

KWANDEBELE - A QUESTION OF POWERINTRODUCTION

Since January 1986, politics in Kwandebele and Moutse have been dominated by the issues of Independence and Incorporation. The determination of the Kwandebele government to fully implement these two foundation stones of apartheid policy, has been matched by an implacable commitment on the part of the residents of the area to oppose them and prevent their being carried through. This has meant that for over two years now this central Transvaal area has been characterised by a continuously intense political conflict between the homeland government and the majority of the people that it rules. This has resulted in sustained repression involving a level of brutality that may well be worse than that experienced by people anywhere else in South Africa.

This paper looks at the last year's events in Kwandebele in order to explain the nature of the political conflict there as well as the tactics of repression and the impact they have had on popular struggle.

BACKGROUND - The events of 1986

On 1st January 1986 the predominantly Sotho area of Moutse was incorporated into Kwandebele after a six year struggle. The incorporation was marked by extreme violence when Kwandebele's Mbokodo vigilante group attacked Moutse residents.

Kwandebele itself was to go through a similar experience of violence a few months later. The Mbokodo vigilantes formalised their existence and leading cabinet ministers including the chief minister Skosana became top Mbokodo officials. Mbokodo inflicted a reign of terror on Kwandebele residents that enraged the local population. In May the Kwandebele government announced its intentions of taking independence. A powerful and broad based anti-independence lobby developed under the leadership of the Kwandebele Royal Family (the Ndzundzas) that united the entire community against independence plans and Mbokodo. The result was a four month civil war in which over 160 people died, hundreds were detained, many people lost their homes and others were forced to flee the area. Finally in August 1986 the popular forces won a temporary victory when the legislative assembly unanimously voted to cancel independence plans and to outlaw Mbokodo.

For a brief period of jubilation it seemed that Kwandebele's troubles were over. But this optimism was short-lived. For although Independence was no longer on the agenda, the underlying power structure remained intact. Known Mbokodo members still controlled the administration and the existing cabinet remained in control. The cancellation of Independence severely weakened the strength of the government, nevertheless the status quo remained in place.

INDEPENDENCE REVISITED/.....

## INDEPENDENCE REVISITED

Within a few months the Kwandebele government began to re-consolidate its power base. Projects that been planned for Independence were continued and a new commissioner of police, Brigadier Lerm who supported independence, was instated. There was a renewed onslaught of repression and detentions directed towards both the Kwandebele Royal Family as well as youth and students.

In the midst of this growing tension, SS Skosana, the Chief Minister, died of sugar diabetes. George "Majozi" Mahlangu, a 35 year old graduate, known to have been an Mbokodo member and confidante of the notorious Mbokodo leader Piet Ntuli, was chosen Chief Minister. Under his leadership the harassment of the Royal family continued with the Royal family being both detained and fired from the legislative assembly.

Door-to-door raids were carried out in numerous villages in both Moutse and Kwandebele in early 1987 resulting in many arrests and detentions. Tension also intensified in the schools. Detentions of scholars precipitated schools boycotts. By April this harassment had increased to the point that a widespread school boycott was beginning in the Siyabuswa area.

## GUNS AND PICKHANDLES

During April 1987 repression in Kwandebele took on a qualitatively new dimension with the introduction of a kitskonstabel force personally trained by Brigadier Lerm. The introduction of this force is in line with similar developments all over South Africa. The special constables with their six weeks training are being used to supplement regular police forces especially in areas of intense unrest.

In Kwandebele many of the special constables are alleged to be ex-Mbokodo members. This was confirmed by Brigadier Lerm and a Lieutenant Joubert who denied that the special constables were Mbokodo members, but confirmed that "there were former Imbokotho members and "comrades" in the special constable group". Lieutenant Joubert added that "the former Imbokotho members were well-disciplined and well-behaved, and added some stability to the group".

During March rumours began to circulate in the village that Mbokodo was being trained as part of the police force. In April this force hit the streets. For an initial period the re-appearance of Mbokodo wearing grey or green overalls, carrying guns and pickhandles was a source of confusion to many people.

