

**A BIOGRAPHICAL STUDY OF
P.R. MPHEPHU (1925-1988), WITH
SPECIAL REFERENCE TO
POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IN A
TWENTIETH CENTURY SOUTH
AFRICAN AFRICAN SOCIETY**

By

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BA Honours (UNIVEN)**

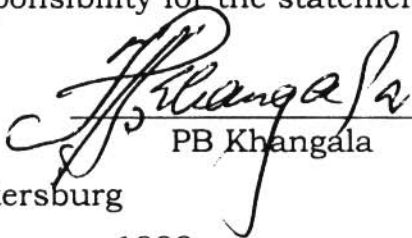
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Northern Province of South Africa**

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1 January 1999

STATEMENT

I, the undersigned PETERROCKS BENJAMIN KHANGALA, hereby declare that this dissertation is my own work and that it has never been submitted in part or in full at this or any other university or academic institution. I accept full responsibility for the statements made and the conclusions drawn therein.


PB Khangala

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1 January 1999

PREFACE

This study is an attempt to investigate the role played by the late P.R. Mphephu in the Venda region of the Northern Transvaal during the period 1925 to his death in 1988.

Mphephu was one of the key figures in the development of this policy of independent homelands, introduced by Dr. H.F. Verwoerd since the 1950's. He was also one of the first among homeland leaders to accept the principle of independence for his region.

Patrick Mphephu was born on 4 February 1925 at Dzanani Royal Kraal. He grew up at Tskhakhuma where he attended school. He was baptised in the Lutheran Faith and given the name of Patrick. He left school after completing standard 5 in 1946 and went to Johannesburg to seek employment, like his father and grandfathers before him. Mphephu's father George Ramabulana, died in November 1949. Mphephu was subsequently installed in 1950.

When Mphephu assumed leadership, the government of the Nationalist Party had already started introducing its policy of Separate Development (apartheid). According to this policy, homelands were to be established and developed along ethnic lines. This was to be done with the co-operation of traditional leaders. The aim of the South African Government was to arrest the flow of the Blacks to the cities. Blacks were to rule themselves in their respective homelands. The economic development of homelands was given priority. Within this framework of development, Mphephu was to play a key role.

In the 1950's the South African government introduced tribal authorities into Venda as one of what was later to become the indigenous homelands. These were the lowest level of traditional government. Mphephu became chairman of Mphephu Tribal Authority. By 1959, all the regional authorities were firmly in place. These were the second tier of government and Mphephu became the chairman. By 1962 the Thohoyandou Territorial Authority was established which was formed by the combination of all regional authorities. This was the highest form of government and Mphephu was elected chairman. This led to Venda attaining self rule in 1969. Mphephu became Chief Councillor.

In 1973, the first general election took place. There were two political parties contesting the election, namely, the Venda National Party (VNP) under Chief Mphephu and the Venda Independence Progressive Party (VIPPP) under Mr. Baldwin Mudau, an

urban representative. Mphephu won the election and became chief minister.

In 1978, the second general election took place and Mphephu won again. The following year he was made paramount chief. On 13 September 1979, Venda became an independent republic with Mphephu as its first president, a position that he maintained until his death on 17 April 1988.

Reason for the Research

P.R. Mphephu played a key role in Venda from 1950 to 1988 in transforming Venda from a traditional to a modern society. In the research an attempt was made to :

- a) give a biographical sketch of P.R. Mphephu as hereditary traditional ruler of the Venda speaking people;
- b) investigate the way in which he played a key role in the process of the development of an independent state in terms of the policy of separate development;
- c) account for the socio-economic changes that took place in Venda between 1950 and 1988; and
- d) shed some light on the complexities of establishing a bridge between traditional society and a system of Western government in Venda, up to 1988.

Contribution to Knowledge

It is hoped that the study will make some contribution to our knowledge of an important period in the development of Venda society.

Method Followed

Research was conducted in terms of the existing scientific guidelines of history as an academic discipline. Both primary and secondary sources were consulted.

Sources Consulted

- a) The Transvaal Archives in Pretoria
- b) Official reports and documentation, available in Venda.
- c) Oral historical sources.
- d) Secondary publications such as books, periodicals and newspapers.

Acknowledgements and thanks

The study was commenced under Professor J.W.N. Tempelhoff, to whom I am indebted for the guidance he gave me. The supervision of the dissertation was taken over by Professor J.G. Pretorius after Professor Tempelhoff left the University of the

North in 1996. I wish to thank him for the manner in which he brought home to me the principles of the historical method and for the fruitful mutual relationship which he created.

I also want to thank Mrs. C. Coleman of Levubu who typed the first manuscript as well as Mrs. E.L. Pretorius who was responsible for the final layout.

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P.B.K.

Thohoyandou
Northern Province
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New Year's Day 1999

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION: THE RAMABULANA CHIEFTAINSHIP AND P.R. MPHEPHU'S EARLY YEARS

The history of Venda¹ chieftainship is complex. It is marred by conflict among chiefs' sons fighting for the succession. Those who ruled, either did so with the help of their supporters or, they were placed in the position by enlisting help from other tribes and foreigners who entered the territory which is today known as the Soutpansberg. Those who were defeated were forced to flee with their followers and establish themselves elsewhere. This is probably why Venda chiefs over the years did not rule specific tribes but instead governed over certain areas. The Vendas' inability to live peacefully with one another made it easier for the White community to subjugate them.²

The history of Ramabulana can be traced back to the latter part of the 17th century and the beginning of the 18th century when the Vhasenzi and the Vhalemba tribes left the area which was to become Zimbabwe, and settled at Lwandali, an area north-east of the present Dzanani. Their first leader was Dambanyika, the descendant of Mambo who ruled the Vhavenda and Vhakalanga in Zimbabwe. The Vhatavhatsinde had already established themselves in the north-eastern areas. According to the historical traditions of the Vhavenda, when Dambanyika arrived at Lwandali, the locals he found were the Vhangona and Vhakwevho, and they became his subjects. He was a hunter who used bows with poisoned arrows as well as dogs. Dambanyika established the first Dzata at Lwandali and the ruins are still partially visible today. There are conflicting narratives of how he died. One story has it that he was murdered by his jealous sons. The most common account is one that tells that he died in a cave while pursuing a rock rabbit. There was a rock fall and he was trapped inside, and unfortunately his followers could not save him. The name of Lwandali then changed to Tshiendeulu, a Kalanga word meaning "going away for good". Tshiendeulu became the new name given to the burial place

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- 1 *Vha-* is used to refer to Venda and other groupings in an ethnic context; *Venda* and its derivatives are generally used because of the fact that this study has been written in the English language. For the same reason one does not refer in a study done in English on a topic from French history to the inhabitants of France as *Français* but as *French*.
 - 2 S.P. Jordaan and A. Jordaan: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 12; Benso/RAU: *The Independent Venda*, p. 20; J. Hoagland: *South Africa*, p. 79; H.A. Stayt: *The Bavenda*, p. 19.

for chiefs.³

Dambanyika was succeeded by his son, Dyambeu or Velelambeu, around 1723. He left Tshiendeulu with some of his followers and settled at what is currently known as Dzata II or Dzanani. They never visited Tshiendeulu again. Even today Ramabulana chiefs do not communicate directly with members of the royal family residing at Tshiendeulu. This is perhaps because Tshiendeulu is regarded as a burial place of Dambanyika, the founder of Vhavenda. Dyambeu established the second Dzata. The circumstances surrounding his death are not clear. He was allegedly murdered by his son Phophi who, later, changed his name to Thohoyandou. Thohoyandou's important sons were Mpofu, Raluswielo and Ravhura. Thohoyandou as a leader enhanced the status of Dzata and was responsible for the establishment of a great empire whose influence extended as far south as the Olifants River and across the Limpopo River in the north. He is said to have subjugated many tribes with the help of *Ngomalungudu* (the divine drum) whose sound filled his enemies with fear.⁴

It is not clear how Thohoyandou met his fate. He is alleged to have disappeared while on a hunting expedition. Another account has it that he was murdered by his jealous brothers because he did not want to vacate the throne, which in any case did not belong to him, but instead to his brother's son. Thohoyandou's disappearance resulted in the break-up of the empire, because his sons, Mpofu, Raluswielo and Ravhura left with their followers and established themselves at Sunguzwi (Hanglip), Depeni near Siloam and Makonde, an area north-east of Sibasa.⁵

Mpofu ruled around 1791-1829 and it was during that period that the first white man, Coenraad Buys, arrived. He was given a place on the western side of the Soutpansberg near what is now called Buysdorp.

3 M.H. Nemudzivhadi: *When and What*, p. 19; Anon: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 35; N.J. van Warmelo (ed.): *Copper miners of Musina and the Early History of the Soutpansberg*, pp. 34-38; R. Stevens: *Venda*, pp. 37-38; S.P. Jordaan and A. Jordaan: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 9; Benso/RAU: *The Independent Venda*, p. 19.

4 M.H. Nemudzivhadi: *When and What*, p. 19; N.J. van Warmelo (ed.): *Copper miners of Musina and the Early History of the Soutpansberg*, p. 34; Anon: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 35; H.A. Stayt: *The Bavenda*, pp. 15-16; Benso/RAU: *The Independent Venda*, p. 12.

5 M.H. Nemudzivhadi: *When and What*, p. 19; N.J. van Warmelo (ed.): *Copper Miners of Musina and the Early History of the Soutpansberg*, p. 38; H.A. Stayt: *The Bavenda*, p. 15; Anon: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 35.

It was also during that period when a group of refugees settled south of Dwars River after fleeing the wars of Shaka. They were the Batlokwa under their chiefs Machaka and Ramokgopa and they became Mpofu's subjects. They were responsible for bringing circumcision to the area. Several Venda chiefs married in the families of the Batlokwa community. Makhado's uncle, Madzhie, came from that group. George Mbulaheni Mphephu⁶ and later Patrick Mphephu married into that group.⁷

Mpofu died in 1829. Shortly afterwards trouble flared up between his sons who started fighting for the succession. Mpofu's important sons were Ramavhoya and Ramabulana. The elder Ramabulana who was eligible for the chieftaincy, could however not match his younger brother in war. He then enlisted the help of the Voortrekker leader Louis Trichardt, who had earlier arrived in the region. Ramavhoya was killed and Ravele Rasithu Ramabulana became the new ruler. His headquarters were at Tshirulululuni.

Ramabulana lived in harmony with the White community which subsequently in 1848 established the town Oudedorp. Later problems developed, when he resisted attempts by the Whites to establish hegemony over his community and to levy taxes in the area. He was subsequently forced to flee, first to Nngwekhulu, then to Mauluma, and, eventually, to Vuvha.

The effects of the Mfecane⁸ were also felt in the Venda region. The Tsongas/Shangaans arrived in the area between 1835 and 1840, after fleeing the wars of Soshangane, a Zulu headman who fled from Shaka. A second group arrived under the leadership of João Albasini, a Portuguese hunter-trader, and settled at Luonde (Goedewensch). The last group to arrive fled their territory as a result of civil war between the chiefs Muzila and Mawewe in Mozambique. Albasini later became a native commissioner of the South African Republic and collected taxes locally. This made him unpopular with Venda chiefs at the time. The Swazis also tried to invade Venda but they were repelled because the Soutpansberg range

6 In Venda orthography *ph* is pronounced as [p].

7 M.H. Nemudzivhadi: *When and What*, p. 19; Anon: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 35; M.H. Nemudzivhadi: *Ravele Land Consolidation* - submitted to Van der Walt Commission, 1980, Unpublished report, p. 3; Benso/RAU: *The Independent Venda*, p. 20.

8 Or *Difaqane*, the time of troubles in Southern Africa during the first decades of the nineteenth century.

offered refuge against attacks.⁹

After Ramabulana's death in 1864 trouble flared up between his sons Davhana, Rasikhuthuma, Nthabalala and Makhado. Davhana ruled for a short period but was easily ousted by Makhado. The rule of Makhado was characterised by many conflicts with local White communities, with his brothers and with other local chiefs. As a young man he was employed by White hunters at Schoemansdal where he was taught to hunt elephants. He later proceeded to Kimberley where he was employed in the mines. His aim was to accumulate enough money to buy guns for the trouble he knew would crop up over chieftainship. His uncle Madzhe was of Sotho origin and had a strong influence over him. Makhado was the first Venda chief to be circumcised and this played a major role in making him more acceptable to the different tribes living in the Soutpansberg area, since both the Sothos and Lembas adhered to that particular custom. Later the Ramabulana chiefs, including Patrick Mphephu, were circumcised. Tshivhase chiefs, on the other hand, down to the present day, do not believe in that practice.¹⁰

Makhado was called "The Lion of the North" because of his strong stand against White occupation. He also refused to pay taxes, most probably at the instigation of his uncle, Madzhe, his advisor. Even Commandant Paul Kruger failed to subdue him, and in 1867 this led to the evacuation of Schoemansdal and the resettlement of the local Whites who retreated to the southern areas of the then northern Transvaal and further afield. Makhado was constantly at war with his brothers, especially Davhana, who went to settle near Albasini after fleeing first to Nngwekhulu and then to Vuvha. Makhado died in 1895 after allegedly having taken an overdose of medicine. Another rumour has it that he was poisoned on the instructions of his White enemies. Makhado's important sons were Mphephu Alilali Tshilamulela, Maemu, Kutama and Sinthumule.¹¹

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- 9 M.H. Nemudzivhadi: *When and What*, p. 20; M.H. Nemudzivhadi: *Ravele Land Consolidation* - submitted to the Van der Walt Commission, 1980. Unpublished report, p. 4; N.J. van Warmelo (ed.): *Copper Miners of Musina and the Early History of the Soutpansberg*, p. 39; Benso/RAU: *The Independent Venda*, p. 21.
- 10 Benso/RAU: *The Independent Venda*, p. 21; Anon: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 35; N.J. van Warmelo (ed.): *Copper Miners of Musina*, p. 41; S.P. and A. Jordaan: *The Republic of Venda*, pp. 9-10.
- 11 Benso/RAU: *The Independent Venda*, p. 20; Anon: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 37; H.A. Stayt: *The Bavenda*, p. 16; N.J. van Warmelo (ed.): *The Copper Miners of Musina*, p. 41.

Makhado was succeeded by his son Maemu whose mother was Makhado's youngest wife. He was therefore not eligible for the position of chief according to Venda tradition. After an unpopular regency under his mother during his minority, Maemu ruled for a short while, just to be ousted by his half-brother Mphephu Alilali Tshilamulela, the eldest son of Makhado by his first wife, Midana. Mphephu had fled to the Witwatersrand after a scandal involving one of his father's younger wives. Like his father before him, he was employed in the mines. And like his father, his main objective also was to buy guns for the conflict which he knew lay ahead. Mphephu's supporters persuaded him to go back home and, because he was probably supported by the majority of the Vendas at the time, it was easy to depose Maemu.¹²

Mphephu's refusal to pay taxes to the White authorities brought him into conflict with the Transvaal government. He was also frequently in conflict with his brothers Maemu and Sinthumule. In 1898 he was attacked by the combined forces of General Piet Joubert, Kutama, Sinthumule, several Venda chiefs and also Tsonga and Swazi regiments. He thereupon fled to Rhodesia with some of his followers. His brothers Sinthumule and Kutama were promoted to chiefs during his absence. They were placed in charge of locations to the west of the town of Louis Trichardt. When Mphephu returned, he was allocated a reservation in the Nzhelele Valley, the home of Thohoyandou, the legendary ruler.¹³

Mphephu was the last Venda chief to offer resistance to White rule. After the Mphephu War of 1898 his territory was divided into locations for Africans and White farms. He died in 1924¹⁴ and was succeeded by his son, George Mbulaheni, who was one of the first Venda chiefs to be installed by the White authorities. George Mbulaheni Mphephu died in 1949 and was succeeded by Patrick Ramaano Mphephu on 24 February 1950.¹⁵

12 D.W. Krüger (Ed.): *Dictionary of South African Biography* III, pp. 639-640.

13 SA LDE 202 1082/17. Secretary for Lands - Secretary to the Locations Commission, 1906.01.12; M.H. Nemudzivhadi : *The Conflict between Mphephu and the South African Republic 1895-1899*, pp. 62, 169; Benso/RAU : *The Independent Venda*, p. 22.

14 TA GOV 1089 PS 50/8/1907. Location Commission 38/06. Report of Native Location Commission on the Location for the chief Mpefu [sic]. Pretoria 1907.04.08; N.J. Van Warmelo (ed.): *Copper Miners of Musina*, p. 42.

15 N.J. van Warmelo (ed.): *Copper Miners of Musina*, p. 24; M.H. Nemudzivhadi: *When and What*, p. 28; A.J. Venter: *Black Leaders of Southern Africa*, p. 188.

The appointment of Patrick Ramaano Mphephu (Ramabulana) as chief of the Vendas was based on heredity and tradition, but was subject to certain requirements. He was born on 4 February 1925 at the Dzanani chief's house and was the only son of his mother Mushaathoni who came from the Malimuwa line. Mphephu's mother was a blood cousin of his father's, and that made him eligible for the chieftainship, since he derived from noble stock through both parents.¹⁶ Moreover, cattle from the royal house had been used as *ndzekiso*, commonly known as *lobola*,¹⁷ to pay for Mphephu's mother. Without this requirement, a new chief could not be legitimately installed.¹⁸

Mphephu, as was the custom in the royal family, did not grow up in the royal place, but with his maternal uncle, Toni, at Malimuwa, the place of his mother's birth, to whom his mother had been sent for her confinement. Sending prospective chiefs away in this manner, ensured that they were not poisoned by other members of the royal family who could benefit by such elimination of a rival.¹⁹ The negative results of having heirs to the throne grow up at a different place were obvious: there was little identification of father and son with each other, and often there was serious mistrust between them – which boded ill for the welfare of the tribe since the heir was not familiar with the administration of the community and he and his subjects were most of the time strangers to each other. In the circumstances Mphephu, like most of his predecessors, were dependent for advice on influential family members in the royal household. These were the *makhadzi* (the deceased chief's elder sister from a different mother), the *vhokhotsimunene* (the deceased chief's elder brothers from different mothers), the *ndumi* (the chief's younger brother from a different mother). They became a power behind the throne, leaving little possibility for the chief to take important decisions on his own, while at the same time effectively preventing commoners to be drawn into the political decision making process.²⁰

Mphephu's father, George Mbulaheni, and his tribal council were all illiterate, which caused him to fail to understand the workings of White administration. He

16 OS: 931023, p. 42. Mukumela Mphephu (P. R. Mphephu's half-sister, 72 years), Maniini village, A.J. Venter: *Black Leaders of Southern Africa*, p. 188; W. le Roux: *Politieke Leiers van Suider-Afrika*, p. 226.

17 *Ndzekiso*=royal payment in the form of cattle for the acquisition of a bride; *lobola*=a Zulu word commonly used for payment of a bride.

18 OS: 931023, p. 42. Mukumela Mphephu, Maniini village.

19 OS: 931023, p. 42. Mukumela Mphephu, Maniini village.

20 S.P. Jordaan and A. Jordaan: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 24; H.A. Stayt: *The Bavenda*, pp. 195-199.

accordingly had sent his son to attend the missionary school at Siloam.²¹ Patrick's schooling was, however, short-lived because of a dispute between the Ramabulana and the Tshivhase clans over the area called Sendedzane.²²

The Reverend D.W. Giesiecke of the Lutheran Mission, whose predecessors had been responsible for establishing mission stations in the eastern areas of Venda,²³ but had been opposed by the Ramabulana, thought that his mission could be served if Mphephu could be given a formal education and if he could be persuaded to accept Christianity. He therefore prevailed upon Mphephu's father to release the young man, together with four other boys from the royal kraal, to continue their schooling at Tshakhuma Mission Station.²⁴ Mphephu was accordingly accommodated in the family of Mrs. Musolwa Manyage who was related to Ramabulana. According to his classmates, Mphephu was an average pupil excelling in extra-mural activities like the Boy Scouts, football and boxing. His first encounter with Christianity was when he attended catechism classes of the Lutheran faith. He was later baptised by Reverend Giesiecke and became known as Patrick. He left school while doing standard five in 1946 – a step which later was to have serious consequences when he was not able to obtain support, according to some observers, among his classmates and the Venda elite when he contested two elections in Venda between 1973 and 1978.²⁵

His reasons for leaving school and entering the labour market were understandable. His progress at school was slow and he was already 21 years of age. He had to support his mother and two sisters, Muofhe and Phopi.²⁶ Mphephu went to Johannesburg where he was employed by the City Council which had formerly also employed his father. Since he was of royal stock, he was given the position of a messenger rather than a labourer. He held this position until he was

21 OS: 931023, p. 42. Mukumela Mphephu, Maniini village.

22 SAB NTS 3795 2515/308; SAB URU 1938/744 Crownland, Louis Trichardt—Chief Mphephu wishes to purchase land adjoining his farm "Sendedzani" 1325; OS: 931024, p. 41. Silas Ramovha (brother of P. R. Mphephu's father-in-law, 71 years), Dzanani village; OS: 931023, p. 42; Mukumela Mphephu, Maniini village. The disputed area claimed by the Tshivhase clan had been purchased from the South African Government for irrigation purposes.

