the masses to turn round and make their way to the royal kraal. Though ripeness for conflict in the homeland was underestimated, it is common knowledge in Kwa-Ndebele that opposition to independence began on 14 May 1986 because of the authorities' indifference to the peoples' concerns.

According to members of the Unrest Monitoring Group, the meeting which broke up in violent confusion had been peaceful until the SADF repeatedly fired tear gas and rubber bullets from

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<sup>40</sup> The Star, 15 May 1986.

casspirs and a helicopter which was hovering above the Ndzundza area, to disperse the hitherto unlawful gathering.<sup>41</sup> All hell broke loose when teargas was thrown into buses which then veered out of control. As one witness puts it, “in one occasion, a driver who was overcome by teargas leaped out of his bus, thus leaving panicking passengers who also jumped out of its windows. In the stampede that ensued, the driverless bus ran over and killed a ten year old boy from enKosini (the king’s place). The sight of his badly mangled legs infuriated us and fuelled our determination to fight Mbokotho to the bitter end”.<sup>42</sup>

In the pandemonium that ensued, people were scattered in all directions and those who could not get away in time were overcome and trampled upon, while many more were injured. In the midst of this, a 13 year old, Boy Masilela also from enKosini, was fatally wounded when a leading Mbokotho businessman opened fire in what later transpired to have been a coldblooded attack.<sup>43</sup> The boy had actually gone to buy bread at the supermarket.<sup>44</sup>

What appeared to be more frustrating to the people was the lack of concern by the South African government to the bloodletting in that homeland. For instance, the then Minister of Law and Order, Louis le Grange openly refused to answer questions about the involvement of the SAP and SADF in the crisis, declaring instead, “seeing that Kwa-Ndebele is a self-governing state with its own police force and the circumstances of the events on 14 May 1986 were an internal concern of that state, I do not deem it in the public interest to make known information regarding

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<sup>41</sup> The Sowetan, 15 May 1986.

<sup>42</sup> Interview with Mr S.D.Lekotoko, 12 October 1997.

<sup>43</sup> SAIRR, Survey 1986, p.682.

<sup>44</sup> The Cape Times, 15 May 1986.

the national state's domestic affairs".<sup>45</sup> This was the same kind of response the then minister of Bantu Administration and Development M.C.Botha, gave to Colin Eglin's (PFP) suggestion that the Transkeians be afforded the opportunity to decide on independence through a referendum,<sup>46</sup> "did the hon. member want us to intervene there as though we were some kind of UN, and hold elections or exercise supervision over them? Is the Transkei not to be afforded the opportunity of organizing its own affairs itself?...This is not our approach to self-determination".<sup>47</sup>

In retaliation, the masses set that businessman's supermarket on fire including every other Mbokotho property in the vicinity. Generally, the targets of people's anger which at first appeared to be obvious Mbokotho property, soon changed from arson to looting, when the "tsotsi" element among youths took advantage of the unrest situation. This provoked Mbokotho into mobilization to protect their businesses. In the process, many innocent bystanders were hurt while many more were left homeless. What remained to be done in consequence was a clear move away from "microphone politics", "mass meetings" and so forth, to grassroots level organisation.

When the dust settled, the cost of physical damage to property was vast. This included over 41 business premises, ten vehicles and nine houses belonging to Mbokotho and alleged Mbokotho

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<sup>45</sup> Hansard, (A) 16 q cols 27 May 1986. *Clearly Pretoria also had vested interests in Kwa-Ndebele independence and it would not stop the bloodshed if that would ensure the cutting of the political umbilical cord between the two states and there absolve the central state of responsibility for the welfare of the homeland residents.*

<sup>46</sup> House of Assembly Debates, 7 June 1976, col. 8369.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 9 June 1976, col.8565.

members, all totalling an estimated R4 million.<sup>48</sup> This, according to the some members of the Moutse community was the “first large scale resistance to independence”.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, from this date, the average Kwa-Ndebele resident realised that the issue was not only fighting Mbokotho, but also resistance to the looming spectre of independence. Consequently, the crisis was gradually changed from being anti-Mbokotho in motivation to being anti-independence in essence. In spite of this, however, it must be emphasised that even then, the great majority of the people fighting against independence did not do so conscious of the legal consequences of bantustan independence on their lives, nor were they aware that it meant the loss of their South African citizenship which they would arguably be fighting to protect. In this way, it can be argued that their resolve to resist independence could not be equated with their determination to fight a tangible thing like Mbokotho, with which they had daily confrontations.

The irony was that a movement that claimed to be interested in peace (as Skosana had alleged earlier that “Mbokotho just keeps the peace”), should be one of the primary factors of conflict in the struggle against independence. What was even more disturbing were Skosana and Maqhawe’s responses to accusations of violence against Mbokotho. Indeed this illustrated a recurring trend in the government’s mode of justifying violence, while at the same time distancing itself from liability. For instance in the aftermath of the violence one man was found shot in the mouth and it was claimed that, “he was about to throw a petrol bomb”,<sup>50</sup> while the Kwa-Ndebele police also claimed that some men were “shot by shopkeepers protecting their

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<sup>48</sup> Die Vaderland, 16 May 1986. *See also*, Rapport 18 May 1986 and Die Burger, 15 May 1986.

<sup>49</sup> The Cape Times, 15 May 1986.

<sup>50</sup> SAIRR, Survey 1986, pp.682-83.

shops”,<sup>51</sup> when in reality most shopkeepers were Mbokotho members with a political agenda. This in a nutshell explains how the homeland administration exhibited a flagrant disregard for democracy and the rule of law and willingness to use coercive violence to foist independence on an unwilling population. To all the foregoing developments, Pretoria turned a blind eye and took a rather non-committal position. Instead, on 15 May, the Deputy Minister of Development and Land Affairs, Ben Wilkens, quoted P.W.Botha when he said in April, “it is my policy as well as that of my supporters that we do not want to force independence upon peoples inside and adjoining South Africa. But if there are peoples...who prefer the road to independence, we cannot and will not oppose them, however small they may be”.<sup>52</sup> By stating categorically that the government did not have to consult the homeland citizens before it could take this decision,<sup>53</sup> it was giving sweeping powers to the homeland leadership which it would later regret.

## 5.6. The rise of KWAYCO

In the beginning, comrade resistance movements in Kwa-Ndebele, first to Mbokotho and then to independence, in contrast to the country-wide resistance to apartheid, had a narrow social base. Unlike resistance movements to apartheid in the townships with a strong trade union component, such resistance in Kwa-Ndebele was in the form of a large and uncoordinated collection of individual groups of unemployed, yet militant youths who were rarely fully informed about the political and legal implications of independence as contemplated for their bantustan. In the light of this assertion, one may say, the suggestion that the battle that engulfed

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid,p.683.

<sup>52</sup> Hansard, (R) 13 cols 2936 and 2911, 15 May 1986.

<sup>53</sup> Hansard, (A) q cols 2100-2101, 3 June 1986.

the homeland in the middle of 1986 was initiated as a struggle against independence, cannot be as accurate as the present argument that this struggle against independence followed spontaneously from the war against Mbokotho.

The Ndzundza royal family which came to play such a critical role in the struggle, set in motion a process of consultation with the local population. This effort resulted in the establishment of village committees throughout the homeland which together formed the UDF affiliated Kwa-Ndebele Youth Congress(KWAYCO),under the leadership of Prince S.J.Mahlangu.<sup>54</sup> This reflects the ambivalent political position of the Ndzundza royal house and the extent to which the excesses of Mbokotho had promoted an unusual tactical alliance between traditionally conservative leadership within the bantustan, youth and community representatives opposed to independence. What is more, this alliance also loosely embraced some white farmers in the region who resented the incorporation of their land into the bantustan as proposed in the 1983 consolidation proposals.<sup>55</sup>

KWAYCO was an umbrella body with more than 25 individual youth congresses organised at village level. The structures were rural equivalents of “street committees” and “neighbourhood organisations,” established in the urban townships. Unlike these organisations however, members of the various village committees in Kwa-Ndebele left their homes to avoid Mbokotho capture and operated from the veld and they were allowed by some headmen opposed to

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<sup>54</sup> SAIRR, Survey 1986, p.683.

<sup>55</sup> C, Murray, “Displaced Urbanisation: Rural Slums”, in W, Beinart and S, Dubow,(eds), Segregation and Apartheid in Twentieth-Century South Africa, (London, Routledge, 1995), p.247.

independence to use tribal offices for their caucus meetings.<sup>56</sup>

As it turned out, it was KWAYCO which played a key role in facilitating the success of the opposition by putting inexorable pressure on the Kwa-Ndebele government. Because it had links with the UDF, KWAYCO represented a serious challenge to Mbokotho's authority and legitimacy among a population that was already disaffected by growing unemployment and widespread poverty. Those comrades who fell in the hands of Mbokotho with direct complicity by government officials, were held prisoner at "Kloppersdam Mbokotho concentration camp" near Vaalbank. A number of affidavits which were filed by fourteen of the victims through a Pretoria lawyer, and they all implicated Chief Minister Simon Skosana, Minister of Law and Order Fanie Mahlangu, Minister of Works K.Motshweni, Member of Parliament M.G.Mahlangu (later Chief Minister) and Minister of Internal Affairs M.P.Ntuli. According to these, while at the camp, they were made to trample on burning coal, dipped in the water and forced to sing a song praising Mbokotho and Maqhawe.<sup>57</sup> As one of the victims puts it, "the men tied our legs together with wire and pushed us into the dam and they took us out after a few minutes...they again assaulted us and asked us if we were prepared to join the vigilante group and to identify the comrades who were causing trouble in the homeland".<sup>58</sup>

It is not intended here to suggest that the government had always been unjustified in taking the kind of action they sometimes did, such as calling the security forces to quell the riots. More often than not, comrades could be extremely high-handed and their actions on certain occasions

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<sup>56</sup> SAIRR, Survey 1986, p.683.

<sup>57</sup> Testimony of Johannes Ramohlale, cited in the Affidavit of Prince S.J. Mahlangu, p.5.

<sup>58</sup> Pretoria News, 22 May 1986. See also, The New Nation, 5 November 1986.



deserved to be challenged by force. For instance the plundering and looting of special delivery vehicles which entered Kwa-Ndebele by “comtsotsis”, was an action questionable from the standpoint of legality and honesty. Admittedly, the unrest situation was sometimes exploited by criminal elements who could hardly differentiate between political activism, vandalism and criminal activity. Obviously, the latter two are no agents of human development and progress and no government worthy of its name could rest on its laurels when vandalism and criminal activity were evident.

In Kwa-Ndebele, as anywhere in the country, the line between comrades and the thug element, 'comtsotsis'<sup>59</sup> was blurred. Quiet frequently, at the centre of the vanguard of the comrades' “action” were always desperate, unemployable young people of the kind the poor economic circumstances Kwa-Ndebele would continue to spawn. For instance the plundering of a Coca-Cola delivery truck at Kameelrivier “A”, and the stoning of a privately hired passenger bus travelling through Kwa-Ndebele,<sup>60</sup> were actions sufficiently reprehensible to warrant some expression of government indignation. What I argue is that, even when they had sound grounds for their action and/or reaction, often government intervention through a thug organisation like Mbokotho was apt to be abrupt and menacing in the extreme.

What is interesting, is that neither violence nor criticism had any effect. Instead the Kwa-Ndebele cabinet summoned all chiefs and headmen and made them swear loyalty in an effort to

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<sup>59</sup> *City Press*, 8 June 1986. *During the three day-stay away, two Kwa-Ndebele businessmen Mr Jan Buda and Mr Piet Ngoma were “necklaced” for having hired two “comtsotsis” to burn shops of their rivals so that their businesses could prosper without competition.*

<sup>60</sup> *Interview with, Mr S.D.Lekotoko, 12 October 1997.*

isolate the royal family. In the aftermath of that meeting Maqhawe Ntuli exulted: "No one can stop independence now...and with the riots, Mbokotho's work has only begun".<sup>61</sup> This statement clearly shows a complete lack of understanding of the gravity of the situation and illustrates in no small measure a disturbing government reliance on repression, that could not be sustained.

### 5.7. Kwa-Ndebele work stay away, June 1986

Since the disrupted meeting at the royal kraal in mid-May, pupils throughout the homeland had launched a school boycott in protest against the detention of their colleagues. In the process, battles continued to rage between the youths and Mbokotho and reports emerged of brutality and killings on both sides. Consequently, on 2 June 1986 KWAYCO called on the entire Kwa-Ndebele work force including the daily commuters to Pretoria to a three-day work stay away in protest against *inter alia*, the independence issue, the deployment of police and security forces in various villages as well as to protest against government-backed vigilantism that was tearing the homeland apart.<sup>62</sup>

As a result of the previous day's events when many people were injured in the confrontation with Mbokotho, the stay away was well supported. However it was the stopping of the Putco buses which carried daily commuters to Pretoria on 3 June and the active participation of the more than 2,000 homeland civil servants that ensured a total stay away.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Abel, Politics by Other Means, p.453.

<sup>62</sup> Resolution of a meeting of the Kwa-Ndebele Youth Congress held on 2 June 1986. See also, Pretoria News and The Star, 3 June 1986.

<sup>63</sup> City Press, 8 June 1986.