However, as conflict heightened it soon became clear that they were part of the security forces. From late April they became the main force patrolling villages and keeping control.

The introduction of the kitskonstabels fundamentally changed the balance of power in the area. People's fears that the Mbokodo terror had re-emerged in a new guise were soon proved to be true.

Only now with/.....

Only now with their statutory powers this para police force had legal sanction for the actions taken against opponents of Independence. Whereas before Mbokodo atrocities could be reported to the police, even if follow-up action was tardy, now Mbokodo were the police.

#### INDEPENDENCE ANNOUNCED

In April the legislative assembly was opened again. Speeches made by key cabinet ministers referred to the 'Ndebele nation's' desire for self-determination'. Two weeks into the session, Princes James and Andries Mahlangu, speaker of the legislative assembly, Solly Mahlangu, and Prince Cornelius were all of whom oppose Independence, fired from their positions in the Ndzundza tribal authority and therefore from their positions in the legislative assembly. All were in detention at the time. The way was now open for Independence without a parliamentary opposition.

Finally, on May 6 - the day of the white elections - the Kwandebele government announced its intentions of taking Independence on a retroactive basis. In making the announcement the Chief Minister, Majozi, said that public meetings had been held where a mandate was obtained and that the paramount chief, Mabhokho, had agreed to the plan. (This was denied by the paramount chief who told the press "I was at no time consulted about Independence since it was rejected by the nation last year". He added that he was not going to force the Ndebele nation to take a direction it did not want).

This attempt to tell the world that Paramount Chief Mabhokho supported independence was been a central element in the Kwandebele government's attempts to obtain popular support for its plans. It is quite clear that the Royal Family has a vast degree of popular support and power. Its opposition to Independence has formed the foundation for all other resistance efforts. The Kwandebele government has tried many tactics to both limit and co-opt the paramountcy. This has ranged from lies that the Mabhokho (paramount chief) has consented to independence, to assertions that the paramount is being manipulated, by his sons and forced by them to oppose independence. The paramount has at times been summoned to KwaMhlanga ostensibly to sign documents agreeing to Independence. Rather than do this he has spent much of the past two years in hiding. Most recently he has been restricted from leaving Kwandebele and from giving interviews.

Steps have also been taken to limit and control the powers of the Ndzundzas tribal authority. The Manala chiefdom has been elevated in status by the Kwandebele government, and the support of some of its chiefs for independence has been acclaimed as a reflection of majority support. In addition, the Kwandebele government has used its powers to fire the leading members of the Ndzundza tribal authority and replace them with its own hand-picked people. Their implementation of its plans has then hailed as support from the Ndzundzas overall.

The Response to independence/.....

## THE RESPONSE TO INDEPENDENCE

The response to Majozi's statement was entirely predictable. With speed and fury Kwandebele's people indicated their anger. Within 24 hours all schools were out on boycott, reports flowed in of government property being burned and its vehicles stoned. Calls were made for a May 14 stayaway to commemorate the previous year's resistance as well as oppose current developments.

Information minister FK Mahlangu's statement that "the decision to opt for independence was a time for rejoicing" was not shared by the people. Once again their lives had been turned inside out by the Kwandebele government's determination to proceed along the Independence path.

The Kwandebele government was also swift to respond. Its newly-introduced 'Kits' force was deployed throughout the area, as were the regular police and the 115 Battalion. A strict curfew was enforced and anyone out after dark was liable to be teargassed, if not beaten or detained. A news blackout was enforced and journalists were prohibited from entering the area.

Door-to-door raids started in many villages and the hunt for "comrades" was carried out with excessive brutality. All people suspected by the government to be fuelling resistance were given stern warnings. This included teachers and civil servants.

