

CHAPTER 1.

Introduction

The independence of Bophuthatswana can be seen as a milestone in the history of South African politics. It signified Bophuthatswana's political break away from South Africa and it ushered the Tswana into a western-type political control structure. The events which led to the political independence of Bophuthatswana are complex in nature and should be viewed in the light of a range of causes and consequences. It is the purpose of this study to examine the factors culminating in the creation of Bophuthatswana as an independent state.

The basic argument which is also presented as the main problem around which this analysis is built, i.e. that the process and events which ultimately led to the political independence of Bophuthatswana, was and is complicated and varied in nature and it can be demonstrated by stating a range of major aspects. Contrary to simplistic views and ideological reductionistic perspectives on this issue, a variety of view points presented as theoretical explanations exist as to how and why Bophuthatswana came into being and became independent.

One view point to be considered is that the Tswana were compelled to accept independence so that the grand Verwoerdian scheme of apartheid could be achieved. A second argument is that the Tswana had to accept independence because they knew they would never have a voice in the white parliament. Another possibility is that the Tswana had to accept independence because they wanted to create a political platform from which they could state their needs and demands as a people. A further argument is that the Tswana had to accept independence because their chiefs saw this as a means of enriching themselves, while a final consideration is that the Tswana as a people actually did opt for independence.

A second major issue complicating the achievement of independence refers to the current status of Bophuthatswana. It is common knowledge that the political independence of the Tswana has not been positively accepted across the world or even among all Tswana people in

Bophuthatswana or South Africa. It has been rejected as the brain child and offshoot of apartheid. Prejudice has thus often swamped objectivity regarding this event. Although it is not the object to discuss this aspect at length, it nevertheless obviously complicated affairs.

Another major factor that contributed to the complexity of the named process and events, had a bearing on the alleged historical unity of the Tswana as well as processes of fission and fusion during their stay in Southern Africa —which in turn affected settlement patterns complicating inter-group and inter-racial relations as well as policies and patterns of control over the Tswana.

An additional major range of events preceding independence but which had definite and intricate effects on it pertained to the South African government's policy of indirect rule via a comprehensive system of "Black Authorities" and definite policies aimed at creating ethno-national states, destined to be independent. Within this process, various factors contributed to the complexity of the matter, i.e. conflicting interests between the Tswana and the South African government, the creation and development of political parties and policies as well as competing political leaders in the Tswana area; problems pertaining to land distribution, settlement and resettlement of people; geographic borders; constitutional rights and citizenship disputes and a host of other issues, all of which exerted influences on decision-making on independence within Tswana ranks.

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

Since the study deals with the political independence of Bophuthatswana it is necessary to look briefly at the background to independence in Africa especially as Bophuthatswana independence took place one and a half decades after most of the other African states achieved independence. This background may help the reader to understand certain issues pertaining to the independence of Bophuthatswana which are raised in this study. The intention here is not, however, to compare the independence of Bophuthatswana with those of other countries in Africa.

During the four decades between the Berlin Conference and the outbreak of World War I, Africa underwent profound and unprecedented changes. The European colonial powers had effectively established peace throughout most of Africa through colonisation, i.e. by political subjugation (for various reasons) and by establishing colonial rule in these areas. Generally, the colonial powers had colonised Africa for strategic, imperial, economic and political reasons¹.

With the outbreak of World War II in 1939, Africa was still directly in the hands of various colonial powers. They had spread and entrenched their social, economic and political influence in the African colonies and intended to control their colonies in Africa for some time to come. Van Aswegen maintained that "die moontlikheid van onafhanklikwording van die gebiede binne 'n dekade of twee is so goed as nêrens gedink nie"². In 1939, a British official stated at a conference that Britain was convinced that it had unlimited time to work in Africa.

In 1944, at the Brazzaville Conference on the future of the French overseas territories, the French saw no possibility of any colony developing outside the French imperial system while the Belgians viewed 1985 as a possible target date for any self-government of the colonies³.