According to the Labour Monitoring Group at the University of the Witwatersrand, the action of the Kwa-Ndebele civil servants was very unusual in that during the Transvaal stay away of 5-6 November 1984, Kwa-Ndebele workers went to work as usual.<sup>64</sup> But this time, as evidenced by the May-Day stay away and June 16th stay away to commemorate the 10th anniversary of Soweto riots, the previously conservative Kwa-Ndebele population had come to support boycotts and stay aways as effective and popular methods of resistance to apartheid.

Though the last constituency to enter the fray, standing in relative isolation from the student body and other extra-parliamentary political formations, the action taken by the Kwa-Ndebele civil servants was unprecedented. It is common knowledge that in most homeland structures the civil service, on whose loyalty every sound administration depends, was a conservative group whose members would stand and fall by the state regardless. Their unusual action so enraged Maqhawe that he ordered them to fill in leave forms giving reasons for their absence, “warning that those who did not give ‘acceptable’ reasons would be fired”.<sup>65</sup> The day the stay away ended, that is, 5 June, Skosana denied rumours that ‘independence’ was to be cancelled. Pretending that all was normal in the territory, he stated, “the Ndebele people will be celebrating their independence” and that they were “busy with preparations”.<sup>66</sup> Nevertheless, the participation of the civil service in the stay away, though only for three days, substantially broadened both the base and the strength of those opposing independence and raised for the first time the possibility of paralysing the entire administrative apparatus.

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<sup>64</sup> The Star, 20 November 1984.

<sup>65</sup> TRAC, The Struggle Against Independence, p.128.

<sup>66</sup> SAIRR, Survey 1986, p.684.

## 5.8. Kwa-Ndebele's Special Emergency Regulations

The activity of the youths during this time was marked by a ferocious willingness to confront the police and to attack those who were regarded as collaborators. To give one an idea of the scope of such militancy, it will not be out of place to make the following observation: On 11 June the youths attacked and killed security guards at various shops in the homeland. The next day Maqhawe Ntuli led an Mbokotho retaliation in which about sixteen people were killed at Tweefontein with some victims shot by Maqhawe himself.<sup>67</sup> The events that were taking place at Tweefontein mirrored those that were a common feature throughout the homeland at the time, where many people went missing and some of them were last seen in Mbokotho vehicles, having been abducted from their homes at night. A disturbing aspect was that in some instances searches for these people in police cells, hospitals and mortuaries always drew a blank and there was always a high likelihood that Mbokotho might have killed and buried them, as one of Majosi's nephews puts it, "the last time we had seen our brother (Daniel) was in our uncle's van in the night and we thought that we would never see him again because since then his whereabouts remained unknown and no one in the family would dare ask my uncle. As for me, he knew I was a comrade leader but I was always on the alert".<sup>68</sup>

The forces challenging the apartheid state had so intensified the onslaught that on 12 June 1986 the central government reimposed a nationwide state of emergency which extended to the non-independent homelands. On 26 June in the face of escalating violence and increased resistance to government plans, the Kwa-Ndebele commissioner of police, Brigadir C.M. van Niekerk,

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<sup>67</sup> Affidavit by Prince S.J.Mahlangu, p.7. See also, Abel, Politics By Other Means, p.453.

<sup>68</sup> Interview with Miss P.N. Mahlangu, 11 June 1997.

issued a set of additional emergency restrictions for Kwa-Ndebele which were amongst the most stringent anywhere in South Africa, with the reasons for detention being especially arbitrary.<sup>69</sup>

Such emergency restrictions specially tailored for Kwa-Ndebele included the following:

- In order to be in Kwa-Ndebele people must have either an abode or be employed by a Kwa-Ndebele concern.
- Between 9pm and 5am no person may be outside the premises of his place of abode.
- Goods may not be delivered in Kwa-Ndebele without the written authorisation of the commissioner of police
- No person may play, loiter, or aimlessly remain on any public road within Kwa-Ndebele
- No person may possess a motor car tyre which is unfit for further use on a car, or have on their premises any fuel not stored in the tank of a car or machine.
- Students may not move out of the magisterial district where their parents live or where they attend school.
- No person may travel by public transport unless he or she has paid for it and can provide proof of such payment on demand.
- No one may publicise, spread, distribute or transmit any news or commentary concerning the actions of the "force" without the authorisation of the commissioner of the Kwa-Ndebele police.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Kwa-Ndebele Official Gazette, no.45, Government Notice no.9, 12 August 1986. See also, The Star, 27 June 1986 and Mc Caul, Satellite in Revolt, p.94.

<sup>70</sup> The Star, 26 June 1986, City Press, 29 June 1986.

Under these restrictions more than 300 people were detained and on 12 August these regulations were re-gazetted in Kwa-Ndebele's official gazette, with additional restrictions on memorial services, commemorative services, funeral processions and burials etc.<sup>71</sup> According to TRAC, "any slight transgression such as merely being in the wrong place at the wrong time" was sufficient cause for detention.<sup>72</sup> No wonder the increasing need for the construction of additional detention cells at Allemansdrift, Kwaggafontein and Weltevrede.<sup>73</sup> In this way, the political activists and the homeland leadership stood adamantly poles apart. Antagonism on both sides grew, attitudes hardened, and an abysmal gulf in mutual trust formed and grew.

### **5.9. The politicised rural community turns radical**

The usual way to justify the homelands was to deploy an argument long used in regard to political action in rural areas, which, suggested that those who lived in these areas were quite content and that only radical agitators from outside, quite out of touch with the aspirations of the rural masses were behind the turmoil in the homeland.<sup>74</sup> This accounted to a large extent to the prohibition of outsiders in Kwa-Ndebele during the unrest period. The obvious result was news blackout regarding the homeland crisis, with information on developments in the area channelled through the biased government's Bureau for Information, which consistently blamed the violence on urban "radical elements" who were motivated by no purpose other than to

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<sup>71</sup> Kwa-Ndebele Official Gazette, no.45, Government Notice no.9, 12 August 1986.

<sup>72</sup> TRAC, Kwa-Ndebele. The struggle against independence, p.27.

<sup>73</sup> Kwa-Ndebele Official Gazette, no.50, 29 August 1986.

<sup>74</sup> TRAC, Kwa-Ndebele: The Struggle Against Independence, in Popular Struggles, p.130.

stimulate unrest.<sup>75</sup> As could be expected from the government controlled media, the Bureau for Information always defended the actions of the security forces. For instance, it claimed that, between 13 June and 18 July 1986, 32 people had been killed, but the security forces had not killed anyone.<sup>76</sup> Besides this, the South African government's public explanation for the intensified and widespread popular resistance to the apartheid state within the bantustan areas had always been defensive. It consistently identified the crisis as part of a concerted strategy co-ordinated and directed externally by the ANC and internally by its perceived "surrogate" forces, notably the UDF, in order to make the country ungovernable and hence overthrow the state. However the massive display of support for the liberation movements and other non-tribal organisation (such as KWAYCO) within the various homelands themselves, soon rendered such justification increasingly obsolete.

Admittedly, since the inception of the UDF, black resistance in South Africa had become increasingly effective because of the organisation's capacity to provide a national political and ideological centre. But on the other hand, as Mark Swilling puts it, "the history of township revolt was not due to strategies formulated and implemented by the UDF's national leadership. Instead, the driving force of black resistance that had effectively immobilised the coercive and reformist actions of the state had emanated from below, as communities responded to their abysmal urban living conditions".<sup>77</sup> The same reasons should be advanced in explaining the unusual effectiveness of rural struggles against the government plans, as was the case in Moutse

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<sup>75</sup> Abel, Politics by Other Means, p.454.

<sup>76</sup> SAIRR, Survey 1988, p.688.

<sup>77</sup> M. Swilling, "The United Democratic Front and Township Revolt", in W.Cobbett and R.Cohen (eds), Popular Struggles in South Africa, (London, Africa World Press), p.90.

and Kwa-Ndebele.

Some of the events illustrate that by 1986, there were a number of struggles that were being waged in the country. The first was the struggle against Kwa-Ndebele independence and the second was the general struggle against apartheid. As it turned out, it soon became apparent that some of the people who died in the trouble-torn Kwa-Ndebele were victims of the latter struggle, yet they could easily be mistaken for victims of a purely domestic power struggle between the homeland bureaucracy and royalty.

For instance on 15 July 1986 the bodies of nine pupils from J.Kekana Secondary School in Mamelodi were found in a burnt down house in Vlaklaagte in Kwa-Ndebele.<sup>78</sup> The youths, viz. Victor Hlophe; Jeremiah Magagula; Ngemane Maifadi; Abram Makolane; Zacheus Skosana; Mbuso Malobola; Jimmy Mabena; Samuel Ledwaba and Obed Mokhonoane had fled the township at the beginning of July after a spate of petrol bomb attacks on their homes.<sup>79</sup> Though the youths may have been victims of a hoax by vigilantes, according to a 15 year old youth who escaped from the ordeal, these pupils were victims of the national struggle against apartheid. He claimed that they were approached by someone who introduced himself as an ANC guerrilla and that he would help them cross the border to join the ANC mission in exile. He then left them at a house in Vlaklaagte No.1. After some time, two armed men in balaclavas including the alleged ANC man shot at the house and set it alight.<sup>80</sup> This is confirmed by hindsight, because on 6 March 1997, Captain Wouter Mentz of the Vlakplaas security police, testified before the TRC

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<sup>78</sup> Capital Radio, Umtata, 18 July 1986, 9am, cited in Mc Caul, Satellite in Revolt, p.91.

<sup>79</sup> The Weekly Mail, vol.2, No.28, 18 July 1986, p.1.

<sup>80</sup> The Weekly Mail, vol.2, No.28, 24 July 1986, p.1.



in Pretoria about his involvement in these killings and applied for amnesty in this regard.<sup>81</sup>

The foregoing story has some relevance to our subject in more than one respect. In the first place, it explains why the youth in Kwa-Ndebele had been playing such an important part in the upsurge of resistance to independence. Secondly, it explains why the youth movement had generated a militancy which presented such a solid wall of rejection to the apartheid state.

At first, when the number of the killings rose dramatically, there appears, at least for public consumption, to have been a denial of the problem by government officials. The police also under-reported killings as did virtually every other Afrikaans newspaper during this time. For the Bureau of Information, there had always been a deliberate unwillingness to publicise what was in effect a civil war which had erupted in Kwa-Ndebele and continued unabated in spite of the state of emergency. For instance when the chief minister declared that the situation was under control and that calm had returned to the area, it became clear that he was either misled by his subordinates or had a dubious conception of the term "calm".

The increase in state violence and consequent disruption of education in the urban areas led to many youths moving to the homelands, albeit temporarily to attend school and thereby escape the violence and disruptions in the South African township.<sup>82</sup> Kwa-Ndebele was a convenient destination for most of these students. This explains why there was a mushrooming of boarding

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<sup>81</sup> SABC News 19hoo, Thursday, 6 March 1997, Captain Wouter Mentz's testimony before TRC.

<sup>82</sup> The Star, 10 January 1978.

schools in Kwa-Ndebele in the 1980s<sup>83</sup> These youths imported into Kwa-Ndebele the most popular methods of resistance to apartheid such as boycotts and stay aways, that had become a common feature of urban student life. No wonder the issues and grievances raised in the early stages of student boycotts such as in Bongihlanhla High School centred mainly around educational issues, like shortage of text books and the lack of democratic representation. But later the boycotts translated into the widespread mobilisation of protest against Mbokotho and independence. This coincidence of political and educational grievances, had increasingly become a distinctive feature of unrest in urban African schools since 1976, when "Bantu Education" began to lose legitimacy amongst the students.

Against this background, it goes without saying that the claims by the government spokesmen that "outsiders" have been responsible for pressurising or inciting pupils to boycott schools "for their own political ends" are clearly inadequate. These simplistic allegations cannot explain the involvement of extremely large numbers of pupils from Pre-Schools to Colleges of Education in the bantustan. As in the urban townships, the permanent out-of-class student population had become the most significant political force, which ensured that the school boycotts became transformed into the spearhead of a national political crisis. For instance the idea of "liberation Now, Education Later,"<sup>84</sup> also no doubt had captured the imagination of certain Kwa-Ndebele youngsters who, like their urban counterparts, viewed their brand of inferior racial education as "poison".

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<sup>83</sup> M. Bot, School Boycotts 1984: The Crisis In African Education, for Indicator Project of South Africa, (Centre For Applied Social Sciences, University of Natal, April 1985),p.16.

<sup>84</sup> J. Hyslop, "School Student Movements and State Education Policy: 1972-87", in Cobbett and Cohen, (eds), Popular Struggles in South Africa, p.197. See also, The Star, 7 December 1986.

The second reason may also be suggested along the same lines. The reform process had been accompanied by increased repression in the homeland areas and a dramatic increase in unemployment in these areas, both of which had affected the youth most severely. Thus increasing unemployment was often accompanied by rising levels of alienation which tended to spill over into social unrest and disruption.<sup>85</sup>

#### 5.10. The Second stay away 15 July 1986

On 15 July Kwa-Ndebele experienced another work stay away called for an indefinite period through anonymous pamphlets which were distributed in all the villages. It soon transpired that this was in protest against *inter alia*, the deployment of the security forces in various villages, the actions of the Mbokotho vigilantes. They also demanded the release of the detainees, the resignation of the cabinet, as well as the calling off of the independence plans for the homeland.<sup>86</sup> The civil servants vowed to continue the stay away until the government addressed them on these issues.

