

The destabilisation of Moutse

After decades of peaceful and relatively prosperous co-existence amongst people of different ethnic groups, an area in the north eastern Transvaal called Moutse has become a place where beatings and bloodshed are the order of the day. Details of this have appeared frequently in the Press this year. And it is all thanks to the South African government with its apartheid ideology which according to a Moutse resident, is 'alive and kicking in Moutse'.

Combining Trac press releases and public addresses given by Aninka Claassens and residents of Moutse, GLENDA WEBSTER reports on this first Government atrocity of 1986.

The Government's true intention for the country can be seen quite clearly in its attitude to the 120 000 residents of Moutse. In spite of all it may say to convince overseas creditors, bankers and others about how things are going to change, how they actually are being *entrenched* is very cruelly obvious in Moutse.

On January 1 1986 the South African Government went ahead with the incorporation of Moutse's 66 000 hectares into the KwaNdebele homeland. This took place in spite of five years of protest, petition and pleading from the people of Moutse. It is a move which, moreover, flies in the face of the Government's own stated policy of separate development on ethnic lines. For the residents of Moutse are Sotho, and with their inclusion into KwaNdebele that homeland's Ndebele group will become a minority.

Thus, on January 1, 120 000 black people were extricated from the map of 'white' South Africa simply by moving the boundary around them. This means that the Moutse area will become 'independent' along with the KwaNdebele homeland of which it is now part, on December 4 1986.

And this is the bone of contention. For against the will of its residents, the area of Moutse has been granted as a reward to the KwaNdebele homeland for its willingness to take independence, and the consequences of that are these:

Firstly, the people of Moutse will lose their South African citizenship. This is the purpose of the government's homeland policy — to carve up the black population into many small units separate from white South Africa which will be left unthreatened by a black majority to control the bulk of the country's wealth, its army, its police and other matters considered to be 'general' affairs. While Mr PW Botha did suggest on September 11 1985 that he was considering restoring common citizenship to all, nothing has happened so far. In the meantime a conversation reported between Mr Botha and Dr van Zyl Slabbert in the *The Star* (Saturday February 15), stated that Mr Botha said 'The independent homelands will stay. We'll sort them (urban black people) out with decentralisation . . . I will not give up self-determina-

tion for whites — own schools, own residential areas, and own way of life.'

Secondly, the people of Moutse feel that their area has been selected to bolster up a particularly unviable, unsuitable homeland. So the South African government is reducing its own costs at the expense of defenceless, disenfranchised people. Moutse has been selected, the people say, as the 'soft option' when white farmers from another area nearby refused to give up their land to give KwaNdebele some viable territory. KwaNdebele is probably the poorest homeland. It has no hospital. Some of its Ministers needed literacy classes only a few years ago. There are very few job opportunities. Many of its residents commute daily to jobs in white South Africa, some rising as early as 2 am and returning late at night.

Moutse on the other hand has tarred roads, 58 schools, a hospital, established businesses and farms. These will now fall under the administration of KwaNdebele and for this the residents of Moutse, who claim to have built up this wealth after centuries of stable living in the area, will not be compensated.

Thirdly, the residents of Moutse have reason to fear the rule of the KwaNdebele administration which they believe to be corrupt and tyrannical. Business licences which are allocated by the KwaNdebele administration are arbitrarily awarded or withdrawn. Moutse residents fear victimisation because they have been opposed to incorporation. 'Friends of Skosana (the Chief Minister of KwaNdebele) will be granted the only licences to trade' said one Moutse resident.

Furthermore, the residents of Moutse fear that once the area becomes independent they will be forcefully re-



Victims of the vigilante attack on Moutse

photo Gill de Vlieg

moved. They have reason to believe their land is wanted for industrial development. Their fears are not unfounded. In February, on the second anniversary of the forced removal of the people of Mogopa in the western Transvaal, the Government moved into the village of Uitvlugt in Moutse and removed some of its residents to Immerpan (a year before, also in February Minister Gerrit Viljoen had said that forced removals were being suspended).