In order to understand independence in Africa more fully, it is necessary to study African Nationalism closely. It is not the intention of this study to delve deeper into either African Nationalism or African independence. It is, however, necessary to mention, for purposes of clarity, that the concept of nationalism is an extremely complex one and as such may differ from time to time and place to place⁴.

¹C. Young. Decolonization in Africa; in L.H. Gann and P. Duignan. 1970. Colonialism in Africa 1870-1960 Vol. II. The History and politics of Colonialism 1914-1960. Cambridge, pp.1-2.
S.C. Easton. 1964. The Rise and Fall of Western Colonialism: A Historical Survey from the Early Nineteenth Century to the present. New York, pp.3-13.

²H.J. van Aswegen. 1982. Geskiedenis van Afrika: Van die Vroegste Oorspronge tot onafhanklikheid. Cape Town. p.406.

³L.H. Gann and P. Duignan. 1970. Op. cit. p.452.

⁴H.J. van Aswegen. 1982. Op. cit. p.406.

Lord Hailey argued that there was nothing in African Nationalism which compared to what had pertained in Europe during the nineteenth century. His argument is based on the fact that there were no nations or demarcated states where nationalism could show itself. Africa comprised only ethnic groups with no cultural traits - thus there was no potential for nationalism⁵. The argument of Lord Hailey seems to suggest that nationalism as a phenomenon is restricted to "people states" or nation states.

Van Aswegen also proposes the idea of nationalism as a phenomenon characterising nation states. However, he argues that although nationalism was not as clear in Africa as it was in Europe, the spirit which emerged in Africa after the World War II qualifies as nationalism with its own distinctive characteristics⁶.

Another dimension of nationalism refers to the common resistance against foreign rule rather than the creation of nation states, or ethnic states. So African Nationalism can be regarded as the common resistance which emerged from the colonial situation. Africans became sensitive and reacted against colonialism, to change and improve the colonial situation in Africa⁷.

The struggle of African Nationalism was for freedom. In the first place, freedom meant independence i.e. freedom from colonialism; and, secondly, freedom meant political freedom, social and economic freedom and racial equality. The Colonial powers had imposed their political and administrative structures of government upon the African people. In most of the African colonies there were a number of ethnic groups with different life styles and feelings. Sometimes these ethnic groups were divided by defined geo-political boundaries. So, another intention of the leaders of African Nationalism was to fuse the diverse inhabitants of the colonies into nations.

⁵Lord Hailey. 1950. Native Administration in the British African Territories. London. p.206.

⁶H.J. van Aswegen. 1982. Op. Cit. p.408.

R. Emerson. 1962. From Empire to Nation: The self-assertion of Asian and African Peoples. Boston. pp.213-228.

⁷H.J. van Aswegen. 1982. Op. cit. p.408.

It should, however, be noted that World War II brought about profound changes in Africa and although the metropolitan powers tried to subdue the process of decolonisation, they did not succeed. "Die proses van dekolonisasie in Afrika het vinnig geskied, so vinnig dat verskeie koloniële moondhede daaronder heeltemal onverhoeds betrap en dus onvoorbereid was om die ingrypende verandering te hanteer"⁸.

Decolonisation was the second phase in African Nationalism. This process was influenced by many factors, particularly after World War II.

The unity which prevailed in Africa due to the spirit of nationalism accelerated the process of decolonisation and thus played an important and decisive role.

The emergence of an educated African elite also influenced the process of decolonisation. These new leaders visibly obtained wider popular support: some of them adopted a strategy of mass single parties which created the vital nexus between leadership and mass. "Thus African Nationalism grew swiftly in post-war Africa from the parlour doctrine of dispersed groups of intellectuals, treated with condescension by the metropolitan powers, to a movement whose ramifications seemed to extend into every village, and whose demands represented overwhelming consensus"⁹.