It was only after mid-May that the full horror of events in Kwandebele became clear. Three journalists from the Star were detained at Kwaggafontein police station for three days. On their release they reported witnessing events of extreme and random brutality. In the overcrowded cells at Kwagga they were kept with people from every walk of life in Kwandebele. Senior civil servants, youngmen, children, old chiefs were crowded together in small dark cells. The food was appalling. There was no proper medical treatment or exercise. Yet it was not the conditions of detention that caused the subsequent outrage, but the random torture inflicted on prisoners.

The chosen weapon of Kwandebele's kitscops is the pickhandle. In a matter of days it came to symbolise both the brutality of the Kwandebele authorities as well as the consequences of opposing them. For hundreds of people were beaten with this crude but effective weapon. In Kwagga police station the Star reporters saw people being forced to hold onto the charge office bars and being beaten systematically with pickhandles, as well as being kicked and hit until they collapsed. In the villages, youths were beaten at random by the "pickhandle vigilantes" before being detained and taken off to police stations for further torture.

This is the testimony/.....

This is the testimony of a journalist from the Star who was detained and witnessed assaults at Kwaggafontein police station:

".....a youth by the name of Michael Makau, who had been standing against a wall in the charge office was told to come over the counter and was told to hold onto the bars above it. Mahamba (a plain clothes policeman), then removed a pick handle which was concealed behind a board under the counter and began to beat him with this object. After the first blow which was delivered with two hands from above the shoulder, Makua fell to the floor. When Makua fell he was kicked by Mahamba and had his face slapped and was ordered to stand up again and hold onto the bars

Another policeman came across and also slapped Makua. The youth complied with the comand to get up and hold onto the bars again. All along the two poliæemen were telling him that he was going to tell the truth about a meeting which he attended. When he denied attending the meeting, Mahamba again swung the pick handle and beat Makua on the buttocks, whereupon he fell down. This sequence of events was repeated several times, until Makua could no longer stand. Thereafter he was made to lie on the table in the charge office. Five policemen assaulted Makua, remonstrating tha he should tell the truth. By this time Makua was screaming very loudly and begging for mercy. Everytime he pleaded for mercy, he was told that he must tell the truth. After sometime he slipped off the table onto the floor where he was left. He crawled over to the wall in the charge office and it was clear that he was in great agony".

In Vlaklaagte village, a stronghold of opposition to independence, the assault on the youth became so bad that one distraught father commented that "we have no cheldren any more. If they are not in jail or in hospital they have run away". The following are just some of the incidents that took place in May and June 1987:

From the second week of May any young boy became fair target for assault and beating. On 13.5.87 for example, AM and ES two scholars were asleep at E's house when they were woken by large numbers of men bursting into the house shouting that they were comrades who must show them their leaders. The two youths were pulled out of bed. One boy boy was hit on his face with an R1 rifle and then pushed into the road. They were blindfolded and beaten until they pointed out other homes where youths were staying. One boy sustained a severe head wound when he was hit on his head with a rifle. The kitscops then took them and other prisoners to a camp at Emagesini near the old Kwaggafontein electricity sub-station.

There Z,E and three other/..

There Z,E and three other youths were beaten and tortured. They were kept there overnight and the following day were again sjambokked and finally released.

On 27th May LM truck driver from Vlaklaagte was taken from his home by unidentified men who beat him up as they took him away. One of the vehicles driven by them had a police registration KNP 2029. The following day his wife MM traced him to Kwaggafontein police station.

The same night another youth KM was raided by police. He was not at home at the time and was eventually found at the home of a neighbour who was slapped around while the arrest was taking place. AN was detained at home at 2am that morning. About ten men with guns broke the windows and made their way into the house. A was woken by a blow on his head with the butt of a gun, made to dress and taken out to a van. On the way he was kicked on the chest and slapped about the face. He was then taken to Kwaggafontein police station where he witnessed assaults on KM, AN and DS. He was then put in a cell with 54 other people.

KM was kicked in the ribs and slapped. He was also beaten on his feet. His trousers were torn off and he was then put in a toilet size room where he was more thoroughly beaten. He was hit on his head with a hammer and on his release from detention he was bleeding from his eyes and could not speak properly.