The stay away affected schools, post offices, magisterial offices and clinics as a result of which a number of government institutions were closed in the homeland. It should be remembered that secondary schools in the region had been closed since May after the disrupted meeting at the royal kraal. However, services at the Philadelphia hospital in Moutse were not affected.<sup>87</sup> The

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<sup>85</sup> J. Nattrass, Indicator Project of South Africa, vol.12, No.1 (Centre For Applied Social Sciences, University of Natal, Durban, 1984)

<sup>86</sup> Resolution of the KWAYCO meeting held on 14 July at enKosini.

<sup>87</sup> The Weekly Mail, vol.2, No.28, 18 July 1986, p.1.

reason for this is not hard to find. Certainly the hospital staff had not as yet started to regard themselves as employees of the Kwa-Ndebele Department of Health, and therefore could not be affected by the stay away which was called within Kwa-Ndebele. Again they believed that by joining the stay away they would give credence to the incorporation of Moutse into the homeland.

Like the three-day stay away in June, the second stay away led to a total breakdown of administration in the homeland. For instance pensions were not being paid out, the sick and the infirm could not receive medical treatment and all attempts to pay bail or apply for the release of detainees had stalled.<sup>88</sup> So tense was the situation in the homeland following the stay away that there developed a deep mistrust among the people themselves, with some people without any justification, stigmatising others as Mbokotho members and thus leading to sometimes arbitrary “necklacing” by the “comrades”.

About 160 people had died between 12 May and 25 July 1986.<sup>89</sup> This invited outside criticism of the independence issue, with the Progressive Federal Party MP, Mrs Helen Suzman, being the most vocal, describing the whole Kwa-Ndebele affair as a “crying shame which totally negates the government’s intention of abandoning grand apartheid”.<sup>90</sup> The party’s Northern Transvaal Unrest Monitoring Committee called for a judicial commission of inquiry with wide briefing into the Kwa-Ndebele independence issue. The majority parties in the houses of Delegates and Representatives in parliament said that they would block legislation providing for

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<sup>88</sup> The Star, 18 July 1986.

<sup>89</sup> McCaul, Satellite in Revolt, p.93.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

Kwa-Ndebele independence.

In view of the worsening crisis and the problems emanating from the stay away which affected indiscriminately even the innocent people, especially the pensioners, various church leaders stepped in to register their concern. They included the Anglican Bishop Suffragan of Johannesburg East, Bishop Simeon Nkoane; the Anglican Bishop of Pretoria, the Right Reverend Richard Kraft; the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Pretoria, the Most Reverend George Daniel and the Luthern Bishop of Northern Transvaal Diocese, the Right Reverend Solomon Serote, who met the minister of Constitutional Development and Planning, Chris Heunis on 25 July who in reply committed himself to a quick resolution to the impasse in that territory.<sup>91</sup> On 26 July, Prince S.J. Mahlangu convened a meeting of youths and headmen in which it was resolved that the stay away of civil servants and primary school pupils should end on the 28th of that month.<sup>92</sup>

The unusual stance taken by the Kwa-Ndebele civil servants to down tools in protest against state attempts at homeland independence can only be explained in two ways: In the first place, the majority of people working in that homeland were non-Ndebele for reasons already stated and therefore they had also fallen victim of Mbokotho taunts and attack. In the light of this, they realised that whatever the benefits, as aliens in that territory they never stood to gain anything from that homeland's independence. For instance, the brutal treatment meted out to non-Tswanas after that homeland's independence, was so well covered in the *Post* newspaper, that it reminded most of the victims who came to settle in Kwa-Ndebele, what would happen to them

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<sup>91</sup> The Star, 26 July 1986.

<sup>92</sup> Pretoria News, 27 July 1986.

after the homeland's independence.<sup>93</sup> Secondly, though the potential "beneficiaries" of independence,<sup>94</sup> the civil servants had realised that independence for Kwa-Ndebele was simply unworkable under the circumstances and since most of them were seconded from outside the homeland, they feared replacement by real Ndebele once independence was achieved, as became the case in Bophuthatswana.<sup>95</sup> Thus a combination of these considerations ensured that the civil servants abandoned the possible "advantages"<sup>96</sup> that they would gain from independence as obvious "beneficiaries", and joined forces with the majority of those who were opposed to it.

Thus the crisis in the homeland can best be summed up in the words of an historian of a completely different period of history, George Rude', when he wrote, "Anomic and associational movements, social protest and political demands, well-organised and clear-sighted interest groups and 'direct-action', crowds, leaders and followers came together in a chorus of united opposition".<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Post, 15 December 1978

<sup>94</sup> For an overview of the status of the civil servants in an independent bantustan, see, Roger.J. Southall, "The Beneficiaries of Transkeian 'Independence'", in Journal of Modern African Studies, vol.15, no.1 (1977), p.4.

<sup>95</sup> Post, 6 December 1978. For the actions that were taken by the Mangope government against the non-Tswanas after Bophuthatswana independence, See, Post, 11-20 December 1978, The Citizen, 3 January 1978 and Pretoria News, 14 August 1978.

<sup>96</sup> *According to Stultz, Transkei's Half-Loaf*, p.84, one of the changes after independence was in salaries. For instance during the 13 years of Transkei self-government, salary scales for the public service were upgraded nine times and in 1976-77 it was projected that salaries, wages and allowances to civil servants and teachers would consume 30.3 percent of the Transkei budget.

<sup>97</sup> G. Rude', Paris and London in the Eighteenth Century, (London, 1970), p.319. cited in Seekings, "The Origins of Political Mobilisation in PWV Townships 1980-84", in Cobbet and Cohen, Popular Struggles in South Africa, p.70.

This popular opposition to independence was joined even by forces from conservative quarters, the white farmers at Rust de Winter, who also came out strongly against the 1985 consolidation proposals which affected their land. Through the Rust de Winter Farmers Union, they opposed what they regarded as a ploy to make them “victims of a dying policy” by including their land into Kwa-Ndebele. In the end, it was incumbent upon the homeland administration to either abandon the independence idea and save face or force it through and perish. Surprisingly however, the government chose the latter option with disastrous consequences, the details of which shall be the concern of the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 6

### THE TURN OF THE TIDE

#### Part one:

#### 6.1. The murder of Maqhawe Piet Ntuli

By mid-July 1986, Mbokotho was completely on the defensive, with many of its members either dead or in hiding.<sup>1</sup> During this time, the Kwa-Ndebele government was also in disarray, as shown by its request that the central government's commissioner general in Kwa-Ndebele, Brigadier Van Niekerk be withdrawn, on account of his reluctance to detain Prince S.J.Mahlangu, yet without clear evidence that he was involved in subversion.<sup>2</sup> According to *The Weekly Mail*, his withdrawal was requested by Skosana, who accused him of disloyalty because he had spoken to Prince Mahlangu in a peace-making bid.<sup>3</sup> Clearly, Skosana did this because he was tied hand and foot by the network of political troubles in which, he found himself entangled and thus like a beast which on being stabbed, rushes about in despair.

A resort to force is apt to provoke resistance which may recoil upon the aggressor. No wonder then that though both the Kwa-Ndebele and the South African governments appeared impervious to pressure, the tide turned significantly when on the evening of 29 July 1986, the Kwa-Ndebele

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<sup>1</sup> TRAC, "Kwa-Ndebele-The Struggle Against Independence", in Cobbett and Cohen, Popular Struggles in South Africa, p.130.

<sup>2</sup> SAIRR, Survey 1986, p.686.

<sup>3</sup> The Weekly Mail, 21-27 November 1986.



minister of Internal Affairs, Piet Maqhawe Ntuli, regarded as the power behind the Mbokotho, was blown to pieces by a car bomb soon after leaving Skosana's heavily guarded residence. Shortly before his death, Ntuli had been arrested by the South African Police and was facing charges of car theft, murder, corruption, assault and possession of an arms cache.<sup>4</sup>

According to TRAC, the Kwa-Ndebele police's willingness to arrest Ntuli was quite clearly in recognition of the need for a scapegoat for all the troubles besetting the homeland at that stage in the hope that if enough crimes could be laid at Ntuli's door, then Skosana would regain credibility to proceed with independence. Thus, his arrest was a political strategy that might well have had as its aim, the need to salvage independence.<sup>5</sup>

As news of the blast spread, there were widespread celebrations throughout the homeland as people danced in the streets, shouting "*Mahlungu amahle*", meaning "good bad-tidings".<sup>6</sup> Newspapers have to attract readers and consequently there has to be an entertainment value to the news.<sup>7</sup> Ntuli's death came at a time when Kwa-Ndebele was plagued by "necklace" killings, school boycotts and work stayaways since the incorporation of Moutse into the area and the government's opting for independence. He was buried secretly in Siyabuswa to avoid anti-independence groups disrupting his funeral,<sup>8</sup> for as Sop puts it, "though Karl Marx died having

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<sup>4</sup> McCaul, Sattelite in Revolt, p.94.

<sup>5</sup> TRAC, "Kwa-Ndebele-The Struggle Against Independence", in Cobbett and Cohen, Popular Struggles in South Africa, p.131.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p.132.

<sup>7</sup> G. Murdock, "Political Defiance:The Press Presentation of a Militant Mass Demonstration", in S. Cohen and J. Young (eds), The Manufacture of News: Social Problems, Defiance and Mass Media (London, Longman, 1973), p.164.

<sup>8</sup> The Sowetan, 5 August 1986.

thousands of political opponents, he died without a single personal enemy. But with Ntuli, the opposite was certainly the case".<sup>9</sup>

A former Germiston taxi driver, Ntuli was in charge of the ministry which granted trading licences in the homeland, and his corruption in this regard was evidenced by the fact that cabinet members and their families were responsible for almost 48% of all commercial activity in the territory.<sup>10</sup> Actually as one report puts it, Kwa-Ndebele was controlled by a "cabal of businessmen-politicians whose tide-hold over business life keeps competition to a minimum".<sup>11</sup> Quite certainly, Maqhawe Ntuli was more of a businessman than a politician. He had neither the ability nor a feasible political programme to guide his political actions. It was probably in a similar context that Senator Henry Cabot Lodge of the United States postulated that, "the businessman in politics is too often one who has no business there".<sup>12</sup> This explains why in the period between 12 May and July 1986, an estimated 70% of Kwa-Ndebele's business premises were destroyed in political conflict.<sup>13</sup>

The two questions that lay inexorably at the heart of Kwa-Ndebele's complex web of political intrigue were: who killed Ntuli and why. With the help of hindsight, one may say, until the advent of the TRC, these questions could not be answered with certainty. Newspapers in South

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<sup>9</sup> Interview with Mr S.C.Ntuli, 14 May 1997.

<sup>10</sup> P. Van Zeyl, Kwa-Ndebele: a profile, PV2/a/a, 21 February 1984.

<sup>11</sup> Rand Daily Mail, 15 June 1982.

<sup>12</sup> L.E. Neame, Some South African Politicians (Cape Town, 1929), p.175. Quoted in G.C. Cuthbertson, "The Political Career of Richard Stuttaford 1924-1942", (Unp. M.A. dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1977), p.1.

<sup>13</sup> New Nation, 31 July 1986.

Africa tend to be 'event-oriented' in that they concentrate on specific events, without attempting to analyse the situation in context. It was only through the TRC that it became known that Maqhawe's murder was related to the nationwide uprising and the activities of the Civil Cooperation Bureau (CCB).<sup>14</sup> The first organisation to claim credit for the operation was the ANC, which stated that "Umkhonto we Sizwe" had carried out the murder as part of its strategy of identifying with local struggles.<sup>15</sup> This version was however greeted with a degree of scepticism from various quarters including the government. Instead it was believed that Ntuli might have been a victim of his own pursuit of power. He could have been blown up by a home made bomb which he was ferrying for use against his numerous enemies.<sup>16</sup> Admittedly, Ntuli was becoming an embarrassment to both the central and the Kwa-Ndebele governments and in this way he was harming the independence cause. The excesses of his Mbokotho had done more than anything to raise popular feelings against independence and people thought that this tyrannical behaviour would become the norm even after independence. Therefore it was hoped that his elimination would change the people's attitude towards independence. This gave rise to the speculation that he was killed by people within the homeland administration.<sup>17</sup>

In the weeks following his death, the word from Pretoria and Siyabuswa was that independence was going ahead. With Ntuli now a convenient scapegoat, the road seemed to be open for those functionaries whose hands were not so directly tainted with blood.<sup>18</sup> Unfortunately for the

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<sup>14</sup> See footnote number 19 below as well as the literature relating to the TRC.

<sup>15</sup> SAIRR, Survey 1986, p.689.

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Mr I.M.Ntuli, 17 June 1997

<sup>17</sup> The Sunday Star, 3 August 1986.

<sup>18</sup> TRAC, "Kwa-Ndebele-The Struggle Against Independence", in Cobbett and Cohen, Popular Struggles in South Africa, p.131.

independence fanatics, the damage to the independence cause had already been done, because at the time of Ntuli's death many previously apolitical people had become strongly anti-independence. His death would not as had been expected, restore the credibility of independence.