The formation of the mass parties became possible because they were faced with a common enemy and had to adopt a common resistance; the effects of the post-war period provided for the ideal of liberation which all the African colonies supported, and the use of the democratic principles of the West against West colonies (France and Britain).

The democratic heritage of metropolitan powers such as Belgium, Great Britain and France became major assets to the nationalist movements because demands and values of the Africans were considered in terms of a democratic ethos. This does not, however, suggest that ultimate

⁸H.J. van Aswegen. 1982. Op. cit. p.406.

⁹C. Young in L.H. Gann and P. Duignan. 1970. Op. cit.

acceptance of democratic values as the standard of terminal colonial statecraft did not come without difficult and devious sophistry. It was quite clear, in certain instances, that there was a vast gap between metropolitan democratic theory and colonial democratic practice.

The other determinant of decolonisation was the web of partisan conflict within the metropolitan community. For instance, Britain was set firmly on the path of decolonisation by its post-war Labour government: the most decisive steps were taken in Asia but vital innovations were made in Africa also. One such step was the institution of representative local government as a substitute for the outmoded native administration system. "In accordance with the Labour government policy, the aim of the British colonial policy was to guide the colonial territories to responsible government within the Commonwealth, conditional to both a fair standard of living and freedom from oppression from any quarter to the people concerned"¹⁰.

The emergence of powers such as the United States and the Soviet Union, as hostile superpowers, reduced the dominance of powers such as Great Britain and France on the world scene and accelerated decolonisation. The Soviet Union maintained an intense and vocal opposition to colonisation in Africa while the United States was a natural ally of Afro-Asian anti-colonial nationalism¹¹. Makers of the post-war world also created and made available new international forums where colonial nationalists could plead their case. The United Nations was the most prominent of such agencies.

The process of decolonisation in Africa ultimately led to the transfer of power. It should be noted that the mechanisms used to finally transfer power from the metropolitan powers to the colonies differed from one colony to the other. This was mainly because different factors affected the colonies differently.

In examining the pattern of power transfer pursued by the three major colonisers in Africa, we must consider briefly a number of variables. These include the theories of colonial administration

¹⁰C. Young in L.H. Gann and P. Duignan. 1970. *Op. cit.* pp.465-6.

¹¹*Ibid.* p.453.

and imperial ideology that underlay colonial rule; the model of government provided by the metropole; power transfer experiences in other parts of the globe; the nature of post-colonial association; the character of the nationalist movements; the legal status of the dependencies and the presence or absence of Settler Communities¹².

The direct and indirect rule practised by France and Britain, respectively, had major implications for the power transfer process.

Indirect rule was the mechanism used by Great Britain to govern the British African colonies. It meant the appointment of traditional tribal chiefs as agents of local rule, the use in local governments of those men whom the people were accustomed to obey. The term "indirect rule" has generally been used to describe, not a general principle of government, but a particular and local form of its application. Indirect rule was offered as a technique of social change, a means of bringing African communities into closer contact and harmony with the modern world and of raising their standards of life without any resultant social chaos. This principle of native administration was exceedingly influential throughout British Africa in the inter war period¹³.

Indirect rule, where it could be successfully applied (Buganda and Northern Nigeria), implied a special type of political evolution. "The final outcome of indirect rule, carried through to its logical extreme would be a loosely organised confederation of native states but this system came into conflict with the concept of the modern state that generally prevailed after World War II"¹⁴.

The educated nationalists saw in the system nothing but an imperialistic device, on the part of the governing power, by which the subject races might be kept down forever, or at least indefinitely. There were a few, of course, of the more discerning among these nationalists who

¹²C. Young in L.H. Gann and P. Duignan. 1970. *Op. cit.* p.480.

R.O. Collins. 1970. *Problems in the History of Colonial Africa 1860-1960*. New Jersey. pp. 83-150.

¹³R.O. Collins. 1970. *Op. cit.* pp.111-158.

¹⁴C. Young in L.H. Gann and P. Duignan. 1970. *Op. cit.* p.480.

were prepared to admit that there was some good in the system although they strongly disapproved of its machinery¹⁵.

