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Background to

South Africa's Transkei ploy

As the era of white racist control of southern Africa draws to a rapid close, South Africa is about to pull a rabbit out of its hat that it hopes will reverse the trend.

It's called the "Republic of Transkei." The Transkei, largest and most important of South Africa's bantustans or "African homelands," became an "independent" state Oct. 26.

BLACK MASKS OVER WHITE FACES

The purpose behind the Transkei scheme is to give apartheid South Africa a new lease on life in the face of mounting black rebellion at home and international pressure abroad.

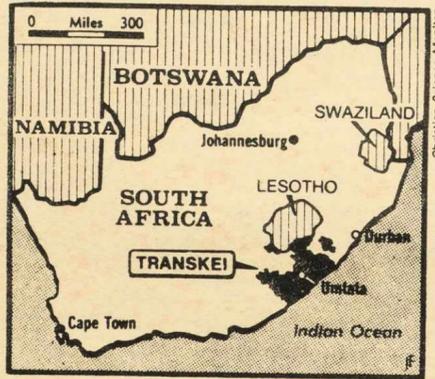
Formerly scheduled for "independence" in the late 1970s or early 1980s, South Africa last year moved the date up to 1976. This action followed the defeat of Portuguese colonialism in Mozambique and Angola when the Pretoria government realized that white racist control of South Africa itself was jeopardized.

The advancement of the date for Transkei's political separation from South Africa also came as international pressure against the South African occupation of Namibia (South West Africa) was mounting drastically. Transkei was to be a kind of model government, designed to defuse such pressure and put an acceptable face on the unending brutalities of apartheid.

DEPENDENT RURAL SLUM

But also as never before, apartheid and the place of South Africa itself in southern Africa are under intense scrutiny as the "Republic of Tanskei" is launched. In effect, the new "republic" will remain an almost wholly dependent rural slum—as it has been since the territory's borders were legally outlined in the 1930s. Few countries are expected to recognize it as an autonomous nation—and those that may do so have thus far avoided admitting their plans. Its government has also been rejected by the Organization of African Unity, the key continental body

whose imprimatur would have lent the "republic" a great degree of legitimacy. It is thus likely that Transkei will remain South Africa's political pariah, since any recognition of it constitutes approval of the apartheid system.



land "capital", that will house the executive and legislative branches of the new government. But pre-formed concrete shells rising above Umtata slums are no substitute for both the popular support and the independent economic and political infrastructure that are so conspicuously absent in Transkei.

Launched in 1936 as one of Pretoria's "native reserves," the Transkei is the largest such area to be "given" to black Africans in South Africa. Located in the eastern Cape Province along the Indian Ocean, it is also the only bantustan to be allotted a coastline, although its only deep-water port, Port St. Johns, is to remain under South African control even after the territory's Oct. 26 "independence."

The government rationale behind the original bantustan legislation in 1936 was that the tribal trust lands designated therein were the traditional "homelands" of Africans. But even at that time, significant numbers of the tribal groups that were assigned to one or another of the reserves had been living in "white areas" as "temporary sojourners"—that is, as either recruited or independent migrant workers—for generations. Many thousands of those workers had long since abandoned the tribal designations, the new "native reserve" system sought to revive and prolong. And in many instances they had never even visited their "homeland," having only a vague notion of its geographic location.

A similar situation prevails today, on the eve of Transkeian independence—when some 1.35 million Xhosa, officially take part of Tanskei's population of 3 million, live in "white areas", in townships such as Soweto and Alexandria. Under recent South African legislation, acceded to by the Transkeian "parliament" and its "head of state," Chief Kaiser Matanzima, these workers are being denied South

African citizenship and are being told that they are hence forth citizens of the new "republic".

Under the terms of the 1936 legislation, the areas set aside for bantustan settlement were never meant to be the outline of future "independent" states. They were intended, rather, as the small areas—13% of the country's available land for almost 90% of its population—where black South Africans would be herded for permanent settlement under the direct rule of the various commissions, authorities and state-owned corporations set up by Pretoria to rule them.

During the period following this legislation, bantustan borders changed often. At times this was due to a demand by white farmers in the area of a bantustan for a part of the

tional Court of Justice decision against South Africa. The case brought in 1960 by the two African countries was a milestone on the political and diplomatic front.

There was also growing domestic opposition against apartheid by the black victims of that system inside South Africa itself. Since the late 1950s, there had been sporadic demonstrations, stoning of whites and the symbols of white administration inside the bantustans, particularly in Transkei. In eastern Pondoland, a section of Transkeian territory, there was significant opposition to increased taxation, government-sponsored soil-conservation programs and unpopular tribal chiefs. Earlier, there had been opposition to the principal collaborator among the chiefs appointed within the Transkei, Chief Matanzima. And in the white areas, the Sharpeville massacre of 1960 was the most important manifestation of this wave of resistance.

