

THE TRANSKEI: The World's First All Black State*

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Even though the Republic of South Africa has the continent's largest white population group, in their own country whites are outnumbered by their black countrymen by about four to one, or 12,465,000 versus 3,481,000. So far South Africa's whites maintain a strong minority government which enforces strictest segregation or apartheid in the conventional sense. However, in the face of mounting world hostility, the government of the Republic is presently engaged in a long range program of population redistribution. The hoped for end result is to be a multiracial commonwealth with 406,734 square miles or 86.3% of the total area as "white land" and 65,625 square miles or 13.7% as the black people's domain which is to enjoy continued assistance from the white mother government.

While admitting that this is an act of white self-preservation, South African officials also insist that no country on earth has offered more to the black man. They wish to transmit the conviction that theirs is the only realistic road to racial peace.

History, written without the benefit of Negro documentation, sets the lines of demarcation. It states that white settlers, when trekking inland from their base in Capetown (Kaaapstad), some two centuries ago, found the South African Veld emptied by savage tribal warfare. They encountered massed Negro populations, the Bantu, only when they reached the eastern and northern rim of the Veld (see Figure 1).

There was plenty of land for all and the white man preferred the cool uplands of the Veld for himself and his herds, while the Bantu were settled in the hotter stream valleys which form a horseshoe-like frame around the Veld. In any case these valleys remained the "homelands" of the Bantu and they are now to be transformed into at least eight self-governing "Bantustans".

The 40% of South Africa's black people who presently live in these Bantustans maintained their tribal, or to be more specific, 260 tribal organizations. Therefore, says official South Africa, several Bantustans are needed to preserve the heritage of at least the main Bantu subgroups. The interrelated problems now being tackled by the mother government in the capital Pretoria include bringing the Bantustans into the twentieth century without abandoning their tribal culture, tripling the ratio of people per square mile, and creating a political and economic atmosphere so inviting that the majority of the Bantu on the outside, who are mainly urbanized and generations removed from tribal life, will want to "return" to the homelands.

*This is a follow up to "South Africa's Bantu" by the same author, published in *The California Geographer*, Vol. VI, 1965, p. 37.

FIRST BANTU ANTONOMY

Of the eight Bantustans in the planning stage only one the Switzerland-sized Transkei (see Figure 1 and 2), has reached a development level which permits a critical analysis. Except for 15,000 whites and 13,000 coloreds¹ who are all on "recall", the Transkei has a population of 1,400,000 Bantu. Practically all of them live under several tribal hierarchies (Figure 2), somewhat like the medieval Germans lived under a multitude of lords, but in language and culture they are all Xhosa. With an additional 2 ½ million outside the Bantustan the Xhosa are the Republic's largest Bantu subgroup. A Xhosa state would command the fealty of one-fourth of