23 OS: 931024, p. 41. Silas Ramovha, Dzanani village; OS: 931023, p. 42; Mukumela Mphephu, Maniini village.

24 OS: 931024, p. 41. Mr. Silas Ramovha (71 years), Dzanani village, p. 41; OS: 920321, p. 3. T.T. Mathagu (65 years), Tshakuma Mission Station.

25 OS 920315, p. 8. Joel Nethavhani (63 years), Siloam village, B. Nel : "Khosikhulu Mphephu of Venda" in *Southern Africa Today*, 3(4), July 1986, p. 103.

recalled at the time of his father's death in 1949.²⁷

After the subjugation of the Vendas in 1898, the Zoutpansberg was divided into White area, trust farms, crown lands and reserves for Africans. This resulted in the resettlement of various tribes who were residing in the area, like the Sinthumule, Kutama and the Ramabulana. The new British military government found itself confronted with the problem of administering many traditional leaders who had formerly been independent. Subsequently a form of indirect rule was introduced whereby traditional leaders were governed through native and sub-native commissioners. Although this kind of administration was accepted somewhat reluctantly by the chiefs its shortcoming was that it lacked consultation and that led to discontent.²⁸

In order to rule the various African tribes effectively, the South African Government introduced an act of parliament, namely, the *Native Administration Act of 1927* (Act no. 38). This act gave more powers to the Native Affairs Commissioners who had powers to appoint and dismiss chiefs.²⁹ In the reserves, the chiefs were confronted by many problems which included shortage of land and poverty. The introduction of new farming methods which included the demarcation of grazing land, the reduction of stock and the introduction of dipping tanks by the officials did not enjoy support from the African communities.³⁰ The chiefs' problems were not usually entertained and their powers were reduced. Their jurisdiction was restricted to minor petty cases related to tribal problems, and that, in turn, reduced their standing in the eyes of their subjects. This made them reluctant to co-operate with government officials. The *Native Administration Act* was also used to depose problematic chiefs and to appoint their half-brothers in their place. That divided the affected tribes into two groups because in Venda tradition a chief is not made

26 OS: 920321, p. 3, T.T. Mathagu (65 years), Tshakhuma Mission Station; OS: 931023, p. 42 Mukumela Mphephu, Maniini village, (72 years).

27 OS: 930226, p. 5, Edward Nedohe (62 years), Shayandima Township; B. Nel: "Khosikhulu Mphephu of Venda", in *Southern Africa Today*, 3(4), July 1986, pp. 1-3; A.J. Venter: *Black Leaders of Southern Africa*, p. 188.

28 TA GOV 1152 PS 50/37/08. Telegram to Governor of Transvaal to Secretary of State dd. 1908.09.19. Powers of paramount chiefs; VG : Commission of Inquiry into Venda Vhuhosii Affairs, 2(2), pp. 728-738; *The Star*, 18.08.1993, p. 12.

29 TA GOV 1152 PS 50/37/08. Telegram to Governor of Transvaal to Secretary of State dd. 1908.09.19. Powers of paramount chiefs; VG : Commission of Inquiry into Venda Vhuhosii Affairs, 2(2), pp. 728-738; *The Star*, 18.08.1993, p. 12.

30 TA GOV 1152 PS 50/37/08. Telegram to Governor of Transvaal to Secretary of State dd. 1908.09.19. Powers of paramount chiefs; VG : Commission of Inquiry into Venda Vhuhosii Affairs, 2(2), pp. 728-738.

but born into the position after satisfying requirements stated earlier. State appointed chiefs did not always enjoy the support of their subjects.³¹

Several Venda chiefs who refused to co-operate with the government officials were deposed and replaced by their half-brothers. Chief Ratshialingwa Tshivhase was deposed and deported to Hammanskraal in 1946 because he did not want to accept White rule and government officials were often chased away from his area. Piet Dzhomoere of Ha-Sinthumule location was deposed and replaced by his half-brother George Sinthumule in 1940 because he refused to co-operate with agricultural officials.³² The conflict between Venda chiefs and the United Party government continued because of lack of consultation which undermined the traditional leaders' authority.

After 1948 the National Party Government introduced a new form of traditional government which empowered the chiefs. Chiefs were given more and more powers to rule their subjects and that made them to co-operate more with the new government. By consulting with traditional leaders, the National Party Government became acceptable to traditional leaders and therefore its policies could be implemented.

Chief Mphephu accepted White authority because his country was small and undeveloped. As a strong traditionalist, the new political dispensation offered by the National Party Government was attractive to him.³³

31 *The Star*, 18.08.1993, p. 12.

32 SA GG 1191 50/1693. Minute 50/1693 dd. 1942.10.13 from Gov.-General to lawyers Hellman and Baker in Johannesburg. Natives : Miscellaneous. Petition praying for an investigation into the circumstances of the deposition of Peter Sinthumule from chieftainship of the Bavenda tribe and the appointment of George Sinthumule in his place. See also SA URU 2353 1921 Acts of Misconduct, Folio 432. Afdanking van Ratshimphi Sibasa (Tshivhase) as hoof van die Vhavenda stam te Sibasa, Tengwe en Tonondo lokasies. Distrik Zoutpansberg weens slegte gedrag en aanstelling van Ratshialingwa Tshivhase in sy plek.

32. M.C. Botha: *Die Swart Vryheidspaaie*, pp. 149, 153; S.P. Jordaan and A. Jordaan: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 12; B. Rodgers: *Divide and Rule: South Africa's Bantustans*, p. 47.

Chapter 2

SOCIO-ECONOMIC TRENDS WHICH LED THE VENDAS JOINING THE LABOUR MARKET DURING THE FIRST HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The beginning of the twentieth century brought along serious changes in South Africa as a whole and in the Soutpansberg in particular. The new political dispensation had brought an end to inter-tribal warfare, which in turn led to an increase in population as a result of the stability that followed. This did not imply that influential Venda chiefs like Tshilamulela Mphephu, Tshivhase, Kutama and Sinthumule did not resent their loss of independence and their being placed under government officials, or that they ceased to hanker after the old order.

In the economic sphere it gradually became evident that subsistence farming was not able to meet the demands of a constantly increasing population and that new methods of food production were called for. Money economy for the first time began to play a significant part in the lives of the Africans of the Soutpansberg area. Government policies, natural disasters, the two World Wars, and the growing industries of the Witwatersrand all these combined to create a moving away from the traditionally Venda areas to towns and cities.¹

The new order started with the conclusion of the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) on 31 May 1902. It brought a new political dispensation to all the territories now under British rule. It was at this time that a native policy was formulated concerning political rights and land allocation. The new British administration under Lord Alfred Milner, the Governor of the Transvaal Colony, and High Commissioner for Southern Africa, did not believe that Africans could develop to the position of the Whites, and was opposed to granting political rights to them. In 1903 he appointed Sir Godfrey Lagden, who was experienced in African matters, to head a commission to investigate land issues and African labour.² In 1905 the Lagden Commission, ever aware of the importance of the role of the economy, especially that of the Witwatersrand, for the success of British rule in

1 See, *inter alia*, M. Wilson and L. Thompson (eds.): *Oxford History of South Africa*, II, pp. 131, 175.

2 L. Louw and F. Kendal: *South Africa, The Solution*, p. 32; S.B. Spies: "Reconstruction and Unification, 1902-1910" in C.F.J. Muller (ed.): *Five Hundred Years of South African History*, p. 366.

South Africa, recommended that African reserves should not be increased because it would result in a shortage of labour. It further endorsed the permanent separation between White and Black people and the establishment of reserves and townships adjacent to White towns. It further advised the strict enforcement of pass laws. It also gave attention to related matters such as education which should be structured in such a way that it suited the African way of life.³ These recommendations formed the basis of the policy of segregation, and also paved the way for the introduction of the apartheid policy when the Nationalist Government came into power in 1948.

Acting on the recommendations of the Lagden Commission, the British officials thereupon created reserves for the Venda in the northern part of the Transvaal.⁴ Large areas which previously belonged to them were now allocated to White farmers. The Soutpansberg was further divided into three native commissioners' areas, namely, Louis Trichardt, Spelonken and Sibasa. The Chief Native Commissioner at Pietersburg was made responsible for the administration of all the African chiefs in the Soutpansberg area.

The control of the Venda and Shangana/Tsonga in the Sibasa and eastern areas was made more effective by the establishment of a police station at a place called Tshanowa in 1902. Later this police station was transferred to Sibasa where the offices of the sub-native commissioner responsible for the administration of the area were established.⁵

It was during this time that Tshilamulela Mphephu, the grandfather of Patrick Mphephu, returned from Rhodesia in 1902 and established himself in his old royal kraal at Swongozwi (Hanglip). He was removed and resettled in the Nzhelele Valley because the area of the former Ramabulana capital was needed for the establishment of farming and forestry operations. Mphephu's new areas was small, dry and unsuitable for cultivation. His people were used to roaming the mountains where they practised subsistence farming and the rainfall was

3 L. Louw and F. Kendal: *South Africa, The Solution*, p. 32; S.B. Spies: "Reconstruction and Unification, 1902-1910" in C.F.J. Muller (ed.): *Five Hundred Years of South African History*, p. 366.

4 In the absence of the concept of private ownership among the Venda, one of the reasons for the creation of reserves was to prevent tribal land from being whittled away to plantation owners, White farmers, mines, etc. Cf. Crown Land Ordinance (Transvaal), 1903, as amended, 1906.

5 M. Nemudzivhadi: *When and What*, p. 26.

high. He complained to the local authorities, requesting to be settled elsewhere, but they were merely carrying out government policies which they could not change, and so nothing was done to improve the matter.

Tshilamulela Mphephu was confronted with several problems that necessitated serious attention. The first was that his new territory included the Dzata ruins, but living near them was considered inadvisable and dangerous by his traditional healers and he was urged by them to settle some distance from these ruins which were formerly the royal house of Thohoyandou.⁶ Another problem, apart from the chronic shortage of suitable land for cultivation, was a serious shortage of water. Despite the fact that the Nzhelele River flowed through his lands, it originated in the area of his old enemy Tshivhase whom he suspected might poison the water. He also was plagued by the fear that his forefathers might haunt him if he neglected their graves at his former capital place of Swongozwi (Hanglip). After repeated appeals to the government for the acquisition of the burial place of his ancestors, his wish was granted. Some members of the Ramabulana ruling house were allowed to resettle at Swongozwi as caretakers of the royal graves,⁷ but many of his subjects left the land to settle on White farms.

The support that Mphephu's brother Sinthumulele had given to the Boers under General Piet Joubert against him in the 1890's, still rankled with him, and for years he made preparations to settle the score with Sinthumule. In 1912 he was ready to act and accordingly dispatched an army against him. The authorities, however, stopped him near the town of Louis Trichardt, and he had to return home dissatisfied and disgruntled without having achieved his objective.⁸

There was also friction between Sinthumule and another half-brother of Mphephu's, Kutama. Both had combined with Joubert to unseat Mphephu and had been rewarded with a location west of Louis Trichardt. In 1903 they were both elevated to the position of chiefs by the British. In the beginning, Kutama,

6 NTS 7787 191/335. Chief Mpefu's [sic] complaint F.1294. From "Memorandum of proceeding at an Indaba held on 1905.10.18 at Louis Trichardt, Zoutpansberg District between His Excellency Sir Arthur Lawley K.C.M.G., Lieutenant-General of the Transvaal and certain chiefs and headmen of spelonken and Shewase sub-districts"; Benso/RAU: *The Independent Venda*, p. 232.

7 SA LDE 202 1082/17. Secretary for Lands - Secretary to the Location Commission, 1906.01.12. TA GOV 1089 PS 50/8/1907. Location Commission 38/06. Report of Native Location Commission on the location for the Chief Mpefu [sic]. Pretoria 1907.04.08.

8 M. Nemudzivhadi: *When and What*, p. 26.

the elder of the two, was placed under Sinthumule. Due to tensions that followed over land, a location was provided for Kutama and his people to the west of Sinthumule's area. The shortage of grazing land created tension between the Kutama and Sinthumule chiefs on one hand and the White officials on the other. The chiefs resented the new methods of fencing in grazing lands with barbed wire fencing and gave agricultural extension officers a hard time. Both the local residents and chiefs regarded them with suspicion and considered them as nothing but landgrabbers.⁹

Although the chiefs of the Soutpansberg complained about the shortage of land, the establishment of the town of Louis Trichardt in 1902,¹⁰ together with the establishment of plantations in the Soutpansberg at the turn of the century, created many opportunities for unskilled labour in the area. This need for labour was readily filled by the young men from the reserves who were drawn somewhat reluctantly into the labour market as the money economy replaced the old traditional lifestyles which the Vendas had practised before their final subjugation.

Shortage of land was closely connected with population growth. The increasing population in the reserves more and more prevented the keeping of large herds of cattle there. This in turn adversely affected the prevailing custom of paying with cattle for the acquisition of brides. The Vendas who had been practising polygamy traditionally, now found it difficult to feed large families.¹¹ This resulted in the decrease of the number of men being able to afford polygamous marriages.

One of the worst headaches experienced by the Venda chiefs as a result of the new circumstances in which they found themselves was the levying of taxes payable in cash on their people. This was first introduced in 1903, and from the start the chiefs experienced problems when raising the money required. Despite the friction it caused between them and the administration, the collection was diligently pursued by the officials in the reserves.

9 TA GOV 1089 PS 50/8/1907: Location Commission 142/06. Report of the Native Location Commission on Kutama's location. Pretoria 1907.04.06.

10 BENSO/RAU: *The Independent Venda*, p.22.

11 A. Sparks: *The Mind of South Africa*, p. 108.

On 18 October 1905, a meeting was held at Louis Trichardt concerning the chiefs' difficulties. The chiefs from the three districts of the Soutpansberg – which included, apart from the Venda chiefs, Shangaan and Sotho chiefs as well, together with native commissioners and the Lieutenant-Governor, Arthur Lawley, were there.

At the meeting, Mphephu, supported by other chiefs, complained about the loss of his land and the unsuitability of the new areas that had been allocated to their people in the Nzhelele Valley. As spokesman for the Venda community he said that his people were unhappy about the taxes they had to pay. The most common ones were £2 Government tax and £1 for residing on crown lands, as well as tribal levies and dipping tax.¹² It usually took a person three months' wages to pay the taxes and levies for a year.¹³

Natural disasters like drought, famine, cattle diseases and crop failures caused a lot of hardship for the Venda community. One such famine occurred in Venda in 1912, causing a serious shortage of food in the reserves. On top of that there was also a locust plague (known as *nzie tshikume*) in 1915 which destroyed what was left of the crops.¹⁴ The situation was so critical that maize had to be transported by White traders from Bandolierskop by ox wagons to the region to alleviate the situation.¹⁵

The severe country-wide drought which accompanied the Great Depression of 1930 to 1933 also had its effect on the area. George Mbulaheni Mphephu, Patrick Mphephu's father, who succeeded Tshilamulela Mphephu in 1924, approached the native commissioner at Louis Trichardt in April 1933 to discuss the plight of his people. His request to be allowed to purchase a trust farm adjoining his area and called Sendedzane was granted after his people had agreed to raise an additional tribal levy for this purpose. This farm was to be used for irrigation purposes, using water from the Nzhelele River.¹⁶

12 NTS 7787 191/335. F1294. Chief Mpehu's [sic] complaint. "From memorandum of proceeding at Indaba held in 1905.10.18 at Louis Trichardt between Venda chiefs and Sir Arthur Lawley", M.H. Nemudzivhadi: *When and What*, p. 26.

13 J. Pampallis: *Foundations of the New South Africa*, p. 108.

14 M. Nemudzivhadi: *When and What*, p. 26.

15 M. Nemudzivhadi: *When and What*, p. 26.

16 SA URU 693/790 and NTS 781/308, Vol. 2, 3580, File No. 784/308. Sale of Sendedzane, No. 1325; M. Wilson and L. Thompson (eds.): *Oxford History of South Africa II*, p. 131.

Earlier George Mbulaheni's father had been granted permission to purchase the trust farm Vuvha (Seville), since that area received more rain than the Nzhelele Valley. The purchase of the two farms helped to ease the situation in the Nzhelele area.¹⁷

It was also during this period that irrigation schemes were introduced in the Mphephu Location along the banks of the Nzhelele River, the cost being borne by the South African Government. The maintenance was done by members of the tribe under the supervision of the Native Affairs Commissioner from Louis Trichardt. The establishment of irrigation schemes did help to ease the effects of the drought,¹⁸ but it could not stop the flow of young men to the cities, partly because, according to Venda labour customs, cultivation was regarded as the work of womenfolk.¹⁹

The new political dispensation introduced at the beginning of the twentieth century affected the traditional leaders' lifestyle profoundly because the native commissioners administered the reserves through them. This situation meant a drastic change in the status of the chiefs. Whereas previously their authority had emanated from the customs prevailing in the particular tribe or group without any reference to another tribe or group, there was now a central authority in South Africa after 1910 whose interest did not lie in one restricted area only, but in the country as a whole. The Venda chiefs, like all chiefs in South Africa, were now legally dependent on the Government for their incomes. In turn they were expected to enforce government authority and policy which in many cases was not acceptable to their subjects. The officials could do little about their complaints which were mostly about land allocation. Venda chiefs were only allowed to hear petty cases and to give punishment on minor offences concerning tribal laws and customs. Their subjects could also take them to court if they were not satisfied with the judgement of cases against them. In this way chiefs lost authority over their subjects. They had to accept that power now lay with native commissioners who could appoint or dismiss the chiefs after

17 SA URU 187 1091: Minute 1091 dd. 1914.04.01 from Prime Minister's Office to Wolf and Simpson the sellers. Sale of Chief Mpefu [sic], in trust for his tribe portion of farm Seville No. 2539. District Zoutpansberg.

18 SA NTS 174/337. Vol. 103, 02/25 7936, Rev. L5/336. Famine Relief; SA NTS 7937 174/337(i) Zoutpansberg Scheme – Nzhelele Irrigation Scheme.

19 Anon: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 15.

discussing issues with their supervisors in Pretoria.²⁰

Because of the change in their status chiefs did not escape the rural poverty that affected their subjects. Since tribal funds and levies were now controlled by the native commissioners, the chiefs found it increasingly difficult to feed their growing families. The compensation paid to them by the government officials could not meet the financial burden caused by the large families that they inherited from predecessors and other family relations. This, as well as their polygamous lifestyles, forced young men from the ruling houses to join the labour market.²¹ Thus Patrick Mphephu's father, George Mbulaheni, as well as Sinthumule, Kutama, Tshivhase and Patrick Mphephu himself were migrant labourers before they became chiefs.²²

The number of plantations in the Soutpansberg region increased from 1920 onwards because of the growing need for timber in the mines, railways and factories.²³ Many of the Vendas, more especially those who resided in the mountains, were evicted to make way for the establishment of plantations. The affected communities were those from Malimuwa near Witvlag, who were resettled at Joubertstroom (Ha-Maelula), and the Mauluma community who resided near Tshakuma, who were resettled at Beaconsfield near Dzanani in 1937.²⁴ The chiefs were powerless to resist the forced removals because the land of the reserves and locations was regarded as crown land and belonging to the government. The inhabitants were therefore not regarded as permanent occupiers of land which had been allocated to them, and could be removed and resettled elsewhere.²⁵

20 SA NTS 73/55 337: F. 290 Minute 2/1/2 dated 11 October 1949 by Native Commissioner of Duiwelskloof to The Chief Native Commissioner of Pietersburg under the heading; Chief George Senthumula; Louis Trichardt, Chieftainship of the Venda Tribe, Louis Trichardt area of the District Zoutpansberg.

