

force would be used. Tearsmoke should be used first depending on wind and other conditions. Only after that should rubber bullets be used, or possibly bird-shot. Live rounds of ammunition should not be used in the absence of particular threat to the soldiers or to others. No firearm should be loaded until the commanding officer has ordered this.

The commanding officer should keep in constant contact with his men, informing them how to handle particular situations and keeping them as calm and confident as possible. If the crowd failed to disperse, force could be used but the force used should not be greater than necessary and should be moderate and proportionate to the circumstances of the case.

Firearms and other lethal weapons should be used to disperse a gathering only where weapons less likely to cause injury or death had first been used to no avail; or where there had been violent behaviour on the part of the crowd. In addition, firearms should be used with all reasonable caution, without recklessness or negligence and without causing unnecessary injury.

**T**HERE HAVE been many demonstrators killed or injured over the years.

On 21 March 1960 several thousands of people gathered near the police station at Sharpeville to protest against Africans having to carry reference books. The demonstration was peaceful and had been in progress for some hours, when an unidentified member of the police force is said to have panicked and fired a shot without warning and without an order to do so.

This was followed by shots from numerous other members of the force, including the policemen manning machine guns. Sixty-seven people were killed and 186 injured. Of these forty were women and eight were children. The police said in justification of the shootings that they thought that they were being attacked. But of the bullet wounds that could be classified, 30 were inflicted from the front and 156 from behind.

On 21 March 1985 a police patrol in two armoured cars confronted a crowd marching from Langa to KwaNobuhle to attend a funeral in contravention of a magisterial prohibition imposed on the gathering. The gathering was peaceful. According to the police a member of the

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Political commentator ANTHONY HEARD believes the root cause of Bisho-type massacres is the Bantustan system which the Nationalist government "clings to like a bad habit."

## SUCH TRAGEDIES ARE INEVITABLE OUTCOME OF VERWOERD'S CRAZY VISION

**I**T WAS all so obvious. The dream had to become a nightmare, the government's creation a Frankenstein.

Yet it took 33 years for South Africans to witness the events that signalled the death-throes of the Bantustan policy. And to this day the government shows unwillingness to ditch the scheme, clinging to it like a bad habit.

An SADF-trained brigadier from Ciskei was the agent of the latest terror. But if it was not Brigadier Gqozo it would have been some other tinpot dictator who would have done it. Bishos were built-in inevitabilities of the system.

To heap all or most blame on Ronnie Kasrils's charge of the light brigade is, literally, to seek a red herring. A cacophony of criticism has been directed at this flamboyant adventurer. Yet were he a Chinese hot-head in Tiananmen Square, he would have been hailed to Pretoria's rafters and feted by White South Africa.

The blame for the deaths lies squarely on Brigadier Gqozo; the responsibility rests with President De Klerk; and the root cause must be sought in the crazy vision of Bantustans which Dr Hendrik Frensch Verwoerd announced to Parliament in 1959.

In doing so, in the debate on the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Bill, Verwoerd was laying the legislative foundations for what happened to African National Congress protesters in Bisho, in "independent" Ciskei.

**I**T IS ideologically important to note that they were not South African government troops who fired indiscriminately into a crowd of protesters, killing about 28, wounding nearly 200.

No, they were the troops of a puppet state of Pretoria's whose collapsing flagpole at independence summed up its rickety nature.

Bisho drew attention as never before to "Bantustans" set up under apartheid, and still thriving, in a perverse sort of way, to this day.

In various Papa Doc Haitis scattered around South Africa, brutality and disrespect for decent standards have become the order of the day. In this system, tear gas, warnings and orthodox crowd control give way to unheralded volleys of deadly fire.

Because the Bantustans are its creature, unrecognized by the world, the government of F.W. de Klerk must carry ultimate responsibility for what happened — if not specific blame for pulling the trigger. That is a constant, whatever the inquiries find on specifics.

While argument rages over the rights and wrongs of Ciskei troops gunning down scores of civilians who had broken through a line drawn by a magistrate, it is instructive to look back to the ideology that started it all, and to consider what can urgently be done about it.

**D**R VERVOERD was Prime Minister from 1958 to 1966, the years I happened to be in the Press Gallery. When the Nationalist caucus chose him to succeed Hans Strijdom, a prescient Nasionale Pers journalist, Schalk Pienaar, turned to fellow journalists and muttered to us: "This is bad news. His mind is far too tidy."

Within a year of his accession, Verwoerd informed the country and the world of his new vision. It concerned setting up "Bantu" states.

There was much excitement, and confusion. There were henceforth to be not one but about nine or ten South Africas, and very fragmented. There was a helter-skelter map-race, as journalists sought to pinpoint where the boundaries of these states would be. A country whose



# ‘Verwoerd set about racial engineering with a self-assured vigour which chilled his opponents and impressed his friends . . . “Doubt was unknown to him . . . ”’

motto was *Ex Unitate Vires* was about to be ripped apart, not by war but by tidiness.