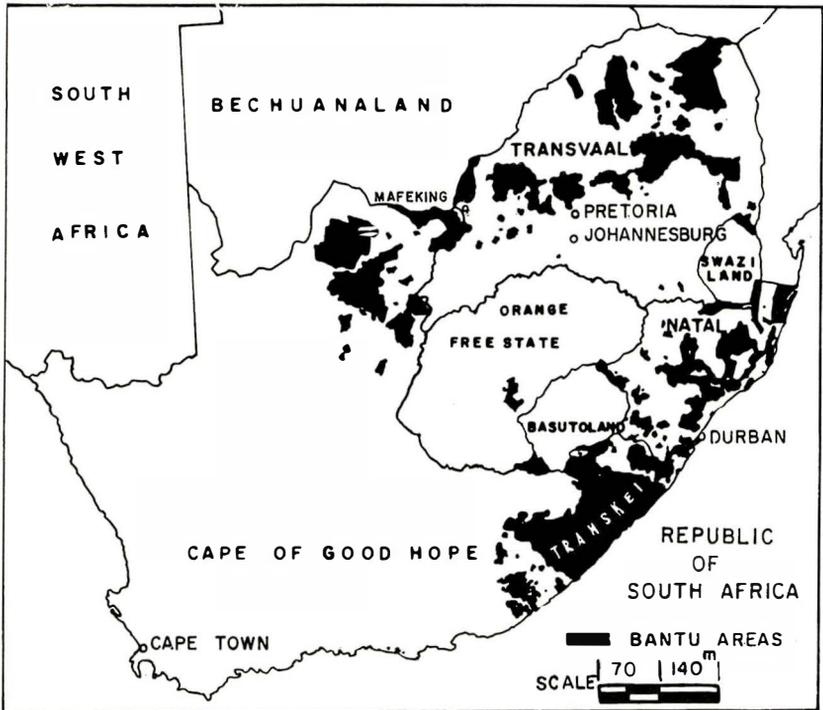


Figure 1

Source: From Secretary for Information, Republic of South Africa, Pretoria, Private Bag 152.

South Africa's present black majority. Hence the Transkei received highest priority in the Bantustan scheme. As early as 1879 white magistrates began to "assist" the tribal chiefs. Next the chiefs became salaried employees but also subject to veto by the mother government. Prodded by Pretoria, the chiefs began to share their power with appointed and sometimes elected counselors. Chiefs, counselors and magistrates in 1895 formed

¹ The 1,700,000 "coloreds" in the Republic's territory are not Negro's but mulattoes who by law live separately from whites as well as from blacks.

a Bantu Council which became the first official "Territorial Authority" of the Transkei. The Xhosa call it "Bunga", the "Place of Meeting and Discussion". As this revision of tribal government continued, opposition increased, however, and in 1959, when the Bantustan planning reached the initial stage, serious riots broke out and most of the power was transferred to the white-commanded police assisted by chief's homeguards.²

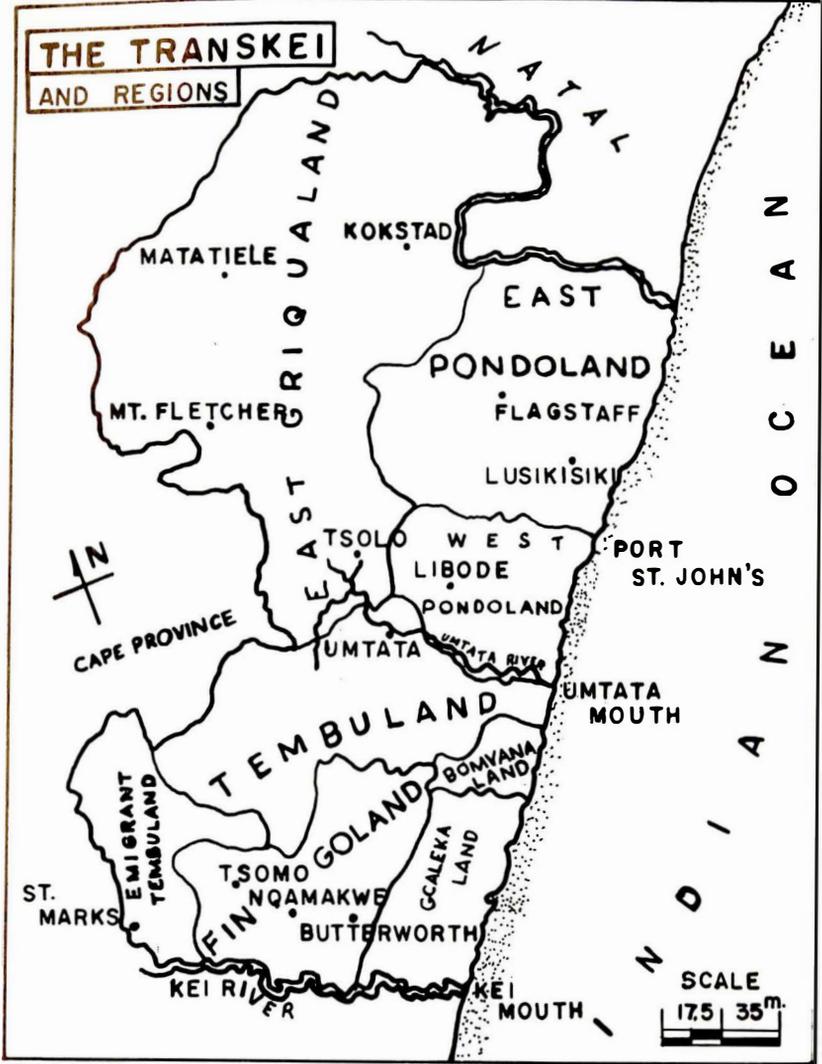


Figure 2

Source: From Secretary for Information, Republic of South Africa, Pretoria, Private Bag 152.