21 SA NTS 338 77/55(1), p. 45, Ref. S.14/191: Chiefs and Headmen.

22 OS: 930408, p. 28, M. Charles Senyosi, Kutama Village, (± 70 years); C.J. Beyers (ed.): *Dictionary of South African Biography III*, pp. 639-640.

23 B.J. Barker *et al.*: *Reader's Digest, Illustrated History of South Africa – The Real Story*, p. 320.

24 B.J. Barker *et al.*: *Reader's Digest, Illustrated History of South Africa. The Real Story*, p. 320; Venda Government (VG): *Commission of Inquiry into Venda Vhuhosi Affairs with Special Reference to the validity of the Chieftainship of Musekwa, Ravele, Mulambilu and Tshifhire*. From file 25/2 dd. 19.06.1989, under the heading: Application for promotion to Khosi. F.N. Ravele.

25 F.F. Zibi: "Natives and the Land Act of 1913", in *European and Bantu. (Being papers and addresses read at the Conference on Native Affairs held under auspices*

The Venda community which had been living near the present-day Seville or Vuyha was removed in 1925 to make way for the establishment of plantations. That community was also resettled at Beaconsfield in the Nzhelele Valley under Chief George Mbulaheni Mphephu. This caused congestion in the already overcrowded area. These removals forced many people to seek employment in order to a voice starvation in their new areas.²⁶

The Union of South Africa was formed on 31 May 1910. During that period, there were many complaints about African encroachment on White land. The Botha administration then passed the *Native Land Act* of 1913 which divided the country into Black and White areas. The Land Act was based on the recommendations of the Lagden Commission (1903-1905).²⁷ The primary purpose of the Act was to segregate society and the secondary objective was to limit the number of Africans residing on White farms. The Africans were allocated 7% of the total land and by 1936 with the passing of the *Native Trust Land Act*, they were finally awarded 13% of the total land surface of South Africa.²⁸

The 1913 Land Act was passed while many Africans were residing in White areas. The result was that many Africans were forced out of their former areas. Those who did not want to settle in the reserves, became squatters. In order to avoid hunger, many young men sought employment on neighbouring farms. Others were lured by the bright lights of the cities and they drifted to urban areas for employment.²⁹ African chiefs were invited after the passing of the Land Act to offer their comments.³⁰ In 1914 meetings were held at Louis Trichardt between

of the Federal Council of the D.R. churches at Johannesburg on 27-29 Sept. 1923), p. 28.

26 Venda Government (VG): *Commission of Inquiry into Venda Vuhosi Affairs with Special Reference to the validity of the Chieftainship of Musekwa, Ravele, Mulambilu and Tshifhire*. From file 25/2 (F.N. Ravele to District Director Dzanani on 19 June 1989, under the heading: *Application for Promotion to Khosi. F.N. Ravele*). No page number.

27 J. Pampallis: *Foundations of the New South Africa*, p. 24; J. Butler et al.: *Black Homelands of south Africa*, p. 24; B.J. Liebenberg: "Botha and Smuts in Power, 1910-1924", in C.F.J. Muller (ed.): *Five Hundred Years of South African History*, pp. 393-397.

28 A. Sparks: *The Mind of South Africa*, p. 136; J. Dugard: *South Africa: Time Running Out*, p.13.

29 F.F. Zibi: "Natives and the Land Act of 1913", in *European and Bantu*, pp. 24-32.

30 SRP 6/92: Report of the Department of Native Affairs for the years 1913-1918. Presented to both Houses of Parliament by command of His Excellency the Governor-General. (U.G. 7-19), Land Act of 1913.

Venda chiefs, Tshilamulela Mphephu, Sinthumule, Ramaremsa and Makwerela and the native commissioners, Harris and Stubbs, to discuss the Land Act and its implications on the Venda community.³¹ The Vendas who were directly affected by the Land Act, were Tshilamulela Mphephu's followers. As stated earlier, they had left the Nzhelele Valley as it was small and unsuitable for cultivation and settled on neighbouring farms.³² Sinthumule's and Kutama's people were also affected by the Land Act. Their reserves could not hold the growing population and moreover the area was unsuitable for cultivation.

The Pass Laws controlled the movement of Africans in White areas and forced them to look for employment. The employer appended his signature at the end of every month in the passbook. There was also space provided for payment of the different taxes in the Passbook. The person's place of origin was represented by a number. Without a passbook an African could be arrested for vagrancy and trespassing.³³

Another cause contributing to the movement of rural communities away from the land was the introduction of Tribal Trust Funds in the Soutpansberg in 1914 for the purpose of providing essential services to the communities such as the maintenance of dipping tanks, sinking of boreholes and improvements to local roads. The amount was determined by the chief in conjunction with the elders of the tribe, while the funds themselves were controlled by the native commissioner at Louis Trichardt. The chiefs were also allowed to raise a special levy for the purchase of trust farms. Since the payment of tribal and special levies was compulsory for all married men, they became another incentive for men to look for work elsewhere.³⁴

The First World War (1914-1918) offered job opportunities for many Vendas who joined in large numbers. The Venda chiefs forgot their past differences with the government and contributed to War Funds, for example Tshilamulele Mphephu and his tribe donated 60 head of cattle, Chief Sinthumule donated 40 head of

31 M. Nemudzivhadi: *When and What*, p. 26.

32 M. Nemudzivhadi: *When and What*, p. 26.

33 J. Pampallis: *Foundations of the New South Africa*, p. 25; L. Thompson: *A history of South Africa*, p. 164; M.J. Wilson and L. Thompson (eds.): *Oxford History of South Africa II*, p. 35.

34 SRP 6/33 U.G. 7-19: p. 23. Report of the Department of Native Affairs for the years 1913-1918. Presented to both Houses of Parliament by the command of His Excellency the Governor-General: *Tribal Trust Funds*.

cattle, while Tshivhase donated 60 head of cattle.³⁵

It was the Second World War (1939-1945) that attracted many young Vendas to urban areas to seek employment. The war effort greatly stimulated the manufacturing industries. The South African Government relaxed influx control regulations so that Africans could be employed on a large scale in the cities and towns to fill the gap left by White skilled workers who had gone to war, and to benefit from the general boost to the industries of the country given by the war effort.³⁶

The mining industry attracted Africans in large numbers. However, the expectation of high wages and good working conditions seldom tallied with reality. In 1912 the Native Labour Recruiting Corporation (NLRC) was established to handle all recruitment of migrant labour for the mines. Recruitment offices were opened at Louis Trichardt, Sibasa and Soekmekaar. The recruitment agents visited chiefs' kraals and gave the would-be employees cash advances in order to pay taxes. These were later deducted from their wages. On the mines Africans were paid low wages and conditions were bad. The Pass Laws prevented them from deserting. Commercial farmers competed with the mining industries for African labour. Africans mostly preferred working in the mines as the wages on the farms were not consistent and sometimes farmers even lowered them.³⁷

The South African Railways was one of the biggest employers of unskilled labour in the country. The establishment of the railway line between Bandolierskop and the towns of Louis Trichardt and Messina in 1914, drew many labourers from the Venda. The new railway line also facilitated the general movement from rural to urban areas.³⁸

Thus the main cause of the drift of rural people to towns was an increase in rural

35 Native Labour Contingents for War Services. SRP 6/33 p. 33. U.G. 7-19. Report of the Department of Native Affairs for the years 1913-1918. Presented to both Houses of Parliament by command of His Excellency the Governor-General, p. 33.

36 B.J. Liebenberg: "Smuts in Power, 1939-1948" in C.F.J. Muller (ed.): *Five Hundred Years of South African History*, p. 449; J.D. Omer-Cooper: *History of South Africa*, p. 183.

37 M. Wilson and L. Thompson (eds.): *Oxford History of South Africa II*, p. 132; J. Pampallis: *Foundations of the New South Africa*, p. 25; J.D. Omer-Cooper: *History of Southern Africa*, p.170; Anon: *The Republic of Venda*, p.110.

38 J. Pampallis: *The Foundations of the New South Africa*, p. 25; H.A. Stayt: *The Bavenda*, p. 8; J.D. Omer-Cooper: *History of Southern Africa*, p.101.

poverty coupled with industrial growth. The South African economy continued to grow after the Second World War. It was during this period (1946) that Patrick Mphephu joined the labour market in New Doornfontein, Johannesburg.³⁹

Not all the Venda's migrant labourers returned home after their contracts had expired. Some remained for good and became detribalised. The Fagan Commission (1946-1948) found that most Africans in the urban areas were living there permanently and that there was no way of deporting them back to their respective homelands.⁴⁰ Many Vendas were accommodated in townships on the Witwatersrand. Their greatest concentration was in the township of Tshiawelo ("Place of Rest"), near present-day Soweto. An indication of the permanent concentration of Vendas on the Reef was the names of several schools in Meadowlands, Soweto and Tshiawelo called after Venda chiefs; Such as Thohoyandou, Dzata and Mambo.

There were Advisory Boards in various townships which represented the interest of the local people. A White superintendent was in charge of the townships with the responsibility of providing municipal services,⁴¹ allocating houses, collecting rent and removing families. The Vendas who were residing in various townships on the Witwatersrand were represented by a Venda urban representative and advisory boards. They collected taxes from those who had families in Venda. They also kept the Vendas informed of the developments which were taking place in Venda. Chiefs like Patrick Mphephu found it necessary to visit these areas to maintain contact with their followers.⁴²

The United Party Government (1934-1948) paid little attention to conditions in the reserves, which contributed to the drift of rural people to urban areas in large numbers. Thus the deteriorating conditions in agriculture, overcrowding, bad farming methods – to name but a few – which were not properly addressed by the

39 OS: 930226, p. 5, Matodzi Nedohe, Shayandima Township, (70 years): M. Wilson and L. Thompson (eds.): *Oxford History of South Africa II*, p. 175; B.J. Liebenberg: "Smuts in Power, 1939-1948" in C.F.J. Muller (ed.): *Five Hundred Years of South African History*, p. 449.

40 A. Sparks: *The mind of South Africa*, p. 188; P. Laurence: *The Transkei, South Africa's Politics of Partition*, p. 27; B.J. Barker et al.: *Reader's Digest. Illustrated History of South Africa, The Real Story*, p.372.

41 OS: 930417, p. 31, Masindi Charles Senyosi, Kutama village, (70 years); J. Butler et al.: *Black Homelands of South Africa*, p.22.

42 OS: 930507, p. 40, Machaka. E. Masutha, Gogobole vilalge, (70 years); 930417, p. 31, Masindi C. Senyosi, Kutama village (70 years); D.A. Kotzé: *African Politics in South Africa*, p.68.

government, and aided by the pull of the growing industries, lured rural people to urban areas on a large scale. It was the policy of the new government under the National party, which came into power in 1948, which started to address rural poverty by rehabilitating the reserves in close co-operation with traditional leaders.⁴³

43 M. Wilson and L. Thompson (eds.): *Oxford History of South Africa II*, pp. 35, 131, 175.

Chapter 3

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH AFRICA AFTER 1948 AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF TRADITIONAL VENDA CHIEFS.

The National Party (NP) Government under the leadership of Dr. D.F. Malan came into power in 1948 after defeating the United Party (UP) of General J.C. Smuts at the polls. The NP won the election mainly because its racial policy was acceptable to the White voters.¹ The UP policy on racial matters was liberal in nature and hence made the majority of White voters feel insecure. After the elections, the future policy of the NP, regarding the “Black Problem”, was based on “apartheid”. The term “segregation” was discontinued as it was associated with the policies of the former government.²

The origins of apartheid were diverse. Some elements dated back to the period of British Colonial rule in the 19th century in Africa, where “indirect rule” was established.³ Other elements could be traced back to the era of the South African Republic (Transvaal) which introduced a form of territorial segregation after 1881, similar to that of the British colonial authorities in Natal. The reserve system of Sir Theophilus Shepstone, which was introduced in Natal after 1853, also had elements of separation in it. This system was imported into the Transvaal between 1877 and 1881.⁴

Other early traces of apartheid started to emerge during the 20th century when the Lagden Commission (1903-1905) recommended territorial and political segregation between Blacks and Whites. This recommendation was instrumental in the passing of the 1913 *Land Act* which allocated Blacks 7% of the total land in the country. All subsequent South African prime ministers favoured segregation. General J.B.M. Hertzog in, particular played, a major role in passing legislation which had elements of apartheid. It was used after 1948 by the government to

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- 1 B.J. Liebenberg: “Smuts in Power, 1939-1948” in C.F.J. Muller (ed.): *Five Hundred Years of South African History*, pp. 462-463; H. Lever: *South African Society*, p. 267.
 - 2 B.J. Liebenberg: “Smuts in Power, 1939-1948” in C.F.J. Muller (ed.): *Five Hundred years of South African History*, pp. 462-463; H. Lever: *South African Society*, p. 267.
 - 3 K. Smith and F.J. Nöthling: *Africa North of the Limpopo*, pp. 208-210.
 - 4 H. Lever: *South African Society*, p. 266.

perpetuate specific discriminatory land policies.⁵

The most important legislation to be passed through the efforts of Hertzog, was the abolition of the Cape Native Franchise and the establishment of the Native Representative Council in 1936. This formed the basis for the future administration of reserves, later called Bantu homelands, after 1948. Through his efforts the 1936 *Native Trust Land Act* was passed. These two acts which had clear signs of apartheid in them formed the basis for future race relations in South Africa.⁶ It is therefore incorrect to say that the Nationalist Party invented racial discrimination. It was however responsible for a very specific type of policy - apartheid - taking shape.

The previous policy of segregation was already subjected to change after 1940 when the Africans in urban areas started to pressurise the UP government to change its racial policies. There were incidents of labour unrest which caused the UP Government to appoint the Fagan Commission in 1946. The demands for change grew stronger after the Second World War when Africans in the British, French and former German colonies, as well as in South Africa, started demanding equal status with the Whites. The UP Government in South Africa was unable to come up with any clear solutions to this matter, causing the majority of White South Africans to feel threatened.⁷

The difference between apartheid and segregation was cosmetic because both aimed at separating the races, however the policy of segregation was more liberal in nature. It was also flexible, depending upon the circumstances prevailing at the time. For example during the time of rapid industrialisation, i.e. during the Second World War, influx control regulations and pass laws were lifted to allow many Africans to join the labour market. Apartheid, on the other hand, by the 1950's took a prescriptive stance towards the business sector. Industrialists were required to establish themselves near the homelands so as to create job opportunities there. Apartheid became more dogmatic in approach and there was a stricter enforcement

5 B.J. Liebenberg: "Botha and Smuts in power, 1910-1924", in C.F.J. Muller (ed.): *Five Hundred Years of South African History*, pp. 395, 415.

6 B.J. Liebenberg: "Hertzog in Power, 1924-1939", in C.F.J. Muller (ed.): *Five Hundred Years of South African History*, p. 435.

7 B.J. Liebenberg: "Smuts in Power, 1939-1948" in C.F.J. Muller (ed.): *Five Hundred Years of South African History*, pp. 453-455; T.R.H. Davenport: *South Africa, A Modern History*, pp. 340-345.

of laws. Human rights were in most cases violated.⁸

When the NP Government came into power, various institutional forms of discrimination were already in place.⁹ The new government only passed laws to make its racial policies more effective because apartheid was found to be the only solution to the racial situation. Thus social and political discrimination was perpetuated by the new government. Dr. H.F. Verwoerd who became the Minister of Native Affairs in 1950 was, and is still, regarded as the architect of apartheid. In reality, apartheid was already firmly in the public sphere of society when he took office. Verwoerd only supervised its application and gave it a new direction in the form of transferring political rights of Africans and their administration to the homelands.¹⁰

The apartheid policy was based on the belief that the South African society consisted of four major racial groups namely, Whites, Africans, Coloureds and Indians. Each of these had to be able to exist separately without the interference of another group. The Africans were further subdivided into eight and later ten ethnic groups, namely Zulus, Xhosas, Northern Sotho, Southern Sotho, Tswana, Swazi, Tsonga and Venda. These were to rule themselves in their respective homelands.¹¹

Political events which took place after the Second World War prompted the NP government to come up with clear policies concerning Black South Africans. Decolonisation was taking place in the East and also in Africa. India and Pakistan gained their independence in 1947. In Africa, colonial rule was coming to an end and the policy of segregation was no more acceptable. Colonial territories were demanding their freedom. In South Africa, many Africans in urban areas were also demanding equal status.¹²

In 1952 Venda had the smallest population of all the African ethnic groups in

8 B.J. Barker *et al.*: *Reader's Digest, Illustrated History of South Africa – The Real Story*, pp. 360-361; B.J. Liebenberg: "The National Party in Power, 1948-1961" in C.F.J. Muller (ed.) *Five Hundred Years of South African History*, p. 488.

9 B. Rodgers: *Divide and Rule – South Africa's Bantustans*, pp. 5-6; B.J. Liebenberg: "The National Party in Power, 1948-1961" in C.F.J. Muller (ed.): *Five Hundred Years of South African History*, p. 481.

10 P. Laurence: *The Transkei, South Africa's Politics of Partition*, p. 27.

11 L. Thompson: *A History of South Africa*, p. 190; J. Seiler (ed.): *South Africa since the Portuguese Coup*, p. 139; P. Maylam: *A History of the African People of South Africa*, pp. 167-171.

12 A. Sparks: *The Mind of South Africa*, p. 186; B.J. Liebenberg: "Smuts in Power, 1939-1948" in C.F.J. Muller (ed.): *Five Hundred Years of South African History*, p. 463.

South Africa. It was “ruled”¹³ by chiefs like Mphephu, Kutama, Sinthumule, Tshivhase, Nelwamondo, Rammbuda, Nesengani and Mphaphuli. They were assisted by headmen. These included Ramovha Booi, Mugivhi, Makuya, Ravele, Tshikundamalema, and Madzivhandila, to name only a few. Most of the male population was employed in the urban areas while others found employment on neighbouring White farms and in the nearby towns of Messina and Louis Trichardt¹⁴

The only contact with Whites in the Venda rural community was with the missionaries, traders and government officials. Venda was undeveloped. In the rural areas, the needs of the community were basic in nature and the politics of liberation was still largely absent.¹⁵

Verwoerd decided that the only solution to the country’s race problem could be solved by transferring political power of the Africans to their homelands. This was to be done by empowering traditional leaders whose authority was crumbling because most of the male population was employed in the urban areas. This was caused by rural poverty, overcrowding and the lack of job opportunities in the reserves. The administration of the Africans was to be transferred to the homelands with the chiefs in command, while senior White officials would assist them.¹⁶

The indirect representation of Africans in parliament was abolished in 1959. The Native Representative Council which had been introduced by General Hertzog in 1936, no longer had credibility. It literally became moribund after the 1946 strikes of African mine workers. It was then replaced by the *Bantu Authorities Act* of 1951. This Act laid the foundation for the future administration of the homelands. In the new political dispensation, chiefs were given more powers to rule their subjects.¹⁷

Opposition to the NP policy of separate development, came from the educated

13 No other suitable word could be found to describe the relationship between the various traditional chiefs and the scattered Venda communities under them.

14 SA K20 3(46), pp. 512-516: Verslag van die Kommissie vir die Sosio-ekonomiese Ontwikkeling van die Bantoegebiede binne die Unie van Suid-Afrika (Tomlinson Report).

15 OS 920314: F.N. Ravele, Mauluma Village; SA K20 E5/38(18), pp. 868-904A (Tomlinson Report); Sibasa Rehabilitation Committee, 1952.06.17.