Although indirect rule was flawed, particularly in the difference between its theory and its application (practice), it generally allows a relatively peaceful transfer of power from the colonial power to the Africans e.g. Northern Nigeria, Swaziland, Bechuanaland.

The French were committed to direct rule or assimilation. This was a process which subjected the inhabitants of the French African colonies to the French way of life. French social, political and cultural institutions were established in these colonies. More generally, the power of traditional authorities was curtailed or ended. "Their place was taken by modern bureaucracies designed to replace, not modernise chieftaincy"¹⁶.

Although the French were committed to direct rule as an administrative ideology, they did not always apply it in practice, especially when wielders of traditional power became pillars of colonial support. Transfer of power in the French colonies was not an easy exercise. This was so because, unlike Britain, France did not have a system which initially involved the local chiefs fully in the administration. The requirements for qualification to serve in the local governments were demanding and, as such, few Africans had served in the government. So, most of the power transfer instances were done much against the will of the colonial power.

Belgium had embraced a dogma of administration theoretically influenced by Lugard but in practice differing greatly from the dicta of the dual mandate. With the exception of Rwanda and Burundi, the large chieftaincies that might have served as instruments for indirect rule were viewed with distrust and broken into smaller units. The heavy emphasis on efficiency and productivity led to a degree of intervention by the Belgian administrators quite incompatible with the postulates of indirect administration.

¹⁵R.O. Collins. 1970. *Op. cit.* p.14-17.

¹⁶C. Young in L.H. Gann and P. Duignan. 1970. *Op. cit.* p.481.

The goals of the metropolitan powers themselves also influenced the transfer of power. Britain's unhappy experience of unsuccessful decolonisation in the thirteen American colonies, made her evolve slowly a formula of self-governing dominions within the British Empire rebaptised as the British Commonwealth of Nations after World War II. This made Britain enter an era of power transfer with coherent aims¹⁷. The precedent of India was also of vital importance, since it clearly demonstrated that power could be transferred to a militant nationalist movement that had its popular support.

The existence of the Commonwealth was of immense value in permitting a relatively harmonious power transfer, except in Kenya and Central Africa, where settler groups advanced special claims.

The French had a far more difficult time, particularly in North Africa because their imperial *Weltauschuung* inherited from the past was peculiarly unsuited to the requirements of the post-war world. Initially the French chose the enlarged Republic as the ultimate framework for territories legally under full French sovereignty. Another post-war idea was federalism which was entirely out of keeping with the highly centralised unitary traditions of the French Republic. The alternative to De Gaulle's French Community also failed to perpetuate any organic links between France and its African territories and collapsed only two years after its creation. "Because of the absence of clearly worked out mechanism of power transfer in the French African colonies, the colonial power was in most cases forced to transfer power when they were not yet prepared to do it - hence conflicts, for example, the uprisings in Algeria"¹⁸.

The Belgians lacked any historic experience by which they could shape the colonial future; the colonial doctrine could provide no guidance to the ultimate transfer of power. A Belgo-Congolese Community, pronounced as the goal in 1952, had major structural flaws. Transfer of power in Belgian African colonies was in most cases not the initiative of Belgian government, but mainly

¹⁷C. Young in L.H. Gann and P. Duignan. 1970. *Op. cit.* p.482.

¹⁸C. Young in L.H. Gann and P. Duignan. 1970. *Op. cit.* p.482.
S.C. Easton. 1964. *Op. cit.* pp.303-319.

of the colonies themselves. That is why transfer of power was not methodically done but in the end, the colonial powers had to withdraw without real transfer of power.