SEPARATE STATES

Accordingly, the apartheid policy elaborated under Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd in the 1950s underwent significant change in the early 1960s. In April 1961, Verwoerd announced that "in light of the pressure being exerted on South Africa," bantustans would be developed in separate states, even to the point of independence. The Transkei Territorial Authority immediately responded with

Some 1.8 million "superfluous Bantus" have been removed to bantustans that have been overcrowded for over twenty years.

land designated as "native reserve". This is one cause of the fragmentation of most bantustan areas today. At other times, land from one bantustan would be taken and given to another, with the attendant population removals following. This practice served to create and exaggerate the tribal antagonisms and ethnic enmity on which Pretoria's "divide-and-rule" strategy toward Africans is built.

However, two significant developments that occurred in succeeding decades forced Pretoria eventually to redesign its original "native areas" policy.

One was the rapid growth of South African industry, a growth that was accompanied by a government-sponsored

a request to be made a "whole self-governing state."

In Tanskei, Verwoerd and the Nationalist government found a perfect model for the new policy. Its claimed population could be said to reside on a continuous piece of land—while the largest population group, the Zulus, had been 'given' some 144 fragments of unconnected land, precisely because they were the largest group.

With a sizable population, Transkei's limited independence and projected sovereignty would calm the Afrikaaner attacks against the economic patterns then in full bloom in South Africa. Henceforth, the government could claim to be taking steps toward the fulfillment of the goals of Afrikaaner apartheid. Granting semi-independence to Transkei was also designed to stop the growing resistance movement among bantustan-residing blacks—which was strongest, at that point, in Transkei.

Another reason for Pretoria's choice lay in Chief Matanzima himself. Matanzima had collaborated with the white government since the 1950s—even in the face of violent opposition to his power from 1957 on. Matanzima was ready and willing to accept the handouts of semi-autonomy from Pretoria, while, to this date, only one other bantustan, Boputhatswana, has accepted even in principle, the concept of independent bantustan states. Most other bantustan leaders, even though they were installed by Pretoria, have rejected "bantustanization" in favor of a unified South Africa.

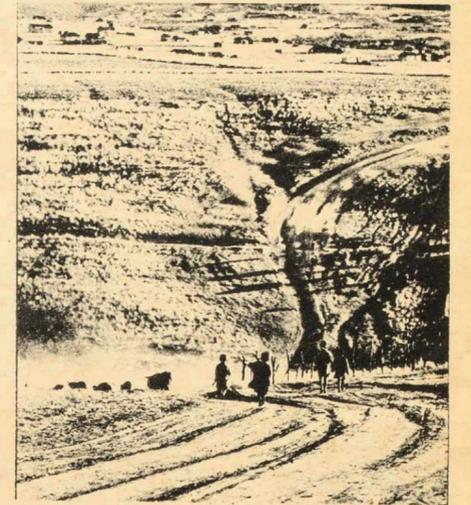
Matanzima was elected as chief of the Transkei in 1963, in an election run by the Bantu Authorities. Pretoria backed his campaign heavily and openly, while harassing the few opposition candidates that ran against him.

In the years since Pretoria's policy shift toward "independent" Black bantustan states was set in motion, Matanzima has proven a willing servant to the white government. Repression, petty apartheid, arrests and all the other commonplaces of South African life continue in Transkei today as they do in South Africa proper.

But Matanzima's chief attraction for Pretoria has likely resided in his willingness to accept political "independence" for a territory that will remain so totally

black economies in Transkei and other bantustans, however, statistics show that the overwhelming proportion of financial assistance funneled through the BIC went to white-owned industries that took advantage of bantustan labor supplies. In later years, government policy has been to shift some of this burden for bantustan "development" to the private sector.

Now under the auspices of the Transkei Development Corporation in Umtata, there is little to suggest that the "republic" will differ from BICs in anything but the address



Distant view of a Zulu bantustan, South Africa.

of its administration. A series of recent ads in numerous U.S. newspapers are indicative, noting the territory's "bright economic prospects" and its "attractive investment incentives." Through this policy, the majority of Transkeian workers will thus remain as migrants to "white areas" while industrial development in the territory will closely resemble the border industries developed in past decades—capital intensive enterprises that contribute little to the development of a local economy.