16 J. Seiler (ed.): *South Africa since the Portuguese Coup*, p. 139.

17 J. Fisher: *The Afrikaners*, p. 325; P. Maylam: *A History of the African People of South Africa*, p. 167; B.J. Barker et al.: *Reader's Digest, Illustrated History of South Africa - The real story*, p. 365.

urban Africans, as well as the homelands of the Ba-Pedi of Sekhukhune, the Zulus of Natal and Zululand and the Xhosa of the Transkei. Opposition in Venda was virutally non-existent. Resistance movements like the African National Congress (ANC) and the South African Communist Party (SACP) opposed this policy on a national level. They argued that apartheid was fostering the division of Africans.¹⁸ This South African racial policy was also condemned internationally. In the United Nations Organisation, concerted efforts were initiated to oppose the government's policies.¹⁹

Verwoerd wanted to reduce the number of Africans resident in urban areas. In fact, he wanted to reverse the process of African urbanisation. He wanted Africans to stay in their respective homelands and seek employment in nearby towns and cities, where they would be able to commute every day to and from work. This was to be done as a way of addressing rural poverty. More attention was consequently given to agriculture as the rural population depended on it for their living.²⁰

When Patrick Mphephu succeeded his father in 1950, the NP Government was busy implementing, by means of legislation, the policy of Separate Development. Mphephu's appointment, like that of other African chiefs was confirmed by the authorities in Pretoria. Mphephu was installed on 24 February 1950. He was to be chief of the Vendas who were residing in the Nzhelele area under the jurisdiction of the native affairs commissioner at Louis Trichardt.²¹

As stated earlier, there were already a number of Venda chiefs "ruling" independently, with Shangaan and Northern Sotho communities residing among them.²² There were also a number of independent headmen, some of whom were his grandfather's subjects before he fled to Zimbabwe. These included headmen

18 A. Hepple: *South Africa*, p. 113; J. Butler *et al.*: *Black Homelands of South Africa*, p.79; B.J. Liebenberg: "The National Party in Power, 1948-1961" in C.F.J. Muller (ed.): *Five Hundred Years of South African History*, p. 490.

19 R.M. Price and C.G. Rosberg (eds.): *The Apartheid Regime*, p. 216; A. Sparks: *The Mind of South Africa*, pp. 186-187.

20 C. Danziger: *A History of Southern Africa*, p. 94; M. Wilson and L. Thompson (eds.): *Oxford History of South Africa II*, p.175; B.J. Liebenberg: "The National Party in Power, 1948-1961" in C.F.J. Muller (ed.): *Five Hundred Years of South African History*, p. 487.

21 SA URU 2721 468, Minute 2/1/2/1, dd.1950.02.13 from Native Affairs Commissioner Louis Trichardt to Chief Native Commissioner, Pietersburg, folio 65: Appointment of P.R. Mbulaheni (Mphephu) as chief of Bavenda Tribe, Louis Trichardt.

22 H.M. Nemudzivhadi: *The Conflict between Mphephu and the South African Republic 1895-1899* (M.A. UNISA, 1977), p. 169.

like, Nelwamondo, Madzivhandila, Ravele, Mugivhi and Netsianda.²³ Military clashes with the Whites in the 19th century and the territorial division of the Soutpansberg area, in terms of the segregation policy, cut many headmen off from their chiefs. In the process they became independent from their former chiefs, and were placed under the jurisdiction of a native affairs commissioner.²⁴

In accordance with Venda tradition, Mphephu was equal in rank to other Venda chiefs. However, he had one advantage over other chiefs because of his origin, as he came from the senior house of Ramabulana which had more influence than other aristocratic families. He was the great-grandson of Makhado, whose ancestor was Thohoyandou, the founder of the Venda nation.²⁵

As pointed out earlier, Kutama and Sinthumule were not originally chiefs but Tshilamulela Mphephu's headmen, because they were his half-brothers. They were the first Venda headmen to be elevated to the positions of chief by President Paul Kruger's government after Tshilamulela Mphephu had taken refuge in Zimbabwe.²⁶ This was in conflict with customs and traditions of Venda aristocracy. The Venda chiefs, Tshivhase and Rammbuda, also shared the same ancestor Thohoyandou, but their ancestors had left Dzanani II to become independent chiefs. Other traditional rulers like Davhana, Nthabalala, Nesengani, Kutama and Sinthumule came from the house of Ramabulana and they were Patrick Mpephu's *makhosimunene* or relatives.²⁷ It thus appears as if the offspring from the centralised leadership could claim seniority of chieftainship.

Verwoerd's policy of "separate development" which was sometimes interpreted as "separate freedoms", was attractive to Venda chiefs, because it promised to give them the respect, power and dignity which the previous government had taken away from them. All the chiefs who were ruling at the time favoured the new

23 NTS 7787, File No 191/335, Chief Mphephu's complaint: Memorandum of proceedings at an indaba held on 1905.10.18 at Louis Trichardt, between Venda chiefs and Sir Arthur Lawley.

24 J. Hoagland: *South Africa*, p. 169.

25 A.J. Venter: *Black Leaders of Southern Africa*, p. 188; S.P. Jordaan and A. Jordaan: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 12.

26 H.M. Nemudzivhadi: *The Conflict between Mphephu and the South African Republic (1895-1899)*, p. 169; VG 2(1), p. 419: Commission of Inquiry into Venda Vhuhosi Affairs; H.A. Stayt: *The Bavenda*, p. 16.

27 S.P. Jordaan and A. Jordaan: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 13.

government's policy,²⁸ mainly because of Venda's isolated location in the far Northern Transvaal, where the chiefs had been able to maintain their traditional system of government to a greater degree than elsewhere. They were less affected by external influences promoting rapid modernisation than traditional rulers were in many other parts of South Africa.

During the long period of subjugation after 1898, the Venda chiefs' authority was reduced by the South African Government. Subjects no longer depended on their leaders for land because they did not have any to distribute. At the same time the traditional bond between chiefs and their subjects was being loosened, because modernisation and urbanisation were making traditional chieftainship irrelevant to educated and detribalised urban Africans. The new government was intent on empowering traditional rulers in their respective territories in order to get their co-operation in implementing the policy of "separateness".²⁹

Mphephu, in particular, supported the new political dispensation. As a strong traditionalist, he wanted to preserve the chieftainship of his forefathers.³⁰ He found the Nationalist Government's plan of restoring traditional rule acceptable. The development of the reserves, which the previous government paid scant attention to, was attractive to him. The development of the homelands, he reasoned, would alleviate rural poverty in his chieftaincy because the homeland, apart from being backward, was poor.³¹ Mphephu knew rural poverty from personal experience. On a more personal level, the new dispensation also offered material advantages for him.³²

The Political development of the reserves, called "homelands" as from 1951, started with the passing of the *Bantu Authorities Act* (Act No. 68 of 1951). The act gave

28 SA K20, E5/38(22), Socio-economic Development of Native Areas Commission (Tomlinson Report), pp. 1101-1111; Record of Evidence, 1952.06.19, at Pietersburg; OS 920314: F.N. Ravele, Mauluma Village.

29 SA K20 3(18), pp. 868-904A (Tomlinson Report): Record of Evidence, Sibasa Rehabilitation Committee, Pietersburg, 1952.06.17; A. Sparks: *The Mind of South Africa*, p. 195; B.J. Liebenberg: "The National Party in Power, 1948-1961" in C.F.J. Muller (ed.): *Five Hundred Years of South African History*, p. 491.

30 OS 920314: F.N. Ravele, Mauluma village; B. Rodgers: *Divide and Rule - South Africa's Bantustans*, p. 47; A.J. Venter: *Black Leaders of Southern Africa*, p. 188.

31 OS 920314: F.N. Ravele, Mauluma village; SA K20 3(22), (Tomlinson Commission), pp. 1101-1111. Record of evidence, Pietersburg, 1952.06.19; SA K20 109(16) (Tomlinson Commission), pp. 512-516; M.C. Botha: *Die Swart Vryheidspaaie*, pp. 149, 153.

32 P. Maylam: *A History of African People of South Africa*, p. 171.

more powers to the chiefs and ensured that political development in the homelands was to be based on ethnic lines.³³ The act also provided for the introduction of three tiers of traditional government, namely, tribal or rural municipal government, regional and, finally, territorial authorities or “rural parliaments”. At the head of each tier of traditional government was a chief. The three tiers of traditional government were to be implemented in stages. Tribal authority, as a structure of government, was to be applied first. This would be followed by regional, and finally, territorial, authority. This would pave the way for eventual self-government in the future homelands.³⁴

For the new political dispensation to succeed, the development of the various homelands was given priority. Dr. E.G. Jansen, the first minister of Native Affairs in the National Party government of 1948, appointed Prof. F.R. Tomlinson, a well known agricultural economist, at the helm of a commission to investigate ways in which various homelands could be made self-sufficient. Meanwhile a start was made with the provision of basic needs for Africans in the homelands. Water was, for example, provided by the sinking of bore holes and the establishment of dams. In the Venda area, new methods of cultivation and stock farming were introduced by agriculture extension officers. Plantations were also being established in the Tshivhase and Lwamondo areas. These improved conditions were part of “betterment” schemes. It marked improvements in agriculture.³⁵

The Tomlinson Commission consisted of Prof. Frederik Rothman Tomlinson, the chairman, assisted by Dr. M.D.C. de Wet Nel, J.C. Janse van Rensburg, G.T. Badenhorst, C.B. Young, Prof. C.H. Badenhorst and J.H.R. Bisschop as well as Dr. J.H. Moolman. Before the actual work was done, a preliminary survey was made in the form of providing a short history of the various tribes in South Africa. All the ethnic groups in South Africa were grouped in blocks from A to G. Since Venda had the smallest population of 1.8%, it was grouped with the Tsonga and Balovedu.

33 P. Laurence: *The Transkei, South Africa's Politics of Partition*, p. 6; T.R.H. Davenport: *South Africa. A Modern History*, p. 384; L. Thompson: *A History of South Africa*, pp. 190-191.

34 M. Horrel (ed.): *A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1950 - 1951*, p. 11; Anon: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 68; J. Cope: *South Africa*, p. 44-45.

35 SA K20 3(22) (Tomlinson Report), pp. 1101-1111, *Record of Evidence*, Pietersburg, 1952.06.19; B.J. Barker *et al.*: *Reader's Digest, Illustrated History of South Africa - The Real Story*, p. 380; B.J. Liebenberg: “The National Party in Power, 1948-1961” in C.F.J. Muller (ed.): *Five Hundred Years of South African History*, pp. 486-489.

They were placed in group B.³⁶ In its research, the commission distributed questionnaires to native commissioners and government officials which covered *inter alia* African agriculture, plantations, the creation of rural townships, labour, social structures of Africans as well as their sources of income. Personal interviews were also conducted with influential members of the various ethnic groups and traditional leaders.³⁷

The first meeting was held on 17 June 1952 at Pietersburg with the members of Sibasa Rehabilitation Committee which consisted of five teachers namely, M.E.R. Mathivha, B.R. Manyatshe, S.M. Dzivhani, F. Mashamba and A.J. Mahlale. The discussion centred around rural poverty and the fact that young men who were employed in urban areas did not offer financial help to their parents, thus increasing rural poverty. The Rehabilitation Committee agreed with the Tomlinson Commission that border industries would somehow arrest the flow of young men to urban areas. The establishment of rural townships was also accepted.³⁸

Rural poverty was to be solved by the introduction of new farming methods and irrigation schemes were to be established since the rural communities depended on agriculture for their livelihood. The establishment of schools for chiefs' sons was also accepted because the majority of chiefs were semi-illiterate and could not understand the rules and regulations of the government.³⁹

The Sibasa Rehabilitation Committee was in favour of the retention of a traditional system of government. The chiefs, it was felt, should work in conjunction with government officials. On the question of reducing stock—always a problem as a result of overgrazing—the Committee stated that the matter was sensitive and should be addressed via the traditional leaders who were the right people to offer comments after consulting with their subjects. The Committee was also in favour of the establishment of a school for agriculture.⁴⁰

36 SA K20 3(46) (Tomlinson Report), pp. 512-516: Boekdeel 1, Inleiding, Die Breër Verband.

37 SA K20 3(46) (Tomlinson Report), pp. 512-516: Boekdeel 1, Inleiding, Die Breër Verband.

38 SA K20, 3(18), E 5/38 (Tomlinson Report), pp. 868-904A: Sibasa Rehabilitation Committee, Pietersburg, 1952.06.17.

39 SA K20, 3(18), E 5/38 (Tomlinson Report), pp. 868-904A: Sibasa Rehabilitation Committee, Pietersburg, 1952.06.17.

40 Tomlinson Verslag: SA K20, Vol.1-5, Deel 1, Bl.37; and Tomlinson Verslag: SA K20, E 5/38. Socio-economic Development of Native Areas Commission. Evidence, (11-12), (18), Sibasa Rehabilitation Committee, 1952.06.17, Pietersburg, pp. 868-904A.

The second meeting, which consisted of the tribal leaders in the persons of headman Makhavhu, for Sibasa, and Nesengani and Nelwamondo of Louis Trichardt district, was held at Pietersburg in June 1952. The discussion focussed on the "betterment areas". These areas were showing marked improvement in agriculture because the local chiefs had been working in close co-operation with agriculture extension officers. The three traditional leaders welcomed the government's new policy of improving agriculture in their areas. They however complained about the shortage of land. This was caused mainly by afforestation in their areas. They complained that they were in most cases not consulted when new regulations were introduced. As community leaders, they wanted to be included in the decision-making process.⁴¹

The chiefs showed willingness to work closely with government officials. They however, resented working with White missionaries in their areas. Chief Rasengani (Nesengani) went on to explain that his relationship with the local Swiss missionaries was strained. He had also demolished their school and forced them to leave his area. He had instead established his own school in the area. The tribal leaders wanted the government to get involved in the establishment of schools. They also preferred African to White missionaries. The Venda chiefs welcomed the plan to introduce irrigation schemes in the area under the supervision of agriculture extension officers. They also agreed to the establishment of a school for chiefs.⁴²

The Tomlinson Commission recommended the establishment of plantations in the mountains in the former settlements of the Venda. Thathevondo plantation, which was being established at the time, was to be enlarged. The members of the commission pointed out that, apart from supplying the much needed firewood, plantations would offer job opportunities to many Venda people.⁴³

The Commission also recommended the release of trust lands so that reserves could become meaningful homelands. The development of mining was to be controlled by mining commissioners who were placed under the control of native affairs commissioners. Since there were no mining operations of importance in the

41 SA K20 3(22) (Tomlinson Report), pp. 1101-1111: Record of Evidence, Pietersburg, 1952.06.19.

42 SA K20 3(22) (Tomlinson Report), pp. 1101-1111: Record of Evidence, Pietersburg, 1952.06.19.

43 SA K20 106(13) (Tomlinson Report), p. 11: Samevatting van verslag, Hoofstuk 32.

reserves, no clear policy on mining was formulated by the government.⁴⁴

Since the majority of Venda preferred the retention of traditional government, it was recommended by the Commission that important chiefs like Mphephu and Tshivhase and other smaller chiefs like Sinthumule, Ramabuda and Mphaphuli should be given tribal authorities⁴⁵

The Tomlinson Commission Report was completed in 1954. Verwoerd combined his ideas and some of Tomlinson's recommendations and findings to produce a homeland policy.⁴⁶ The development of the homeland of the Venda, Gazankulu and part of Lebowa was done simultaneously because they were grouped together under one unit, since they shared the same area under the control of the two native affairs commissioners of Sibasa and Louis Trichardt.⁴⁷

Some elements of the commission's recommendations were found in the administration of the Venda homeland. The application of the three tiers of traditional government and the empowerment of traditional rulers, including the economic development of the Venda homeland, were taken from Tomlinson's report. Also applied were the policies pertaining to the development of agriculture.

Mphephu was accorded privileged status because he came from a long line of influential hereditary rulers. The Tshivhase chieftainship at the time was not on good terms with the South African Government because of internal conflicts over the chieftainship.⁴⁸ Mphephu, coming from the senior house of Ramabulana, was found to be the most suitable candidate and the most acceptable to take the lead in carrying out the policy of separate development.

The restoration of traditional government in Venda took place after the completion of the Tomlinson Commission Report. Existing tribal councils were abolished and replaced by the three tiers of traditional government. The majority of Vendas

44 SA K20 105(9) (Tomlinson Report), p. 65: Samevatting van verslag; SA K20 3(46) (Tomlinson Report), pp. 512-516

45 SA K20 3(46) (Tomlinson Report), p. 517.

46 B.J. Liebenberg: "The National Party in Power, 1948-1961" in C.F.J. Muller (ed.) *Five Hundred Years of South African History*, p. 489; C. Danziger: *A History of Southern Africa*, p. 94.

47 SA K20 3(18) E 5/38 (Tomlinson Report), pp. 868-904A; Record of Evidence, Sibasa Rehabilitation Committee, 1952.06.17; P. Maylam: *A History of the African People of South Africa*, p. 167.

48 SA NTS 338 77/55 (1), p. 92: Acts of misconduct, folio 432, Ref. Case of Ratshimpi Sibasa vs Ratshialingwa Sibasa and D.G. Hartman.

favoured traditional government, and so did the other three ethnic groups accommodated in the same area, namely the Shangaans, Belobedu, and Northern Sotho's under chiefs Machaka, Mamaila and Ramokgopa.⁴⁹ The introduction of tribal authorities brought a lot of changes to the traditional system of government. It undermined the tribal customs which had been in place for many decades. The officials became involved in the elevation of headmen to the position of chiefs. According to Venda tradition, headmen were appointed by their chiefs and could be replaced. They could not be elevated to the position of their masters. In Venda tradition, as stated earlier, the chief was a hereditary ruler and the choice of his appointment lay with the senior members of the ruling family in conjunction with the elders of that particular tribe.⁵⁰

Shortly before Verwoerd's visit to Sibasa in 1954, a tent town was established to accommodate the traditional leaders of the three ethnic groups. A festive atmosphere prevailed because the three groups had had a long history of intermarriage. The Mphaphuli chiefs had married into the families of Shangaan chief Mhinga. As stated earlier, Makhado's uncle, Madzhe, for example, was from Northern Sotho aristocracy. Mphephu's father, George Mbulaheni, had also married into the Mamabolo's family. These marriages were intended to reduce friction and to create bonds of friendship between the different chiefdoms.⁵¹

The actual meetings took place over a number of days at Mphaphuli Hall in Sibasa. Verwoerd explained how the new political dispensation was supposed to function. He also announced the government's plan of rehabilitating the region and stressed that for the plan to succeed the co-operation of traditional leaders was essential. These leaders did not hesitate to show their willingness to co-operate with the government. Mphephu, in particular, was one of the main speakers who supported Verwoerd's new policy of separate development.⁵²

Shortly after Verwoerd's visit, tribal authorities were introduced in Venda under the chiefs Mphephu, Tshivhase, Rammubuda and Mphaphuli. Mphephu became

49 Anon: "The Republic of Venda", in *Africa Institute Bulletin Supplement*, 27(5), 1987, p. 4.

50 VG 2(1), pp. 281, 402, 419: Commission of Inquiry into Venda Vhuhosi Affairs.

51 OS 920314: F.N. Ravele, Mauluma Village; M. Nemudzivhadi: *When and What*, p. 28.

52 OS 920314: F.N. Ravele, Mauluma Village.

the chairman of Ramabulana Tribal Authority in 1954.⁵³ His election to head the tribal authority, like that of other traditional leaders, was not necessarily based on ability, but on his standing as a hereditary ruler of the community.⁵⁴ His appointment like those of other traditional leaders, was confirmed and approved by the authorities in Pretoria. Chiefs were assisted by headmen and councillors who were appointed by members of their respective communities.⁵⁵

The functions of the various tribal authorities were local in nature and they served the specific needs of the various communities. They were responsible for the establishment of schools, local roads, dipping tanks, payment of private teachers and the collection of tribal levies. In dry areas like Nzhelele, Sinthumule and Kutama, many bore holes made their appearance.⁵⁶ The old irrigation canal which was established during the rule of George Mbulaheni Mphephu was improved.⁵⁷ Dipping tanks were provided among the main villages.