AN was beaten when he was arrested. Eventually he collapsed onto the floor and was then jumped on by men wearing heavy boots. At the police station he was kicked on his ribs and also sjambokked. DS suffered the same fate and JN was beaten so severely that the prisoners in the cells could hear his screams.

On Sunday 31st May the kitscops and the Mbokodo again went on the rampage in Vlaklaagte. At about 11.30am they burst into a local shebeen. JN was sjambokked by Mbokodo men in civilian clothes. This was witnessed by a number of policemen accompanying the Mbokodo. He was forced to point out the shop where his friend DM was. When the Mbokodi found D they pulled him out of his home, beat him up and took him away.

Around the same time JM (18) was also taken from his home by men who told his mother that she would never see him again. J heard them and tried to escape over a wire fence. He was shot at and then caught. Before he was taken away he was thoroughly beaten with sjamboks and kieries. The only man his mother could recognise was SM a well known Mbokodo leader who used to own a shop in the village. SM has been identified as being present during many of these assaults and arrests.

Later that day YR, /.....

Later that day YR, DM and MQ were also taken by the Mbokodo and kitscops. Y was beaten up with pick handles in full view of a crowd of people watching a soccer game at the field across the road from his home. DM's arrest was also watched by a large group of people. D was shot whilst trying to escape and was then beaten. SM accompanied the kitscops carrying out these arrests.\*

This harassment of youth continued for months after the Independence announcement. The focus of repression shifted from village to village as organisation and resistance became stronger of weaker. But the pattern of assaults and detentions has not yet ceased. Despite this, Kwandebele's youth have continued to organise. Recently the Mabhokho youth congress was formed to co-ordinate youth structures in all villages. One of its central aims is to take forward the fight against independence.

By June there were the beginnings of a public awareness of the horror of Kwandebele. On the 9th the Kwandebele cabinet together with Brigadier Lerm met with the South African cabinet to discuss their independence request. To the surprise of all concerned PW Botha refused to grant independence. Instead he stipulated conditions to be met before independence could be granted. These stipulated that Independence must be obtained in an orderly fashion; that agreements must be negotiated by joint committees of the two governments; and that the government of Kwandebele must consider some acceptable method of demonstrating that it had the support of the broad population. Even the South African government was forced to recognise that the Independence decision had no support or legitimacy and could only be implemented with brute force.

Since this meeting the Kwandebele government has continuously reiterated its intentions of taking independence, but has also refused to hold a referendum. The reason most often given is fear of "intimidation". The South African government has not commented any further except to state that its conditions stand.

The Kwandeele government has not however been totally impervious to Pretoria's demands. During July and August there was a noticeable let up in the numbers of assaults and beatings. Some detainees were also released. But anyone challenging Majozi's government in any way was still a target for detention and arrest. The Kwandebele government also attempted to generate a propaganda and publicity campaign around the Independence issue. From July Kwandebele cabinet ministers spoke regularly on the radio about the "winds of freedom" blowing through Kwandebele. FK Mahlangu claimed that regular meetings were attended by thousands who were showing support for the government, but that a referendum could not be held because of fears of "intimidation".

\* NOTE: THESE INCIDENTS ARE DRAWN FROM AFFIDAVITS

A series of meetings were/.....

A series of meetings were in fact held in July and August to discuss the Independence issue. First all chiefs and headmen were summonsed to Kwamhlanga, then taxi-drivers and finally businessmen. At these meetings those present were asked to declare their support for Independence. In each case many of the opponents of Independence refused to attend. A register of attendance was taken at each meeting and the names of the absentees noted. This aroused fears of retaliatory action against anti-Independence people. In addition the Independence stadium at Kwamhlanga was opened in mid-July with much fanfare. A police and kitscops pass-out parade was held. Scholars and teachers were given the day off to attend and free buses were made available to transport them. However many scholars and teachers did not go and held normal classes. The most elaborate of these PRO meetings was held at Kwamhlanga stadium in October. A four day Kwandebele show was held. The programme included an agricultural show, traditional music and dancing, as well as a concert with big names such as Brenda Fasi and Lazarus Kgakgudi. A friendly soccer match between Moroka Swallows and Jomo Cosmos was also planned.

