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CAN BOP STAY OUT?

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The Bop administration has refused to sign any of Codesa's agreements. It argues that, even on the issue of reincorporation, it is keeping its options open. But can it stay out? A correspondent examines the issue at stake.

The TBVC "states" are the direct creations of the policy of apartheid. They are in essence no different from the other so-called self-governing territories which are also the direct result of the policy of separate development. The so-called self determination took place in the corridors of power in Pretoria. The will of the people affected was never tested or even thought of.

In the event:

the 1910 boundaries of South Africa were altered in order to provide for these pseudo "states".

approximately nine million South Africans lost their citizenship, and the Pretoria regime began and continues to treat those people as aliens in their land of birth.

the international community rightly refused to recognize the so-called "independence" of the TBVC "states". Only the Pretoria regime accorded recognition to its own toy administrations.

Today the negotiation process has to address the question of the reincorporation of all THE the TBVC "states". High on the agenda is the immediate restoration of citizenship to those who were victims of this criminal act of denationalization engineered by apartheid.

The Transkei and Venda have so far made it clear at every turn that they want to be reincorporated soon. The Ciskei vacillates, depending on tempers in Cosag, Ulundi or Mmabatho. Bophuthatswana is trying very hard so far without success, to convince itself that it is not a product of the apartheid system! They argue passionately that they have always been an "independent state". This has, of course, been rejected as nothing but the siren songs of self-interest coming from the brutal and corrupt clique in

Mmabatho.

The fact is: there can be no political settlement of the South African conflict unless and until all the TBVC territories are reincorporated and citizenship of those who lost it are restored unconditionally. National elections can only take place if they involve all South Africans.

If the Pretoria regime is going to continue pussyfooting on Bophuthatswana, the whole peaceful process of negotiations will be placed in jeopardy. At grassroot level the demand for armed action to be waged against Bophuthatswana will increase both in crescendo and practice. Already the situation there has reached unbearable limits and could at any time burst like an abscess and spoil the already delicate negotiation process.

What is expected of the Pretoria? It must:

- repeal all laws which sought to give the bogus independent status to all the TBVC "states"; and
- restore citizenship of people affected without their consent by this aborted attempt at social engineering.

This does not need the consent of the administrations in these territories – it is just a question of whether the De Klerk regime has the political will.

Bophuthatswana's illusions about "independence" need to be challenged. It has always been heavily reliant on Pretoria for sustenance. Research by academics in Bophuthatswana has shown that the Bop administration would lose more than R3 928 million per annum if central government was to act decisively. This can be broken down as follows:

Budgetary assistance:	R 1 087 million
Customs Union benefits:	R 1 087 million
Common Monetary Area agreement:	R 19 million
Tax compensation:	R 147 million
Industrial incentives:	R 26 million
Drought relief:	R 64 million
Project Aid from Loan Fund:	R 76 million
Development of Winterveld:	R 188 million
Technical assistance for small development projects:	R 1 292 million

This is only a tip of the iceberg. In addition to the "development aid", there

are:

- seconded officials (one of whom being the Chief Justice);
- seconded military and police personnel and all other seconded officials; and
- weapons and ammunition assistance to the Bophuthatswana Defence Force and Police.

conservative estimates put the level of Bop's dependence on South Africa at 56 percent of the budget. Bop academics say its no less than 67 percent. Bophuthatswana also relies on the SABC for the TV and radio frequency spectrum and, possibly, transmitters.

Such are the implications of continued refusal to abide by the decisions from multi-party negotiations. These might be "good reasons" for the De Klerk administration to dilly-dally on the issue. The ANC, its arch-enemy, is effectively banned in the territory. Recent reports about arms shipments to Unita in Angola indicate that Pretoria can continue to use Bop for undercover operations and consistently wash its hands off. But a Transitional Executive Council would not allow such an anomaly to continue. Neither would the people of Bophuthatswana. So Mangope, Rowan Cronje and their clique can continue for a while longer with their delusions of power. But if they intend to stand in the way of democracy, this will soon turn into a nightmare.