The *Bantu Authorities Act* of 1951 also made provision for the elevation of headmen to the positions of chiefs. At the time, there were eight chiefs in Venda and many independent headmen. The chiefs were, Mphephu, Kutama, Sinthumule, Nesengani, Tshivhase, Mphaphuli, Lwamondo and Rammbuda.⁵⁸ Since there were not sufficient chiefs to head the required tribal authorities, Verwoerd again visited Venda in 1958 with the view of elevating independent headmen. He used the *Native Administration Act* of 1927 which empowered him as minister of native affairs to effect those promotions. This power in fact lay with the governor-general, who was by that time Jansen, Verwoerd's predecessor in the Department of Bantu Affairs. The Act made the governor-general the supreme chief of all the African chiefs. It also empowered him to appoint and dismiss unco-operative chiefs and also to create tribes.⁵⁹

Several Venda chiefs who had not co-operated with the South African Government

53 SA NTS 8940 177/362(1): Minute 177/362(2) on Establishment of Mphephu Tribal Authority from Dept. of Native Affairs Pretoria to Chief Native Affairs Commissioner at Pietersburg; M. Nemudzivhadi: *When and What*, p. 28.

54 J. Cope: *South Africa*, pp. 44-45.

55 SA NTS 8940 177/362(1): Minute 177/362(2) on Establishment of Mphephu Tribal Authority from Dept. of Native Affairs Pretoria to Chief Native Affairs Commissioner at Pietersburg; J. Cope: *South Africa*, pp. 44-45.

56 Anon: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 68; M. Horrel (compiler): *A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa, 1950-1951*, p. 11.

57 OS 930423, S. Ramovha, Dzanani village.

58 P. Laurence: *The Transkei, South Africa's Politics of Partition*, p. 6.

59 T.R.H. Davenport: *South Africa, A Modern History*, p. 294; *The Star*, 18.8.1993, p. 12.

in the past, became victims of the Act. In 1930 headman Tshikonelo was forcibly removed from his post. The South African Government used force to attack his kraal, because he had resisted the installation of his brother by chief Phaswane Mphaphuli to his post.⁶⁰

In 1939, Chief Peter Sinthumule was deposed by the South African Government and his half brother George was appointed in his place.⁶¹ In 1946, chief Ratshimpi Tshivhase was deposed and later banned to Hammanskraal and in his place Ratshialingwa was appointed.⁶² In all these cases, the communities sympathised with their deposed rulers. The state-appointed chiefs did not usually enjoy popular support because the Vendas were fond of their hereditary chiefs, but they were afraid to voice their disapproval in public, although they did so in songs.⁶³

It is evident that after the NP government came to power, it sought co-operation rather than confrontation with the traditional leaders by maintaining friendly relations. By empowering traditional leaders, the NP government was able to make its policies acceptable to the Africans in the tribal areas.

During his second visit in 1958, Verwoerd elevated several headmen to chiefs. Among the new chiefs were, Madzivhandila, Piet Booie or Ramovha, Makuya, Tshikonelo and all the headmen from Davhana area. The newly promoted chiefs were called, "Brief-case chiefs" or *Mahosi a Bege*. During their installation ceremonies, the new chiefs were given their appointment letters and brief-cases,⁶⁴ which meant, from the communities' point of view, that the chieftainship came from brief-cases. Since the rural communities did not have newspapers to express their displeasure,⁶⁵ they called these new rulers, "brief-case chiefs", because the

60 M. Nemudzivhadi: *When and What*, p. 27.

61 SA GG 1191 50/1693: Minute 50/1693 on Natives, Miscellaneous Petition praying for an investigation into the circumstances of the deposition of Peter Sinthumule from the chieftainship of the Bavenda tribe and the appointment of George Sinthumule in his place, from Gov.-General's Office to Lawyers Hellman and Baker in Johannesburg, Pretoria, 1942.10.13.

62 SA URU 2353 1921, fol. 432: Act of Misconduct., Afdanking Ratshimpi Sibasa (Tshivhase) as hoof van die Venda stam te Sibasa, Tengwe en Tononda Lokasies, Distrik Zoutpansberg, weens slegte gedrag en aanstelling van Ratshialingwa, 1946; M. Nemudzivhadi: *When and What*, p. 27;

63 VG 2(1), p. 392: Commission of Inquiry into Venda Vhuhosi Affairs; S.P. Jordaan and A. Jordaan: *The Republic of Venda*, pp. 23-24.

64 VG 2(1), p. 266: Commission of Inquiry into Venda Vhuhosi Affairs.

65 VG 2(1), p. 392: Commission of Inquiry into Venda Vhuhosi Affairs.

traditional system of appointing chiefs was undermined. There was no opposition from the old chiefs when their headmen were being made their equals, for fear of losing their positions. Verwoerd was then able to restructure the traditional government with the help of chiefs who had become subservient to the government.⁶⁶

Some of the headmen who were later promoted to the position of chief included persons like, Nethengwe, Tshikundamalema, Manenzhe, Mutele, Khakhu, Mulima, Mashau, Nthabalala and Mashamba to name only a few. In this way the Venda community was divided into 27 tribal areas under 25 chiefs and two independent headmen of the Gwamasenga Community Council. The two independent headmen, Mugivhi and Netsianda, were later (after independence in 1979) promoted to chiefs by President Mphephu.⁶⁷ While these political developments were taking place in Venda, similar developments were taking place in the Shangaan and Northern Sotho communities who were all sharing the same area since boundaries were not introduced at that stage. Shangaan headmen who were formerly under Chief Mphaphuli were also elevated to the position of chiefs. These included, Mhinga, Xikundu, Mavambe, and Mudavhula, among others. They were elevated to the chieftainship in order to head their tribal authorities under the Bantu Affairs Commissioners of Sibasa, G.T. Ackron and M.G. Potgieter, among the Shangaan communities. The elevation of Shangaan headmen to the status of chiefs caused friction among the Venda chiefs who regarded the Shangaans as their subjects. When boundaries were established later to separate the three communities, tensions increased because of rival claims over certain areas.⁶⁸ Later this was responsible for forced removals which took place when the boundaries were defined for these three communities.

Mphephu's enthusiastic support for the new political dispensation was rewarded. In his area, no headman was promoted to chief, which was fortunate, because the elevation of a headman naturally led to the division of land. Mphephu's former areas included Nzhelele location, Sendedzane and part of Seville including

66 A. Hepple: *South Africa*, p. 114.

67 VG: Unpublished report, p. 5, submitted by M. Nemudzivhadi on Ravele Land Consolidation to the Van der Walt Commission, 1980; Anon: "The Republic of Venda" in *Africa Institute Bulletin Supplement*, 27(5), 1987, p. 4.

68 VG: Unpublished report, p. 5, submitted by M. Nemudzivhadi on Ravele Land Consolidation to the Van der Walt Commission, 1980; Anon: "The Republic of Venda" in *Africa Institute Bulletin Supplement*, 27(5), 1987, p. 4.

Musekwa location. Mphephu was allocated more than 30 trust farms when tribal authorities were established. His new area included the following trust farms: Paradise, Mopani, Drylands, Serole, Cliffside, Settoni, (Tshituni), Mapela, Doornhoek, Baobab, Diepkloof (Ha-Mavhunga), Greystone, Bloemfontein, (Matshavhawe), Stony Edge, Beaconsfield, Mpsema (Phadzima), Chewas, Fripp, Kilimanjaro, Keerweder, Straithaird, Afton, Thiel, Natalie, Nicholson, Van Graan, Kondoa, Telema, Gray, Dwarsspruit, Cadiz, Gordon, Colibri and Watervoor. In this way Mphephu's area became one of the biggest in Venda. He had also more headmen under him than any Venda chief because each trust farm was under the control of a local ruler. This enhanced his status even more.⁶⁹

With the establishment of tribal (local) authorities, boundaries were defined and adjusted. Chief Sinthumule's area included the trust farm Nieuw Engeland which was situated about 70 kilometres east of Louis Trichardt. He had also trust farms by the names of Bergplaats and Joubertstroom (Ha-Maelula) or Tshifhire, which were situated near Njelele location on the south-eastern side.⁷⁰ Kutama's area was the smallest of them all. It included the trust farm Zaamenkomst and a small irrigation scheme named Cape Thorne, north of the railway to Messina.⁷¹

The new political dispensation created tension when the boundaries were adjusted. The Levubu River was regarded as the eastern and south-eastern boundary between the Shangaans and the Vendas. There were Venda communities who were residing on both sides of the river. Tribal authorities were established before these boundaries were adjusted. The creation of new chieftaincies among the Shangaans caused problems because the Venda chiefs had regarded them as their subjects. There were claims and counter claims to certain areas on both sides of the Levubu River. The Venda chiefs claimed certain areas in which the Shangaans were residing including villages like, Bungeni, Majosi, Hluvuka and Bokisi as far as Giyani in the east.⁷² The Shangaans claimed the areas in which they were residing as theirs, alleging that when they arrived from Mozambique, they found the area

69 Union of South Africa Government Gazette, no. 312, 1957.03.01, p. 12; Union of South Africa Government Gazette no. 1978, 1957.12.20, p. 13; Union of South Africa Government Gazette no. 21, 1959.01.02, p. 25.

70 Union of South Africa Government Gazette, no. 312, 1957.03.01, p. 12; Union of South Africa Government Gazette no. 1978, 1957.12.20, p. 13; Union of South Africa Government Gazette no. 21, 1959.01.02, p. 25.

71 Union of South Africa Government Gazette, no. 1978, 1957.12.20, p. 13.

72 VG: Unpublished report, pp. 1-24, submitted by M. Nemudzivhadi on Ravele Land Consolidation to the Van der Walt Commission, 1980.

uninhabited because the Venda communities were residing in the mountains.⁷³

The Balovedu of Soekmekaar also claimed certain areas of Venda, like Sekhusesa and Mamaila as theirs. The creation of the homelands in accordance with the provision of the *Bantu Self-Government Act* of 1959 laid the problems to rest. Forced removals took place and the three ethnic groups were reshuffled. This paved the way for the creation of the three homelands, namely Venda, Gazankulu and Lebowa after 1959.⁷⁴

The elevation of headmen to the position of chiefs in Venda later caused simmering discontent among the independent headmen who were sidelined by Verwoerd. Independent headmen regarded themselves as the equals to the chiefs in status because they were also accountable to the native affairs commissioners. They were not under chiefs because they ruled independently in their own areas. Headman Ravele, for example, lost his status as an independent ruler when his father, Nanga, was placed under Mphephu's father, George Mbulaheni. Headman who formerly resided in Duiwelskloof, was an independent ruler. During the time of forced removals, he was placed under Netshimbupfe who was also a headman at the time. Netshimbupfe was later promoted to the position of chief. Thus Netshitungulwana became his subject. Another independent headman, Muila who also resided in Duiwelskloof was sidelined during promotions by Verwoerd. He lost his status as an independent ruler when he was also placed under Netshimbupfe. Muila's promotion took place very late during Mphephu's rule. This simmering discontent was borne silently during Mphephu's rule.⁷⁵

73 VG BAO K375, file no. 11/3/3(1): Minute, Matshangana Territorial Authority to Minister of Bantu Administration and Development on additional facts in connection with the boundary between the Matshangana and the Bavenda of Louis Trichardt and Sibasa, 1963.11.12.

74 VG 2(2), pp. 582-584: Commission of Inquiry into Venda Vuhosi Affairs.

75 VG 2(2), pp. 582-583, 742: Commission of Inquiry into Venda Vuhosi Affairs.

Chapter 4

THE APPLICATION OF THE SECOND AND THIRD TIER OF TRADITIONAL GOVERNMENT AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF VENDA .

The second tier of traditional government introduced by the National Party Government was the Regional Authorities established at Vhembe, Ramabulana and Spelonken or Sekhusesa in 1959. These Regional Authorities consisted of the representatives of various tribal authorities from the three ethnic groups which were residing in the area and who were later to be incorporated in the homelands policy of the government.¹

During the same period, the NP Government passed the *Bantu Self Government Act* of 1959 which laid the foundation for the creation of eight homelands and at the same time abolished African representation in parliament. The homelands which were in the process of being created were for the Northern Sothos, Southern Sothos, Tswanas, Zulus, Swazis, Xhosas, Shangaans and Vendas. The Act also made provision for the appointment of five (White) Commissioners-General in the homelands who were to guide and advise the Africans on constitutional affairs. They also served as a link between the various homelands and the South African Government.²

The Vhembe Regional Authority covered the whole Sibasa area including the eastern areas inhabited by Shangaan chiefs like Mhinga, Xikundu, Mulamula, Mavambe and Mudavhula. The name "Vhembe" was a common name which was used by both the Vendas and the Shangaans when referring to the Limpopo river. The name was agreed upon to avoid friction because the regional authority catered for both groups. The chairman of the Vhembe Regional Authority was headman Mabilu from Sibasa, acting chief of Ha-Tshivhase at the time. He was assisted by chief Mhinga, a Shangaan.³

The Ramabulana Regional Authority covered the Njelele area including some Venda areas on the western side of Louis Trichardt under chiefs Sinthumule and Kutama.

1 "The Republic of Venda," in *Africa Institute Bulletin Supplement*, 27(5), 1987, p. 4.

2 J. Butler *et al.*: *Black Homelands of South Africa*, p. 30; R.M. Price and C.G. Rosberg (eds.): *The Apartheid Regime*, p. 192; J. Hoagland: *South Africa*, p. 169.

3 OS 940521, p. 43; F.N. Ravele, Mauluma village; OS 930221, p. 13; A.D. Mahatlane, Giyani township; Anon.: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 68.

It also covered the Shangaan areas on the south-eastern side of Louis Trichardt under chiefs Baloyi and Bungeni. Chief Patrick Mphephu became the chairman of Ramabulana Regional Authority in 1959.⁴

The Spelonken Regional Authority covered the south-eastern areas of Louis Trichardt under the Venda chiefs Nthabalala, Masakona, Mulima, Muila to Soekmekaar. It also included the Northern Sotho areas of Manthata, Ramokgopa and Mamaila. The chairman was chief Ramokgopa.⁵

The powers and duties of regional authorities were divided into two sections. The first section included the management of welfare services to the disabled, the promotion of economy, notification of births and deaths and the collection of revenue. The second section included the establishment and maintenance of roads and bridges, health institutions, the improvement of farming and the control of diseases.⁶ This was the first step in the development of the three homelands along modern lines.

The development of the Venda homeland started to take shape with the introduction of regional authorities. Like tribal authorities, regional authorities also had treasuries in which funds were collected for the purpose of rendering services for that particular region.⁷

In the field of health, the regional authorities were responsible for the establishment of clinics in Venda and Shangaan areas. Some of them were Beuster, Tshakhuma, Sibasa, Rembander, Thengwe, Madombidzha, Mauluma and Madabani. In the Shangaan areas, the clinics of Shikundu, Mhinga and Mavhambe were established by the Vhembe Regional Authority. Two old-age homes were established at Mulenzhe (Piet Booii) and Dzanani, but the venture was abandoned because Venda culture did not support the system of abandoning parents and grandparents to the care of the State. The buildings were later used by the agriculture extension officers.⁸

4 OS 945021, p. 43: F.N. Ravele, Mauluma village; OS 930221, p. 13: A.D. Mahatlane, Giyani township.

5 OS 940521, p. 43: F.N. Ravele, Mauluma village.

6 Anon.: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 68; M. Horrell (ed.): *A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1950 - 1951*, p. 11.

7 M. Horrell (ed.): *A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1950-1951*, p. 11.

8 OS 940521, p. 43: F.N. Ravele, Mauluma village; OS 930221, p. 13: A.D. Mahatlane, Giyani township.

The South African Government contributed funds for the development of the area. Graders and other types of heavy machinery were purchased for the construction of roads and bridges. The Lambani-Mhinga bridge which joined the two countries across the Levubu river and Ramokgopa dam, was constructed by the Vhembe Regional Authority.⁹

A bottle store was established under each regional authority. Profits from the sale of liquor were used to pay for bursaries for needy students. Sibasa Bottle Store fell under the administration of Vhembe Regional Authority while Mphephu Bottle Store was controlled by Ramabulana Regional Authority.¹⁰

Attention was especially devoted to services such as the electrification of Sibasa. Water supplies came from the old Phiphidi dam. Other developments which were established by regional authorities, were sisal and timber plantations in rural areas. Many irrigation schemes were established in Venda including the Tshiombo, Palmaryvile, Dzindi and Matangari schemes to name only a few.¹¹

With the establishment of Bantu Education in 1953, mission schools were taken over by the government and they became known as State-aided schools. These included high schools and a teacher training institution. In Venda all the mission primary schools, which included Tshakhuma, Beuster, Georgenholtz and Gertrudsburg, became community schools. School committees were introduced to give parents more say in the running of the schools. All the school boards fell under the control of regional authorities which employed teachers through the school committees. The school boards liased with circuit inspectors.

In the Njelele area, Mphephu, as the head of Ramabulana Regional Authority was instrumental in the establishment of Mphephu Secondary school which later became a high school. He encouraged his subjects to pay a school levy and in this way many primary schools came into being in his area. Mphephu was also instrumental in hiring many unsubsidised teachers who were paid from funds collected by his subjects because there were very few teaching posts at the time. Mphephu also encouraged Venda students to take agriculture as a potential future vocation. Several Venda students were trained at Arabië near Groblersdal and

9 OS 940521, p. 43: F.N. Ravele, Mauluma village.

10 OS 940521, p. 43: F.N. Ravele, Mauluma village.

11 OS 940251, p. 43: F.N. Ravele, Mauluma village.

Fort Cox in the Cape in the field of agriculture. Njelele, Beaconsfield, Musekwa and Mauluma clinics for medical care, in Njelele were established during this period.¹²

Vhembe Regional Authority consisted of twelve Venda and six Shangaan chiefs. This unequal representation caused a lot of tension during deliberations because the Shangaan chiefs were always outvoted. Another complaint was that the development of the region was concentrating on the Venda side and neglecting the Shangaan areas. Only three clinics were established in the Shangaan area against the many which were established in Venda. This caused the breakaway of the Shangaans who then formed their own regional authorities, namely, Malamulele and Mhava.¹³ The Gazankulu homeland was later formed in 1963 in accordance with the passing of the *Bantu Self-Government Act* of 1959. The Spelonken or Sekgosese regional authority continued to function and there was no thought of the Northern Sotho breakaway at that stage.¹⁴

When the three regional authorities were firmly in place, Thohoyandou Territorial Authority, as the last tier of traditional government, was established in 1962¹⁵ and Mphephu was elected chairman because of the seniority of the house of Ramabulana.¹⁶ His deputy was the Northern Sotho chief, Manthata. Mphephu's appointment, like that of other territorial authorities' leaders, was confirmed by the South African Government in 1962.¹⁷ In the same year Michiel Daniël Christiaan (Daan) de Wet Nel was appointed Commissioner-General of the Vendas and Shangaans with his head office situated at Sibasa.¹⁸ The new Commissioner-General had wide-ranging powers and responsibilities, like arranging territorial authority meetings, and being able to veto any decisions taken at the meetings that

12 OS 950306, p. 48: J.V.N. Mulaudzi, Shayandima township.

13 OS 930221, p. 13: A.D. Mahatlani, Giyani township.

14 OS 930221, p. 13, A.D. Mahatlani, Giyani township.

15 Anon.: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 58; "The Republic of Venda", *Africa Institute Bulletin supplement*, 27(5), 1987 p. 4; M. Nemudzivhadi: *When and What*, p. 28.

16 SA URU 4495 233/263, p. 108, Minutes 233-263, File 56/8/2 dd. 1963.02.20. approved by Prime Minister H.F. Verwoerd: Aanwysing van Kaptein P. R. Mphephu as voorsitter van die Thohoyandou Gebiedsowerheid, Noordelike Gebied.

17 SA URU 4495 233/263, p. 108, Minutes 233-263, File 56/8/2 dd.1963.02.20, approved by Prime Minister H.F. Verwoerd: Aanwysing van Kaptein P. R. Mphephu as voorsitter van die Thohoyandou Gebiedsowerheid, Noordelike Gebied.