Another theory was that Ntuli could have been killed by 'agents of Pretoria', since only 'they' could have had both the access to his car, parked as it was in a heavily fortified complex, and the expertise to prime the bomb to explode where it would kill him alone without harming anybody else.<sup>19</sup> The truth however only surfaced in 1997 when in his application for amnesty, Lieutenant Gideon Nieuwoudt of the Vlakplaas Security Police, confessed before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, that he had carried out the murder of Ntuli.<sup>20</sup> According to his confession the security police had suspected that Ntuli was a double agent. He was thought also to be working for the ANC by destabilising the homeland and thereby damaging the independence cause through his behaviour, his unpredictability and utterances.<sup>21</sup> Therefore his elimination would pave the way for Skosana to pursue his quest for independence.

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<sup>19</sup> McCaul, Satellite in Revolt, p.95. See also, The Sunday Star, 3 August 1986.

<sup>20</sup> SABC, TRC-Special Report, 1997. *\*This is the commission established by the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act of 1995 in order to provide "as complete a picture as possible of the nature, causes and extent of gross violations of human rights", committed between 1 March 1960 and 5 December 1993. Therefore it was charged with awakening the new democracy's memory of its protracted birth pangs during the apartheid era. It was to hold public hearings throughout the country in which the victims of human rights abuses and those who had wronged them should tell their stories.* For an overview of this, see, S. Nuttall and C. Coetzee (eds), Negotiating the past: The making of memory in South Africa (Cape Town, Oxford University Press, 1998), p.46. and Kader Asmal, L. Asmal and R.S. Roberts, Reconciliation Through Truth: A Reckoning of Apartheid's Criminal Governance (Johannesburg, Mayibuye Books, 1996).

<sup>21</sup> SABC, TRC-Special Report, 20h30, 13 July 1997.

Closely analysed, people had reason to hate and despise Maqhawe more than any of the Mbokotho leadership. His unconditionality and utter ruthlessness in action was an important element in the success of Mbokotho. During his times, the moral fabric of his own society had been eroded beyond repair. He knew that violence and terror have their awful fascination and that the brutal employment of force quite often attracts as many people as it repels. In the early days of the struggle against independence, Ntuli seemed to have believed that a bloody affray in the streets was a better advertisement for Mbokotho's power than perhaps a dozen pamphlets. For him it would seem, if the bigness of the lie about the benefits of independence for the residents lent credibility to it, so did the enormity of the violence increase the likelihood of its intimidating opponents and persuading neutrals to join the cause. "The important thing is to be taken seriously and the dangerous man is always taken so",<sup>22</sup> said Maqhawe Ntuli emphatically. Indeed, Ntuli's matter of fact acceptance of this truth and his unscrupulous application of it in his political behaviour through Mbokotho, should certainly not be omitted whenever the nature of his political character is being analysed.

Ntuli's death was fundamentally important, in that it shifted the balance of power in favour of the anti-independence forces. Again it prompted an emergency meeting of the tribal chiefs and the cabinet on 1 August, where for the first time the chiefs spoke unanimously against Mbokotho and yet less emphatically about independence. The question is, why a unanimous resolution in favour of independence in 1982 became a hesitant and/or reluctant support for it in 1986? According to the journalist Patrick Laurence, "there seems little doubt that a decision taken in 1983 to take the chiefs out of the legislative assembly and place them in a special body known as 'Ibandla Lamakhosi' was a factor in the change. The motive was to place the chiefs *per se*

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<sup>22</sup>

Interview with Mr Majozi Mahlangu, 10 March 1998.

above the day-to-day political infighting...But it was seen by at least some chiefs as a bid by ambitious politicians, of whom Ntuli was a pre-eminent example, to sideline them".<sup>23</sup>

This meeting decided that a legislative assembly session be called on 7 August to discuss the unrest situation and Mbokotho. However the meeting only took place on 12 August. On 8 August Prince James Mahlangu convened a meeting of youth representatives, headmen, and other community leaders at the royal kraal to discuss the possible return to school of secondary school pupils.<sup>24</sup> As could be expected, the meeting inevitably grapped this opportunity to discuss the burning issues: 'Mbokotho' and 'independence'. In reiterating his opposition, the Ndebele King Ingwenyama David Mabusabesala Mapoch declared, "there can be no independence without seeing the constitution first....The cabinet should have consulted the people first and not forced them to take what they don't want".<sup>25</sup> One of the Chief Minister's sons, Peter Skosana and leader of the comrades expressed the hope, "Now that Ntuli is dead I think my father will back away from independence".<sup>26</sup> Yet on the other hand his father conceded, "If possible we will go for independence on 11 December, but we are now trying to get the second mandate from the people".<sup>27</sup> Three days later, more than 200 people who had been detained in Kwa-Ndebele for allegedly opposing independence were released.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> McCaul, Satellite in Revolt, p.96. *It is remarkable how Maghawe's motives were not even understood by the very people he worked with. Most cabinet ministers would not openly challenge his decisions and he wielded more power than the chief minister himself.*

<sup>24</sup> Abel, Politics by Other Means, p.456.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, p.455.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, p.456.

<sup>27</sup> SAIRR, Survey 1986, p.689.

<sup>28</sup> McCaul, Satellite in Revolt, p.97.

## 6.2. Revocation of the independence decision

The assassination of Maqhawe Ntuli was an important turning point in the struggle against independence, because it deepened the rifts within the homeland. While on the one hand it represented an enormous morale boost for anti-independence forces who then believed that victory was in sight; on the other, it terrified the remaining Mbokotho members and many pro-independence factions who genuinely feared that the same fate also awaited them. This probably explains why Prince Cornelius Mahlangu changed his mind about independence. In the words of one writer, “he has managed to switch sides, stabbing his political master in the back, once he saw the way the wind was blowing and this restored his credibility”.<sup>29</sup> The Prince stated in this regard, “I can see now that the people are totally opposed to it. I don’t know how the other ministers feel, but I know that Ntuli’s death has shaken them”.<sup>30</sup>

The horror of the way Ntuli died put pressure on the Kwa-Ndebele cabinet to call a special session of the legislative assembly with the expressed purpose of deliberating on how to resolve the crisis that had amounted to a mini civil war in the homeland. The meeting, which technically excluded the ‘independence’ issue from the agenda, took place on 12 August. During the debate, a packed public gallery composed of every kind of Kwa-Ndebele resident, from gnarled old men with grey heads and walking sticks to comradely-looking youths, glowered down at their representatives.

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid, p.102.

<sup>30</sup> Abel, Politics by Other Means, p.455.

The unscheduled debate on “independence” was introduced under the item of “unrest,” by Prince James Mahlangu. He timed his moment well. The assembly had just voted 10% wage increases for its members.<sup>31</sup> The Prince said solemnly: “There is a very strong demand from the nation against independence. The people say they were not informed and do not know what this independence is all about”.<sup>32</sup> Though some ministers tried to block discussion on the grounds that independence was not on the agenda, Paradise Mahlangu, the man who succeeded Ntuli as Minister of Internal Affairs, urged discussion on the subject. Having their constituents so close at hand probably had some bearing on the fact that not a single dissenting voice was raised for “independence”, an idea which enjoyed wholehearted support in the assembly in the past three months.

The sentiment in the gallery was quite clear from the roars of disapproval when one of the ministers, K.M. Mtsweni, made a feeble attempt to postpone the debate.<sup>33</sup> Thereafter, speaker after speaker rose to call for the scrapping of “independence” in order to restore peace in the troubled territory. Several times the Speaker of the House, Solly Mahlangu admonished the gallery, who also clapped and cheered when “independence” was attacked. As each one of them emphasized that his constituency had sent him to oppose independence, all the ministers disclaimed responsibility for the idea and started blaming each other. With Ntuli now dead, he was made a convenient scapegoat for all the troubles of the past months.

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<sup>31</sup> City Press, 17 August 1986.

<sup>32</sup> Interview with Prince S.J. Mahlangu, 14 August 1997 See also, Weekly Mail, 15-21 August 1986, vol.2, No.32, p.14

<sup>33</sup> The Weekly Mail, 15-21 August, vol.2, No.32, p.14.



A dejected and somewhat confused Chief Minister, Simon Skosana, sat in a sulky silence throughout the proceedings, resting his head in his hands. He rose only once to speak, yet a cry of anguish rather than a measured response to the debate: "I am surprised, everybody seems to be turning against me on this independence issue, when they had instructed me to run to Pretoria and Cape Town asking for it. Today even small children in the street point their fingers at me and say I am a criminal...But if everybody does not want me, I cannot force independence on them".<sup>34</sup> On the other hand Pretoria's representatives including the Commissioner-General of Kwa-Ndebele, Gerrie Van der Merwe, watched the proceedings, grim-faced and impassively taking notes.

At the end of the debate, the Speaker, Solly Mahlangu, ruled: "Not one of you said independence was all right and should go ahead. I am of the opinion that the House is quite unanimous with regard to independence. 'Independence' is being uprooted, eradicated with all its roots and thrown into the deep ocean".<sup>35</sup>

It didn't take long for word to filter out to the people and the streets of Siyabuswa rang with the sounds of celebration. Car hooters blared and people danced in the streets in the same manner as they had done on the occasion of Ntuli's death. Soon afterwards, cows were slaughtered in celebration. But for the people involved, it was more than just sacrificial cows that they slaughtered. Pretoria's thirty-year grand plan to separate its people had been well and truly slaughtered, too. *City Press* aptly remarked that, "if it had ever been born, the "independent"

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<sup>34</sup> City Press, 17 August 1986.

<sup>35</sup> Interview with Mr S.C. Ntuli, 14 May 1997. See also, The Star, 13 August 1986, Sowetan, 13 August 1986 and Pretoria News, 13 August 1986.

state of Kwa-Ndebele would have been the bloodiest of apartheid's children".<sup>36</sup>

This resounding victory against Pretoria's scheme of fragmenting South Africa was welcomed by a broad spectrum of South African opinion. While *New Nation* called it "a watershed in the fight against apartheid in all its forms", *The Argus* said "Kwa-Ndebele had suffered enough from the burden of national ideological traumas".<sup>37</sup> The influence that this had on the wider South African society was best expressed as follows, in a letter to the editor of *The New Nation* by Africa Boso, from as far as King William's Town:

*Dear Editor*

*The victory of the Kwa-Ndebele people is heralding the fall of the whole apartheid citadel. The South African government has had an abortion, while trying to make Kwa-Ndebele the "fifth phony independent baby". What a miscarriage!*

*Kwa-Ndebele residents have injected us with new blood of determination, unity and willingness to fight apartheid in all its forms. They have come together young and old, students, workers and churches to fight for their ancestral birthright.*

*Moreover, they have shown the Pretoria government, that jails and bullets cannot withstand the truth. They faced death with boldness. In the end they emerged winners - because the truth is more powerful than lies.*

*This should serve as a lesson to "Botha's other homeland piccanins". One day the truth and reality will catch them unawares. If they don't join forces with their brothers...woe unto them! We will never be separated by apartheid laws, nor the regime's cohorts. All we want is "One*

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<sup>36</sup> City Press, 17 August 1986.

<sup>37</sup> Abel, Politics by Other Means, p.457.

*South Africa, One Nation”.*

*To the compatriots of Kwa-Ndebele I say: “Do not mourn your fallen heroes. Their saintly blood was not spilt in vain. Your victory is one step towards People’s Power”.*

*Love, unity, determination are the anchors of a just and stable South Africa. To you all I say: “Viva! Ahuta continua! Vukani madoda sekusile!”<sup>38</sup>*

Meanwhile in another letter to *The Argus* by Chief C. Moshesh, the writer stated: “I hope that this will end the Verwoerdian dream of independent homelands surrounding a white South Africa in which, as Dr Connie Mulder once explained, there would be no black South Africans”.<sup>39</sup>

The man in the street however regarded this only as victory against Mbokotho and some seemed to see no relationship between the challenge to independence with the general struggle against apartheid, as one resident put it, “now that Mbokotho was defeated, we hoped that Skosana and his men would resign, but they continued to hold office. That is why we continued with the struggle”.<sup>40</sup> While another saw this as a victory for Prince James to take the reigns of power, “when we heard that independence was cancelled we expected James to become the chief minister, but this did not happen. But we continued to fight until he became chief minister”.<sup>41</sup> This lack of understanding of what was actually happening by the actors in the drama, suggested

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<sup>38</sup> The New Nation, 9-22 October 1986.

<sup>39</sup> The Argus, 18 August 1986. *The significance of these letters lay in the fact that they served to demonstrate even to the central government that the Kwa-Ndebele independence issue was not only a matter for the residents, but instead it was a national issue*

<sup>40</sup> Interview with Miss L.M. Dlamini, 14 August 1997.

<sup>41</sup> Interview with Miss S.B. Tshabangu, 14 August 1997.

that the real implications of homeland independence, such as loss of South African citizenship were certainly not issues for the average resident. I am not trying to suggest here that all the people who resisted independence did so with such sheer political ignorance, but that the majority of them were not motivated by the actual disadvantages of bantustan independence, such as the loss of South African citizenship, job discrimination within the RSA as well as the non-recognition of such an independent state by the international community.