² Leonard Thompson, *The Republic of South Africa* (New York: Little Brown, 1966) pp. 81 ff.

The Transkei Territorial Authority continued to cooperate with the government in Pretoria and prepared a first homeland constitution which received the approval of the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa. It called for a much heralded election of the Xhosa in 1963. Almost no publicity was given to the constitutional provision that only 45 of 109 fixed seats in the new Transkeian legislature are elective. The majority 64 seats are reserved for four Paramount Chiefs and 60 Chiefs. The idea of an Upper House was rejected because chiefs should "sit with the people in council" and not above them. The opposition "Democratic Party," allowed under the constitution, won a landslide victory at the ballot box. But the cooperative "National Independence Party" had the majority vote in the newly convened legislature where it counted. The party's leader, Paramount Chief Kaiser Matanzina, a man trusted by Pretoria, became and still is the Transkei's Chief Minister.³ His platform states: "Separate development . . . is the only realistic way of bringing about equality among all races in Africa."⁴ His Xhosa cabinet consists of the Ministers of Agriculture and Forestry, of Education, of Roads, and of Justice (controlling lower courts only). The additional Ministry of Finance, which in the absence of a sound Xhosa tax basis requires good contacts with the central government, is held by the Chief Minister himself. White Bantu affairs officials, who until 1963 headed these departments, are now secretaries assisting their respective ministers. Attempts to extend Xhosa jurisdiction into such areas as Public Health, Postal Service, etc., so far have not been successful. To that the opposition Democratic Party remarks "The Transkeian Government has not proved that it could manage the six departments presently entrusted to its care."⁵ While the administration of higher courts some day might be negotiable, the portfolios of defense, foreign affairs and internal security remain the sole responsibility of the mother country. The Prime Minister of South Africa, Mr. Vorster, assured the Transkeian Legislature in April, 1967, that already 2,561 out of a total of 2,920 Transkeian civil servants are Xhosa and that this changeover will continue as rapidly as qualified candidates become available. The implication is that, outside of the ministers, the highest Transkeian Government officials are still whites on "Temporary duty." In accordance with the central government's intent the new state created an "internal" citizenship for all Xhosa whether they live in or outside the Transkei. What benefits the outsiders could derive from that is not quite clear since all "internal" rights are subordinated to the so-called "external" obligations towards the Republic of South Africa.

The entire Transkeian Government structure then rests on the loyalty of the tribes to the chiefs and theirs to the government in Pretoria. With 80% of the 1966 Transkeian budget coming from the white taxpayers a grateful chief minister summed up the situation, "We are experiencing an atmosphere of tranquillity, peace and goodwill . . . with the blessing of our

³ Matanzina was born only a chief. His elevation to Paramount Chief by the President of the Republic of South Africa contradicts the very basis of hereditary tribal leadership.

⁴ *South African Digest*, South African Information Service Dec. 6, 1964.

⁵ *Ibid.*, June 3, 1966.

mother country, the Republic of South Africa."⁶ The Transkei's second general election in November, 1968, is not likely to change this picture.