18 SA URU 5109 633 pp. 44-45: Aanstelling van die Heer Michiel Daniël Christiaan de Wet Nel as Kommissaris-Generaal van die Venda-en-Tsonga Volkseenheid; J. Cope: *South Africa*, pp. 44-45.

he did not consider to be in the interest of the Vendas.¹⁹

Thohoyandou Territorial Authority was constituted by the representatives of the three regional authorities which were operating in Venda at that time. Its main function was to supervise various services which were rendered by regional authorities. It was an overseeing body which did not render any active service to the Venda community.²⁰ Thohoyandou Territorial Authority also served as a coordinating body for tribal authorities and was given limited powers on matters which affected the administration of tribal authorities. Other functions were to control the construction and maintenance of roads, schools, health institutions and the collection of revenue.²¹

The territorial authority initially did not have administrative buildings of its own and it operated from the offices of the Commissioner-General. It functioned on a skeleton staff of three clerks from the three ethnic groups mentioned earlier. Although the functions of the territorial authority were advisory in nature, it had firm control on the budget of the three regional authorities which was approved by the Central Government in Pretoria. It also had limited legislative powers.²²

The *Bantu Self-Government Act* of 1959 specified that the representatives of the three tiers of traditional government should be elected on ethnic lines. The application of this Act later resulted in the breakaway of the Northern Sotho chiefs of Mamaila, Ramokgopa and Manthata in 1967, who went on to form their own territorial authorities in the Lebowa homeland.²³ The application of the Act also created friction when the geographic boundaries of the three ethnic groups were defined. This eventually led to forced removals among the three tribal groups when the affected communities were compelled to settle in their respective newly created homelands of Lebowa, Gazankulu and Venda.²⁴

In the Thohoyandou Territorial Authority constitution, it was stipulated that each chief should bring along one elected representative to assist the chiefs in the

19 OS 940721, p. 46: J. Mulaudzi, Thohoyandou Township.

20 OS 940721, p. 46: J. Mulaudzi, Thohoyandou township; Anon.: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 68; J. Cope: *South Africa*, p. 44.

21 Anon.: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 68; J. Cope: *South Africa*, p. 68.

22 OS 940721, p. 44: J. Mulaudzi, Thohoyandou township; Anon.: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 68.

23 A.N.J. Herholdt and R.J. Dombo: "The Political Development of Venda: A Study of a Society in Microcosm" in *Journal for Contemporary History*, June 1992, 17(1), p. 73.

24 "The Republic of Venda", *Africa Institute Bulletin Supplement*, 27(5), 1987, p. 4.

meetings. This increased the number of representatives from twenty five chiefs and one representative from Gwamasenga Community Council to 52 members.²⁵ Baldwin Mudau, one of the Venda elite who had attended school with Mphephu earlier at Tshakuma Mission Station, became one of the urban representatives of the Thohoyandou Territorial Authority who served as a link between the Urban Boards and homeland administration. He organised visits of the Venda chiefs and helped to establish Venda schools in the urban areas.²⁶ Later on he was to become the pivotal figure in the opposition to Mphephu's rule.

A draft constitution for all the homelands was circulated and members of the various territorial authorities were requested to give their inputs and offer comments where necessary. In the draft constitution of Gazankulu, no mention was made that the chief Councillor should come from the ruling house. Many of the Venda elite were frustrated by the excessive influence of many of the traditional leaders elected who had little Western education – like Mphephu himself – and wanted to replace them and to lead the Vendas like Hudson Ntsanwisi, a commoner by birth and a former academic of the University of the North, was doing in neighbouring Gazankulu. Members of the Thohoyandou Territorial Authority who were inclined towards this way of reasoning and who wanted the Venda constitution to be amended to be in line with that of Gazankulu were J.P. Mutsila, H. Mangoma and B. Mudau. These were commoners who later were to form the core of the opposition party when Venda became a self-governing territory in 1973.²⁷ It was evident that there were elements in Venda politics who were not prepared to accept Mphephu's authority on hereditary and historical grounds.

The structure of the executive committee of the Thohoyandou Territorial Authority consisted of the chairman, Mphephu, his deputy chief V.P. Manthata, a Sotho, as well as other chiefs like, J. Sinthumule, M.D. Ramabulana, Netshimbupfe and D. Modjadji. The white officials who always attended the executive meetings, and acted as advisers, were M.G. Potgieter, the Bantu Affairs Commissioner at Sibasa, B.J.D. Liebenberg, a Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner of the northern areas, and Mr. D.E. Jacobs a representative from Pietersburg. H. Mangoma acted as treasurer

25 OS 940719, p. 44: S. Mulaudzi, Dzwerrani village; M. Horrel (ed.): *A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1950-1951*, p. 4.

26 OS 930417, p. 3: M.C. Senyosi Kutama village; D.A. Kotzè: *African Politics in South Africa 1964-1974*, p. 60.

27 OS 940719, p. 44: S. Mulaudzi, Dzwerrani village; OS 940721, p. 46: J. Mulaudzi, Thohoyandou township; Benso/RAU: *The Independent Venda*, p.43.

and secretary at the same time, while J.P. Ramabulana acted as interpreter. These meetings were held every two months and centred mostly on the development of the area and ways in which the homeland could be made self-sufficient.²⁸

Tension between the Shangaans and Vendas was created by the application of the *Bantu Self-Government Act*, especially over the adjustment of boundaries. Shangaan school boards expelled Venda sub-inspectors from their schools and vice versa. Teachers were also expelled if they happened to teach in another ethnic area. The Secretary for Bantu Administration and the Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner in Pietersburg were kept busy trying to solve these disputes,²⁹ but without noticeable success.

The establishment of Thohoyandou Territorial Authority was the first step in the blending of a traditional system of government with a Western type democracy. This became clear in 1969 when the territorial authority was given limited legislative and executive powers to control its own affairs.³⁰ Mphephu's position, for the first time, changed to that of Chief Councillor when Venda attained self-rule in 1969.³¹ Executive power, which could be compared to that of a cabinet, was vested in the Executive Council, which was elected by secret ballot by members of the territorial authority. In this way, traditional leaders were introduced to the workings of a western system of government because elections and ballots had not featured in traditional governments. The Executive Council, ("cabinet") consisted of the Chief Councillor and five other councillors. Many chiefs at the time could not be appointed to these positions because of a lack of education. That is why a school of sons of chiefs as mentioned earlier, was later established at Sibasa in 1972. The six newly created departments were run by White seconded officials because there were no qualified Venda officials at the time.³²

Mphephu was allocated the responsibility for Authority Affairs and Finance, A.M.

28 VG: Dept: Bantoe Administrasie en Ontwikkeling, File no. n11/3/3(1): Minutes Executive Committee Meeting, Thohoyandou Territorial Authority, Sibasa, 1963.09.24, no page number.

29 VG: Dept. Bantoe Administrasie en Ontwikkeling File, no. N11/3/1(11): Minute, no. F56/9/4 from Matshangana Territorial Authority dated 1963.11.12 to the Honourable Minister of Bantu Administration and Development, Pretoria, no page number.

30 Anon.: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 68.

31 Anon.: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 70; Benso/RAU: *The Independent Venda*, p. 33; A.N.J. Herholdt and R.J. Dombo: "The Political Development of Venda: A study of a Society in Microcosm" in *Journal for Contemporary History*, 27(1), June 1992, p. 74.

32 OS 950306, p. 48: J.V.N. Mulaudzi, Shayandima township; Anon.: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 70.

Madzivhandila for that of Agriculture, T.T. Netshimbupfe for that of Community Affairs, J.R. Rambuda for that of Works), F.N. Ravele for that of Education and Culture, while a commoner, I. Mudau, was responsible for the Dept. of Justice.³³

When Thohoyandou Territorial Authority was given self-rule, it ceased to be an advisory body and took over the powers which were previously asserted by regional authorities.³⁴ The regional authorities then became advisory bodies in that they kept the territorial authorities informed about the needs of the Vendas in their respective areas.³⁵ The Thohoyandou Territorial Authority also received semi-legislative powers although the decisions taken could be vetoed by the South African parliament.³⁶

The sitting of the territorial authority represented a form of parliament. There was a chairman instead of a speaker. The six councillors represented a cabinet, while traditional leaders and their elected members, represented members of parliament.³⁷ In this way Venda leaders were empowered to rule their subjects in the Western system of government.³⁸

Many Vendas did not understand or care about the workings of the three tiers of traditional government which were to be the pillars on which the homeland administration rested. Politics, in the modern sense of the word, did not play an important part in their lives. The Vendas in general only really became politically aware and got involved in homeland's politics when Venda received self-rule in 1973 and political parties were introduced.

The territorial authority continued to function as an advisory body in that it kept the central government informed about the needs of the Vendas in the homeland. Although the budget was still approved by the central government, the administration of the homeland was in the hands of traditional rulers.³⁹

Mphephu as chairman of Thohoyandou Territorial Authority did not play any important role because the white government officials including the Commissioner-

33 Benso/RAU: *The Independent Venda*, p. 42; Anon.: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 79.

34 OS 940721, p. 46: J. Mulaudzi, Thohoyandou township; Anon.: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 70;

35 OS 940721, p. 46: J. Mulaudzi, Thohoyandou township.

36 Anon.: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 70.

37 OS 940721, p. 46: J. Mulaudzi, Thohoyandou township.

38 Anon.: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 68.

39 Anon.: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 70.

General and magistrates were responsible for bringing the South African Government policies to traditional leaders through the territorial authority. It was also during this period of territorial authority, as stated earlier, that Venda rulers were being familiarised with the workings of western style of government. The aim of the South African Government was to blend the traditional government, with which the Venda rulers were familiar, with the new system of government which was foreign to them.

Chapter 5

THE DEVELOPMENT TOWARDS SELF-GOVERNMENT OF THE ETHNIC COMMUNITIES IN SOUTH AFRICA AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE VENDA HOMELAND

The political development of the various homelands in South Africa was made possible through the application of various laws which had been introduced since the early 1950's. The *Bantu Authorities Act* of 1951 increased the power of traditional rulers and laid the foundation for the development of the homelands along ethnic lines through the application of three tiers of traditional government.¹ This was followed by the passing of the *Bantu-Self-Government Act* of 1959 which laid the foundation for the creation of Bantu homelands.² The *Bantu Homeland's Citizenship Act* of 1970 tied each African to a particular homeland.³

The Transkei was the first of the homelands to undergo rapid political development. In 1955, when Venda was busy introducing tribal authorities, the system of territorial authority in Transkei was already in place.⁴ Although representatives of the territorial authority were divided on the issue of accepting self-government, Chief Kaizer Matanzima was elected Chief Minister in 1963.⁵ This encouraged other homelands to follow suit.

The constitutional development of the homelands was introduced in two phases by the Government. The first phase was the setting up of territorial authorities so that traditional leaders could be trained in the workings of western democracy. In the second phase, homelands executive political governments were introduced consisting of chief ministers and their cabinets. They were responsible for government departments.⁶ This was a blending of traditional and western systems

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- 1 R.E. Bissel and C. Crocker (eds.): *South Africa into the 1980's*, p. 28; P. Maylam: *A History of the African People of South Africa*, p. 160; T.R.H. Davenport: *South Africa: A Modern History*, p. 384.
 - 2 J. Pampallis: *Foundations of the New South Africa*, p. 186; J.D. Omer-Cooper: *History of Southern Africa*, p. 213; J. Butler et al.: *Black Homelands of South Africa*, p. 30.
 - 3 L. Thompson: *A History of South Africa*, p. 191; J. Butler et al.: *Black Homelands of South Africa*, p. 79.
 - 4 B.J. Liebenberg: "The National Party in Power, 1948-1961" in C.F.J. Muller (ed.): *Five Hundred Years of South African History*, p. 523.
 - 5 B.J. Liebenberg: "The National Party in Power, 1948-1961" in C.F.J. Muller (ed.): *Five Hundred Years of South African History*, p. 523.
 - 6 B.J. Liebenberg: "The National Party in Power, 1948-1961" in C.F.J. Muller (ed.): *Five Hundred Years of South African History*, p. 523.

of government. Traditionally chiefs either ruled certain tribes or areas, as was the case of Venda. They were not responsible for government departments.⁷ In the new dispensation the traditional rulers in cabinet posts now acquired more powers as political heads of departments.

The draft constitutions of the various homelands, including Venda, were drawn up by the South African Government.⁸ Although several authors have stated that the constitution of Venda was drawn up by the Vendas themselves,⁹ the Venda traditional rulers could not have drawn up, nor understood the intricate workings of Western democracy. Mphephu himself, for example, as a traditionalist did not support the idea of introducing political parties.¹⁰ In the territorial authority's meetings where senior White officials attended, there was always a permanent interpreter because the majority of traditional leaders had little formal education. They could not communicate freely in either the English or Afrikaans language.

The Venda chiefs were familiar with traditional government. The homelands' constitutions, apart from being similar in many ways, did not allow room for the appointment of an ordinary citizen to head the state.¹¹ The only exception was that of the commoner, Hudson Ntsanwisi, a commoner by birth, who was appointed to the position of chief minister of Gazankulu. He was later elevated to the position of chief.¹² Traditional leaders in various homelands formed the political majority in parliaments,¹³ and that caused problems for opposition groupings.

In the 1970's various homelands became self-governing territories. Lucas Mangope was elected chief minister of Bophuthatswana in 1972, Cedric Phathudi of Lebowa in 1972, Mphephu of Venda in 1973 and W. Mota for Qwaqwa in 1974. Because of his resistance to the homeland policy, Mangosuthu Buthelezi, who was by that time a Chief Councillor of the Kwazulu homeland, declined the offer of taking self-rule for Kwazulu.¹⁴

7 S.P. Jordaan and A. Jordaan: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 12.

8 OS: 940721, p. 46. J. Mulaudzi, Thohoyandou township.

9 M.C. Botha: *Die Swart Vryheidspaaie*, p. 151; Anon: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 74.

10 W.J. Breytenbach: *Tuislande: Selfregering en Politieke Partye*, p. 156.

11 OS: 940721, p. 46. J. Mulaudzi, Thohoyandou township, Venda Government; (VG): D.J.H. le Roux: *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Causes of the Unrest and Ritual Murders in Venda during 1988*, pp. 170-177.

12 OS: 940719, p. 44. S. Mulaudzi, Dzwerani village.

13 D.A. Kotzé: *African Politics in South Africa 1964 - 1974*, p. 120.

14 B.J. Liebenberg: "The National Party in Power, 1948-1961" in C.F.J. Muller (ed.): *Five Hundred Years of South African History*, p. 523; J. Cope: *South Africa*, pp. 44-45.

The development of the homelands in South Africa was partly based on the recommendations of the Tomlinson Commission. The homelands which were being developed at the time were Venda, Ciskei, Gazankulu, Kwazulu, Transkei, Lebowa, Bophuthatswana and Witzieshoek (Qwaqwa). The Bureau for Economic Research: Co-operation and Development (BENSO) formulated policies that were to govern the economic development of all the homelands.¹⁵

The future policy on the development of education was formulated under the control of local director of education in Venda. This led to the establishment of a new teachers training college at Tshakhuma. Many secondary schools were established and paid for by the government and that brought to an end the mission schools in Venda because many grants for teachers were created in order to reduce the dependence on privately paid teachers. The task of building schools was placed on the department of education in Venda and tribal communities also collected funds for this purpose. Under each chief, a secondary school was established. This later caused a lot of shortage of suitable qualified teachers. Later several teachers training colleges were established at Tshakhuma, Dzanani and Thohoyandou to solve the acute shortage of teachers.¹⁶

The planning for the creation and the running of the departments was under a co-ordinating committee established by the government which held meetings regularly to report on progress made in the development of the region. It was realised that regional authorities were unable to rehabilitate the homeland fully because of lack of funds and expertise. The co-ordinating committee consisted of heads of the six departments but it was also under the control of another body called the Planning Committee. This Planning Committee was also created by the South African Government like the Commissioner-General, the Director of Finance, the Sibasa Magistrate, a representative from the Department of Bantu Administration and Development, representatives from the Bantu Investment Corporation (BIC), the officials from the Department of Agriculture at Louis Trichardt, representatives from the Department of Posts and Telegraphs as well as the Chief of Police for Louis Trichardt.¹⁷ The political leaders were always invited during these meetings and there was a good working relationship between the two groups. A permanent

15 SA K20 Tomlinson Commission 3(22), pp. 868-904A. Record of Evidence, 1952.06.12.

16 BENSO/RAU: The Independent Venda, p. 92.

17 SA BEN 88, File N/4/2/7(2): Minute dd. 1975.10.07, Venda Planning Committee, Venda Owerheid 1975-1977.

translator was appointed so that the political leaders could easily follow the discussion affecting the homeland.

The creation of the six cabinet posts led to changes in the position of the ministers who for the first time were taken away from their subjects and placed over government departments. These traditional leaders played a double role in that during the week they played the role of political heads but during weekends they acted as traditional leaders in their respective areas. Modern houses were built at Makwarela township to accommodate them. During this period of territorial authority, Mphephu and other political leaders did not play any significant role because the actual running of the departments was under seconded officials from Pretoria. The Vendas at that stage were not aware of the political developments which were taking place behind the scene because they were used to the traditional system of government which had been in place for centuries.¹⁸

Grants paid to Venda government increased dramatically as from 1970. After the creation of six departments and the appointment of political heads and their secretaries. The administrative cost to run these departments increased because they needed more staffing, buildings, furniture, vehicles and funds. These departments were accommodated in temporary structures near Makwarela township.¹⁹

A suitable place had to be established to accommodate the Venda civil officials who were needed to man the bureaucracy. Mphephu realised that Venda could not depend on the officials supplied by the central government indefinitely, and that local civil servants had to be trained as soon as possible. The Tomlinson Report on Venda had initiated the principle in 1952 already. Accordingly the two existing townships of Makwarela and Shayandima, which consisted of little more than a few four-roomed houses each, were identified for the new development. Another aim of developing these townships was to encourage Venda migrant labourers to settle in with their families permanently.²⁰ In this way the central government wanted to reverse the process of urbanisation to cities.

Other bodies involved with the planning for the development of the region were

18 Anon: The Republic of Venda, p. 71.

19 SA BEN 88, File N/4/2/7(2). Minute dd. 1977.05.17 of the Venda Planning Committee. Venda Owerheid, 1975-1977.

20 SA K20 Tomlinson Commission 5(18), pp. 868-904A: Record of Evidence, 1952.06.17.

experts from the University of the Witwatersrand, who investigated the socio-economy of the region and made recommendations. There were also consulting engineers who investigated the establishment of a group of nine proposed dams in the Sibasa district. Loxton, Hunting and Partners of the Bureau for Market Research had to report on the socio-economic structure of home-ownership at Makwarela and Shayandima. Students from the University of the North were to help in the distribution of questionnaires in villages. Researchers wanted to get a profile of the expenditure of Venda families.²¹

The construction of the Vondo dam was in the pipeline as the old Phiphidi dam was covered with silt and could not hold enough water. There was also a suggestion by the Commissioner-General for the establishment of a railway line across Levubu. This plan however did not enjoy support. There was at one stage talk of removing the Sinthumule-Kutama villages in order to eliminate "Black Spots". This plan was also abandoned because of resistance from the people. At that stage political heads were not directly involved in the development of the region, they however became more prominent with the compulsory resettlements from 1970 onwards.²²

With the passing of the *Bantu Homeland's Citizenship Act* of 1970 which made the South African homelands to develop along ethnic lines, all the homelands were as a result given substantial grants by the South African government to be developed into meaningful entities, and Venda was no exception.²³ The planning for the establishment and development of various projects in Venda was placed in the hands of various government appointed bodies, but traditional leaders were also involved in that they were given the task of informing their subjects of the new developments which were being introduced in their areas. Mphephu and other traditional leaders gave full their support to these committees because the development of the homeland was widely viewed as a positive sign in the policy of separate development.

