

In his first two articles in this series, Mr. Mbeki sketched the historical and economic background against which the Transkei Bunga (the Transkeian General Council) the so-called Transkei "Parliament" composed of Chiefs, Government nominees and some elected representatives, dating from the last century — voted itself out of existence in favour of Dr. Verwoerd's Bantu Authorities plan. It did so after considering the report of the "Recess Committee", which was guided by the Native Affairs Department. He proceeds to examine the real motives behind the Verwoerd Plan.

# THE TRANSKEI TRAGEDY

*A STUDY IN THE BANTU AUTHORITIES ACT.*

By GOVAN MBEKI

## III NATIONAL GRAVE-DIGGERS

The emergence of new independent African states to the north has made the mouths of South African capitalists water. They plan to underseil the East and the West in this new potential market with shoddy goods produced under sweated labour conditions. Factories in or near the Reserves, where the only industrial law that applies is the slave-like "Native Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act" would suit this purpose well. But to carry out this purpose it is important that Africans should be found to co-operate.

The Chief has been selected as the chief collaborator in this plan. Let us see what the apartheid gossellers offer him under the Bantu Authorities Act. The main bait is "political development" under the "wise and helpful guidance" of a State department supervised by the learned Doctors Verwoerd and Eiselen.

### FUNCTIONS OF "BANTU AUTHORITIES"

To be in a position to assess the true nature of the "powers" which the chief, or any unscrupulous person who is elevated to the position of chief, is to wield under the tutelage of Dr. Verwoerd and his army of Native Affairs officials, we must study the list of functions for the Bantu Auth-

ority. The departmental Memorandum which is the basis of the Recess Committee's Report submitted at a special session of the Transkei General Council on 23rd and 24th November 1955, states that in addition to some of the functions mentioned below "the Minister would have the power to assign to any authority any other function." This is the list:

- (1) Land administration,
- (2) General Administration of own affairs,
- (3) Measures to combat soil erosion,
- (4) Organising Bantu Farmers' Association,
- (5) Eradication of weeds,
- (6) Education (School Boards and teacher-training),
- (7) Secondary and Major Scholarships,
- (8) Licensing and allocation of sites,
- (9) Co-operative Credit Societies,
- (10) Bantu Athletics and Sports.

To carry out these functions the Government creates a machinery which purports to be the fulfilment of the African peoples' aspirations. As Mr. C. B. Young, Under-Secretary for Native Affairs puts it: "It is the desire of every race to govern itself or to participate in such government". (Note that it is the **RACE** as distinct from the "nation" for which the Nationalists are providing.) The Nationalist project, for purposes of distracting the minds of the people from their main problems of food, landlessness, pass laws, etc., their own warped moral standards by which they judge political, economic, social and even their religious standards according to the manner in which they measure up to their theory of the Nationalist racial superman.

The Bantu Authority, though for different ends, is promised powers, despotic powers, over his tribal group, similar to those which the Nationalist "superman", Dr. Verwoerd, is seeking to exercise over the entire African people. The Nationalists are even in this ideological sphere extending the practice of master and servant. There must be black man to do the "dakka werk" under the supervision of the Nationalist white baas. The same practice of baas boys as is encouraged on the mines to extract maximum production from tired mine workers by using Africans themselves to prod their fellowmen so that even though exhausted almost beyond endurance they should still strain to dig out an extra fraction of an ounce of gold. To achieve this the mine management has exploited man's vanity for power, however illusory such power. Underground, a white "baas" supervises a number of African "baasboys" who goad the workers to produce.

The Nationalists are adopting similar tactics to implement their Bantu Authorities plan. They want the chiefs to play the role of "Baas boys" so that they break up resistance to oppression amongst their people. Lest the chiefs should be unwilling to co-operate fully, provision is made in the plan for the elevation of unscrupulous individuals to the rank of chiefs. Behind the "baas boy chiefs" will be the Native Commissioners to ensure that they carry out the Nationalist policy.

It should not, however, be imagined that the Nationalists regard the co-operation of the chiefs by itself, as sufficient to ensure the smooth working of the Bantu Authorities plan. The Under-Secretary realises that the people may not accept the scheme and so hurries to assure them in advance:

"Under the Bantu Authorities which you constitute you will be able to lead the people in a true sense. You will be able to tell them, not ask them, what to do. That is an important point."

Indeed it is an important point; for here the Nationalist Government establishes the fact that it will resort to force to back the chiefs as they are directed to compel their people to accept all the oppressive and degrading slave laws which are based on the theory of the white man's racial superiority.

