

CHAPTER 6.

CONCLUSION

The aim of the chapter is to bind the analyses and arguments contained in the study together. This will be done by briefly referring back to the problem formulations as well as to the perceptions indicated in the introduction.

The process and events which actually led to the political independence of Bophuthatswana, were and are complicated and varied in nature. This is demonstrated by the range of aspects stated in the study. It is, therefore, necessary when we study this subject to guard against simplistic views and ideological reductionistic perspectives.

The general perception about the independence of Bophuthatswana is that it was forced upon the Tswana, without their consent, by the South African government. This perception may mislead people and obscure the other possibilities and it may further suggest that no other historical processes prior to independence had any influence.

The study has, however, revealed that there were some historical processes which took place before the independence. For example, processes of fission and fusion among the Tswana during their stay in Southern Africa affected their settlement, and in turn complicated inter-group and inter-racial relations as well as policies and patterns of control over the Tswana and land "distribution".

The study has further revealed that a major range of events preceding independence had definite and intricate effects on it. For example, the South African government policy of indirect rule via a comprehensive system of "Black Authorities" and definite policies aimed at creating ethno-national states. These were destined to be independent within this process. Various other

factors contributed to the complexity of the matter, e.g. conflicting interests between the Tswana and the South African government; the creation and development of political parties and policies; as well as political leaders in the Tswana area and additional issues which exerted an influence on decision making about independence within Tswana ranks.

All these factors complicated the issue of independence and led to many viewpoints about the independence of Bophuthatswana.

The Bantu Authorities System which was introduced by the South African government, boiled down to the development of a political structure enhancing the policy of separateness. This structure was a mechanism which aimed at keeping and even attracting blacks from white areas to their own scheduled reserves with their own political institutions and equal rights in these reserves. The system further resulted in constitutional and political development among the Tswana e.g. self-government and the formation of the Bophuthatswana Legislative Assembly which ultimately became the parliament of Bophuthatswana.

Although not explicitly stated before and during the implementation of this system, the government had already gradually started to think that the various black ethnic groups in their respective reserves should eventually control themselves. Later it became apparent that this was their aim. Their purpose was to separate the blacks into ethnic groups and on an ethnic basis, train them to administer their own affairs in their own homelands, introduce their own political institutions and have equal political rights in these reserves.

Indisputedly, the system was actually the genesis of self-government and also independence, of some of these black homelands, the Tswana homeland included. So, in the final analysis, the essence of independence in Bophuthatswana can be seen in the introduction and implementation of the Black Authorities system which arguably enhanced the policy of separateness which was later known as apartheid — hence the perception that the Tswana were compelled to accept independence so that the grand Verwoerdian scheme of apartheid could be achieved.

It further became clear that the South African government was prepared to continue with the plan of granting independence to the Tswana in spite of vehement objection of the official opposition party in the South African parliament. This was demonstrated in the motivation of the Minister of Bantu Administration and Development when presenting the Bill on the Status of Bophuthatswana in parliament. This step could also be perceived as the total commitment of the government to ensure that the Tswana became independent so as to avoid their persistent demand for franchise in South Africa. With such commitment and intentions on the part of the government, it is doubtful that the Tswana had any choice, besides independence.

Despite the objection of Bophuthatswana on the question of citizenship, land consolidation and resettlement of the Tswana, the government continued with its plan. The Tswana realized that under the South African government they would never have a vote in the white parliament and arguably they had to accept independence.

The study indicates that the Tswana themselves clamoured for self-government. Even the opposition party (S.P.) advocated self-government. This idea is captured in the words of Chief Pilane, leader of the S.P. who was also chairman of the T.T.A., when he said *"We are a proud people, will it be surprising if we ask for self-government?"*

Admittedly, the newly formed opposition party (B.N.S.P.) was against independence, hence its refusal to participate in the negotiations on independence. It should be noted, however, that the main objection of the B.N.S.P. was not against independence as a process leading to a particular governmental control, but that certain requirements such as citizenship and land consolidation should first be met by the South African government. Most probably, the B.N.S.P. was also against independence because they realised that they would not be the ruling party. This was demonstrated in the power struggle between Chief Maseloane and Chief Mangope.

The notion that Chief Mangope regarded independence as a mechanism to rescue the Tswana from the shackles of apartheid and to use it as a platform from which the Tswana could state their

needs and demand their right as a people, warrants some consideration as a perception accounting for the ultimate acceptance of independence.

It should also be noted that the Chief Minister in his motivation for the acceptance of independence was strongly positive, hence a motion requesting a mandate for the Executive Council of the T.T.A. to enter into negotiations with the South African government for self-government. The support for the motion, the support the Chief Minister got from the majority of the Tswana chiefs on the question of independence, the support he got from members of the B.D.P. on 8 November 1975 during their National Congress when the idea of independence was rallied among them, and the support he got during the debates on the issue of independence, were positive indications that independence was acceptable.

If one examines the steps taken by the Tswana themselves towards independence and the support the Chief Minister received, one is tempted to consider the perception that the Tswana actually opted for independence.

The support by the majority of the Tswana chiefs was very important. With their traditional position and power it was very easy for them to use their influence on their people to accept independence. Independence appeared favourable to them because they would become automatic members of parliament, earn a salary, and besides, independence was going to reinforce their political status and power since they were appointable as ministers of departments by virtue of their status as leaders of the various constituencies. The cabinet of Bophuthatswana used this situation and continued with negotiations for independence. The attitude of chiefs in this regard rendered the referendum on independence unnecessary because they were traditionally regarded as representatives of their tribes and, therefore, what they agreed upon was binding on their tribes. So, a possible perception is that the Tswana had to accept independence because their chiefs saw it as materially and politically gainful.

It is evident that the Tswana, through their leader, took an active role in the attainment of independence and that the South African government planned for the Tswana to become

independent. Given the evidence above, it is arguable that the steps taken to achieve the independence of Bophuthatswana was a dual action between the Tswana and the South African governments, hence the perception that the independence of Bophuthatswana was negotiated.

Taking into account the events and factors mentioned in this study, it becomes clear that the achievement of the independence of Bophuthatswana can in no way be regarded and evaluated as a simplistic issue.