Indeed, the decision by the Kwa-Ndebele legislative assembly to cancel independence was unprecedented in South African history and it seemed to signal a defeat of the bantustan system that had serious implications for any other homeland considering the same constitutional option.

### **6.3. The banning of Mbokotho**

It would be remembered that at the centre of the battle against independence was the Mbokotho vigilante organisation which had been established in Kwa-Ndebele at high government level for purposes of crushing dissent of every kind , thus ensuring that residents accepted independence against their wishes.

For the different reason that it operated without a constitution and was bloodstained, Mbokotho was also outlawed at the same special sitting of the homeland legislative assembly that decided against the homeland becoming the country's fifth independent state. Newspapers made the most of the theme, with *City Press* referring to it as "The death of a sacred cow".<sup>42</sup> The Minister of Justice, A. Mahlangu, was requested to formulate a law making it a criminal offence for

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<sup>42</sup> City Press, 17 August 1986.

anyone to mention the word Mbokotho or call an organisation by that name. Indeed these were fatal blows to Skosana's self esteem from which he never recovered. For the first time since the outbreak of general mobilisation against Mbokotho, the nation breathed a sigh of relief.

Regarding the banning of Mbokotho, most of my respondents held almost the same views. For instance, Sarah Tshabangu reflected one of these, "because Mbokotho was the cause of all the trouble in the homeland, after it was cancelled in Kwa-Ndebele there was freedom. We were not asked to join it by force and we started to go back to school".<sup>43</sup> When asked why they were fighting against Mbokotho, the respondents never even knew that the vigilante organisation had anything to do with Kwa-Ndebele independence, but rather understood it to represent some catch 22 situation, "the Mbokotho was a group of businessmen who forced people to join them in order to help them to beat people who walked at night. They wanted people to help them to protect their own businesses against criminals. If you refused they tortured you. If you agreed the comrades would 'necklace' you",<sup>44</sup> Sarah Tshabangu explained. Whatever their interpretation and understanding, the people's determination to resist Mbokotho indeed contributed to the decision to outlaw the organisation.

Following the decision there was a dramatic decline in unrest incidents. Once detainees had been released, pupils returned to school. Health and welfare services were also resumed.<sup>45</sup> On the political stage, events were taking a different direction, as F.K.Mahlangu and K.Mtsweni took

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<sup>43</sup> Interview with Miss S.B.Tshabangu, 14 August 1997.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> McCaul, Satellite in Revolt, pp.98-99.

over the administration of the territory due to Skosana's deteriorating state of health.<sup>46</sup> In a press statement these leaders said that they accepted the people's rejection of independence, but indicated that the developmental projects that were initiated in view of independence would continue as planned.

It would be remembered that when independence was openly opposed by the very legislative assembly which opted for it in 1982, the Chief Minister indicated that he was only the messenger of the house and that he could not force independence on an unwilling population. In September 1986, F.K. Mahlangu re-affirmed that the Kwa-Ndebele legislative assembly rescinded its earlier decision to seek independence for the homeland in accordance with the wishes of the people. "The whole situation", he continued in a radio interview in Siyabuswa, "also demonstrated to us that people are very good judges of their own needs. It is only in a democratic society that a government can heed the wishes of its people. What happened here proves that Kwa-Ndebele is such a society".<sup>47</sup>

However it soon transpired that this admission was only cosmetic. Evidence for this is not hard to find. For instance, soon afterwards, Skosana fired Police Commissioner, C.M. van Niekerk, blaming the security forces for Maqhawe's murder and angry that van Niekerk refused to arrest Prince James.<sup>48</sup> Van Niekerk was replaced with Brigadir Hertzog Lerm who immediately

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid, p.99.

<sup>47</sup> The Argus, 10 September 1986, and SABC, Radio Ndebele News Bulletin, 10 September 1986.

<sup>48</sup> Insig, Desember 1989.

introduced stringent security measures for Kwa-Ndebele.<sup>49</sup> According to one report about Brigadier Hertzog Lerm, “So’ opgetree het dat dit gelyk het of hy die *de facto* hoofminister van Kwa-Ndebele is”.<sup>50</sup> Meanwhile Skosana sought legal advice on the way independence was dropped, i.e. it had not been on the agenda for the day and the decision to cancel it had not been put to a vote. To substantiate his position Skosana argued that violence in Kwa-Ndebele was part of the unrest throughout South Africa and therefore not attributable to independence.

This sudden change of attitude by a now ailing Skosana, represented another set of contradictions which made it difficult to understand the chief minister’s real intentions. His argument that the comrades held meetings under King Mapoch and that cabinet attempts to ban them were unsuccessful because of the intervention by the Commissioner General, Van der Merwe and the Commissioner of Police, Brigadier Van Niekerk, led to a renewed ‘spree of arrests’, by the new Police Commissioner, Brigadier Hertzog Lerm. The latter raided the royal kraal in October and arrested Chief Makhosana Mahlangu and Tim Skosana. On 6 November the Kwa-Ndebele police Lieutenant Van Wyk and Captain De Jager came to the royal office and demanded receipt books, expenditure book and credit notes as well as the minutes of all the tribal authority meetings.<sup>51</sup> On 10 November, the two policemen detained Prince James Mahlangu, Prince Andries Mahlangu as well as ten others including the Secretary-General of the Ndzundza tribal authority, Simon Mgidi.<sup>52</sup> These actions were an obvious sign of the continuing commitment to independence and they serve as an undisputable evidence of Skosana’s hidden

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<sup>49</sup> Abel, Politics by Other Means, p.457.

<sup>50</sup> Insig, Desember 1989.

<sup>51</sup> Affidavit of Prince S.J.Mahlangu, p.7.

<sup>52</sup> SAIRR, Survey 1986, p.692.

agenda, which he was quick to deny. For instance he said in this connection, “allegations that I have something up my sleeve regarding these matters are wholly unfounded. Kwa-Ndebele has suffered enough at the hands of people who advocate violence. Nothing can be gained from this”.<sup>53</sup>

These events however boded ill for the future of Skosana’s administration, because as could be expected, they provoked the people into another yet expensive action which would otherwise not have resulted had the August 12 ruling on independence been genuinely regarded as binding to everyone including government.

#### **6.4. The death of Chief Minister S.S.Skosana**

As mentioned earlier, the homeland’s fragile peace was again threatened when Prince James and his brother Andries were detained under the state of emergency on 10 November. On 17 November Kwa-Ndebele’s civil servants began their third major stayaway in protest against this spate of detentions of their leaders. They demanded the unconditional release of all detainees and other opponents of independence.<sup>54</sup>

On the same day that the civil servants went on strike, 17 November, Kwa-Ndebele was thrown back into disarray when the Chief Minister, Simon Skosana died of diabetes in the Rand Clinic in Johannesburg. This was three months after he suffered his biggest political defeat. He died a disillusioned man even before realising his dream of obtaining independence for Kwa-Ndebele,

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<sup>53</sup> McCaul, Satellite in Revolt, p.100.

<sup>54</sup> SAIRR, Survey 1986, p.692.



or even before establishing the homeland's new capital, KwaMhlanga, about 70 km north-east of Pretoria. He in fact lived to see much of his work undone. But admittedly, the political problems of his times could break even a stronger man. Hindsight has equipped us with the knowledge that the idea of independence, not only for Kwa-Ndebele, but for any other bantustan also died with him. It was perhaps in this context that Steve Biko's postulation is relevant that: "It is better to die for an idea that will live, than to live with an idea that will die".<sup>55</sup>

There can be no doubt that the circumstances of Skosana's death were profoundly influenced by his personal failings, such as a capriciousness that seemed to grow in inverse proportion to his dwindling physical powers. As the independence crisis escalated and his opponents intensified the struggle, he increasingly lacked solutions, and instead became more self-centred. It was always the "Me! Me!" and "I! I!" attitude and when that did not work, he complained about the ingratitude of his colleagues and became more convinced that everyone beyond the limits of his family circle was conspiring against him. Though he reacted savagely by ordering unlawful arrests and wanton police charges against his opponents, this did nothing to strengthen his position. No wonder that at the end of his life, he had no other answer for the problems of Kwa-Ndebele but violence.

One thing that Skosana obviously lacked was nobility, and in this is to be found the explanation of the relative indifference with which he witnessed Mbokotho atrocities. Consequently, even his colleagues in government watched him being hated by the very people he claimed to lead. In the light of this analysis one may say, it would be a mistake to allow reflection upon the cause

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<sup>55</sup> Steve Biko, *I write What I Like: A selection of his writings*, edited by A. Stubbs, (Randburg, Ravan Press, 1978), p.59.

of his death (diabetes), to obscure the fact that it was more the result of frailties of his politics, stress, depression and incapacity to cope with crises, in addition to those of his own character. The methods of political management that had worked for Transkei's Matanzima in 1976, Bophuthatswana's Mangope in 1977, Venda's Mphahlele in 1979 and Ciskei's Sebe in 1981 proved incapable of meeting the complex political challenges to Skosana's administration in 1986. It is therefore needless to conclude that to people from within as well as from without the political confines of the homeland, his death was not an unfortunate ending.

The death of Skosana however, raised three pivotal questions. First there was the question of who would succeed him under the current political climate with the capacity to reduce chaos to order? Secondly, what would happen to his renewed quest for independence, evidenced by his authorisation to detain the royalists? And thirdly, what would be the fate of such detainees now that he was dead? There were people in the homeland who believed that the acting chief minister, Mtsweni, was Skosana's natural successor. The corollary was that he, rather than Skosana, was the driving force behind the bid to reverse the defeat of August 12. On 27 November the legislative assembly held a special session to appoint a new chief minister. Less than 48 hours before, Prince James Mahlangu together with nine others had been released from detention, thus enabling him to stand for election. However, owing to lack of sufficient time to canvass enough support, the "People's Prince" lost the secret ballot election by 25 votes to the 41 of Majozi George Mahlangu, whose election raised fears of a resurgence of violence because of his association with assassinated former Mbokotho leader, Maqhawe Ntuli.<sup>56</sup> His election as chief minister was a major coup for the pro-independence faction in the Legislative Assembly and it dashed any chance of the royal family ever taking control of Kwa-Ndebele through the

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<sup>56</sup> SAIRR, Survey 1986, p.692.

structures of the homeland system. Again, the victory of Majozi Mahlangu was a clear indication that in spite of popular resistance, pro-independence sentiments were still very strong in the legislative assembly.

Meanwhile, everyone was watching to see what the ambitious Prince Cornelius Mahlangu had up his sleeve. He had been Kwa-Ndebele's Minister of Health in Skosana's cabinet. A somewhat incongruous position, given the vigour with which his brother, Prince James, has been hounded by the majority of the cabinet. Prince Cornelius had adopted a highly ambiguous position during the bloody struggle over independence which cost at least 100 lives between May and August alone.<sup>57</sup> During that period he remained a member of a cabinet which was still formally committed to independence, while his brother, Prince James, made common cause with the "comrades", in the battle against such constitutional changes. This gave rise to scepticism in certain quarters about the opposition to independence voiced by Prince James himself, and belatedly, on 12 August by Prince Cornelius. The sincerity of their opposition was questioned and doubted, as one sceptic puts it, "the two princes were not genuinely against independence *per se* but rather, to independence in which control would be in the hands of Skosana and Ntuli rather than theirs".<sup>58</sup> For instance, the alliance between the royal family and the "comrades" was no less than a marriage of convenience. Certainly, the Mahlangu brothers were elitists, who appeared to have little in common with the egalitarian sentiments envinced by the "comrades". Therefore had Prince Cornelius been elected chief minister, the sincerity of his opposition to independence specifically and the government's bantustan policy in general would certainly have

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<sup>57</sup> The Weekly Mail, vol.2, No.46. 27 November 1986, p.13.

<sup>58</sup> Interview with Mr P.K.Mahlangu, 14 May 1997. See also, The Weekly Mail vol.2, No.46, 27 November 1986, p.13.

been put to the test.

## **Part two:**

### **6.5. President Botha sets conditions for independence**

Nothing illustrated Majosi's lack of political foresight and imagination more strikingly than his announcement to pursue the independence ideal of his predecessor. This new example of the chief minister's insensitivity to the public mood aroused widespread criticism at a time when public respect for him even among his former loyal admirers had already been shaken by revelations that he was the actual founder of the already infamous Mbokotho and prime mover of the motion that led to its birth.

As an obvious prelude to what was up his sleeve, Majosi Mahlangu wasted no time in purging the assembly of all known opponents of independence. On vague grounds that their behaviour had become an embarrassment to the administration, Prince James Mahlangu and his brother Cornelius, as well as the Speaker Solly Mahlangu, were, through a combination of allegations, dismissed from their seats in the assembly. Closely related to this, it is worth noting that during the early months of 1987, as a further ploy to downgrade the Ndzundza paramountcy, the Majosi administration spent its energies in a propaganda campaign in which aspersions were cast on the legitimacy of Ndzundza's claims to royal status.<sup>59</sup> At the same time, there was a simultaneous attempt to bring the Manala tribe into the "pro-independence" faction as well as the attempt to enhance its status in Ndebele politics. Shortly before this, the township of Ekangala was finally incorporated into Kwa-Ndebele in contradiction of assurances given to residents in 1986 that this

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<sup>59</sup> See chapter two above for details.

would not happen.<sup>60</sup>

With the champions of independence dead, namely, Ntuli and Skosana, it was generally expected that the independence ideal had also died with them. But with the equally ambitious Majozi Mahlangu at the helm, this hope soon transpired to be a pipe dream. On 7 May 1987, with no visible opposition in the assembly, as leaders of the anti-independence lobby were either in jail, on the run or utterly intimidated, the Kwa-Ndebele legislative assembly voted unanimously to rescind the decision to cancel independence. It was also stated that independence should be made retrospective to the original date of 11 December 1986, on the grounds that the speaker had acted unconstitutionally by allowing a discussion on independence in spite of the fact that the item was not on the order paper for that day.