The differing legal status of various territories affected the power transfer mechanisms. This was particularly true of the United Nations Trust Territories. The fact that alteration in the legal status of Trust Territories could take place only with the consent of a suspicious United Nation constituted a major obstacle to proposals to fuse territories to become independent as one state. For example, Tanganyika could not be incorporated into a colonial sponsored East African Federation; Rwanda and Burundi could not permanently be integrated into the Congo. Other territories were legally protectorates, rather than colonies. In the British case, special difficulties arose when one portion of a territory, like Buganda and Barotseland, enjoyed special treaty relationships with the Crown which it chose to invoke as protection against full absorption into any future independent state¹⁹. This state of affairs enabled some territories to experience power transfer before others.

The character of the tactics and evolution of the various nationalist movements profoundly influenced also the manner in which power was devolved. Where nationalists had had no opportunity for experiencing constitutional machinery and were drawn into violence, as in North Africa (Algeria), a particularly difficult situation arose. Under those circumstances, power was looted. Even when the colonial power tried to resist, it was not always successful²⁰.

The presence of a settler community large enough to pretend to a major role in the post-colonial state was a major difficulty for all colonisers. They inevitably demanded a political formula that granted them a veto power in any future constitution. The settlers urged that the colonisers had a special responsibility to them because of their contribution to the economy and their blood ties to the mother country. In some cases, active encouragement to settle had been given to them or their forebears by previous governments (South African model). Settlers urged that

¹⁹C. Young in L.H. Gann and P. Duignan. 1970. Op. cit. p.486.

²⁰Ibid.
R.O. Collins. 1970. Op. cit. pp. 221-242.

representation should be by racial communities and not simply one man one vote. Even though the settlers could not stop the transfer of power, they delayed it by preventing serious opposition which at times led to serious conflicts (e.g. Kenya)²¹.

From the above discussion, the following can be noted:

- reasons for colonisation were prestige, both economic and political. A deliberate phase to rule Africa and other territories (Asia) was created for purposes of the metropolitan powers
- that pressure on colonial powers to transfer power was from within and without
- mechanisms devised by metropolises provided the possibility to rule cheaply and effectively
- in general, metropolises did not expect the process of decolonisation to be so swift. They misjudged and miscalculated
- that different approaches of metropolises during the colonial era had an effect on post-colonial relationships e.g. Britain's indirect rule provided for keeping a distance when the direct rule provided for keeping a close link
- that the second phase of Africa Nationalism was characterised by a demand for independence and the Africans were prepared to fight for it (e.g. South Africa).
- that the presence of settler communities delayed decolonisation and protracted it; and caused conflicts which called for international intervention (e.g. Rhodesia and Northern Algeria)
- that decolonisation and the transfer of power differed from one colony to the other and
- that of all the metropolises, Great Britain appeared to have had the clearest and most coherent strategy and style of decolonisation.

The study is divided into five chapters with each chapter dealing with a specific issue.

²¹C. Young in L.H. Gann and P. Duignan. 1970. *Op. cit.* p.487.

Chapter 1 is an introduction to the study and aims at stating the factors and events which have complicated the process of attainment of independence by Bophuthatswana. The chapter also indicates the structure of the study and which factors and events are discussed in the study.

Chapter 2 addresses the ethno-history of the Tswana starting with the evolution of the Tswana from the time of their migration from the lake districts, giving a historical background of the Tswana people prior to 1950. Migration, dispersion, fission and fusion, wars and settlements of the Tswana are briefly discussed. This chapter also looks at the influence of and the impact on the settlement of the Tswana by the other cultural and racial groups with which they came into contact, e.g. the Matebele *difaqane*; the Voortrekkers and the British. The implementation of the authority, the rule and the mechanisms of control instituted by their governments among the Tswana, as factors which influenced the present settlement of the Tswana, are discussed. The events which are examined in this chapter have a definite bearing on the present settlement of the Tswana people in Bophuthatswana and on arguments about independence — hence their inclusion and relevance.

Chapter 3 treats the introduction of the Black Authorities System as a method used by the National Party government after their election victory in 1948 as a new mechanism to control and develop the black ethnic groups in their various scheduled reserves through the passing of the Black Authorities Act (68/1951). The chapter further discusses duties, functions and powers of the structures in terms of the Act. Advantages as well as the disadvantages of this system are addressed.