LAND REHABILITATION

The Transkei is 16,500 square miles of rolling hills with an average altitude of 1500 feet. Slope and drainage of the five streams is directed towards the Indian Ocean. The 150 miles along Great Kei River is longest, forms the territory's southwestern boundary and also gives it its name. The average annual rainfall of 34.17 inches is higher than the mean of the Republic. Certainly the countryside is greener than the surrounding Veld. Large coastal sections even have indigenous forest cover. The main man-made feature in the landscape is still the thorn hedged kraal with its round mud huts, the rondavels. It remains the home of 90% of the Xhosa people. The surrounding acreage is at least 70% in tribal ownership. This entitles every married tribesman to a share of the land, no matter how small and uneconomical it eventually might become. Tribal land tenure is the basis of a chief's authority, since as a quasi feudal lord he bestows the land parcels upon his tribesmen. A breakdown of the typical Bantu economy reads "exclusive stock farming 24%, chiefly stock farming with irregular crop growing 27%, mixed farming, predominantly stock, 20%, mixed farming 29%."⁷ The Transkeian statistics for 1966 list four heads of livestock per capita, which makes practically every family a herd owner. Hence, rehabilitation of badly overgrazed pasture lands is the prime target of the mother government's Bantu development plans. It is claimed that by 1967 one-third of the Transkei or 2,894,000 acres was in some stage of planning. This includes primary soil recuperation and better use of livestock but also some expansion and improvement of crops, mainly maize and kaffir corn, with some use of fertilizer. Yet every improvement remains a compromise between modern needs and traditional tribal philosophy. For instance, only after lengthy persuasive sessions with tribal authorities can an eroded grazing area be contoured. And the 12,000 miles of fences which protect the plowed land against roaming cattle cost more than the other rehabilitation efforts combined.⁸

A total of 917 Transkeian regions or "locations" are mapped for improvements. Some field observations in the Mbalisweni location in the Libode District of West Pondoland (see Figures 3 and 4) might offer additional illustration. The area is in close proximity to Umtata, the capital of the Transkei, and to Tsolo, home of the Xhosa College of Agriculture. 16,000 of the Mbalisweni's 21,500 acres are tribal grazing land. The remainder, as shown in the chart, is in kraals with an assortment of poultry, in adjacent woodlots, the people's only source of fuel, and in basic food crops with some patches of vegetables. All around are the ever-present cattle. Rehabilitation (in the lined areas in Figure 3) consisted of plowed contours and guarding fences. This, it was claimed, would be sufficient to restore the carrying capacity of the soil. The use of fertilizer was an especially noted exception. Where in the process of reclamation an entire

⁶ *Tegnikon*, Special Edition, The South African Academy, March, 1967.

⁷ Report of the Tomlinson Commission as quoted in *Tegnikon*, p. 8.

⁸ As told this writer by a field supervisor.

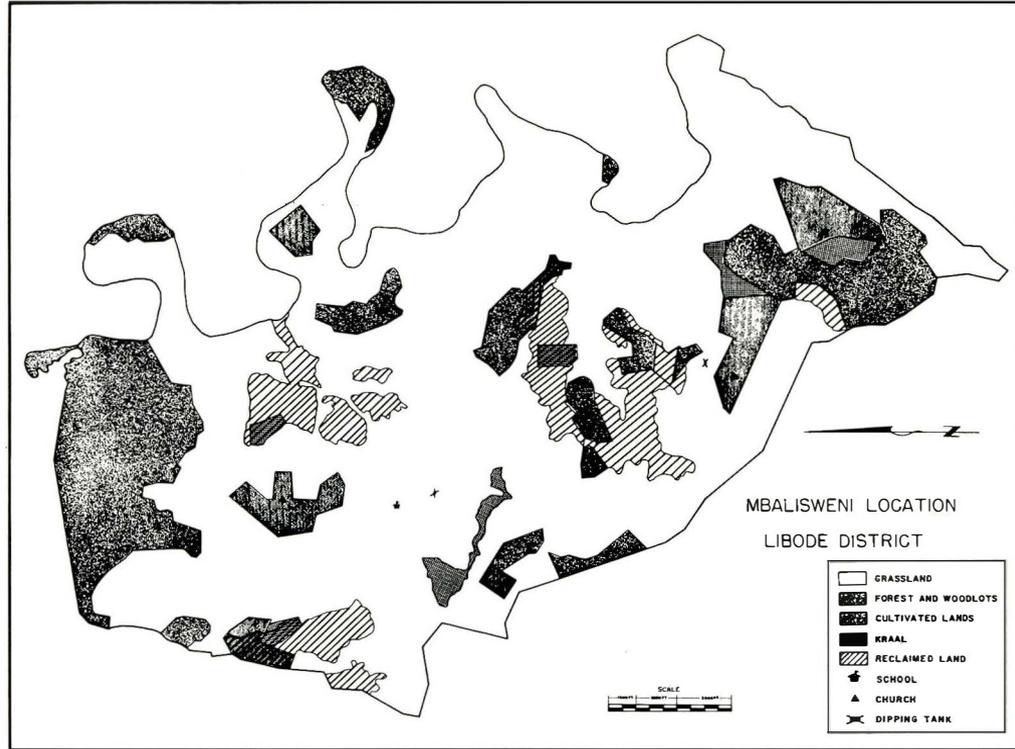


Figure 3

Source: Modified with permission of the Principal information Officer, South African Government, Umtata, Transkie.