As could be expected, within 24 hours of the announcement, the anti-independence faction went on the rampage, destroying both Mbokotho and government property, including school buildings and circuit offices. At the same time, thousands of pupils mounted a spontaneous school boycott while many more fled the homeland for fear of the revival of Mbokotho atrocities. Mbokotho's response to the situation resulted in the petrol bombing of King Mapoch's kraal and thus the struggle against independence that had almost subsided with the 12 August decision to cancel these plans, started again.

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<sup>60</sup> *New Nation*, 21-27 May 1987. On 9 February 1985 it was resolved that the township of Ekangala near Bronkhorstpruit would be incorporated into Kwa-Ndebele in a further attempt to increase the surface area of the tiny homeland. But because of resistance by the township's residents who instead preferred to go back to the East Rand from where they had come as a result of the shortage of housing there, the matter was shelved. For the details regarding the crises around the subject, see, *Hansard* (A) 4 q cols 171-173, 25 February 1985 and McCaul, *Satellite in Revolt*, pp.63-66.

This time Mbokotho, technically disbanded in August 1986, resurfaced in another guise. Large numbers of ex-Mbokotho vigilantes were incorporated into the homeland police force as “kitskonstabels”, popularly known in the homeland as the “green beans”, a somewhat derogatory name derived from the colour of their uniform. This development only confirmed a *de facto* situation, that the police and Mbokotho were one force against the anti-independence group and they were now as they always had been even in the days of Skosana and Maqhawe. Forcibly driven from their communities, their possessions burnt and their businesses ruined, these men could hardly be expected to act as impartial enforcers of the law. This time however, now in uniform and equipped with two months training and firearms, as bitter people harbouring grudges against the opponents of independence, it is understandable why the torture and pickhandle beatings of detainees increased. These men had a vested interest in seeing independence achieved as it was the shortest path back to restoring the businesses and positions they had lost in 1986, as Ntuli once remarked to Mbokotho members, “even the worst idiot knows that his shop will never be rebuilt unless we win”.<sup>61</sup> Thus, in addition to ratifying Mbokotho excesses, the appointment of ex-Mbokotho members as special constables further reinforced the partisan attitude of the police towards independence. Their incorporation into the police force was justly viewed by the ordinary citizens as legitimising the vigilantes.

Nevertheless, in what could also be regarded as a serious turn of the tide against the pro-independence faction, on the 9th of June 1987 the state president brought to an abrupt halt the Kwa-Ndebele administration’s renewed decision to take the independence option. After a meeting between the cabinets of the two governments, the state president issued a statement saying that he would not stand in the way of Kwa-Ndebele independence provided the homeland

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<sup>61</sup> Interview with Mr P.K.Mahlangu, 14 May 1997

administration met the following conditions about which he must be satisfied before the matter could be taken to the South African parliament: “greater autonomy must be obtained in an orderly fashion and on the basis of the broad support of the population of Kwa-Ndebele. Secondly, the government of Kwa-Ndebele must consider some acceptable method of demonstrating that it had the support of the broad population in its striving for independence”.<sup>62</sup>

In a desperate attempt to meet these conditions, Majosi Mahlangu held a series of meetings with different groups, including taxi-drivers, businessmen, teachers, izinduna and civil servants throughout the homeland, following which he hoped to convey to the state president the message that the people of Kwa-Ndebele were in favour of independence. Closely analysed however, this was not a genuine test of support because at each of these meetings the chief minister would ask whether anyone was opposed to independence. As could be expected, for fear of losing their jobs and trading licences, not a single person would answer in the affirmative. This was an unconvincing effort which, far from helping to legitimize independence, created new and confirmed old suspicions about its popular base. During this time, the opponents of independence were forbidden from holding a meeting within the borders of Kwa-Ndebele. This was interpreted by the anti-independence lobby as an abuse of the emergency regulations, who then resorted to holding such meetings outside the homeland, e.g. in Moutse, in order to circumvent Majosi’s use of emergency powers to forbid the holding of any meeting, even one within closed doors.<sup>63</sup> The effectiveness of these efforts was reflected in the subsequent elections which unseated Majosi Mahlangu from his post and then removed him from Ndebele politics.

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<sup>62</sup> Pretoria News, 12 June 1987.

<sup>63</sup> The Star, 14 January 1989.

## **6.6. The Appellate Division's ruling on Moutse**

In an era of supposed reform, the government could no longer exalt apartheid as its inspiration for the resettlement of black communities. Instead, it offered bland technocratic justifications such as, "good management", "good administration", "the best interests of all concerned", "meaningful consolidation", "orderly government", "development", etc. However, one thing certain is that under whatever guise removals continued, they still meant that people were left without homes, jobs, or even subsistence. If people were near enough to a bantustan simply to be incorporated, their removal was just as harsh, for the existing rigours of their lives were compounded by loss of citizenship and dependence on impoverished and mismanaged bantustan coffers. This was the bitter reality of "reform" for many people who lived in bantustans under co-opted rulers as well as for people who lived under threat of removal in "black spots".

Nevertheless, on 7 March 1988, the Appellate Division heard Chief Gibson Mathebe's appeal against the dismissal of his application on 3 December 1986 for an order to declare invalid, Proclamation R227 of 31 December 1985 which incorporated Moutse into Kwa-Ndebele. The argument of Moutse's legal team was that the first priority in consolidation was ethnic units and therefore in consolidating Kwa-Ndebele the government could not as it was doing, rely on "geographic contiguity", which had been disregarded in constructing other homelands. For instance it was argued that the National States Constitution Act of 1971 did not expressly or by necessary implication authorise the incorporation of a substantially sized territory, predominantly occupied by members of one recognised national unit, into the territory of another. The latter act was one of a number of constitutional instruments designed to give effect to the policy of separate development, in terms of which certain national units recognised by statute were



intended to exercise their right to self-determination. Ultimately, the government was hoist with its own petard.

On 29 March 1988, the Appellate Division upheld Moutse's excision from Lebowa but invalidated Proclamation R227 of 1985 which incorporated Moutse into Kwa-Ndebele. In issuing the proclamation, the state president had on his own admission, ignored the ethnic factor but had instead incorporated Moutse into Kwa-Ndebele for administrative convenience. In this way he had not exercised his power for the purpose for which it had been given, viz. "volksseenhede".<sup>64</sup>

Consequently, in a unanimous decision on the case, declaring that incorporation for the sake of administrative convenience disregarded the ethnic origins of the majority of the inhabitants, Judge Grosskopf said emphatically, "Hier het ons te doen met 'n groot getal Noord-Sotho's in 'n vaste en tradisionale woongebied, waarin hulle die meerderheid vorm en waar daar gepoog word om dit by die Suid-Ndebeles se nasionale staat toe te voeg. Dit is gevolglik maklik om tot die gevolgtrekking te kom dat hierdie poging indruis teen die doel waarvoor die grondwet van die nasionale state tot stand gekom het".<sup>65</sup>

Ironically, in the light of the foregoing argument, Moutse's case was won using apartheid logic. For instance, as the name clearly says, Kwa-Ndebele was designated a homeland for "Ndebeles", yet most of the 120 000 Moutse residents were North Sothos. Therefore there was absolutely no indication that the State President was motivated by the desire to add the South

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<sup>64</sup> Beeld, 30 Maart 1988.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

Ndebele of Moutse to their brothers in Kwa-Ndebele. Instead, the motives were administrative. A rather clear, yet unstated reason was that a larger continuous area could be more easily administered than separate areas under different administrations. The irony of the case was most strikingly illustrated by a *Sowetan* cartoon which depicted a white judge protecting Moutse women and children from a bearded Majozi.<sup>66</sup> Meanwhile, the Moutse lawyer, John Dugard, politely declined the people's traditional expression of gratitude, "another wife", saying in effect, "I am very pleased to say I already have a wife".<sup>67</sup> The Verwoerdian ethnic considerations, legally negated the move to give geographical substance to Kwa-Ndebele. Ironically, Moutse lost its legal challenge to incorporation in the Supreme Court in 1986 but won on the same grounds in the Appellate Division in 1988. The victory of the Moutse community in the Appellate Division which in turn ensured the victory of the anti-independence factions in Kwa-Ndebele, came after months of struggle and violence. However, the victors endured with a discipline and restraint which was in large part based on their faith in the due processes of law and the correctness of their cause. In this way, the government's rationale and calculated attempt to modify one of the most important instruments of its hegemony, namely, the bantustans, was caught up in its own contradictions.

#### 6.7. The Supreme Court invalidates the 1984 elections

Even before the Appeal Court decision on Moutse could be made, Majozi's drive to make Kwa-Ndebele South Africa's fifth independent state, was floundering. There is sufficient reason to believe that even if he had not interned his opponents, his independence mandate would have

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<sup>66</sup> The Sowetan, 30 March 1988.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

still been suspect in the light of the fact that the original decision was taken in 1982 by an entirely nominated legislative assembly. The decision was theoretically endorsed by a popular vote in the 1984 election in which only 16 of the 76 members were elected by an electorate strictly confined to men.

It is remarkable that Kwa-Ndebele's ruling class was as intent upon keeping the female population in a perpetual state of dependence as it was upon silencing opposition.<sup>68</sup> All the expedients of the law were employed to maintain male dominance in state, society and home. Under these circumstances, the women's share in the political and cultural life of the homeland was minimal in comparison at least with that of their contemporaries in the sister homelands.

Universal franchise in Kwa-Ndebele was blocked by Skosana when he expressed his uneasiness at having his wife, for whom he had paid a dowry, pointing a finger at him in the assembly and saying that he was not telling the truth.<sup>69</sup> However the enabling legislation which effectively disqualified Kwa-Ndebele women from voting and standing for election in the assembly was signed by the state president shortly afterwards. This was also issued in terms of the National States Constitution Act of 1971.

Closely analysed however, this act did not give the state president the power to discriminate on the basis of gender. This represents another inconsistency in the government's implementation

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<sup>68</sup> For the exact position of a woman in Ndebele society, one can do well to consult, Shirley Ardener, (ed), Defining Females: The Nature of Women in Society (London, Croom Helm, 1977). In contrast, this book can be read in conjunction with the one by Alida Brill, (ed), A Rising Public Voice: Women in Politics Worldwide (New York, The Feminist Press, 1995).

<sup>69</sup> The Star, 29 April 1988.

of the homelands policy because no other homeland ever discriminated against women in this way. On the contrary, one woman, Stella Siqcau, had actually been, though for a brief moment, chief minister of the Transkei.

This exclusion of women from the vote was of direct relevance to the dispute over independence because the chief minister consistently claimed that the 1984 election had given him the necessary mandate to seek independence. Ironically Ndebele women could vote in other homelands, eg. Lebowa, yet non-Ndebele women were denied this right in Kwa-Ndebele, as Abel puts it, "Non-Ndebele women, more than a quarter of the homeland's population were disenfranchised by the geographic accident of inclusion in this homeland rather than the one to which they belonged ethnically".<sup>70</sup>

The other irony was that the Kwa-Ndebele franchise violated tradition because boys who are traditionally regarded as men after circumcision, could also not vote until they turned twenty-one. By allowing youths to vote but not their mothers, the franchise defeated the purpose in that it mocked traditional respect for age. Confirming the argument that Kwa-Ndebele was a homeland founded on contradictions, even in this 'women's vote' case, the most striking contradiction was that the democratic goal sought by the addition of the sixteen elected members to the assembly was utterly defeated by the exclusion of at least half the population from voting.

It is thus understandable that viewing the Proclamation as *ultra vires*, on 26 October 1987 six Kwa-Ndebele women challenged the validity of the 1984 constitution as well as the elections held under it. They asked the Supreme Court for an order declaring invalid the discriminatory

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<sup>70</sup> Abel, Politics By Other Means, p.475.

provisions of the 1984 constitution, an order setting aside the 1984 elections as well as an order interdicting the “elected” members of the assembly including the chief minister from carrying out any functions of the assembly.<sup>71</sup>

Appearing for the defendants, Mr William de Villiers, argued that denying women a say in public life dated back to Aristotle and their exclusion from politics in Kwa-Ndebele was not unfair because it was in accordance with Ndebele tradition. He further argued that the 1971 act made provision for a “gradual evolution” towards western standards with women voting.<sup>72</sup>

On 20 May 1988, judgement was delivered, when Justice C.F.Eloff granted an order declaring void those provisions of Proclamation R205 of 1979 which excluded women from the right to vote for and to serve in the Kwa-Ndebele legislative assembly. He also declared the election of Kwa-Ndebele’s Chief Minister, Majosi Mahlangu and 15 others as members of the Legislative Assembly, null and void.<sup>73</sup> At the same time he invalidated the 1984 elections. He pointed out that though the Bantu Authorities Act authorised the State President to respect black traditions, the National States Act of 1971 did not. He said in effect, “I do not think there is a traditional model of a political system for a national state like Kwa-Ndebele when it comes to the question of voting rights. The fact that women have a subordinate status compared with men in the community is not of real consequence when it comes to stipulating voting rights in public life,

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<sup>71</sup> Budlender, “Constitutional Issues in Kwa-Ndebele”, in .Kruger and .Rainey, Kwa-Ndebele-The Future? p.94.