It is likely that the majority of workers outside Transkei will remain in white-owned mining industries, where they are now, and the majority of Transkei residents will remain, as they are now, on a primitive level of subsistence agriculture, or unemployed. The aim of the present development policy, according to a New York Times report from Port St. Johns Oct. 13, "is to create a black entrepreneurial class capable of running an economy that has been dominated by whites." In other words, there will be no significant change in the present structure or distribution processes of the former economy as it was administered from Pretoria—just some black masks over white faces.

The domestic response to these prospects has been almost universal rejection. An Oct. 16 rally in Johannesburg sponsored by the government to celebrate Transkei's impending "independence" resulted in a violent confrontation with South Africa riot police. Several weeks ago, Chief Matanzima called for a referendum in the Black townships surrounding white South African cities designed to demonstrate his "mandate" as chief of state in the coming "republic". A report in the October 1 London Financial Times tells the story: Based on a survey of polling booths in Soweto, where there is a heavy concentration of Xhosa-speaking people, fewer than five people voted at each of the

Editorial

Support South African boycott

Black leaders in Southern Africa have called for a boycott of South African products. They feel that continued investment in South Africa by multinational companies can only serve to bolster the present racist government. This request is a response to a system of institutionalized discrimination in which Blacks have been deprived of their civil and political liberties.

The boycott was called partially to pressure foreign investors and the South African government but more importantly it draws attention to the racism inherent in the South African system.

People who argue against boycotts contend that their purpose is usually self-defeating; that is the people one intends to aid are those who suffer most as the result of such action. This argument neatly avoids the main issue.

The issue at stake is whether or not one sees a person's problems as the individual's problems. "That's his problem." "It's not my concern." "I can't help them." This does not sound as bad as "Let the bastard suffer" or "I don't give a damn about them", but the effects are certainly the same; a person or a 'weak' group has to struggle against injustice without your help. And naturally the fewer people fighting against injustice the less likely it will be overcome. The trite "If you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem" does have some truth.

The problems of Californian grape pickers or South African blacks are not just "their problems". They are ours as well. Why? Because often we indirectly and sometimes directly cause them. Our inaction also helps perpetuate their exploitation.

Our responsibility as fellow humans is to support justified boycotts. While it may ring of jargon it is our duty to show solidarity with oppressed people. We hope this concern transcends bleeding-heart liberalism to a genuine rational decision based not only on empathy but on a consciousness that oppression can only be overcome when people unite to oppose it.

We don't argue that one should boycott all those who are guilty of racism, sexism, exploitation and oppression. The list would be too long and would therefore serve only those with masochistic tendencies.

But not buying Outspan oranges or South African wines is a different matter and people do have alternatives to these products.

If a boycott is justified, on the grounds of racism, sexism, exploitation, oppression or reasons of this nature, then one should support it.

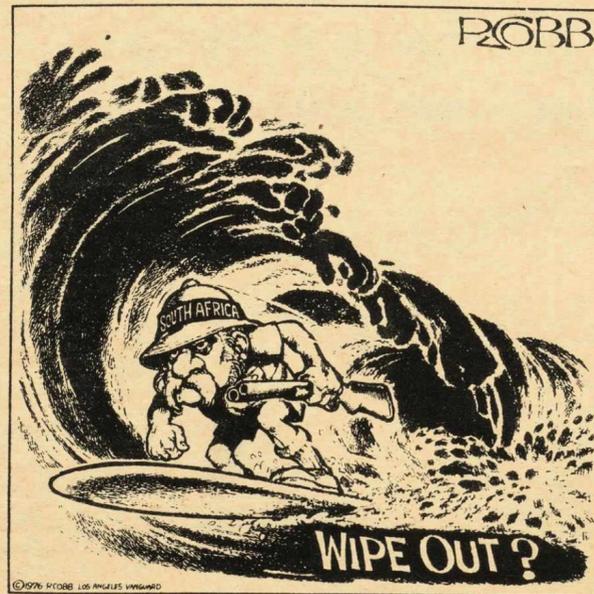
To argue that one hurts the people who are exploited or oppressed, is to lend support to the status quo, as one Black leader commented "Who cares about unemployment when you are a slave".

Black leaders in Southern Africa do not want multinational companies exploiting their cheap labour. Nor do they want them extracting the rich resources from their countries without receiving benefits. As a result they have called for pressure to be placed on foreign companies.

What has this to do with Canada? Much more than that it should. Canadian multinationals and banks are very involved in Southern Africa.

During the past year Canada's trade with South Africa increased despite our government's continued denouncement of the racist system. Our imports rose by 35% and our exports rose by 65%. This duplicity hurts more than our international reputation. It helps perpetuate a system where blacks cannot vote, where 80% of them live below the poverty line and where the government sees them only as a "cheap labour supply."