kraal had to be relocated, neat rondavels had replaced the standard mud huts and a conventional fence had replaced the old thornhedge. There were no access roads to the kraals. In neighboring Tsolo the principal of the agricultural school, with 30 years of local experience, doubted that Xhosa agriculture could ever be modernized. He quoted failures with improved livestock which could not survive on only tribal grasslands. But most of all his graduates themselves reverted in a short time to the ancestral ways as exemplified by the chiefs.

The Nqamakwe District in Fingoland (see Figure 2) has been rehabilitated in its entirety to serve as a pilot project. Most of the rural Transkei, however, looks like Mbalisweni.

The injection of a Peace Corps type of organization or of private capital into the Transkeian agriculture is rejected by the leaders in Pretoria as inconsistent with tribal heritage and the principle of separate development.

Thus, instead of starting the ingathering of Xhosa from the outside, the kraals are still losing their young men to the mines and factories of South Africa. Both governments are committed to a reversal of this trend.

INTRODUCTION OF COMMERCE

With black capital practically none existent public agencies are engaged in the buildup of primarily farm-related business as an incentive to more production. The Bantu Investment Corporation gives financial aid to any promising undertaking from bakeries to business premises. The Corporation will also establish a needed enterprise, such as a lumber mill, even if no suitable Bantu entrepreneur can be found. It will then manage the business until Xhosa can be trained to take it over. Another public group, the Xhosa Development Corporation, was founded in 1965 for the specific purpose of exploring new possibilities for employment. Success is more visible here than on the farm. A meat packing plant the first with a white manager but an all Xhosa crew was established in 1966 in the capital of Umtata. Its daily capacity is 25 cattle and its potential is four times that number.⁹ Some of the wool from the sheep grazing industry supplies the one small textile mill in the Transkei, outside of Umtata. It is equipped with spinning wheels and hand looms which makes it more a training institution for Xhosa housewives than a market producer. Of the Transkei's 635 trading posts, 157 were Xhosa operated by the end of 1967.¹⁰ This represents the beginning of retail business which draws on local production such as vegetables, fruits and eggs. The government would like to see all trading posts converted into Bantu-owned stores but the difficulty is to find Transkeians who can operate a small business. Estimates for 1967 indicate that 1,000 Xhosa were gainfully employed in some such farm related occupations.

While these beginnings should not be overlooked it is quite obvious that the public development programs lead to greater results only when tribalism is less of an obstacle. There are areas in the Transkei which by

⁹ *Tegnikon*, p. 57.

¹⁰ *South African Digest*, Dec. 1, 1967.

topography and climate remained undesirable to the tribes. These are the so-called chiefs' lands, meaning that the chiefs alone decide to what use the land might be put seasonally or on special occasions.

The Lambazi Location of the Lusikiski District in East Pondoland (see Figures 2 and 4) is just such an area. Its plateaus, deeply intersected by streams, reach to the very edge of the Indian Ocean. Rainfall averages 60 inches and results in much indigenous forest cover. This type of landscape never correlated well with the tribal needs for open range. Of the location's 83,100 acres, only rims and some level patches were really used by the Xhosa. The kraals inside the virgin land represent only temporary thornhedge shelters for seasonal herding.

East Pondoland authorities have established commercial timberland with selective cutting and afforestation in a remote area on the north-eastern boundary. In 1964 about 10,000 acres were already under tree management with expansions planned. Furthermore it was found that the wet slopes of the region were also good for the growth of *Phormium Tenax*. Thus a fiber plantation was started on an additional 8,000 acres. To house the workers of both projects a "rural village" was built at a mid-point. While the domiciles are only rondavels they have running water and electricity is furnished by a small hydro plant (see Figure 4). A deactivated World War II airstrip became the overall operations base.