<sup>72</sup> The Star, 29 April 1988. What this means only came to be true in the mid-1990s as evidenced by, T. Mtintso, “From Prison Cell to Parliament”, in A. Brill, (ed), A Rising Public Voice: Women in Politics Worldwide, p.103.

<sup>73</sup> The Citizen, 21 May 1988.

which is alien to the whole tribe. I also do not think there is room for a sort of cosmetic mixture of the old views and the new dispensation. Even if progress towards democracy must follow a gradual evolutionary outgrowing of third-world government forms...such an evolutionary process must take place without discrimination between men and women...the inequality of disenfranchisement was unfair and therefore not authorised by the 1971 Act".<sup>74</sup>

Indeed, this ruling which constituted the second major legal setback to be suffered by the Kwa-Ndebele administration in two months, meant in essence that Majozi was unlawfully holding the office of chief minister. The other striking implication of the ruling was that the legality of all the actions taken by the legislative assembly since November 1984 was in serious doubt. Since Majozi Mahlangu had claimed a mandate to pursue his controversial quest for independence on the basis of the 1984 elections, now with this ruling in mind, his dubious mandate was in tatters.

In order to avoid the legal vacuum that could result if all the actions of the Kwa-Ndebele legislative assembly since November 1984 were not validated, on 24 June 1988, the Central government introduced the Constitutional Laws Second Amendment Bill, retroactively to validate all the actions of the assembly until another election could be held. The bill also sought to extend the vote to women as well as to compel Kwa-Ndebele to hold an election as soon as possible.<sup>75</sup> Only these elections would serve as *de facto* referendum on the independence issue, an acid test of support which Majozi Mahlangu had thus far tried to avoid.

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<sup>74</sup> Abel, Politics by Other Means, p.447.

<sup>75</sup> SAIRR, Survey 1987/88, p.924.

#### 6.8. A replay of Kwa-Ndebele elections, 8 November 1988

On 15 September 1988 the South African government decreed that the Kwa-Ndebele legislative assembly should be dissolved on 7 November and that elections should be held the next day. In this way, Majosi Mahlangu, who was consistently reluctant to submit his pro-independence decision to the will of the people, was forced to hold the elections with disastrous repercussions for his administration.

Indeed, there is persuasive evidence to prove that Majosi Mahlangu had the gravest misgivings about holding elections at a time when people were so bewildered and resentful and all too ready to listen to anybody promising radical departures from his policies. However, time was too short for him to reassert himself. At the same time, conspiracies were being hatched in the hope of unseating him. It is interesting to note that when elections ultimately took place on 8 November 1988, on the first day of balloting the "woman-folk" constituted ninety percent of voters.<sup>76</sup> Against this background, it was a foregone conclusion that their ultimate participation in the election would weigh heavily against the Majosi administration. The beneficiary of the situation would obviously be the royal family which had since refused to endorse the independence decision.

In the light of the foregoing assertion, it is scarcely amazing to note that at the end of the election the anti-independence candidates won all the sixteen seats, with Headman Matthews Siphon Mahlangu, a political newcomer, defeating Majosi Mahlangu himself by 6 130 votes to 1 938.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Abel, Politics by Other Means, p.479.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

In this way, the writing was on the wall regarding Kwa-Ndebele's political future. With Ntuli and Skosana dead, Mbokotho theoretically "banned" and now with Majozi effectively eliminated by popular vote, the anti-independence factions had reason to celebrate their victory not only at the polls but strictly speaking, victory against the state's policy of separate development.

#### **6.9. Majozi's further legal setback**

It should be remembered that for Majozi Mahlangu to be elected chief minister of Kwa-Ndebele in 1986 he was benefited by the actions of the then Commissioner of Police, Brigadier Hertzog Lerm, who detained Prince James Mahlangu and his brother before the Assembly convened. Although they were released in time to attend the session, the detention denied Prince James an equal opportunity to canvass for support. Again in 1987, Majozi still assisted by Brigadier Lerm, tried to bludgeon his way to independence by expelling key opponents from the assembly, and he used the police to harass and detain them. This strategy appeared to work at the time. But in 1988, Majozi suffered a series of setbacks. For instance, Brigadier Lerm was abruptly transferred from Kwa-Ndebele to Port Natal,<sup>78</sup> the Supreme Court ruled that Moutse had been unlawfully incorporated into Kwa-Ndebele, and in yet another key decision, declared the 1984 general election invalid because women had been excluded from the vote. Consequently, Majozi was compelled to hold an election which also turned against him. This time, Brigadier Lerm, who helped him to win the election as chief minister in 1986 by disrupting the opposition camp, was unable to shield Majozi from the people's verdict.

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<sup>78</sup> The Star, 14 January 1989.



In order to provide himself with an alternative road to the assembly in the event of an election defeat, Majosi had established the Sokhulumi Tribal Authority towards the close of 1988. Against this background, it is less surprising to note that shortly before the poll, when a setback for government candidates was evident, the man nominated to represent the Sokhulumi Tribal Authority, Maarman Mahlangu, resigned for health reasons, thus creating the vacancy for Majosi.<sup>79</sup>

The rationale of this move was that since most assembly members were not elected by popular vote, Majosi could still, in spite of his drubbing at the polls, be elected chief minister by the designated members. The extension of the vote to women had not given greater weight to popular vote. On the contrary, its significance had been reduced by an increase in the number of designated members, which raised the overall size of the Assembly from 72 to 89 members.<sup>80</sup> However, several additional factors made another administration headed by Majosi even more contentious. One of the most important of these was the Ndzundza Tribal Authority, the biggest tribal authority in the homeland, which designated 21 members to the assembly. Majosi had “hijacked” the authority and had installed his own nominee as chairman, thus securing the allegiance of the 21 nominees to the assembly. The opposition organized protest rallies in the neighbouring Moutse district to challenge this. The reason for holding the rally outside the Kwa-Ndebele border was to circumvent Majosi’s use of emergency powers to forbid the holding of any meeting. The previous week, a group of Ndebele women had marched to the Union Buildings in Pretoria to register their dissatisfaction at the way Majosi, the man they had rejected by popular vote, had come back into the assembly. Meanwhile, Prince James had filed an urgent

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<sup>79</sup> The Citizen, 18 January 1989.

<sup>80</sup> The Star, 7 January 1989.

application to the Supreme Court to stop him. In affidavits before the court, the Prince declared that Majozi could not make himself available for re-election as Chief Minister because he had lost the election on 14 December 1988, with a large majority. The Prince further submitted that Maarman Mahlangu's resignation which he contended reeked of expediency, was invalid because in terms of Kwa-Ndebele's constitutional proclamation, he had to hand his resignation to the Speaker of the assembly and the last day on which the Speaker could act in that capacity was 7 December 1988, yet Maarman resigned only on 14 December when the election results became known.<sup>81</sup> "Ek dink sy tyd is baie kort"<sup>82</sup>, remarked a former senior official in the Kwa-Ndebele government, one of 15 men who were summarily dismissed from top positions in the administration by Majozi since he became Chief Minister in November 1986.

On 17 January 1989, the political wheel turned a complete cycle in Kwa-Ndebele, when the Supreme Court sealed the downfall of Majozi. In another key decision, the Supreme Court ruled that Majozi's controversial nomination to the Legislative Assembly by the newly-created Sokhulumu Tribal Authority was unlawful, thus disqualifying him as a candidate chief minister. The court also granted an order declaring Maarman Mahlangu's resignation from the assembly invalid.<sup>83</sup> In this way, Majozi was politically hamstrung, and this enabled Jonas Masana Mabena from the Manala section to be elected chief minister. When it emerged that Prince S.J. Mahlangu was losing the election for chief minister, his anti-independence group in the assembly threw all

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<sup>81</sup> Pretoria News, 17 January 1989. See also, The Citizen, 18 January 1989

<sup>82</sup> The Star, 14 January 1989.

<sup>83</sup> The Citizen, 18 January 1989.

their weight behind Mabena, in order to shut out another pro-Majozi candidate.<sup>84</sup>

This legal ruling which finally sealed the political downfall of the last, yet unyielding proponent of independence, had important implications for the future of the homeland. For the purposes of this thesis however, it meant that the 17th of January 1989 represents the last date on which an enquiry about the crisis around the Kwa-Ndebele independence issue can be made, especially because after this date, it would have been straining optimism for any leader to ever consider independence for this embattled homeland. But it was the inclusion of Prince James Mahlangu in the cabinet as Minister of Education, that ensured that the issue of independence for the bantustan became a closed book.

A point of particular importance which merits some observation, is the unusual effectiveness of the judicial process in serving the people. Though it is normally taken for granted that the courts are the guardians of the freedom of the individual and the rule of law in a state, this may be so more in theory than in practice. Given the low educational level of the vast majority of the people in rural societies, the judicial process is too technical for most people to comprehend and consequently it is not easy for them to approach the courts for remedy. Moreover, there is a problem created by the apartheid heritage. The courts in apartheid times were by and large deliberate allies of the administration and this was worse in the bantustans. In Kwa-Ndebele for instance, the laws and regulations were simply neglected or were regularly twisted to the

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<sup>84</sup> *Insig*, December 1989. *The litigious people of Kwa-Ndebele, in an effort to see Prince James become chief minister argued that the 21 nominated members of the assembly were unlawfully replaced by Majozi during his days as chief minister. Therefore should the court rule in their favour, there would be a replay of the elections and the Prince's chances would obviously be bolstered by 21 new members in the assembly.*

demands of expediency by officials and citizens alike, so that the gap was notoriously large between the law as it stood on the statute books and actual practice. For instance, as Abel puts it, "the Transvaal Attorney General refused to prosecute chief minister Skosana, Maqhawe and Majozi for notorious kidnappings, torture, and murders and then charged them with common assault, accepting R50 fines to foreclose judicial exposure of their crimes."<sup>85</sup> This explains in part the reason why the whole concept of the rule of law in Kwa-Ndebele was being held in contempt by the people. There are also instances where the judicial process had become disfunctional because of the unrest, to the extent that many citizens failed to get protection from the law enforcement agencies of the system.

The foregoing assertion notwithstanding, the litigious people of Kwa-Ndebele, no less than the people of Moutse, had demonstrated a clear understanding of the true meaning of the concept of the independence of the judiciary. In spite of the principle of parliamentary supremacy and the government's readiness to overturn judicial decisions through retroactive legislation, these rural communities tirelessly sought legal recourse in the face of increasing government repression. In the end, their ultimate victory no doubt restored the credibility of the justice system in the country at large. And thus, as Ritchken puts it, "by successfully removing the threat of independence, the residents of Kwa-Ndebele hammered the final nail into the coffin of the grand apartheid scheme".<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Abel, Politics by Other Means, p.490.

<sup>86</sup> Ritchken, "The Kwa-Ndebele Struggle Against Independence", in Cobbett and Cohen, Popular Struggles in South Africa, p.445.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion one may say, there are two possible interpretations for the crises in Kwa-Ndebele during the period under review. One is that the violence in that homeland was simply a belated occurrence of the nation-wide revolt against government policy that had started in 1984. The other interpretation is that, the conflict was entirely different in nature, and it concerned Mbokotho's determination to force allegiance of residents, while the independence issue which merely coincided with these developments, only provided the reason for the outbreak of violence.

Closely analysed, these two interpretations are not mutually exclusive. The struggle in Kwa-Ndebele cannot be separated from the nationwide uprising that had been witnessed since 1984. During this time, the resistance to the central state spilled over into previously unaffected homelands and neither homeland was left unscathed. In short, one may say, while the 1980s saw historically unequalled popular mobilisations against the apartheid state, the 1986 popular insurrection in Kwa-Ndebele was triggered both by the attempt to grant that homeland independence at the time the government had committed itself to the implementation of its reform package as well as by Mbokotho's determination to make the residents to accept this independence against their declared wishes.

Presented by Nationalist ideologues as models that would prove the efficacy of separate development, the homelands, in all their stages of self-rule, had instead developed into poverty-

stricken fiefdoms, ruled by well-paid politicians<sup>1</sup>, who demonstrated little tolerance for opposition and whose actions were unchecked if not encouraged by the central government. The bantustans were a testimony to the solidity of grand apartheid in South Africa. The Botha reform measures had made no dent on them or their central place in the ideology of geographic separation along ethnic lines. The establishment of Kwa-Ndebele and all the attendant problems of the mid-1980s is evidence of how well the government had succeeded in making the bantustans the dumping grounds not only of people but also of policies and methods of oppression that would seem inimical to reform. For instance, the costs of repressing a settled urban population of the unemployed would have been enormous and much more sensitive politically and economically, than giving the bantustans jeeps, hippos and soldiers and then leaving them to deal with unemployed discontent.