For various cultural reasons the people of Moutse fear the KwaNdebele administration. So far the KwaNdebele administration has shown itself to be culturally intolerant and aggressive towards others. One resident of Moutse claimed that women have been beaten for wearing slacks, Christian people are forced by the imposition of a R600 penalty, to participate in ceremonies for Ndebele ancestors. Moutse residents who are Sotho-speaking fear that even their language will disappear under the Ndebele administration.

Finally, and by no means least, the people of Moutse fear the tyranny of the KwaNdebele leaders and their newly-established vigilante guards, the MBHOKOTO. So far Mr Skosana and his Mbhokoto have a fearful track record. On January 1 400 Moutse men were abducted, taken to a hall in KwaNdebele (the infamous Siyabuswa hall) and beaten. Mr Skosana was there to assist in the beatings as a result of which several people died. In the conflict so far over 40 people have been killed and hundreds have been imprisoned and arrested as elsewhere in South Africa, on charges of public violence.

According to signed statements collected by members of the Black Sash the South African police, if not the men themselves, then other white men using SAP vehicles, are allegedly assisting in terrorising the residents of Moutse who resist incorporation.

Apart from the tyranny of the Mbhokoto and collusion at some level with the SAP, the South African government uses its police force to impose its will on the people of Moutse. South African police have allegedly been involved in numerous shootings in which people have been killed. Houses have been doused with petrol and set alight by white men who Moutse residents claim are members of the South African Police Force.

The whole exercise of the Moutse incorporation has been a tragic disaster. It has furthermore alienated the Government from Dr Phatudi, the Chief Minister of Lebowa, a homeland adjacent to Moutse. It has united the Indian, coloured and white opposition in the Tricameral parliament against the Nationalist Government. It has brought to light the Government's true intention for the future of South Africa.

It remains to be seen if Mr Chris Heunis, Minister of Planning and Constitutional Development has the integrity to back down and cancel the incorporation, if not the independence of KwaNdebele itself. According to Miss Claassens it would not be an unprecedented move. In 1985, for instance, the Driefontein community were granted a reprieve (see *Sash* November 1985) and the small community of Makgatho in the northern Transvaal were also reprieved.

COSATU — a recent addition to the South African political arena

1985 was an auspicious year for the trade union movement in South Africa. After four years of planning and discussion, several trade union organisations came together under one umbrella to unite some 500 000 workers in the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu). Its aim: to solidify the working class into a united front against the State and the bosses to achieve economic and political justice in South Africa.

At its helm is its president, Mr ELIJAH BARAYI, a man from Cradock. For us in *Sash*, Cradock is a place of promising political leaders, for Matthew Goniwe, Fort Calata and others came from Cradock too.

They were school teachers working within civic organisations but motivated by the same aims.

With the help of Mrs SHEENA DUNCAN, *Sash* tried to find out more about the likely impact of this new protagonist in the political arena.

In spite of a gruelling start to the year in which an unprecedented 23 000 migrant mine workers were dismissed, Mr Barayi graciously made the time to answer our questions.

Mrs Duncan: Economists forecast that by the year 2 000 41% of South Africa's population will be unable to find a job in the formal sector. This means that people will depend on the right to operate freely in the informal sector and in small scale agriculture if they are to survive and live full and creative lives.

Operating in the informal sector implies free enterprise. How does Cosatu visualise the future political and economic organisation of South African society where organised labour will be politically predominant but

where a large percentage of people will not be 'workers'?

Mr Barayi: We want a society where the workers will play a leading role. This does not mean that we forget the unemployed, the aged and the youth. To build a new society we need to destroy those structures and relations which are today the source of the oppressive conditions. Obviously, the informal sector and small scale agriculture, in so far as they do not perpetuate conditions of exploitation, will be allowed to exist. But, exactly how



Elijah Barayi

photo: City Press