After the application of the *Bantu Self-Government Act* of 1959, the three homeland

21 SA BEN 89. N/4/2/7/1. Minute dd. 1977.05.17 of the Venda Planning Committee. Venda Beplanning 1971-1977.

22 SA BEN 89. File N/4/2/7(1). Minute dd. 1972.05.25 of Co-ordinating Committee. Venda Beplanning; "Homeland. Tragedy: Function and Farce", South African Research Service and Development Studies Group (SARS/DSG), *Information Publication*, no. 6, pp. 21-26.

23 SA BEN 88, File N/4/2/7(2): Minute dd. 1975.10.07, Venda Planning Committee, Venda Owerheid 1975-1977.

leaders Mphephu, Ntsanwisi and Phathudi and their respective cabinets were given the task of promoting the new concept of nationhood among their followers. The aim was to encourage removals so that ethnic groupings should be made possible in the homelands. Mphephu, Ntsanwisi and Phathudi held joint rallies in the affected communities where they preached the new concept of promoting nationhood. But this did not always enjoy the support of their followers because politics as stated earlier did not play an important part in the lives of rural communities who were always faced by bread and butter issues.²⁴

At a time when Mphephu had clearly started manipulating the political dispensation to strengthen his power base in Venda, he came under heavy criticism for his handling of the resettlement issue. In the western areas of Louis Trichardt where the Northern Sotho and Shangaan communities resided among the Vendas under chiefs Sinthumule and Kutama, Mphephu told these communities in 1972 that Vendaland belonged to the Vendas and that other communities should leave that area immediately. Those communities were forced to leave before harvesting their crops, causing a great degree of anger and bitterness.²⁵ On another occasion, at Tshivhulana, a Venda village surrounded by Shangaans, where Ntsanwisi and Mphephu had been addressing the Venda villagers, the speakers were booed and heckled. The headman, Netshivhulana, and his followers refused to be moved to Venda areas. Mphephu thereupon threatened him that he would be reclassified as a Shangaan in accordance with the policy introduced by the South African Government to classify Africans along ethnic lines. This made the headman to change his mind. In this his style of leadership was clearly different from that of Ntsanwisi. While Ntsanwisi was usually sympathetic in his approach, Mphephu often used threats to overawe villagers.²⁶

The creation of the three northern homelands, Venda, Gazankulu and Lebowa, was in accordance with the provisions laid down by the application of the *Bantu Self-Government Act* of 1959. It stipulated that the future composition of the three tiers of traditional government should be constituted along ethnic lines.²⁷ This resulted

24 VG: BAO 11/3/3/1(17) Ref. No. N11/3/2(2) dd.1964.07.31 from Bantu Affairs Commissioner of Duiwelskloof to Bantu Affairs Commissioner, Sibasa. Minute: Matshangana Territorial Authority-Bantu Affairs Commissioner; "The Republic of Venda", Africa Institute Bulletin Supplement 27(5), 1987, p. 4.

25 VG: BAO, K459, 6/9/2, N11/3/3(1): Report on a meeting held on 1971.11.29 at Sinthumule Area..

26 VG: BAO K459, 6/9/2. N11/3/3(1): Report on Meeting of Venda and Shangaan leaders held at Tshivhulana, dd. 1971.08.27.

27 Anon: The Republic of Venda, p. 68.

in forced removals and reshuffling of communities which led to tension and suffering.²⁸

When the homelands were established, the three ethnic communities who were residing in the north-eastern Transvaal were forced to move to their respective homelands. The task of carrying out the government's instructions was placed upon the homeland leaders. In this way it had to deflect black anger from the South African Government.²⁹

Chief minister P.R. Mphahlele, as a result of the government's policy of forced removals, came in for severe criticism. The Berlin Mission station of Gertrudsburg which was established by Rev. E. Gottsling in 1899 was situated south of Louis Trichardt on the farm Ledig.³⁰ It brought Christianity and education to the surrounding areas. By the 1950's inhabitants at the mission station consisted of about 400 Venda and Shangaan families. Early in 1960, the residents were forcefully moved to the farm Zaamenkomst about 30 kilometres west of Louis Trichardt. Because of the resistance that followed, the army was called in.³¹

The farm Zaamenkomst which was situated in one of the driest areas in Venda, was placed under chief Kutama when tribal authorities were introduced after 1954.³² Although Mphahlele did not take part in the forced removal of these people, most of the residents of the former Berlin Mission stations like in other mission stations in Venda opposed Mphahlele's rule.

The Tshikota township was established in the late 1940's about three kilometres west of the town of Louis Trichardt. In the early 1960's the inhabitants who consisted of Vendas, Shangaans, Sothos and a few coloureds, were forcefully moved to another township a few kilometres south of the old one. The new township was

28 VG: BAO 11/3/3/1(17) Ref. No. N11/3/2(2) dd.1964.07.31 from Bantu Affairs Commissioner of Duiwelskloof to Bantu Affairs Commissioner, Sibasa. Minute: Matshangana Territorial Authority-Bantu Affairs Commissioner; "The Republic of Venda", *Africa Institute Bulletin Supplement* 27(5), 1987, p. 4.

29 J. Pampallis: *Foundations of the New South Africa*, p. 188; "Homeland Tragedy; Function and Farce", SARS/DSG Information Publication no. 6, pp. 21-26.

30 R.N. Mathivha: *The Berlin Missionary Venture in Education at Tshakhuma: Venda 1872-1954*, p. 61.

31 "Homeland Tragedy: Function and Farce", SARS/DSG Information Publication no. 6, p. 27; R.N. Mathivha: *The Berlin Missionary Venture in Education at Tshakhuma: Venda 1872-1954*, p. 61.

32 Union of South Africa, Government Gazette no. 21, 1959.01.02, Union of South Africa, Government Gazette, no. 312, 1957.03.01, Union of South Africa Government Gazette no. 1978, 1957.12.20; "Homeland Tragedy: Function and Farce." SARS/DSG/ Information Publication, no. 6, p. 27.

left to deteriorate so that the residents would be willing to be moved. They were again moved to another township about 30 kilometres south-east of Louis Trichardt, to the farm Vleifontein. The Shangaans were resettled on Waterval near Elim Hospital. The Sothos were to be resettled at Seshego near Pietersburg. Some groups however refused to move.³³

In 1984, the Vleifontein residents heard rumours which later were broadcast over the radio that they were to be placed under Vuwani District and be reincorporated into Venda. There was widespread reaction to it. Tension began to mount and Mphephu used his security forces to quell the ensuing unrest. Many people were arrested, including teachers who were hospitalised as a result of beatings which took place. Some teachers fled to urban areas. A 12 person Crisis Committee was formed to represent the views of the people. Nevertheless, Vleifontein was reincorporated into Venda. This made Mphephu very unpopular.³⁴

Between 1973 and 1974, meetings between Mphephu and his ministers together with white officials from the South African Government and the residents of Kutama and Sinthumule, took place. The aim was to resettle the residents near Vuwani in order to eliminate 'Black Spots'. There was widespread reaction from the residents and the plans were later abandoned. This made traditional leaders, especially Mphephu, lose credibility with their subjects.³⁵

In 1971 many Shangaan and Venda communities, which had been living on both sides of the Levubu river, were removed from their areas in order to make way for the establishment of the Venda and Shangaan homelands. Chief Mphephu and Professor H. Ntsanwisi were accompanied by their councillors whenever a meeting was held with the affected communities. These meetings took place in a tense

33 "Homeland Tragedy: Function and Farce", SARS/DSG Information Publication, no. 6, p. 28; P. Sidley: "Mphephu lives Forever in South Africa's Banana Republic", *Work in Progress*, no. 46, February 1987, pp. 26-29.

34 "Homeland Tragedy: Function and Farce", SARS/DSG. Information Publication, no. 6, p. 28.

35 SA BEN 89 File N4/2/1 (1) minute dd. 1972.05.25 of Co-ordinating Committee. Venda Beplanning 1971-1977; "Homeland Tragedy; Function and Farce", Information Publication, no. 6. Pp. 26-28.

atmosphere as both communities were not in favour of moving to new areas. The two leaders blamed the South African Government for introducing the new policy of Separate Development. At the same time they stressed the need for nation building.³⁶ By 1973 resettlement of ethnic enclaves of Sothos and Shangaans was completed and the three homelands established along ethnic lines. The way was now open for the further political development in Venda, which began with the appearance of political parties on the scene.

Forced removals caused friction and tension between communities which had been living peacefully for many years.³⁷ The relationship between the chiefs and their subjects became strained, especially when promises made by the chiefs did not materialise. Forced removals disrupted school attendance. It also created problems for pupils who were forced to learn in a language with which they were not familiar. It impoverished the communities who were forced to sell some livestock which could not be taken along. Forced removals also caused hardship to children and old people who could not easily adapt to new places of residence. It also disrupted old age pension pay-outs causing old people to go for months without receiving money. It also created problems for workers because of increased transport fares for long distances that had to be travelled between the homes and places of work.

The passing of the *Bantu Homelands' Constitution Act* of 1971 prepared the territorial authorities in all the homelands to develop towards self-rule. The political development of the homelands was placed in the hands of traditional leaders and a start was made to blend the traditional system of government with the Western type. The Vendas were for the first time drawn into the arena, of formal Western style politics. It caused problems because the majority of educated Vendas were not in favour of the traditional leaders joining the political field. The Vendas were aware that the majority of tradition leaders, Mphephu included, had little formal education.³⁸ They also felt that Mphephu was an unsuitable candidate for political leadership in the Western type of democracy where it would be required of him to give speeches in official languages. The appointment of Professor Hudson Ntsanwisi, a commoner by birth, as the leader of the Tsonga in Gazankulu

36 VG: BAO K459, 6/9/2, N11/3/3(1): Report on a meeting of Venda and Shangaan leaders held at Tshivhulana, dd. 1971.08.27

37 "The Republic of Venda" in *Africa Institute Bulletin Supplement*, 27(5), 1987, p. 4.

38 B.J. Liebenberg: *The National Party in Power; 1948-1961*, in C.F.J. Muller (ed.): *Five Hundred Years of South African History*, p. 523; Anon.: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 70; A.J. Venter: *Black Leaders of Southern Africa*, pp. 187-188.

homeland, prompted the Venda elite to join the opposition party.³⁹

While the territorial authority was in operation, there was no opposition from the Vendas. It was a sort of tribal parliament, and they could associate themselves with it. However the majority of the population did not really understand what was taking place behind the scenes. The situation changed significantly on 1 June 1971, when Thohoyandou Territorial Authority was replaced by a legislative assembly. This resulted in the blending of the traditional system of government with the Western type. The composition of the legislative assembly was the same as that of the territorial authority.⁴⁰ The only difference was that the new legislative assembly was given more powers to deal with the six government departments which had been established earlier.⁴¹ The composition of the Executive Council was the same as that of the former territorial authority, but it could pass laws which could affect people living outside the borders of Venda. These laws could only be repealed by the State President.⁴²

The next stage in the constitutional development of Venda was the granting of self-rule which came into effect on 1 February 1973. Venda then became a self-governing territory in terms of the *Bantu Homelands' Constitution Act* of 1971 and the territorial authority ceased to exist.⁴³

Opposition to self-rule came from the majority of Venda teachers and administrative officials. This was highlighted in minutes written by F.B. Olivier for the Secretary of Education in Venda to the Secretary for Bantu Education in Pretoria on 9 September 1974, when he stressed the need for establishing Tshisimani Training College at Tshakuma as Venda was experiencing a great shortage of teachers at the time.⁴⁴

On the surface the granting of self-rule did not change the political structure which was in existence at the time. The only apparent change that took place was in the

39 OS: 940719, p. 44, S.M. Mulaudzi, Dzwerani village; Venda Government (VG). D.J.H. le Roux: Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Causes of the Unrest and Ritual Murders in Venda during 1988, pp. 170-174; W. le Roux: *Politieke Leiers van Suider Afrika*, p. 226; A.J. Venter: *Black Leaders of Southern Africa*, pp. 187-188.

40 Anon.: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 68; BENSO/RAU: *The Independent Venda*, p. 43; "The Republic of Venda", *Africa Institute Bulletin Supplement*, (27)5, 1987, p. 44.

41 Anon.: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 70; BENSO/RAU: *The Independent Venda*, p. 43.

42 BENSO/RAU ; *The Independent Venda*, p. 43; Anon.: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 71.

43 BENSO/RAU: *The Independent Venda*, p. 43; "The Republic of Venda", *Africa Institute Bulletin Supplement*, (27)5, 1987, p. 4.

44 SA BEN 88 N4/2/7 vol.2. Minute B1347 dd.1974.09.09, from Secretary of Bantu Education in Venda to Secretary for Bantu Education in Pretoria.

designations of councillors and the heads of the six departments which were in operation at the time. The Councillors were now called “ministers” and the directors were “secretaries”. Yet, on the constitutional level a marked power shift had taken place. The Venda Legislative Assembly had wider powers now. It could repeal South African laws which directly affected the Vendas, although it was in the final instance still subject to the approval of the State President of the Republic of South Africa.⁴⁵

The new political dispensation was modelled on a Western type of government system, and with it came traditions that were foreign. The new traditions included the introduction of a national flag, a national anthem, a high court of justice and elections for political offices. Intertwined with these new innovations were numerous symbolic elements, deeply rooted in Venda tradition.⁴⁶

Formerly the Venda traditional power lay with chiefs who were hereditary rulers and the choice of a ruler lay in the hands of senior members of the tribe as well as the members of the royal families. The new political dispensation was democratic in nature because it allowed commoners to influence the political system.⁴⁷ This undermined, to some extent, the traditional system of government which had been in place for generations.

Mphephu was personally not in favour of elections. He believed that it would create disunity among the Vendas. Mphephu felt that elections would undermine the traditional system and be a threat to the position of chiefs. The Venda chiefs, Mphephu in particular, were extremely conservative and traditionalist, hence they tended to support the old system of traditional government.⁴⁸

When Venda was given self-rule in 1973, the Assembly consisted of 60 members of whom 42 were traditional leaders consisting of 25 chiefs as well as two independent headmen from Gwamasenga Community Council plus 15 members who were appointed by the Chiefs-in-Council. The other 18 members were to be elected by

45 Anon.: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 70.

46 A.N.J. Herholdt and R.J. Dombo: “The Political Development of Venda: A Study of a Society in Microcosm” in *Journal of Contemporary History*, (17)1, June 1992, p. 76; Anon.: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 72.

47 BENSU/RAU: *The Independent Venda*, p. 25, A.N.J. Herholdt and R.J. Dombo: “The Political Development of Venda: A Study of a Society in Microcosm”, in *Journal of Contemporary History*, (17)1, June 1992, p. 76.

48 W.J. Breytenbach: *Tuislande: Selfregering en Politieke Partye*, p. 156; B. Rodgers: *Divide and Rule: South Africa's Bantustans*, p. 47.

popular vote.⁴⁹ Chiefs and traditional leaders automatically became members of parliament. It was to create a lot of problems for the opposition party of Baldwin Mudau when the elections took place.⁵⁰

The executive power, at the time, was in the hands of the cabinet which consisted of the chief minister, Mphephu. For official purposes he had been appointed beforehand by the chiefs. There were also five ministers who were formerly councillors. Each was responsible for one or more government departments.⁵¹ The six departments were at the time still run by white secretaries.⁵²

Before the 1973 General Elections, Mphephu had not formed a party and he contested the elections under the banner of "Recognised Leaders". The only opposition party which contested the elections was founded by Baldwin Mudau, an urban representative.⁵³ Mudau grew up at Tshakhuma Mission Station, which became a hotbed for opposition to Mphephu's rule. Mudau's disagreements with his superiors on several political issues led to his dismissal together with all the members of the advisory board. They later formed a core of opposition to Mphephu's appointment in urban areas.⁵⁴ Samson Ramabulana, one of Mphephu's relatives, thereupon replaced Mudau in Johannesburg as Venda urban representative. He was Mphephu's relative, a quiet man by nature, who could not match Mudau as far as organising and leadership ability was concerned.⁵⁵ Many Vendas in urban areas rather supported Mudau because they did not want to identify themselves with the Venda homeland. They were opposed to the traditional system of government and favoured a unitary state with universal suffrage for all adult citizens.⁵⁶

Mphephu's party consisted mostly of leaders who favoured the traditional system of government and wanted to retain the *status quo*.⁵⁷ The Venda Independence Progressive Party (VIPP) of Baldwin Mudau, on the other hand, wanted to reduce the powers of traditional rulers in the government and they favoured

49 BENS0/RAU: *The Independent Venda*, p. 43; "The Republic of Venda", Africa Institute Bulletin Supplement, (27)5, 1987, p. 4; L. Gordon et al. (compiler): *Survey of Race Relations in South Africa* 1978, p. 297.

50 Anon.: *The Republic of Venda*, pp. 72-77.

51 BENS0/RAU: *The Independent Venda*, p. 43.

52 Anon.: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 70.

53 B. Rodgers: *Divide and Rule, South Africa's Bantustans*, p. 47.

54 D.A. Kotzé: *African Politics in South Africa 1964-1974*, p. 60.

55 OS: 930417, p. 31 M.C. Senyosi, Kutama Village.

56 H.W. van der Merwe et al.: *African Perspectives on South Africa*, pp. 12-13.

57 D.A. Kotzé: *African Politics in South Africa 1964-1974*, p. 60.

modernisation.⁵⁸ The VIPP regarded Venda as part of South Africa and favoured changes in the administration of the homeland.⁵⁹ Yet both parties operated within the homeland system. The VIPP consisted mostly of Venda elite and businessmen. It was accused by Mphephu and his supporters of being a foreign party which did not have the interest of Venda at heart.⁶⁰ The VIPP retaliated by accusing Mphephu's party of being government sponsored because they used government vehicles in their campaign.⁶¹ When the campaign started in earnest, the VIPP exposed Mphephu's party as that of illiterates who did not understand the new political dispensation and were not fit to rule the Venda people.⁶² This was a new experience for the population who were accustomed to respecting their traditional rulers. Mphephu in turn did not take the political beatings lying down. Soon he threatened to ban the opposition VIPP.⁶³ Relations between the VIPP and Mphephu's party were bad at all times.⁶⁴ The first signs of an autocratic leader were evident.

Mphephu entered the elections with one critical advantage: the constitution was loaded in his favour. It was stated in the *Venda Constitution Proclamation* (R12 of 1973) that a party which commanded the majority of chiefs in the elections would form the government. Since Mudau was a commoner by birth, it was highly unlikely that the majority of Venda chiefs would support him.⁶⁵

The first General Election took place on 15 and 16 August 1973.⁶⁶ All the Vendas of the ages of 18 and above, except convicted criminals, insane people and listed communists, were allowed to vote. The VIPP under Mudau nominated 18 candidates for 18 seats to be contested and the "Recognised Leaders", under Mphephu, did the same. Besides the two parties which were contesting the

58 M.C. Botha: *Die Swart Vryheidspaaie*, p. 150. D.A. Kotzé: *African Politics in South Africa 1964-1974*, p. 41; C.J. Maritz: "Venda na die Eerste Vyf Jaar" in *Oënskou*, (2)9, October 1984, p. 338.

59 D.A. Kotzé: *African Politics in South Africa 1964-1974*, p. 41.

60 C.J. Maritz: "Venda na die Eerste Vyf Jaar" in *Oënskou*, (2)9, October 1984, p. 338; D.A. Kotzé: *African Politics in South Africa 1964-1974*, p. 70; Anon.: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 70.

61 D.A. Kotzé: *African Politics in South Africa 1964-1974*, p. 70.

62 OS: 930417.p. 31, M.C. Senyosi, Kutama Village.

63 W.J. Breytenbach: *Tuislande: Selfregering en Politieke Partye*, p. 164.

64 D.A. Kotzé: *African Politics in South Africa 1964-1974*, p. 70.

65 BENS0/RAU: *The Independent Venda*, p. 44; "The Republic of Venda", in *Africa Institute Bulletin Supplement*, (27)5, 1987, p. 4; D.A. Kotzé: *African Politics in South Africa 1964-1974*, p. 60.

66 Anon.: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 72.

elections, there were also independent candidates who operated around Sibasa.⁶⁷

The Ramabulanas were known to be descendants of the original rulers of the Vendas. The illiterate rural people could not understand why they had to choose between Mphephu or Mudau. Their traditional leaders explained to them the dangers of choosing a foreigner and a commoner.⁶⁸ Most of the rural communities subsequently voted for Mphephu.