In the light of the foregoing assertion, it is understandable that while the costs of funding ten separate national states may have been an enormous drain on the economy and a terrible waste because they propped up co-opted elite's rather than enhanced general welfare, they also saved the government and the taxpayer the costs of oppression and social welfare. Of the ten homelands, Kwa-Ndebele was good proof that only because it was removed from white eyes was it possible to believe that the disaster which was "bantustan policy", was justifiable under certain circumstances. However, the reality to which the survivors of forced removals, poverty and oppression<sup>2</sup> bear witness, shows that bantustans, even at their most ideal state could never be justified.

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<sup>1</sup> A Fund for Free Expression Report, Human Rights in the Homelands: South Africa's Delegation of Repression, June 1984, p.78.

<sup>2</sup> A. J. Norval, "Searching For a Method in the Madness: Apartheid and Influx Control". South African Historical Journal, 29 (November 1993), p.212.

It should be noted that by 1986 unlike in 1976 when the Transkei became independent, the youth of Kwa-Ndebele had developed a level of resistance to apartheid in general and to the idea of homelands in particular, quite as deeply rooted as the resistance of the youth in South Africa's most troubled townships. The sheer controversy which had surrounded South Africa's past policies have inculcated a high level of political awareness even in rural communities. The foregoing narrative maintains that in Kwa-Ndebele, not only has the excesses of Mbokotho increased the degree of politicization but it has also generated conflict within the once conservative rural community, which in turn has sharpened political awareness even further. Mbokotho's approach scared even those who traditionally might have been allies to the regime.

Closely related with this point was the authoritarian approach of the homeland leadership to the crisis. Its extreme reliance on the vigilantes and the curtailment of political activity have produced a culture of militant anti-independence protest which became far more difficult to suppress. Actually, what united the anti-independence factions was the fact that the pro-independence forces were exceptionally brutal. This fact alone made the residents extremely fearful of what life in a constitutionally independent Kwa-Ndebele under their control held in store for them. For instance, the Kwa-Ndebele administration viewed its opponents as a security threat and placed excessive reliance on the police to contain this perceived threat. Consequently, the police could rely on executive ratification for their excesses, as Nick de Villiers puts it, "not only does the tone of the police leadership permit assaults, it positively encourages them".<sup>3</sup> The important questions to ask in this connection are: to what extent would the people of Kwa-Ndebele simply become bludgeoned into a passive acceptance of this state

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<sup>3</sup> N. de Villiers, "Aspects of the Role of the Police in Kwa-Ndebele", in Kruger and Rainey, Kwa-Ndebele-The Future?, p.57.

of affairs and to what extent would government by force undermine the economic viability of Kwa-Ndebele?

It is not in the nature of insecure governments to conceptualise the opposition as a consequence of their own lack of credibility, but rather as a consequence of their lack of power. With this in mind, it is understandable why in addition to detaining leaders, the Kwa-Ndebele police have also detained a variety of respected community representatives such as magistrates, teachers and priests for merely voicing opinions opposing independence. The strange thing especially in Kwa-Ndebele, was the initial unwillingness of the police to deal with Mbokotho related violence. This has led people to speculate on the police understanding of the conflict or their agendas in relation to it. To many observers however, it was clear that the police openly sympathised with the vigilantes. In fact, given the nature and function of bantustan police in general, this was understandable. With Kwa-zulu police vis-a-vis Inkatha as a notable example, there is no doubt that there was a general tendency of apartheid-nurtured police force to side with the forces of conservative tribalism. The reason why Mbokotho did not enjoy popular support among the Ndebeles in the same way that Inkatha did among the Zulus, was perhaps that it appealed primarily to the business community, while Inkatha appealed to the Zulu nation as a whole. It is common knowledge that a national movement inspires greater enthusiasm than a movement which is not fed by nationalism.<sup>4</sup>

According to the apartheid logic, different ethnic groups could not co-exist in one state, hence the ten homelands. However, in spite of this clearly stated Nationalist conviction, in the 1970s government officials made several adjustments to traditional homeland policy and lumped

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<sup>4</sup> Muller (ed), Five Hundred Years: A History of South Africa, p.464.



together people of different ethnic origins in one territorial unit and conveniently called it Kwa-Ndebele. For instance an article published in the Afrikaans press in 1980 serves to illustrate the nature of the problem. An Anthropology professor from Potchefstroom university, M. van Wateren, wrote in *Die Transvaler* in September that, "what does not belong together cannot merely be amalgamated in the belief that moderation will be upheld".<sup>5</sup> The Kwa-Ndebele independence issue was one example of the numerous problems that confronted South Africa during one of the most massive forms of social engineering that the 20th century has experienced, ie. the attempt to insist on separate development at a time when the government was talking the language of reforms. What happened in Kwa-Ndebele and Moutse in the mid-1980s were some of the contradictions that have developed as a result of the implementation of that policy. Every step taken by the government in an attempt to relieve the pressures and tensions within its boundaries created another contradiction.

For instance, the incorporation of Moutse's more than 120 000 inhabitants, of whom 50% were North Sothos into an already ethnically impure Kwa-Ndebele, clearly cut across all the state principles of separate development embodied in legislation dating as far back as 1959. The government could not justify the incorporation of Moutse as a means of uniting the Ndebele minority with its Kwa-Ndebele homeland without at the same time violating the right of the North Sotho majority to remain in South Africa or join its homeland of Lebowa. In this way, ethnic self-determination for some, inevitably became ethnic oppression for others.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Die Transvaler, 6 September 1980.

<sup>6</sup> Abel, Politics by Other Means, p.491.

On the other hand, South Africa could not abandon the rationale of ethnic homogeneity in favour of geographic contiguity or administrative convenience without utterly betraying grand apartheid in the process. For instance, it promoted grand apartheid as essential to black self-determination, yet it refused to hold a referendum in Moutse about incorporation and in Kwa-Ndebele about independence.

Another contradiction lay in the fact that central to the government's rationale for separate development, has been the need for national identification. It was argued that there was no homogeneous African population in South Africa, but rather different nations, each of which needed its own national base. Yet the creation of two separate states for the Xhosa nation as well as the existence of sizable minorities of different national groups in all the homelands, contradicted government theories. For instance, the establishment of a Ndebele homeland and the failure to unite all the Ndebeles in it, including the so-called Northern Ndebele resident in Lebowa, defeated the whole purpose of bringing together that which belonged together.

The foregoing contradictions notwithstanding, the government insisted on granting Kwa-Ndebele greater political autonomy in a clear, yet unstated attempt to make the homeland functional to the state's interests. What is surprising is not that independence failed, but that it was ever intended for Kwa-Ndebele as late as 1986, a period in which the state was restructuring its separate development policy in terms of which homeland independence was no longer one of the lynchpins of its strategy for dealing with the political incorporation of the Blacks.

Since 1983 the state had been busy with a process of constitutional restructuring, in terms of which homeland administrations were seen rather as integral parts of second-tier governments

than as ten first-tier governments. Thus in the mid-1980s, a homeland's refusal to take independence was no longer a threat to state strategy, and therefore independence did not have to be foisted on an unwilling and resisting population as was the case with Kwa-Ndebele.

Driven by the immediate need to find a way to appease mass demands for change, while leaving apartheid in tact, the government introduced reforms, which closely analysed, were but a study in logical inconsistency. For instance, one may argue, the government insisted on homeland independence in spite of its commitment to reforms because it served as good cover for continuation of white domination. Undoubtedly, true independence would require appreciable and lasting sacrifices on the part of Pretoria. On the contrary, the way in which independence was being foisted on a community which had demonstrated its antagonism to it by popular rebellion, was evidence of the fact that the government was not giving up anything of substance in order that Kwa-Ndebele independence should occur. Instead, through the granting of independence to bantustans, South Africa was gaining greater respectability for her exclusion of Blacks from political participation in the central state. There was no evidence within the TBVC states to prove that P.W. Botha was being made to pay a high price to ensure Ndebele self-determination, except that this step would validate the state's policy of separate development to which, inspite of official rhetoric in the 1980s, he was still fully committed.

Against this background, it cannot be denied that the people of Kwa-Ndebele resisted independence because it lacked the legitimizing element of real and material sacrifice on the part of the government. Noting what was happening in the TBVC states, the people of Kwa-Ndebele had realised that independence would not lessen the reality of white privilege as well as the political supremacy of all whites in the region. Nor would it introduce radical departures from

past practice in the allocation of resources. As Tiryakian puts it, "bantustan independence did not remove the curse of race discrimination within white-claimed South Africa. In short, it did not cut deeply enough into the prior stratification system of race relations".<sup>7</sup>

The bantustan policy and the forced removals that have taken place to make ethnic division a frightening reality in many parts of the country, were also a blueprint for the government's strategy of bolstering co-optable leaders<sup>8</sup>. Calls for the end of influx control and various other ca's for reform had disguised complicity in the continuation of bantustans. The reason for this is that, as cornerstones of separate development, the homelands were performing an increasingly significant secondary function in that, much of the opposition and discontent against the prevailing political and economic conditions in South Africa, was easily channelled into and against the homeland political structures, as Omer-Cooper puts it, "The resentment of Africans in the Bantustans themselves would also be directed against their black governments rather than the government of South Africa as a whole".<sup>9</sup> Particularly during the period under review, homelands were increasingly called upon to control and suppress dissent of any kind. Undoubtedly, the crises in Kwa-Ndebele had been in the short term interests of the central government. For instance, it kept pressure off the central state and it was therefore a great accomplishment that comrades in Kwa-Ndebele should see Mbokotho as their main enemy rather than the apartheid government.

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<sup>7</sup> E.A. Tiryakian, "Sociological Realism: Partition for South Africa?", Social Forces 46, no.2 (December 1976), p.218., cited in Stultz, Transkei's Half Loaf, p.132.

<sup>8</sup> C. Legum, "Political Leadership in the Bantustans", Third World, 2 (1973), p.40.

<sup>9</sup> Omer-Cooper, History of Southern Africa, p.213.

Another proof that the central government had as much interest in the establishment of another independent homeland, as did an enriched businessmen-cum politicians in Kwa-Ndebele, was the fact that when the question of Mbokotho and independence led to unprecedented violence and loss of life, Pretoria resisted any notion of an impartial inquiry into the conflict. But when it came to supporting the hard-pressed Kwa-Ndebele regime against the comrades, it proved only too willing to provide the means to crush popular resistance, through the deployment of the SADF in various villages.

What is clear is that, like the apartheid regime which parented it, the Kwa-Ndebele government had a serious legitimacy crisis. And this could not be addressed unless fundamental black political demands within a greater South Africa for an end to apartheid and the granting of real black political representation were addressed. Instead, the homeland administration addressed this legitimacy crisis from a security perspective and thus perpetuated conflict to the detriment of much needed development in the area. Closely analysed, one may say, the Kwa-Ndebele government was trapped in the homeland framework set by Pretoria and was doomed to a cooptive role which it could not address without negating itself. This explains in part the reason why the government sought to portray the conflict in that homeland more as a power struggle among blacks rather than a liberation struggle against apartheid. For instance, Moutse was seen as the unfortunate object of a power squabble between Lebowa and Kwa-Ndebele. While resistance to Kwa-Ndebele independence was seen as an expression of Ndzundza royal house's resentment of the homeland leadership. This characterization tended to shift responsibility from whites to blacks, and thus further demonstrating their political immaturity. In this way, the government sought to conceal its pivotal role in constructing, exacerbating, and manipulating these conflicts by breaking up peaceful heterogeneous communities into ethnic adversaries which

were competing for scarce resources.

Be that as it may, one may say, no conflict in homeland history had ever been so destructive and none in the end ever avenged itself so completely upon its authors, as the Kwa-Ndebele independence issue. Maqhawe Ntuli and Simon Skosana, were two of the last and yet the least mourned of its victims. Indeed, to have predicted such a catastrophic ending for them would have required powers of divination, usually not granted to ordinary people. Nevertheless, “a cut worm forgives the plough”, so said the poet Blake. Perhaps by invoking this kind of charity there could be forgiveness for the ungovernable fury of the instruments by which history is made.

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In the light of the TRC's function, I have been requested to ensure anonymity to one of my informants by using Mr X, though the descriptions in the work are such that the pseudonym is absolutely a transparent disguise. In spite of this, I used Mr X where necessary precisely in order not to harm or offend my informant in any way and again in order that the study does not fall short of the ethical responsibilities of the researcher. In this study, I interviewed the following people:

Mr P.J. Mashilo at Moutse, 12 June 1997, 15 June 1997.

Mr D. Sibanyoni at Vlaklaagte no.1, 14 May 1997.

Mr S.D. Lekotoko at Wolwekraal "A", 12 October 1997.

Mr P.K Mahlangu at Kwa-Mhlanga, 14 May 1997.

Miss P.N. Mahlangu at Waterval B, 11 August 1997.

Miss L.M. Dlamini at Kwaggafontein "A", 12 October 1997.

Miss S.B. Tshabangu at Tweefontein “H”, 12 October 1997.

Mr K.N. Masango at Tweefontein “K”, 12 June 1997.

Mr A.M. Mahlangu at Thembaletu, 15 June 1997.

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