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THE BENEFICIARIES OF TRANSKEIAN

[independence]

BY

ROGER J. SOUTHALL

UNIVERSITY OF
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FRANK BAFFOE

SEMINAR COORDINATOR

ECONOMICS DEPARTMENT

In a recent article, Heribert Adam argued that the 'prevalent view of South Africa combines conceptual errors with false methodological emphasis and, often, wishful thinking', and that the 'popular perspective represents a gross over-simplification of a far more complex situation.'¹ The analysis to which he was objecting views South Africa as an outdated colonial society, in which white settlers enforce a racially defined domination upon an exploited mass of the black population, which is reduced to serving primarily as a source of cheap labour for white capital by an immense battery of totalitarian controls. Linked to this view - and now fuelled by the widespread riots during mid-1976 throughout African urban areas - is the assumption that substantive political change will necessarily come about by violent revolution, motivated by the growing determination of a burgeoning black population to force a redistribution of power and wealth. However, as Adam further pointed out, analysis of South Africa purely in terms of racial conflict leaves important questions unanswered, for there is need to explore how the differential distribution of wealth and resources - political and economic-originated, and how they are maintained.

As an alternative to the model of racial polarisation, Adam argues that a focus on changing interests in relation to land, labour, and

1. Heribert Adam, 'Conquest and Conflict in South Africa,' in *The Journal of Modern African Studies* (Cambridge), XIII, 4, December 1975, p. 621.

capital will reveal 'black and white as non-monolithic groups, sometimes in fluid alliances across the ethnic lines against contenders within their own colour groups', with the consequence that white power is likely to be increasingly deracialised. Rather than the 'revolutionary defeat and annihilation (of the entrenched white African tribe) in an all-out confrontation, evolutionary change and mutual accommodation in a new class society, instead of an openly racist one, would seem likely.¹ Thus the ruling groups now find it expedient to collaborate with a domestic black bourgeoisie in a process of pragmatic accommodation which leaves white power essentially intact.

The deracialisation of which Adam speaks, however, refers not so much to the incorporation of black élites into the social and political processes of the Republic - although the relaxation of various petty apartheid measures to allow racial mixing in hotels, restaurants, and the like may promote a superficial synthesis-but primarily to the devolution of limited rights to the so-called 'Bantustans'. These areas, based territorially on the 1936 Lands and Trust Act (which set aside 13.7 per cent of the country for Native Reserves),² are ideologically justified in apartheid theory as the 'Homelands' of the various ethnic groups or 'nationalities' into which the law divides the African population. They have been provided with the paraphernalia of political authority, including chief ministers, cabinets, assemblies, and civil services, and are viewed as being at different levels of 'constitutional development.'

1. Ibid. pp. 622 and 640.

2. The 1936 Act was never intended at the time to serve as a basis for the fragmentation of the country into a number of separate states, but the Government has been resolute in taking it as the territorial basis for 'separate development'. However, lands delineated as Native Reserves but never allocated under the 1936 proposals are now being distributed; and because the majority of Homelands consist of many land fragments, the Government is engaging in a process of 'consolidation', reducing the number of pieces of each Homeland, and removing blacks from the white areas. For the 'final' consolidation plans, see the Rand Daily Mail (Johannesburg), 28 July 1975; and for a survey of the resettlement of the population, see Barbara Rogers, *Divide and Rule: South Africa's Bantustans* (London, 1976).

This consists of a progression from ' self-government' - involving originally the exercise of very limited powers by the Homeland Governments over spheres such as internal finance, health, and roads and works-to ' independence', which is defined as the possession of sovereign rights over all spheres previously controlled from Pretoria. In such a way, it is argued, the various nationalities can be left free to pursue their own aspirations, and racial conflict in South Africa will be replaced by bargaining and compromise between a set of economically interdependent, though politically distinct, nation-states.¹

Problems abound concerning this apartheid scenario,² especially since the designated Homelands do not match up to the criteria of potential states, and manifestly demonstrate no capacity to become economically viable in the future. Indeed, various factors - notable an increasing rural population, little industrial investment, and a greater outflow of migrant labour-indicate a growing dependence on the white-dominated economy. In addition, the suppression of movements of African solidarity in the towns, and a manifest lack of interest by urban blacks in the affairs of the Bantustans, have suggested to many that the latter are irrelevant to the mainstream of political developments in South Africa. However, that this may be an example of what Adam characterises as 'wishful thinking' is suggested by the progression of the Transkei to 'independence' in October 1976.

1. For a sophisticated sociological rationalisation of 'separate development', see N.J. Rhodie and H.J. Venter, *Apartheid: a socio-historical exposition of the origin and development of the apartheid idea* (Amsterdam, 1960).

2. Merle Lipton, ' Independent Bantustans', *International Affairs* (London), 48, 1, January 1972, pp. 1 - 19.

It is argued here that the Homelands, however inadequate they may be in satisfying the aspirations of the broad mass of blacks, may be assuming a momentum and dynamism of their own which could serve to stabilise and perpetuate white domination in South Africa. To support this argument, it is intended to delineate the various social groups who may be viewed as benefiting from Transkeian 'independence.'

THE BENEFICIARIES OF INDEPENDENCE.

Perhaps the most commonly-held view of the Homeland leaders is that they are 'stooges' who are willing to implement a policy of divide-and-rule. There is no dispute here that the strategy of separate development is deliberately designed to exploit ethnic divisions within the black majority in South Africa, and thereby to weaken resistance to white rule. However, too great an emphasis on the racial factor diverts attention away from the support bases which certain Homeland leaders may possess amongst the African population. Too often, I would argue, they are dismissed as merely white-appointed puppets, with no support except from a narrow clique of chiefs. However, this simplistic view ignores various social groups that are emerging within the Homelands, and which because of their favourable access to land, capital, and institutional sources of wealth (salaries, allowances, and so on), lend their backing to Homeland leaders. Their interests cut across racial boundaries, and they are becoming increasingly tied up with 'white' capital (public and private).