With formidable attention to detail, Pretoria saw to it that tribal groups would get their Bantustans. The map would look as if black ink had been splashed at random. A Verwoerd lieutenant saw nothing wrong with this — he likened it to the scattered Greek Islands.

Ignoring the post-war reality of a world which had turned its face against racism, Verwoerd set about this racial engineering with a self-assured vigour which chilled his opponents and impressed his friends. A supporter, Professor A.N. Pelzer, wrote: “Doubt was unknown to him.” His confidence won many converts and stilled many critics.

Verwoerd gave the Nationalists what they had been searching for: a “morally defensible” way to carry on the self-same white domination which was stunting blacks and enraging the world. Before Verwoerd’s accession, apartheid was understood as white baasskap over all South Africa, pure-and-simple — a bit awkward for those in power who made much of their devout church-going.

**S**O VERWOERD introduced his Bantustans, arguing that Africans could be “emancipated” in certain areas, as long as it was not in “white South Africa” (which, in reality, was always destined to have a black majority).

That the white minority would hog 87 percent of the country did not worry him at all: history had decreed that, “Here the Bantu occupied certain parts of an uninhabited country and the whites occupied other parts,” he explained. That, of course, would be seriously challenged by experts, such as Monica Wilson, who had concrete evidence of African settlement well down in South Africa long before the whites arrived. But Verwoerd ignored awkward facts.

He was miffed at the British refusal to allow him to incorporate the three

Protectorates into South Africa, which meant into his Bantustan scheme, for that would have made the black-white land ratio a more acceptable-looking 50-50.

Verwoerd pushed ahead with his scheme despite warnings from the Parliamentary opposition that he was creating a Frankenstein which would one day come back to haunt his government. He was accused of over-emphasizing tribalism, robbing blacks of solemnly-granted white Parliamentary representation, refusing to recognize the permanence of urban blacks and in the process denying them political rights, fragmenting the country on a racial basis to its detriment, and so on.

**T**HE BLACK opposition outside Parliament, such as the ANC, saw the Bantustans as a means to divide and rule blacks, with Pretoria buying in stooges who would bolster apartheid through the barrel of a gun. Conflict was inevitable.

Verwoerd wanted at all costs to withhold political rights from blacks living in “white” cities, towns and farms. He thus refused to accept their permanence, envisaging a “changing group” of black workers coming and going from their homelands. He said: “Large numbers of them will come and work and live here for a number of years as family units but will then be interchangeable.”

Just like that; interchangeable.

Some of his lieutenants outdid his eccentricity, dreaming up impossible schemes to whisk rural blacks to and from cities in long-distance bullet trains, just to ensure that they would not live there. In high-density areas, like Hillbrow, there were “locations in the sky”. Urban blacks were officially described as “surplus appendages”.

We were living in cloud cuckoo land.

Verwoerd put the alternatives as he saw them: “We are faced with the choice of either giving the white man his own area and the Bantu his, or having one

state for all in which the Bantu will govern.”

He promised that “if it is within the power of the Bantu, and if the territories in which he now lives can develop to full independence, it will develop in that way.”

Some did, with a vengeance.

**I**NSTEAD of being sent for immediate certification, Dr Verwoerd was hailed as a great man, his schemes blindly followed for years. The Nationalist caucus, which in time was to include F.W. de Klerk (son of staunch apartheid man, “Swaer Jan” de Klerk) uncritically accepted the Bantustan policy. Try as they might Nationalists could find no other scheme that would, in their view, give them a moral defence.

They invested enormous confidence in Verwoerd, even hailing his being (in effect) booted out of the Commonwealth, because of apartheid, as an art of rare statesmanship. This writer saw the wildly cheering crowds, brought to D.F. Malan airport in Cape Town by party formations.

The nightmare from then on is well known. After Verwoerd was stabbed to death in 1966, new premier John Vorster moved ahead swiftly with the Bantustan policy: work continued by P.W. Botha. Impoverished, overpopulated tiny specks of South Africa were given “independence”. For the most part, they were placed in the hands of pro-government lackeys, who distinguished themselves by winning favours from Pretoria and, some, lining hefty pockets. Elections showed their support among the people to be unconvincing.

Military rule became a popular option, with Pretoria currently wringing hands and urging a return to “civilian rule”, as if that would be a cure-all in the crazy world of Bantustans.

**T**HE MOMENTUM of the policy was so powerful that many in the Parliamentary opposition buckled under pressure into uncritical acceptance. Political gymnast Marais Steyn, for one, ended up as Pretoria’s envoy to a Bantustan he had so darkly warned Verwoerd against establishing. So did Horace van Rensburg, no mean gymnast either.