While an individual's boycott may seem to be insignificant, it is more than a protest against our government's two-faced policies. Collectively we have an impact



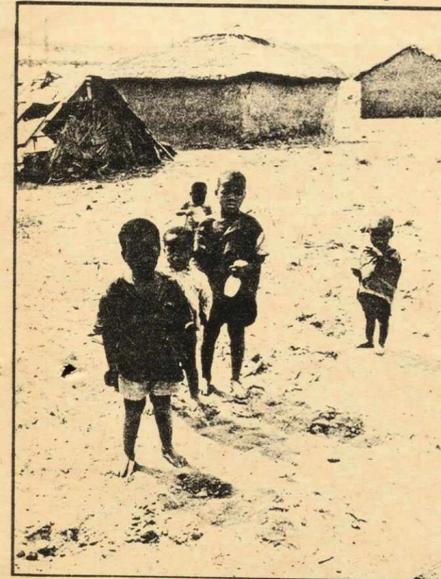
on the South African system. If Canadian multi-nationals and banks withdrew from South Africa it would focus world pressure to change the system of oppression and exploitation.

But the companies won't withdraw without considerable pressure from home, for the simple reason that they benefit from cheap labour; they make super profits. That is why strong pressure here, as well as the refusal to purchase products from an inhumane society, is absolutely necessary.

Are the problems of the blacks in South Africa just personal problems? No, they are not, because we help maintain the system; we must fight to destroy it.

We feel a moral obligation both to boycott South African products and to pressure our government and corporations so they will discontinue support of South Africa: a country where the whites have the highest standard of living in the world and on a bantustan one black child out of three dies before the age of five.

Can we afford not to?



Children on the streets in Kwa-Zulu, a homeland in Northern Natal, South Africa.

decentralization policy that encouraged industrial investment on the rims of bantustan settlements. Concurrent with the development of these border industries, South African whites began to recognize that continuing rates of growth and profit were predicated on the permanent availability of cheap African labor.

Afrikaaner Nationalists, however, were ideologically opposed to any permanent black presence in "white areas." Their world view is dominated by their belief in the total separation of races and the preservation of white supremacy. They believe, as one Afrikaaner churchman argued in 1944, "that it is the Christian duty of the whites to act as guardians of the nonwhite races until such time as they reach the stage of being able to manage their own affairs." This meant "racial separation and the guardianship of whites over the natives."

The second development that led to an eventual change in bantustan policy occurred in the late 1950s and early 1960s. During that period, South Africa was faced with an unprecedented level of international and domestic opposition to apartheid. Internationally, Liberia and Ethiopia had mounted a case at the International Court of Justice against South Africa's continuing presence in Namibia. This pressure culminated in the 1966 resolution by the UN that declared that occupation illegal, and in the 1971 Interna-

Transkei: "congested, denuded, overstocked, eroded and, for the most part, in deplorable condition."

--Native Affairs Commission (1938)

dependent on South Africa and its traditional allies in the West for whatever economic development takes place there. The chief has already asked the U.S. for aid in establishing the territory's economy.

Left to itself, the Transkei is incapable of supporting even the fraction of the claimed population that resides there—some 1.65 million Africans. Starvation, malnutrition, broken homes and disease are rampant, according to recent observers. The government-sponsored Native Affairs Commission, in a 1937-38 report, was even then describing the Transkei's land as "congested, denuded, overstocked eroded and, for the most part, in deplorable condition." Government policy since that time has been to concentrate bantustan populations in order to increase their labor capacity. Between 1960 and 1970 alone, some 1.8 million "superfluous Bantu"—the families of migrant workers living in "white areas"—have been removed to bantustans that were termed overcrowded over 20 years earlier.

In the 1950s and 1960s, Pretoria had arranged for industrial development in or near the bantustans through a government-owned corporation known as the Bantu Investment Corporation (BIC). Rather than develop indigenous

polling places surveyed. The report cited one returning officer who said four people had voted in the 13 hours he had manned a booth.

But there is an additional international aspect that is pressuring South Africa to create an "independent" Transkei. The U.S. has been anxious to secure a firm military foothold in southern Africa for some time, but a base on South African soil would run counter to the "new" African policy that U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger has been advertising among black African leaders.

Accordingly, there are signs that the Pentagon is preparing to install a naval base in Port St. Johns in order to increase its military capabilities in the Indian Ocean. Such a measure would not be possible without an "independent" Transkei in which to set it up.

This proposal was explicitly stated in the U.S. Army's July issue of Military Review, a magazine considered by most observers to reflect Defense Department views. Predicting that arms embargoes—such as they are—against South Africa will continue, the article's author, Maj. Wesley Groesback, notes that Transkei, once independent, would be likely to welcome a U.S. naval presence.