It was widely rumoured that the large crowds expected at the festival would be taken to indicate approval for Independence. However, this festival fell flat after the big names pulled out after approaches from anti-Independence organisations. The large crowds expected did not turn up and the majority of the audience is reported to have consisted of primary scholars.

In addition to these meetings and festivals, pressure on residents of Moutse and Kwandebele to take out Kwandebele citizenship has played a major role in the attempt to show the world that Independence has the support of the people. All over Kwandebele and Moutse pensioners are told to apply for citizenship before their pension applications can be accepted. This requirement is implemented on the basis of a directive from the Kwandebele government. People wanting to apply for business and taxi licences are also told that they must first produce their citizenship cards. Civil servants have been told to take out citizenship in order to guarantee their job security, and trainee teachers applying for entrance to the local college are being turned away unless they are citizens.

These forms of "persuasion" are more subtle than pick handles and sjamboks. Yet they are no less effective. The pressure exerted by the fear of not getting a pension, or not having the licence that enables one to earn a living is a powerful inducement to accept citizenship albeit with extreme reluctance.

THE MOUTSE RESPONSE/.....



## THE MOUTSE RESPONSE

It was in Moutse that these tactics of the Kwandebele government were most strenuously resisted. The Moutse population is still waiting for the outcome of their appeal against the judgement handed down in the Pretoria Supreme court in 1987 which turned down their plea that incorporation be cancelled. Aside from legal cases, the Moutse community has passively resisted attempts by Kwandebele to impose its administration. It was inevitable that the demand that Moutse residents take out Kwandebele citizenship would be resisted strongly.

In August Moutse residents reported to Chief Mathebe, the head of the regional authority with Kwandebele citizenship forms to be endorsed by him. The Chief refused to do this and sent people back to the magistrate with a letter stating that citizenship was not a legal prerequisite of pension applications. This enraged Kwandebele officials who had no choice but to accede to the letter.

## THE POLICE STATION AFFAIR

Towards the end of August, the Chief together with other local notables received invitations to the opening of a Kwandebele police station built near the magistrate's court at Dennilton. The chief, adamant about his rejection of Kwandebele's administration refused to go as did most other Moutse residents including scholars. This "boycott" of the new police station once again angered the Kwandebele authorities and particularly the special constables who are alleged to have retaliated by commandeering buses and forcing large numbers of people to attend the opening ceremony.

In a situation of rapidly increasing tension this was a spark that set Moutse aflame once more. Anonymous pamphlets were circulated calling for stay-aways and boycott and a bus was attacked near Kgobokoane. In response the special constables went into the area with a vengeance. Door-to-door raids were carried out: numerous boys and men were assaulted and detained; roadblocks were erected every few kilometers and a witchhunt began for those suspected of being behind the Moutse community's intransigence. The royal village of Ntoane at Kwarrilaagte was particularly heavily harassed, presumably because it had always been a centre of resistance.

## ASSASSINATION

At the height of this crackdown a senior Kwandebele policeman, Lt Fourie, and his son were assassinated near Dennilton and the local police station was attacked. This brought a new element into the Kwandebele struggle. The Kwandebele security police became far more intensely involved in the Moutse area than ever before. They seem to have believed that the sons and young relatives of Chief Mathebe were responsible for the shooting. Their attempts to track down these suspected culprits introduced a new kind of repression far more systematic than anything hitherto experienced.

TORTURE/.....

