

In this, the fourth and concluding article in his series on the implications of the Bantu Authorities Act for the Transkei, Mr. Mbeki deals with the administration of Bantu Education and the composition of the local authorities, under the Native Affairs Department. It has been proposed by a reader that the whole series should be reprinted as a pamphlet. We would welcome reader's opinions about this suggestion.

THE TRANSKEI TRAGEDY

A STUDY IN THE BANTU AUTHORITIES ACT.

By GOVAN MBEKI

IV. THE LAST WORD

Even the Nationalists whose political philosophy is based on the violent application of their policy, reckon with the fact that compulsion in Government has no lasting results. It is for that reason that the officials of the Native Affairs Department took so much pains to persuade the Councillors at the special session of the Transkei Council to administer the Bantu Education Act. In spite of their unwillingness to accept the administration of so specialised a service as Education, the Councillors were not allowed to evade this responsibility.

Doubtful of the ability of the Bantu Authority to undertake the training of teachers, as this was a matter for experts, one Councillor asked: "I want to know how the territorial authority is expected to train teachers?"

In reply a Native Affairs official retorted: "Would the territorial authority not like to employ the experts who teach the teachers . . . and find the money and build the buildings and generally administer the Colleges?" To this the Councillor replied: "Yes." Elucidating the position further Mr. Pearce added: "I think all this means, Mr. Chairman, that if, in the future, the territorial authority should desire to assist the Bantu Education Division of the Department in some way or other in respect to teacher training, there is the power under which they could assist."

One more problem in respect of the administration of education before the Councillors had completely got themselves entangled irrevocably in the encircling tentacles of the Nationalist octopus had yet to be solved. Under the paragraph dealing with the functions of the Territorial Authority one such function is: "Higher Education: training of teachers". Asking for clarification of this point, a Councillor stated that under this item the control of Higher Education seemed to be restricted to the training of teachers. He suggested that there should be a "for example" inserted between "Higher Education" and "Training of Teachers". When the Chairman suggested inserting the word "including", Mr. Pearce immediately saw the advantage and while acknowledging the unconscious service rendered by this Councillor, agreed with the concurrence of his Committee to have the position clarified by the addition of the word "including" between the words "education" and "training". Thus this function which is to be carried out by the Territorial Bantu Authority would in effect mean the administration of Higher Education, including the training of teachers.

For the Nationalists the acceptance of this item as one of the functions of the Bantu Authority must be considered as one of the greatest achievements. Two principles in their battle to render the African servile have, by the passing of the item "Higher Education, including the training of teachers", been established. That the Bantu Authority should find money to "build the buildings" means acceptance of the Nationalist policy that the African should pay for the Verwoerd indoctrination. The Bantu Authority must impose and collect burdensome taxes in order to help the Nationalists realise their fantastic dream of enslaving 10 million Africans.

Secondly, not only are the Nationalists interested in controlling teacher-training as an immediate and important objective in their scheme, but they are also preparing to take over the complete control of the whole field of Higher Education, including University Education. To enforce the worst aspects of Apartheid even in the seats of higher learning, the Nationalists will always hide behind the Bantu Authority and claim that he wants these things for the development of his people.

When dissatisfaction grows amongst the people against the increasing taxes, against the rehabilitation scheme, against Slave Education, against the pass laws, it is the Bantu Authority who will appeal to the Nationalists to bring in armed police to crush the dissatisfaction. When some men and women become recognised as leaders in their communities, the Bantu Authority will appeal to the Nationalists to deport them as "agitators" and "communists". When delinquency increases as a result of bad economic conditions the Bantu Authorities will plead for the teaching of more scriptures to the children at school for they are becoming more sinful. As the scriptures fail to cure the evil the Bantu Authority will plead for the opening of work colonies. The African must carry out in practice his own suicide and history will never point an accusing finger at God's Chosen race as represented by the Nationalists.