Again, perhaps too much analysis of the impact and rôle of Homeland leaders concentrates on the individuals themselves, and the extent to which they can express dissent and extract concessions

from within the framework of separate development. But behind any leader are various social forces which influence, even if they do not determine, his policies. By focusing on the emergent groups in the Transkei which have developed within the structure of Homeland institutions, it is possible to delineate the support base which Matanzima represents, and to identify the beneficiaries of independence.

The T.N.I.P. Government, I would argue, is representative of the interests of a considerable number of chiefs, politicians, and bureaucrats, and a group of petty traders and businessmen. These two broad elements form a growing class which is dependent upon the material and political support of Pretoria and, increasingly, a number of South African and international firms. The principal beneficiaries of independence may, therefore, be taken to consist of the Transkeian bourgeoisie, international capital and, ultimately, the South African Government.

C O N C L U S I O N .

This attempt to identify the beneficiaries of Transkeian independence starts from the assumption that it is an over-simplification to argue that the Homelands are poli^{ti}cally irrelevant to the future of South Africa. Despite the fact that Homeland leaders do not have the support of the mass of their populations, they are representative of new social groups which have emerged within the protective structures of separate development. Here a number of Africans are finding opportunities of wealth, influence, and-in their own terms-prestige, which are available to them nowhere else in the Republic, and they are consequently prepared to accept the limited advantages that Homeland development can offer them. These groups do not actively support apartheid in its narrowly racially discriminative sense, but they are prepared to accept the marginal gains offered as an alternative to the costs of struggle for a more meaningful liberation. It is only to be expected, therefore, that their political orientation will be broadly conservative, and that their commitment will be to evolutionary and peaceful change within South Africa.

A black bourgeoisie has been identified in this study as the domestic beneficiary of Transkeian independence. Its primary characteristic is that it is dependent on the state for its source of wealth, whether that be drawn in the form of salary or entrepreneurial profit. As such, the Transkeian bourgeoisie is not dissimilar from the beneficiaries of independence in African states to the North. But, whereas in other

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1. See the enthusiastic exegesis about investment prospects by Richard Blausten, 'Foreign Investment in the Black Homelands of South Africa', in *African Affairs* (London), 75, 299, April 1976, pp. 208-23.

states which had a significant settler presence, the African bourgeoisie has not been willing to share political power with the local whites, in the Transkei the politicians and civil servants have shown themselves prepared to accept a fragmented polity, leaving the structure of white domination in the core area unchallenged. It should be noted, however, that the African bourgeoisie in South Africa in its entirety is not so prepared to compromise with the status quo, and black business-men in the urban areas of the Republic, and many of those employed by large firms, continue to lend their support to the overthrow of white political supremacy.

Increasingly, however, as white investment is attracted to the Transkei, a fraction of the bourgeoisie may be drawn into a direct relationship-as a managerial salariat - with South African and international capital. But because the Transkei is an underdeveloped area in relation to the South African economy,¹ white capital can only be attracted by the granting of concessions, and by the maintenance of a low price of labour. To the extent, therefore, that the Transkeian bourgeoisie becomes absorbed into working for white firms, it may serve to widen the gap between itself and a locally based proletariat, for which investment in the Homeland will increasingly provide an urban and permanent base. But such a scenario points to a developing class conflict between the different black groups, and implies the need for the bourgeoisie to strengthen its hold over the available political resources in the Transkei: namely, the organisation of the ruling party, the structure of the chieftaincy, and the apparatus of the state.

1. Limitations of space have prevented an analysis here of the rôle which the Transkei plays in subsidising the white economy of South Africa, whilst simultaneously being the recipient of budgetary and development subsidies from the Pretoria Government. I have attempted to deal with these aspects in 'Independence for the Transkei: mystification and diversion in the model Bantustan', in John Sciler (ed.), Southern Africa Since the Portuguese Coup, forthcoming.

The process of Homeland development as outlined above depicts a class alliance between privileged social groups in the Transkei and white South Africans. At the present time, this alliance is racially compartmentalised, in the sense that the Transkei is set aside as the Homeland of the majority of the Xhosa-speaking people, and is-in apartheid terms- a distinct geo-political entity from the Republic of South Africa. Furthermore, in so far as the Transkei is a 'model' for the other Homelands, a ring of other satellite, quasi-independent states can be expected to emerge which, because of the privileged nature of their élites, will be committed to opposing revolutionary change. To the extent that these privileged groups are prepared to accommodate themselves pragmatically to white political and economic domination, they may expect to receive a 'pay off' in the form of Republican subsidies for their states, none of whose economies can be expected to sustain their populations, even at the subsistence level, from their own underdeveloped resources. In addition, they may expect to benefit from a process of deracialisation, because certain social facilities, including restaurants, hotels, resorts, and hospitals will be opened to blacks who can afford to pay.

Given the preceding outline, it would appear that if the Republic can successfully implement its policy of Homeland development, then the white colour groups as represented by the present South African Government will also be a beneficiary of the independence of the Transkei- and, later, other Homelands. The original conception of apartheid may have been designed to promote ethnic rivalry between disparate black groups, but the actual implementation of this policy will increasingly foster class divisions, and these- if effectively exploited -may extend the future of white supremacy in the sub-continent.

Finally, it should be remembered that the preference of the West is for gradual change in South Africa, sufficient to stave off a violent revolution which would be contrary to its political, economic, and strategic interests. If, therefore, a neo-colonial Homeland 'solution' to the Southern African situation has a chance of success, it is likely to receive western backing.

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