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BANTUSTANS

The Black Sash  Die Swart Serp

ON the 26th October South Africa was torn apart and on that day 3 300 000 South Africans suddenly became foreigners. Three pieces of land were excised from the Republic to become foreign soil and the people who are said to belong there have had their rightful claim to a just share of South Africa's land, wealth and production taken away from them. Over one million of these people do not even live in Transkei and are permanently settled in other parts of the South African Republic. On 26th October they ceased to be citizens of South Africa in terms of the Status of the Transkei Act. None of them any longer enjoy even the limited rights they used to have as citizens of South Africa but are to be accorded "privileges" as foreign guest workers.

In the common area of the Republic there has been an overwhelming rejection of citizenship of Transkei by the Xhosa and Sotho speaking people who are affected. On election day in September seven polling booths were set up in Soweto. At one of these ten people voted and the other six reported a maximum of five votes cast. Urban Black people have made it clear that they will have nothing whatsoever to do with separate development.

Even in Transkei it is not at all clear whether the people who live there are in favour of independence. Chief Kaiser Matanzima refused to hold a referendum on the independence issue and, prior to the September elections, the entire leadership of the opposition Democratic Party was detained in prison without trial by his Government. There has therefore been no free election. The number of voters participating in Transkei elections decreased from 601 204 in 1963 to 323 092 in 1973 and increased only slightly to 354 489 in 1967. The leaders of the 60 000 Sotho-speaking people who live in the new Republic have claimed that they are discriminated against by the Xhosa authorities and have stated that they did not wish to be included in an independent Transkei.

The enormity of what has been done is difficult to assimilate. In exchange for their rightful heritage millions of South Africa's people have been given citizenship of a small country which will remain almost entirely economically dependent upon the Republic, a country where 32 per cent of the citizens live permanently outside her borders and another 11 per cent have to move outside to find employment on a migrant basis.

No doubt they will eventually carry passports instead of reference books but these passports will still have to be stamped with permits to work and reside in South Africa and will not be much use for wide travel as other countries will not recognise them. It is also reasonable to assume that the fingerprints and personal particulars of Transkeian citizens will continue to be stored in the Bantu Central Reference Bureau's Pretoria computer because the South African Government will continue to impose controls on their residence in and entry into South Africa.

No doubt, Transkei citizens will be given "privileges" in South Africa's cities, privileges such as being jumped to the top of waiting lists for houses and easier access to contracts of employment. These things are necessary to the attempt to persuade the leaders of other homelands to ask "voluntarily" for independence in their turn. But it is also likely that, in the longer term, the South African Government will maintain that it is under no obligation to build houses and to provide jobs for foreigners.

The Republic of Transkei is isolated from the international community and her independence is unrecognised. No doubt Mr Vorster and his Government will continue to claim that they have led this new state to a peaceful and negotiated freedom but there is also no doubt that Transkei independence will be challenged internally and externally when the future change to majority rule in South Africa is accomplished — as it inevitably will be.

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