The introduction of the idea of self-government in the black homelands as provided for in the Promotion of the Self-Government Act (38/1959) with its merits and demerits is discussed. This information is relevant to the main theme and argument as it will indicate how the Tswana in the Union were led to a political independent entity. The information will also show how the Tswana were introduced to a system of central government based on traditional institutions and finally ushered into a path of political independence.

Chapter 4 looks at the implementation of the Black Authority system structures as applied in the Tswana homeland, in particular the territorial authority as the legislature body of the Tswana. This body eventually became the Bophuthatswana Legislative Assembly.

The chapter further deals with leadership in the homeland, the rise of political parties with their different ideologies, the struggle for power between the Seoposengwe Party and the Bophuthatswana National Party under the leadership of chief Pilane and chief Mangope respectively; the attitudes of the Tswana towards political parties and the split of the Bophuthatswana National Party which eventually led to the formation of the Bophuthatswana Democratic Party under chief L.M. Mangope and the National Seoposengwe Party under chief Maseloane with their constitutions and manifestos. The attainment of self-government status in the Tswana homeland is also embodied in this chapter. The chapter is relevant to the study because it elucidates the nature of the road the Tswana followed to self-rule and how self-rule was finally achieved.

Chapter 5 concerns itself with the attainment of independence of the Tswana, starting first with the initial stand of the ruling party, the Bophuthatswana Democratic Party as regards independence and why it changed its attitude in this regard. This was followed by the mobilization process, negotiations for independence with the South African government; the arguments for and against independence; the drawing of the Bophuthatswana Independence constitutions; the role played by the South African government towards the realization of the independence; the protracted discussions on controversial issues such as land, citizenship and forced removals, and the feelings and reactions of Tswana regarding independence are discussed. The chapter has been included because it provides information as to how the Tswana ultimately attained political independence.

The last chapter is the conclusion which briefly summarises all points and discussions. It also clarifies issues referring to the prevailing arguments in the study.

S.B. Spies²² rightly observes that "the historian can never, after deciding on his topic, be sure what his research will unearth or where his evidence will lead him". Perhaps one may add to this and say that he does not always know at the beginning of his study or research what sources he will find. The sources consulted in respect of this study were varied. It is, however, not claimed that they have been exhausted. They comprise both primary sources and secondary sources. Some were indispensable. Into this category fall the Hansards both in South Africa as well as in Bophuthatswana; various acts passed during the period under study, both in South Africa and Bophuthatswana; reports of various commissions, as well as constitutions and manifestos of political parties.

Interviews with ordinary people as well as with members of the various political parties were conducted.

Sources for chapter 2 were secondary. Quite a number of works by various authors on the ethno-history of the Tswana prior to 1950 were used.

Chapter 3, which relates to the Black Authorities system and self-government, has as its sources the Black Authorities Act (68/1951) as well as the Promotion of Black Self-government Act (46/1959), supplemented by information from other sources.

Sources for chapters 4 and 5 were mainly Hansards, i.e. debates in both the South African Parliament and Bophuthatswana Legislative Assembly. This information was amplified by the acts passed by both the South African Parliament and Bophuthatswana Parliament. The constitutions and manifestos of political parties in Bophuthatswana were also used.

A variety of problems was encountered during the study. First was the problem of availability of material particularly on the independence of Bophuthatswana. To date not much has been written on the subject especially regarding events and factors which led to the independence of

²²S.B. Spies. 1981. The Historian. Pretoria, p.14.

Bophuthatswana. Secondly the official government sources which were used were informative, but, by their mere nature, are not as argumentative as one would encounter in literature. Because of their political nature, they are almost always biased in presentation.

Despite the limitations and constraints on sources, it is hoped that at the end of the study all cobwebs will be removed and a clear understanding of the creation of Bophuthatswana independence will be achieved.