"INDEPENDENCE" FOR THE TRANSKEI: WHAT IT REALLY MEANS

On October 26, 1976, the Government of the Republic of South Africa, with great fanfare, is to "grant national independence" to the Transkei, one of its bantustans (homelands). This is an attempt to convince the world that the South African policy of separate development is successful and, indeed, is the only viable way to solve South Africa's racial problems. In reality, however, such "independence" for the Transkei is a fraud. It will serve only to ensure the continuing political and economic dominance of South Africa's four million whites over its sixteen million blacks via the balkanization of the black population and the rejection of any idea that blacks may ever participate on an equal basis in the mainstream of the "white" Republic's economic and political life.

The Transkei

Present Population: 1,751,142
Assigned Population: 3,006,000
Land area: 16,554 square miles

No major industries.
No significant mineral deposits.
No usable port or harbor.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:

The Transkei, and the 9 other homelands, are similar to Indian reservations in the United States. The homelands serve as labor reserves for the white-controlled economy of South Africa, and a location for agricultural workers and those deemed unproductive: the old, the very young, the sick, those "endorsed out" of the white areas and resettled in the homelands, and the "undesirables".

The 10 homelands (presently comprised of 113 separate fragments of land) together amount to only 13% of the total land area of South Africa, yet are supposed to accommodate 16 million blacks, while the other 87% of the land is for the exclusive use of the whites who number only 4 million.

The Transkei and the Ciskei are 2 homelands designated for the blacks who, according to the South African Government, belong to the "Xhosa" ethnic group. These territorial designations are fallacious on 2 counts: 1) The "Xhosa" are in fact a mixture of at least six tribal groups, all of which belong to the Nguni language group and only one of which was called "Xhosa" in pre-colonial times; and 2) The fact that there are 2 Xhosa areas contradicts the Government's avowed policy of establishing a homeland for each African ethnic group, and is the result of colonial administrative patterns which have carried over into 1976. The very name "Transkei" is a colonial designation for the area across the Kei River from the white settlements.
Black South Africans who are deemed to be "Xhosa" are to be citizens of the Transkei or the Ciskei, even though some have never lived in either homeland. Only one-half of the Transkei's 3 million people actually live there. The rest live and work elsewhere in South Africa, but will be accorded no political rights outside the homeland.

While the South African Government maintains that the Transkei is a rich agricultural area, much of it actually consists of eroded land. The territory produces only slightly more than half of the total amount of maize needed to feed the current population, thus making each person forcefully resettled in the territory by the South African Government an added burden, and ensuring that endemic malnutrition will be characteristic of the area.

The Transkei is not, and will not become economically self-sufficient. Its budget after 'independence' will continue to be subsidized 60 to 70% by the South African Government. Non-agricultural employment in the Transkei involves government service and cottage or light industry, plus the keeping of small shops. Forty-four per cent of the salaried workers are government employees. The great majority of the working population must migrate to the white areas to find jobs.

Independence for the Transkei was not chosen by the Transkei's citizens by vote. It was decided upon by the current leader of the Transkei National Independence Party, Chief Kaiser Matanzima, and his government, which is largely comprised of people originally appointed to the Transkei assembly by the South African Government. Appointed chiefs gain money, status and police protection by cooperating with the South African regime, and through such cooperation can, and do, effectively squelch political opposition within the homeland.

Chief Gatsha Buthelezi, the leader of the KwaZulu homeland, has said, "No single Black leader will dare go to his people to decide the independence issue on the basis of a referendum. This in itself speaks volumes."

Chief Buthelezi also said, on March 7, 1976, "I challenge anyone to prove to me that the majority of Blacks do in fact want the so-called independence which is offered to our Reserves now called "Homelands".... The majority of the black people do not want to abandon their birth right. They have toiled for generations to create the wealth of South Africa. They intend to participate in the wealth of the land.

The leader of the opposition party in the Transkei, Senator Knowledge Guzma, has stated, "The balkanization of South Africa is in no one's interest. We are one nation." (New York Times, April 23, 1976).

Most leaders of independent African states have said that they will not recognize the Transkei when it becomes "independent". At the 1975 Kampala meeting of the Organization of African Unity, that body reaffirmed its rejection of the entire homeland program and called on all members of the United Nations to refuse contacts with homeland leaders.

The United States Government has not yet made its decision. It is essential that the U.S. not recognize the Transkei, for to do otherwise would be to put America's stamp of approval upon a new expression of the continuing South African policy of apartheid. WRITE TO SECRETARY KISSINGER AND YOUR CONGRESSPERSON. DO IT TODAY!

Potomac Association Task Force on Southern Africa
Washington, D.C.