## TORTURE

Many people were detained and some severely tortured in an effort to establish their involvement in the shootings. Charles Mathebe, a 27 year old youth from Kwarrilaagte was one of these. He was detained because the Kwandebele police believed he knew where guns were hidden. He was taken home to look for them and on a number of occasions was assaulted in front of his family and other villagers. This provided the basis for a court interdict to restrain the Kwandebele police from further assault. After a temporary restraining order was granted he was seen by his attorney who counted 55 scars on his body. He told how he had been beaten, suffocated by having a rubber inner tube pulled across his face, made to stand etc.

Towards the end of 1987 and into early 1988 more and more rumours of torture and of the appalling conditions in which detainees were kept filtered out of Kwandebele's jails. This resulted in further court action. In January applications were brought before the Supreme court on behalf of Moutse activists, Frans Phatlane and Johannes Makitla. Both had been beaten and tortured during the course of interrogation about the shootings. Phatlane had been subjected to sustained electric shocks and Makitla was suffocated with an inner tube. The substance of their statements, however, relate to the conditions under which they were kept. Phatlane was held at Verena police station for 89 days. He was kept alone in a cell without an electric light or running water. He was forced to drink and wash from the toilet bowl. He had no change of clothing or exercise, did not receive proper medical attention and was fed a diet that provided only 10% of the minimum nutrients necessary for health.

## ABDUCTION

In late 1987 the Kwandebele police began to operate on the Witwatersrand. Three executive members of the South African Youth Congress (SAYCO) were abducted from a Johannesburg hotel, as were three leading members of the UDF affiliated Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa. Two executive members of the Moutse Civic Association and one youth congress member were also abducted from their homes in Alexandra. An urgent court interdict challenging the right of the Kwandebele police to operate outside Kwandebele was successful and these detainees were released - all of them reported that they had been assaulted and tortured. Even this supreme court judgement did not restrain the Kwandebele police. In January 1988 Peter Xaba, the secretary of the Unemployed Workers Union in Johannesburg and Dudu Mathebe were abducted from Noord Street in the mid-afternoon and taken in Kwandebele. After threatened court action they were released. Both had been beaten up.

## THE COURT CASE - IMPENDING REPRESSION

During this period Chief Mathebe of Moutse has been under heavy pressure. His sons are accused of being responsible for both the shootings as well as the political unrest.

Members of his family/.....

Members of his family including women and children, have been assaulted and detained and he has been constantly visited by the police and at times has been told not to leave his home.

At the moment it looks as though the Moutse community is once more heading into a confrontation with the Kwandebele authorities. The impending court case is the culmination of two years of bitter suffering. The entire population of Moutse is eagerly awaiting the outcome of this case. In addition many Moutse residents want to be present at the hearing in Bloemfontein on March 7th. Plans are underway to hire buses to make this journey and money to cover the costs is being raised from the community.

However, the Moutse people believe that even this attempt to demonstrate their concern and witness the hearing may be disrupted by the Kwandebele police. In early February Chief Mathebe received a notice from the local magistrate issued in terms of the Public Safety Act. This stipulated at all meetings whether inside or outdoors were prohibited until 31st March 1988. Meetings can only be held with the permission of the police. This is being interpreted by the Moutse people as an attempt to prevent any organisation around the court case. It has also aroused fears that people travelling to Bloemfontein may be prevented from leaving the area. The attorneys acting for the Chief and community have sent a letter to the Kwandebele police requesting an undertaking that their clients will not be prevented from leaving the area to go to court. Should this undertaking not be forthcoming, it is likely that court action will be taken.

The Kwandebele government is making it clear that it would like the Moutse issue to be dead and buried. FK Mahlangu Kwandebele minister of information has made both press statements and radio broadcasts stating that the Moutse issue is finished. "The incorporation of Moutse into Kwandebele is a closed chapter to Kwandebele. Anyone who still feels there is something he can do to reverse the question of Moutse is lost..... Kwandebele has established a good relationship with the people of Moutse...." Clearly the Kwandebele government is intent on suppressing any action that would prove the contrary. This can only mean that as the court case approaches, the people of Moutse are once again heading into a period of increased repression.