SEEDS OF TRIBAL CONFLICT

In the composition of the four types of authority are the seeds of tribal conflicts which would blur the people's vision and render them unable to see their real problems of landlessness, exploitation and recurrent famines. The Recess Committee recommends that there should be four types of authority to take the following form:

(1) A Community Authority which will have influence over a tribal group within a limited small area.

(2) District Authority corresponding to the district Councils and also functioning as school Boards.

This is evidently for administrative convenience, to cover the same area of jurisdiction at present prescribed for each Native Commissioner.

(3) Five Regional Authorities for each of the following areas (a) Eastern Pondoland (b) Western Pondoland (c) Tembuland (d) Transkei Proper consisting of the four Fingo districts (i.e. Butterworth, Idutywa, Nqamakwe and Tsomo) (e) East Griqualand.

(4) A Territorial Authority which is to replace the General Council.

The manner in which the Government wants to ensure that the balance of power in the Authorities is in their favour may be judged from the composition of the Community Authority which is allowed a minimum membership of 8 and a maximum of 14 in the following proportions:

(a) The Chief or Headman to nominate the whole of the minimum, i.e. 8

(b) One third of the difference between the minimum and the maximum to be nominated by the Native Commissioner, i.e. 2

(c) Two thirds of such difference to be nominated by the people in consultation with the Chief or Headman 4

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Total 14
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Here is an abandonment of all pretence of representative institutions. Power comes from above, from the Governor-General (the Supreme Chief) to Dr. Verwoerd to Native Commissioners to Chiefs (African) to Headmen. Showing the typical Nationalist mentality which seeks to give to words and phrases meanings that conform to their myth of the "superman", Mr. Young told the Councillors: "The Chiefs and Headmen are leaders by virtue of their birthright and traditional tribal law. If they are then leaders by birthright . . . there is no need to elect them to a position which they already hold." Consistent with this idea the personnel of the Regional and Territorial Authorities is almost entirely composed of chiefs and headmen. They are made to feel that they have a divine right to rule the people as at the same time they are made to believe that the Nationalist baas has a divine mission to rule the chief. As the Nationalists will, according to this plan, be able to tell the chiefs, not ask them, what to do, it is expected that the chiefs will in turn be able to tell the people, not ask them, what to do. What will happen at the end of the long line when the people are told "what to do" is something to which the Nationalists and the people have diametrically opposed answers. And if history has any lessons to teach about what happened to those who thought like the Nationalists — the Pharaohs, the Hitlers, the Mussolinis — then history is on the side of the people.

THE LAST WORD

"Under the Bantu Authorities Act and the regulations already published thereunder in respect of the appointment or the composition of tribal or community authorities, the people have no say in the appointment of the Community Authority If it were otherwise, Sir, the most vital principle of the Bantu Authorities System would have been thrown overboard

. . . It would make the whole system of Bantu Authorities a farce" . . . declared Mr. Pearce in answer to a Councillor who had complained that the composition of the Community Authority was heavily weighed in favour of what the Councillor described as "illiterate headmen."

The Bantu Authorities Act is a demonstration of the contempt of the Nationalist Party for the masses of common men, and for the African people. With blind faith in the magical powers of a handful of chiefs and their hangers-on, they hope to turn back the wheel of history and to see the African people revert to a state of tribal innocence, at war among themselves and an easy prey to exploitation and oppression. But Verwoerd and his men are due for a rude awakening from their dream. They know not with whom they are dealing: the children of mine and factory, with over a century of bitter lessons of the need for African unity, with minds open to the invigorating experiences of working people at home and abroad, who have hearkened to the inspiring call of the African National Congress.

The Verwoerd plan will not answer a single one of the great problems of the country — the poverty, landlessness, and frustration of aspirations of the people. In the last analysis the success of the plan depends upon its acceptance by the people themselves, and they will not accept any plan that does not answer these problems.

The Native Affairs Department should not be too quick to congratulate itself on its success in getting the members of the Bunga — through a mixture of threats, appeals to personal ambitions, and deception — to "accept" the Bantu Authorities Act. The Bunga had no mandate to speak, and it did not speak, on behalf of the people. The last word lies with the people, and they have not spoken yet.