The lumber supplies three lumber mills and one affiliated furniture factory spread throughout the Transkei. While the mill managers are still whites the crews are all Xhosa. Their biggest orders come from Bantu Schools. As yet a Transkeian processing plant for the *Phormium Tenax* fiber is only in the planning stage.

Another major development project, scheduled for completion in 1968, is in Emigrant Tembuland (see Figure 2). There the Lubisi Dam will provide irrigation for 8,444 acres in the St. Marks Flats. 2,000 Xhosa farmers, with a first contingent already moved in, will produce cotton and soybeans in addition to the foods for their own tables.

Since this presentation attempts to list the major developments in the Transkei something must be said about mineral potentials. The Transkei of course shares the hope for minerals with many other African countries. But the handling of first discovery makes it all too evident that the apartheid principle really voids any attempt to take the Transkei into the 20th century. The government announced that coal has been found in Tembuland (see Figure 2). Since South Africa's big mining companies represent white capital they will not be allowed to enter the Transkei. On the other hand Pretoria seems to be hesitant to initiate a competitive government operation. Hence Xhosa will work the seams by hand as freeholders and the Xhosa Development Corporation will seek market outlets for the coal.¹¹

¹¹ *Ibid.*, Nov. 24, 1967.

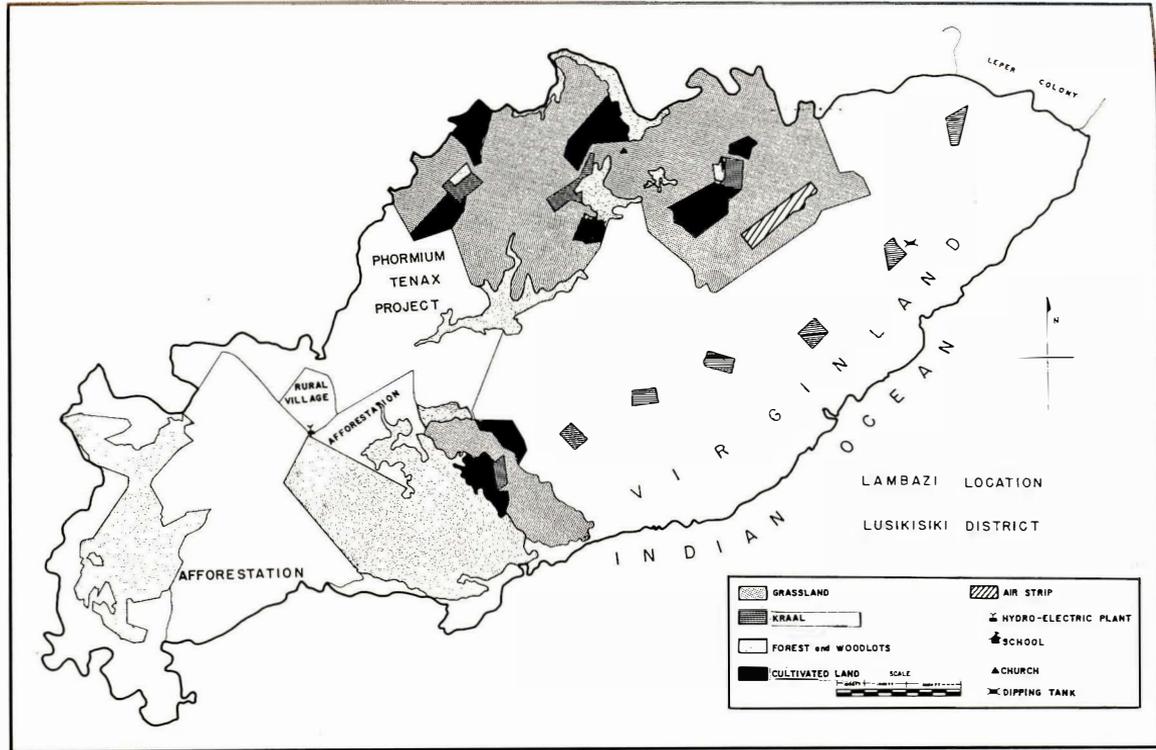


Figure 4

Source: Modified with permission of the Principal information Officer, South African Government, Umtata, Transkie.