In the Verwoerd years, it took rare courage to stand firm against the tide. With the black opposition leadership silenced, exiled, jailed or dead, only a few whites dared to challenge the ruling



## Bisho incident stresses the urgency to dissolve the Verwoerd empire

philosophy in a fundamental way — people like Laurence Gandar of the Rand Daily Mail; “Notes in the House” writer Tony Delius and cartoonist David Marais of the Cape Times; John Sutherland of the Evening Post; and, in politics, the two Helens (Joseph and Suzman), Alan Paton and Peter Brown; in the church, Archbishops De Blank and Hurley. There were remarkably few, for it was unprotected and cold out there at the anti-Verwoerd barricades. The day will come, surely, when a democratic government will recognize such efforts.

The Bantustan policy created new cottage industries, in re-drawn maps, geography curricula, uniforms, designs for flags, a plethora of tribal institutions.

Far too many took the policy seriously.

**Y**ET THE world community refused to recognize Pretoria’s creations. It held Pretoria responsible for them. In time, the Bantustans were gobbling up to 40 percent of the South African budget.

In the rest of South Africa, subservience and repression were the lot of Africans until, largely with their bare hands, they slowly began to turn the tide.

It was logical that, when the ANC was unbanned, it would target the pro-government statelets in order to consolidate rural support before elections. It seemed to underestimate Ciskei’s guns.

To this day, the De Klerk government, in spite of its disavowal of apartheid, seems reluctant finally to wind up the Bantustan era. It gives the puppet states much aid and psychological support: in return, there is the prospect of a political coalition, along the lines of the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance based heavily on Bantustans.

**T**HERE HAS been a general assumption that, if constitutional talks succeed, the Bantustans as tribal entities must be reincorporated into South Africa. But how and when? De Klerk could do it unilaterally tomorrow by threatening to cut off funds. Yet will he? It will reduce his power base.

The incident in Bisho stresses the urgency to dissolve the Verwoerd empire, once and for all. In the interests of future peace and safety, the sooner the better.

# ARTS FESTIVAL

*An American professor affronted some local academics with his forthright but singularly engaging views, writes HUMPHREY TYLER, theatre critic of the Sunday Tribune, in a look back at this year’s national event in Grahamstown.*

**H**ARDLY ANYBODY seemed to have more fun at the Standard Bank National Arts Festival in Grahamstown this year than Richard Schechner. It’s typical of the man. He says to himself when he gets up in the morning “Okay, get up and have fun. Play is more enjoyable than work.”

He’s not very young, and you wouldn’t call him thin. But you could hardly find anybody more energetic or enthusiastic about the performing arts.

He’s a professor at New York University though it’s difficult to figure out how he finds the time. He does a lot of tripping around the world directing plays in countries as diverse as India, parts of Europe, and China. After Grahamstown he was off to direct some Eskimos somewhere. I think. I can’t find my notes about that. He also writes books.

Schechner has an appealing ability to put a lot of people’s noses out of joint in a remarkably short time. Several local Grahamstown literati and some critics seemed to be particularly miffed with him for a variety of reasons, but mainly, it appeared, because he presumed he could actually teach them something new. Schechner is after all a Guggenheim Fellow, not to mention his numerous other awards and being invited around the world specifically to teach.

He directed a play at the festival called *Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom*. It’s by a black American writer, August Wilson,

although Schechner’s first idea when he was invited to Grahamstown was to present something rather more traditional, *The Merchant of Venice*, in fact. He planned to have six black actors dressed as rabbis play the part of Shylock.

I’m not sure why he settled on August Wilson instead. It was a good choice. None of Wilson’s work has been seen in this country before because of the cultural boycott and, as much as you may have come to hate the word, the play is almost rackingly “relevant” to South Africa. And “instead of the usual bullshit you see in most programmes”, Schechner had a display at the back of the performing area full of notes and drawings about the gestation of his production and various letters to and from the African National Congress’s “cultural desk”.

For the record, Schechner was born a Jew, was later initiated as a Hindu and is now professedly an atheist. He also has a huge sense of humour.

He makes a good teacher. He is extremely knowledgeable and vitally creative and provocative. Invited to talk during the Winter School about “Theatre Now” he digressed somewhat to laud certain sports events — the Olympic Games, say — as “major performing arts”. It’s an interesting analogy but this didn’t please everybody either.

*Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom* was quickly sold out but Schechner was so enthusiastic about it that he continued to invite more people to the show, promising to fit them in somehow “and what’s more, it’ll be free”.

It was certainly the most adventurous festival production I saw. Various locals who were outraged by an off-the-cuff assessment by Schechner that South Africans generally aren’t ready for really avant-garde theatre were among the first to miss the point of the production completely, leaving the hall puzzled and



**Ebullient American Robert Schechner, Professor of Performance Studies at New York University: Turning work into play.**