#### CONCLUSION

1988 is still in its infancy but already tensions in both Moutse and Kwandebele are escalating. After a year of harassment and detentions the Ndzundza Royal Family is once more under attack. Prince Cornelius is in emergency detention; Prince James has already been arrested twice - once for attending shareholders meeting of the Siyabuswa bakery, and once on unspecified charges. He has also had two attempts made on his life in recent months. His brother Prince Andries and Solly Mahlangu who successfully challenged his dismissal as a speaker of the legislative assembly have both experienced kidnap attempts.

On February 5 the/.....

On February 5 the Paramount, David Maboko was issued with a restriction order applying to him and his entire family. This prevents them from leaving Kwandebele; from giving interviews to journalists and from participating in the preparation of any publication. It was served the day before a traditional mass gathering of the Ndebeles was due to take place at Roos Senekal near Middelburg. This gathering has been a Ndebele custom ever since the Ndebeles were conquered by the boers towards the end of the last century. It is indeed ironic that the very government which insists it is committed to Ndebele self-determination prevents a meeting in which the unity of the Ndebele people in the face of their oppression is asserted.

In both Kwandebele and Moutse the traditional leadership and the youth have to a large extent borne the brunt of state repression. In Kwandebele the determined refusal of this leadership to give its name to independence has been a critical-factor in sustaining resistance for over two years. In Moutse, the refusal of Chief Mathebe and the tribal authority to accept the incorporation has been instrumental in keeping alive the spirit of resistance. In both areas the traditional leadership has retained its legitimacy and representativity despite the heavy onslaughts it has experienced. This has meant that although the Kwandebele government, through the use of brute repression has managed to keep control of both areas, it does so without any popular base whatsoever. The fact that the Kwandebele government has no legitimacy and that political leadership and direction lies with those who oppose independence and incorporation is the reason that after two years, the Kwandebele/Moutse struggle is no nearer resolution than when it first began.

This intense and sustained struggle has generated its own unique set of contradictions that have still to be played out. The longer the conflict goes on the less possible is a resolution that can rely on easy co-option of the leadership of the Moutse and Kwandebele communities. The level of violence, the difficulties in recourse to law, the arbitrary nature of repressive action, have all fundamentally alienated many conservative people from the homeland establishment. The formation of the UDF affiliated Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa is an indication of this. Until the incorporation and independence issues blew up both areas were almost completely unpoliticised. The bitter two year struggle has seen the formation of many grassroots organisations with a commitment to the total abolition of the homelands system.

From the part of the South African government there are indications that there is some unease about the direction that politics in Kwandebele has taken. The requirement that the Kwandebele government prove it has popular support for independence is an indication of this. Yet, in its response the South African government has displayed extreme cynicism. It has constantly maintained that Kwandebele is a self-governing territory over whose affairs it has no control. For example, parliamentary questions about repression in Kwandebele has gone unanswered for this reason.

Yet, the South African/.....

Yet, the South African government set events in Kwandebele in motion. It must bear full responsibility for the course of history in this area. Its determination to ensure that Skosana took independence meant that Moutse was incorporated; its commitment to a grand apartheid vision meant that it could ignore the feeling of the majority of Kwandebele's people and prop up a government with no base in the people.

Now that both areas have plunged into a bitter experience of conflict and suffering the South African government is attempting to stand back and claim neutrality. This is clearly nonsense. The repression in Kwandebele and attempts to destroy popular leadership and opposition built the interests of the South African government as much as the implementation of the state of emergency does in the rest of the country. South Africa's seemingly clean hands are fundamentally tainted.

It is hard to forecast precisely what 1988 will bring to this troubled part of South Africa. One thing is clear though, the fast and furious pace of Kwandebele politics holds within it the possibility of determining the future of the entire bantustan system. Should independence succeed in Kwandebele, grand apartheid will be given a major boost; should it be decisively eliminated as an option and Moutse be freed from Kwandebele rule; the capacity to carry out grand apartheid in the old way will be decisively weakened.