TOWARDS URBANIZATION

Progress in all undeveloped countries is based on education and industrialization which normally leads to urbanization. But in the Transkei this becomes once more a compromise with the clear intent of prolonging the influence of loyal chiefs.

The state's 25 townships "will probably become completely Bantu owned in the future" but for the time being Xhosa have only "occupation rights in 23 towns."¹² Even in Umtata, seat of the black government and legislature, only the cafeteria in the Bunga Building serves to non-white and only one bank accepts Xhosa customers. Transkeian officials and their black guests continue to reside in outlying villages pending completion of a special hotel, now under construction. Umtata has several good hotels and restaurants which so far do not lack white clientele. None of the town's 6,000 white inhabitants seem in a hurry to depart. The other smaller towns follow pretty much the same pattern. It means that the 3,000 Transkeian civil servants, 6,000 teachers and 1,600 schools are as much part of the kraal as the people they serve.

Education, also under a Xhosa minister, is not compulsory because the traditional tribal upbringing of the young may not be infringed upon. Three hundred twenty thousand Xhosa children attend primary grades. When they reach the age of initiation into tribal responsibilities only 12,000 remain in junior and senior high schools.¹³ Post high school training is offered in almost anything that might benefit a rural society such as agriculture, nursing, teaching, police work. But real degree-granting institutions for Bantu exist only outside the Transkei. The closest to it within the state are two live-in colleges for the sons of chiefs. They are not totally exclusive but a commoner is rare indeed in the student body. The principals are Xhosa-speaking whites and the curriculum is excellent. The graduates, to be sure, will be better prepared than their fathers, but they still will be salaried chiefs indebted to the Republic of South Africa.

White officials in the Transkei claim that the Bantu have no inclination for business and that all training efforts are to no avail. Yet where the Bantu are given an opportunity, in the mines and factories of the Republic of South Africa, they prove themselves good workers and craftsmen and, when given a chance, good foremen. They earn three times as much as their stay-at-home brothers and an average laborer can match the paycheck of a Transkeian teacher. Much of this money has always gone to the folks at home.

A unique plan provides for this industrial labor to tie the pieces into a going economy. The catchword is "border industries," which means that the Xhosa are no longer to trek to the factories but that the factories will come to them. The industries will not move all the way because that would inject a white element into a black state and thus violate the principle of separate development. Visualized is a string of industrial plants just

¹² *Tegnikon*, p. 16.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

outside the Transkei's borders which is to be paralleled by workers communities just inside the Xhosa state. This was a key proposal in the original Bantustan plan of 1956, the Tomlinson Report. By 1967 it had created some 44,000 new jobs for Bantu around the various Bantustans.¹⁴ It can be assumed that about half of that number applies to the Transkei. This is still meager compared with the total of almost four million Xhosa, but it is also the construction of roads, railway sidings, power and water plants and, more employment than was provided by all the other projects combined. The cost of the border industries is extremely high, having cost so far some \$500 million. It includes not only government incentives to industries but of course, Bantu dwellings. The commuting Xhosa labor is housed in townships not unlike those which surround all urban centers of the Republic. In them not only the public facilities but also the homes are constructed and owned by the government. This is probably realistic since very few Xhosa for a long time to come will be able to afford home ownership. The government's rather vague announcement says that 70 townships are in "advanced states of development" and that some day even holiday resorts will be available to the Bantu.¹⁵

This then is to take the Xhosa out of an environment "totally alien" to him and return him to his "own society with its respected customs and restraints." It is intended to complete the separation of black and white in South Africa without diminishing too much the pool of black labor on which the South African industry thrives.

Official South Africa states that the Transkei as the foremost Bantustan has "peace, prosperity and justice for all by means of political independence coupled with economic independence."¹⁶ Do the facts support this claim? In lieu of pros and cons a last item should help to finalize the story of the world's first all black state.

The Transkei has only one outlet to the world, Port St. John's (see Figure 2). This port remains a white enclave outside the jurisdiction of the Xhosa government. Thus the door stays closed and the Republic of South Africa continues to be the keeper of the black man.

¹⁴ *South African Digest*, Nov. 3, 1967.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Dec. 1, 1967.

¹⁶ *South African Scope*, South African Information Service, March, 1968.