## COMPULSION

The Bantu Authorities are to be saddled with the responsibility of carrying out a land policy which the people have opposed so strongly that the Government with all its show of strength through armed police has failed to achieve. The Chiefs, as Bantu Authorities; must now, at the instigation of the Native Commissioner, remove families from one area to another under the "Land Rehabilitation scheme" and pay them inadequate compensation for their demolished huts; they now must compel the people to cull their stock; they must dispossess some who have had arable allotments in the name of soil conservation; they must screen the landless and confine them in labour camps from which the capitalist industrial requirements of cheap labour can be met; they must compel the people to provide forced labour to construct roads, and to eradicate noxious weeds. These and a multiplicity of other tasks which the Native Affairs Department has on its own failed to achieve in the past, are to be applied by the Chiefs under the supervision of Native Affairs officials. To do this work the Nationalists compensate the stooges for the unpopular work they are going to do. Titles that appeal to their vanity; instead of being called Chiefs they will now be known as Bantu Authorities who will be able to tell their people — "not ask them, what to do."

In Paragraph 1(c) of the Recess Committee Report the Committee recommends that the principle of resorting to force to compel a horse that is unwilling to drink be embodied in the Proclamation that is to set up Bantu Authorities in the Transkei. The section which empowers the Minister of Native Affairs to fix a date by which "the establishment shall be completed" reads:

"That if, despite the fixing of a date by the Honourable the Minister, any location or area has not established a Community Authority he may, if in his opinion, the circumstances warrant it, resort to compulsion in the matter."

So revolting is this paragraph that Mr. M. S. Morai (Mount Fletcher) moved that the words "resort to compulsion in the matter" be deleted as

the people "would not like it if such a situation should arise." He was seconded by Mr. K. G. Jojo who as a result earned himself not only discouraging but disparaging remarks from the Chair. These served as a warning to the rest of the members not to oppose any of the recommendations of the Recess Committee. Taking up the line from the chairman's tough remarks Mr. C. W. Monakali adopted a conciliatory approach and in supporting the Recess Committee's recommendation gave as a justification for the insertion of the compulsion clause the reason: "The Bunga itself has accepted the principle because it realised it is the policy of the Government and it has got to be carried out." Mr. T. Ntintili also, in support was not to be outshone by Mr. Monakali in advocating force. Impatient at any delay that would be brought about by the deletion of the compulsion clause he impulsively asks: "How long will we sit there wasting time until everybody else is persuaded of his own accord to have the whole system applied?"

In countries which came under Hitler in Europe some selfish Jews became members of Nazi-inspired "Judenrats" (Jewish Councils) which were supposed to look after the interests of the Jews. Members of these Councils carried out Hitler's fascist policy of Jewish extermination. A Jewish writer sums up the nature and effects of such collaboration thus:

"There were the careless and cynical who hoped to gain favour for themselves in the eyes of the fascists by their over-zealous subservience to racialist doctrines. For a mere pittance of personal exemption they were quite willing to sacrifice tens of thousands of their own flesh and blood to Hitler's butchers. No Germans could have surpassed in keenness these members of the Judenrat who thought to earn merit by complying with all the demands and executing all the decrees of the Gestapo . . . Though they betrayed their persecuted people they too were crushed in turn by Nazi hestiality. As long as they were of some use to the regime they were kept alive and even in relative comfort. No sooner did their usefulness cease and they shared the fate of their betrayed brothers . . . In Auschwitz and Maidenek the dehumanised scum of the Jewish people volunteered to supervise their own people's march to the gas chambers and death. In the end they were also made to join the queue."

In priestlike style, the Chairman of the Recess Committee, Mr. E. W. Pearce, the would-be mentor of Bantu Authorities, summing up the debate on the compulsion clause says "Mr. Chairman, I appeal to my old friend from Mt. Fletcher to withdraw his amendment". Continuing this appeal to his "old friend from Mt. Fletcher", Mr. Pearce states: "We are trying to build a big structure; we have reached the foundations — the part of the building which must be the strongest. While we are trying to build this foundation somebody comes along and wants to insert a charge of dynamite in that foundation and, what is more, Mr. Chairman, he comes along to those who are building and says: 'Will you light the fuse?'"

Anticipating the effect which this passionate appeal may have had on his "old friend" he concluded "Mr. Chairman, I hope sincerely that the mover of the amendment will withdraw it."

After the honey-bird had thus spoken Mr. M. S. Morai the "old Friend from Mt. Fletcher" rose and said:

"When I first read those words (referring to the compulsion clause) I was not aware of all the facts that have been exposed . . . I therefore withdraw my amendment".

The Chairman: "Does your seconder agree?"

Councillor K. G. Jojo who probably had learnt from experience as every herd boy has known that a honey bird is not always the beneficent guide that leads to a beehive, but sometimes, while it still sings its usual sweet song, it leads its follower to a lurking poisonous snake, said: "I am withdrawing half-heartedly. I am quarrelling with the word "compulsion" but in any case I agree to withdrawing".

Pressing for an unconditional surrender the Chairman retorted "I am asking if you agree to the withdrawal of the proposal". Councillor K. G. Jojo: "I agree, Sir, although I do not like that word "compulsion"."

Like the foamy wave that seals the surface of the sea after the last part of a sinking ship disappears into the deep, that last remark by Councillor Jojo ended any further opposition and Councillors competed with one another in a vulgar display of servility as each ended up his speech before resuming his seat with "I thank you sir."

*(Mr. Mbeki's concluding article in this series will be published in our next issue.)*

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