The use of government officials and headmen as election officials also affected the process of voting because intimidation, more especially in the rural areas, was unavoidable.⁶⁹ The use of Venda Government vehicles in the elections made the whole process appear as a state exercise because ballot boxes could be tampered with.⁷⁰ The Vendas in urban areas also voted, although they played no direct part in the homeland's political development. Mphephu's loyal supporters, some of whom were teachers, school inspectors and civil servants, were later involved in the political development of the homeland.⁷¹

Of the 18 contested seats, Mudau's Venda Independence Progressive Party won ten, the "Recognised Leaders" of Mphephu won five and the independent candidates got three seats.⁷² Although the VIPP won by a large margin, they could not form the government because the constitution was heavily loaded against them. Mudau could not form the government because he failed to win the support of the majority of chiefs.⁷³

The South African Government, long before the elections in Venda of 1973, had worked out a scheme of influencing traditional chiefs. Shortly before the election of a chief minister, chiefs were taken to a three day secret meeting in the Manyeleti Game Reserve. There they were told about the dangers of supporting the opposition party and warned of the possibility of losing their positions. They were

67 A.N.J. Herholdt and R.J. Dombo: "The Political Development of Venda; A Study of a Society in Microcosm" in *Journal of Contemporary History*, (17)1, June 1992, p. 76.

68 OS: 950307, p. 48; J.V.N. Mulaudzi, Shayandima Township; OS: 950403, p. 50, E.R.B. Nesengani, Tshivhazwaulu Village.

69 A.N.J. Herholdt and R.J. Dombo: "The Political Development of Venda: A Study of Society in Microcosm" in *Journal of Contemporary History*, (17)1, June 1992, p. 77.

70 A.N.J. Herholdt and R.J. Dombo: "The Political Development of Venda: A Study of Society in Microcosm", in *Journal of Contemporary History*, (17)1, June 1992, p. 77.

71 H.W. van der Merwe (ed.); *African Perspectives in South Africa*, pp. 12-13.

72 BENSO/RAU: *The Independent Venda*, p. 44; Anon.: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 72; "The Republic of Venda", in *Africa Institute Bulletin Supplement*, (27)5, 1987, pp. 4-6.

73 L. Gordon (ed.): *A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1979*, p. 328; C.J. Maritz: "Venda na die Eerste Vyf Jaar", in *Oënskou*, (2)9, October 1984, p. 338; "The Republic of Venda", in *Africa Institute Bulletin Supplement*, (27)5, 1987, pp. 4-5.

also promised gifts in return for loyalty and support. They came back in time for the election of the chief minister.⁷⁴ Thus, although Mphephu lost the popular vote, he was able to form the government through the support of traditional leaders.⁷⁵

Mphephu's cabinet was the only one of all the South African homelands which consisted of traditional leaders only.⁷⁶ During the first sitting of the Venda parliament in 1974, a number of chiefs crossed the floor to Mudau's side. Mphephu reacted by closing the sitting and threatened the disloyal traditional leaders with dismissal. During the following sitting, the disloyal traditional leaders changed their minds.⁷⁷ It was also during the second sitting of parliament that Mphephu threatened to ban the opposition.⁷⁸ The Venda Independence Progressive Party operated under the threat of being banned and was perceived as a threat to the State and the stability of the whole area.⁷⁹

Mphephu was clearly following a line of development which made for authoritarian rule. It was obvious that he had lost the popular vote because of his poor educational background. He was the only homeland leader with little formal education. He could only speak Venda fluently and he read with difficulty. He could not communicate in South Africa's official languages.⁸⁰ He did not want to address the press and press statements were released through his spokesman.⁸¹ Similarly, many traditional leaders in the Venda Legislative Assembly had little formal education. The majority of Vendas, especially educated people, felt that Mphephu was not suitable for the position of leader at a time when Venda was undergoing significant political transformations.⁸²

The use of traditional leaders to enforce apartheid policies made them unpopular. Their involvement with forced removals earlier, made them loose support among

74 B. Rodgers: *Divide and Rule, South Africa's Bantustans*, p. 47; L. Gordon (ed.): *Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1978*, p. 297.

75 B. Rodgers: *Divide and Rule - South Africa's Bantustans*, p. 47; D.A. Kotzé: *African Politics in South Africa 1964-1974*, p. 121; L. Gordon (ed.): *A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1979*, p. 328.

76 D.A. Kotzé: *African Politics in South Africa*, pp. 120-122.

77 W. le Roux: *Politieke Leiers van Suider Afrika*, p. 227, D.A. Kotzé: *African Politics in South Africa 1964-1974*, p. 121.

78 D.A. Kotzé: *African Politics in South Africa 1964 - 1974*, p. 66.

79 D.A. Kotzé: *African Politics in South Africa 1964-1974*, p. 70.

80 A.J. Venter: *Black Leaders of Southern Africa*, p. 128; P. Sidley: "Mphephu Live Forever in South Africa's Banana Republic" in *Work in Progress*, No. 46, February 1987, pp. 26-27.

81 A.J. Venter: *Black Leaders of Southern Africa*, p. 187.

82 VG: D.J.H. le Roux: *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the causes of the unrest and ritual murders in Venda during 1988*, pp. 170-177; W.J. Breytenbach: *Tuislande: Selfregering en Politieke Partye*, p. 164; A.J. Venter: *Black Leaders of Southern Africa*, p. 188.

the rural communities and that eroded their support base.⁸³ The majority of educated Vendas and the youth, in particular, wanted to be identified with the greater South Africa.⁸⁴ Tshikota residents near Louis Trichardt, for example, openly refused to be part of Venda and did not support Mphephu.⁸⁵

Mphephu was able to win the election in the legislative assembly for the chief minister comfortably. As was the case in other homelands, the traditional leaders formed the majority.⁸⁶ He had their support from the outset. What made Mphephu's position more secure was the fact that Venda chiefs traditionally would not forsake one of their own circle.

The elections of 1973 was the battle of the traditionalists against the elite. The ordinary rural Venda citizen did not care about the outcome of the results because it would not change his or her way of life.⁸⁷ The political infighting of the leaders in the legislative assembly consequently passed them by.

There were also traditional leaders in the Venda Legislative Assembly who supported the VIPP. They felt Mphephu was not the right person for the position. Chiefs like Piet Booi, Netsianda, Mugivhi, Mahwasane, Mutele, Tshikundamalema, Mphaphuli and Nethengwe, to name only a few, supported the opposition, but they later changed their minds. Since the elections they had become afraid to lose their status and material comforts.⁸⁸ There were also traditional leaders like, Ligege, Mahwasane, Nemavhola and Maelula who continued to support the opposition party. They found themselves in the political wilderness when the Venda Independence Progressive Party disbanded after the second general election. Chiefs were given high salaries and material comfort in exchange for supporting the homeland system.⁸⁹ Some of the appointed members of the former Thohoyandou Territorial Authority also supported the opposition party, but they were no factor in

83 VG: BAO, K459, N11/3/3(1) Minute dd. 1971.08.27 held at Tshivhulana village. Venda/Sotho/Balobedu Removal.

84 VG: D.J.H. le Roux: Report on the Commission of Inquiry into the causes of the Unrest and Ritual Murders in Venda during 1988, pp. 170-171.

85 P. Laurence: "Rural Revolt, Transvaal's Homelands in ferment", *Indicator SA* (4)2, Spring 1986, pp. 21-26.

86 B. Rodgers: *Divide and Rule, South Africa's Bantustans*, p. 47, B. Nel: "Khosikhulu Mphephu of Venda", in *Southern Africa Today*, (3)4, July 1986, p. 2.

87 S. Kongwa (researcher): "Changing the guard in Venda: Succession and Future Agenda" in *Africa Institute Bulletin*, (28)7, 1988, p. 3.

88 P. Maylam: *A History of the African People of South Africa*, p. 171.

89 P. Maylam: *A History of the African People of South Africa*, p. 171; A. Hepple: *South Africa*, p. 114.

the politics of the day.⁹⁰ Mphephu's first cabinet was thoroughly traditionalist and they were to ensure that his position of power was not undermined by the opportunism of politicians from common stock.⁹¹

Mphephu knew that the majority of Vendas did not support him and that some members in the Legislative Assembly did not show him loyalty. It was against this background that his rule became autocratic and the only people he could trust were those from his royal house. He then rewarded them with high posts and that made him very unpopular with the majority of civil servants.

Had Mphephu not taken traditional leaders on a tour to a game reserve before the election of the chief minister took place, chances were that he would have lost the election and Chief Piet Booie who supported the opposition party at the time would have been elected chief minister. Baldwin Mudau could not have been elected chief minister because he was a commoner by birth.⁹² Mphephu's attitude of not accommodating commoners in his inner circle of power, not only led to an "aristocratic" form of government. It also led to a credibility crisis in his government as a whole. Of true democratic government there was little evidence.

90 D.A. Kotzé: African Politics in South Africa 1964-1974, p. 121.

91 D.A. Kotzé: African Politics in South Africa 1964-1974, pp. 120-122.

92 L. Gordon (ed.): A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1978, p. 297.

Chapter 6

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS IN THE NORTH-EASTERN TRANSVAAL DURING THE 1970'S.

When the Venda homeland was established, it became the smallest and the least developed of all the Black states in Southern Africa. It also had the smallest population. Venda occupied two patches of land in the Northern Transvaal and the community was divided into 27 areas under 25 chiefs and two independent headmen.¹ By the 1970's the rural community was structured along the lines of a subsistence economy with stock farming practised by almost every household. The men were not in favour of following agricultural farming as a vocation. It was regarded as the work of women. The most common crop cultivated (by the women) was maize, the staple diet, although millet, pumpkins, sweet potatoes and groundnuts, to name but a few, were also cultivated.² Cattle, a sign of wealth, would only be sold when the family was in dire need of money, resulting in overstocking and soil erosion.³

The land in Venda belonged traditionally to the chiefs, who held it in trust for the community, and it could not be sold. Under this system commercial farming was a foreign concept and, because it was capital-intensive, its introduction was almost impossible. The rural community was also not ready educationally and financially for this kind of agricultural operation and it continued using the old traditional methods of cultivation. Even in the old irrigation schemes established in Venda along the banks of the Njelele River by the South African Government during the time of the Great Depression (1930-1933), the traditional methods continued to be practised. Later on more irrigation schemes were established, also by the government. Gradually more of these schemes were established along the rivers where the land was rented out to the womenfolk and the old men. All these were placed under the Department of Agriculture when Venda received self-rule in 1973.

Venda communities were allocated plots to cultivate under the guidance of Agricultural extension officers. These communities, of which the agriculturally active population consisted mainly of women and old men, paid only a small rental

1 L. Gordon (ed.): *South African Institute of Race Relations in South Africa 1979*, p. 328; J.A. Coetzee: "n Onafhanklike Venda", in *Woord en Daad*, 25(270), Februarie 1985.
2 Anon.: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 88; BENS0/RAU: *The Independent Venda*, p. 118.
3 Anon.: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 128; BENS0/RAU: *The Independent Venda*, p. 123.

fee. By 1979 there were eighteen irrigation schemes in Venda which were established on the banks of the Mutale, Njelele, Luvuvhu, and smaller rivers like Mutshundudi, Tshinane, Nwanedi, Luphepe and Mvudi. Phiphidi dam supplied water and electricity to Sibasa and Shayandima townships as well as government institutions like Tshilidzini hospital and neighbouring schools.⁴

Because of its location in the north eastern corner of South Africa, Venda offered few job opportunities. Consequently the majority of the male population had to seek employment either on neighbouring White farms or at Louis Trichardt. Many were employed as migrant labourers in urban areas, especially on the Witwatersrand. There were labour bureau's in four districts namely, Sibasa, Dzanani, Vuwani and Mutale. As a whole Venda was underdeveloped. There were few shops and commerce hardly features prominently. The result was that local money was spent outside Venda.⁵

The infrastructure was underdeveloped. Initially the development of infrastructure resorted under the Local Councils. This task was given to Tribal Authorities when they came into existence in 1954. Later the Regional Authorities and finally the Thohoyandou Territorial Authority had to take over the responsibility of providing an infra-structure. When Venda was given self-rule in 1973, the Department of Works took over this function. Apart from a strip of about 12 kilometres of tarred road which linked the T-junction from the Louis Trichardt-Punda Maria road to the house of the Commissioner-General, almost all Venda roads were untarred. Many roads were sub-standard and during times of heavy rain, they were dangerous, because bridges were constantly washed away.⁶ Telecommunication were undeveloped. Few houses, businesses and government offices were supplied with telephones.⁷ Electricity was also under-supplied.

Before the elections of 1973, the development of Venda was stagnant because the South African Government provided limited funds for the development of the

4 SA NTS 7937 174/337(1): Minute LT 2/123/4/1 dd. 1932.08.11 from Native Affairs Commissioner at Louis Trichardt to Secretary for Native Affairs, Pretoria: Njelele Irrigation Scheme/Mphephu Location; J.B. Hoffeldt: "Venda Agricultural Backbone", in *S A Panorama*, (30)3, March 1985, pp. 116-119.

5 "The Republic of Venda", *Africa Institute Bulletin Supplement*, (27)5, 1987, p. 2; Anon.: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 112.

6 BENSO/RAU: *The Independent Venda*, p. 107; Anon.: *The Republic of Venda*, pp. 27-28.

7 Anon.: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 28.

region. The revenue which was collected from the community was not enough to cover the development of the homeland. In some instances, roads were constructed manually and there was little equipment for road construction. The limited resources and an undeveloped infrastructure were factors that contributed to a state of rural poverty and few entrepreneurial opportunities.

The educational system in Venda had a history dating back to the nineteenth century. White missionaries played a very important role in education. Reverend A. MacKidd of the Dutch Reformed Church was the first foreign missionary to establish a mission station in the Venda community in 1863. He stayed first on the farm, Goedgedacht, and later at Kranspoort, a few kilometres west of the town of Louis Trichardt. He was succeeded by Reverend Stephanus Hofmeyer who preached and helped to provide limited educational opportunities up to the end of the nineteenth century.⁸ Although the Dutch Reformed missionaries were primarily involved in work under the Buys community, they also occasionally helped Venda believers.

The Berlin Missionary Society established their mission stations first at Beuster in 1872, followed by Tshakhuma mission station under Reverend E. Schwellnus in 1874. Reverend R. Koen established his mission station at Mavhola in 1877. Getrudsburg mission station near Louis Trichardt was established in 1899.⁹ The Presbyterian Church under reverend MacDonald established a mission station at Gouldville (Vhufuli) in 1902, and a hospital shortly afterwards. The Reformed Church (Gereformeerde Kerk) established a mission station and hospital at Siloam in 1940. The Dutch Reformed Church established Tshilidzini hospital in 1957. Other denominations like, the Anglican, Salvation Army, Swiss Mission and Seventh Day Adventists, also played a part in bringing Christianity to the region. The Venda and other Black communities where Christianity was accepted were the first to receive a Western education, and consequently they were influenced first by Western norms and values. They became generally more tolerant towards their neighbours, so that there was a reduction in inter-tribal conflicts. There was also a

8 "The Republic of Venda", *Africa Institute Bulletin Supplement*, 27(5), 1987, p. 6; BENSO/RAU: *The Independent Venda*, p. 34; W.J. de Kock (ed.): *Dictionary of South African Biography*, I, p. 491; W.L. Maree: *Lig in Soutpansberg*, pp. 49-54.

9 BENSO/RAU: *The Independent Venda*, p. 34; D.W. Giesekke: *A Hundred Years of Christianity in Vendaland*, pp. 1-2; W.F. Malunga: *A century of Dutch Reformed Church missionary enterprise in the Soutpansberg area – the story of Kranspoort* (Unpublished M.A. dissertation, University of the North, 1986), pp. 17-18.

marked decrease in the powers of traditional healers and in ritual murders which had been the bane of Venda society.¹⁰

P.R. Mphephu's predecessors, like Makhado and Tshilamulela Mphephu, did not encourage missionaries to work amongst their people because of the conflict over land. Later Mphephu came under severe criticism. Many people, especially those who had been educated elsewhere, maintained that the traditional leaders were responsible for keeping the masses uneducated because of their dislike of missionaries.¹¹

When Thohoyandou Territorial Authority was established in 1962, the administration of Venda schools fell under its control. When Venda attained self-rule, the Department of Education took control.¹² The Venda Government was however unable to fulfil all the educational needs of the communities. There was a chronic lack of funds. The tribal authorities continued to erect schools in their areas. The structures of these schools were of poor quality due to poor workmanship and a lack of quality supervision. Many secondary schools were also established in 1975, because standard six was abolished and many pupils who were supposed to do standard six flocked to secondary schools.¹³ Venda also experienced a great shortage of teachers in secondary and high schools. Many teachers from foreign countries such as Ghana, Zimbabwe, the Philippines and India were employed on a contract basis. At the time of independence in 1979, Venda had only one technical school, namely Finyazwanda close to Makwarela township. This school offered a variety of technical courses. As there was no university in Venda at the time, Venda students enrolled at various universities elsewhere in South Africa. Many were enrolled at the University of the North which was established to cater particularly for students from the surrounding homelands of Venda, Lebowa and Gazankulu.¹⁴

10 BENS0/RAU: *The Independent Venda*, p. 35; W.F. Malunga: *A century of Dutch Reformed Church missionary enterprise in the Soutpansberg area – the story of Kranspoort*, pp. 17-18.

11 R.M. Ndou: *The Vhavenda concept of life hereafter – a comparison between the traditional Venda religion and the Christian tradition* (Unpublished M.A. dissertation, University of Venda, 1993), p. 22.

12 L. Thompson: *A History of South Africa*, p. 196; "The Republic of Venda" in *Africa Institute Bulletin Supplement*, (27)5, 1987, p. 5.

13 Anon.: *The Republic of Venda*, pp. 88, 158.

14 SA BEN 88 4/2/7/1: Minute 6/2 dd. 1979.03.20 from Dept. of Health Venda to Director for Bureau for Economic Development in Pretoria, Venda Beplanning; BENS0/RAU: *The Independent Venda*, P. 90.

Apart from providing the first educational opportunities, the missionaries also helped in providing the first medical services and welfare facilities. The Dutch Reformed Missionaries established the Hayani hospital for lepers and chronically ill people who could not be treated at home. They were also responsible for the founding in 1971 of Tshilidzini school for handicapped children in Shayandima township. It catered for Shangaan, Sotho and Venda children. In 1976, the administration of this school was placed partly under the Department of Education but the Dutch Reformed Church continued to offer assistance.¹⁵

There were three hospitals, namely, Tshilidzini, Donald Frazer and Siloam, to render health services to Venda and Shangaan residents. The main problem, at that time was a lack of suitable qualified nurses and doctors. There was not a single black doctor in the early 1970's. By the end of 1979, one black doctor had been appointed in the area. The administration of the hospitals was taken over by the Venda Government in 1976, but the South African Government continued to render assistance to all the health services in Venda.¹⁶

The development of Venda from the 1970's on fell under several institutions. Apart from the local government, the South African Government, the Bureau for Economic Research, Co-operation and Development (BENSO), the Mining Corporation (MC), the Electricity Supply Commission (ESCOM), Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) all played a decisive role in development.¹⁷ Many of the government departments with offices in Louis Trichardt were directly involved in development projects.¹⁸

BENSO introduced a new form of strategic planning for the region which was aimed at developing the homeland in such a way that, it would reduce the flow of Venda residents to the cities. The plan was to create enough job opportunities in the homeland, so that especially men, could be employed in or near the homeland. The development of agriculture was given priority because the majority of the rural population traditionally depended on it for survival.¹⁹

The transformation of Venda into a semi-urban society was started by improving

15 Anon.: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 182; BENSO/RAU: *The Independent Venda*, p. 100.

16 BENSO/RAU: *The Independent Venda*, pp. 99-100.

17 BENSO/RAU: *The Independent Venda*, p. 100.

18 BENSO/RAU: *The Independent Venda*, pp. 66-70; Anon.: *The Republic of Venda*, pp. 176-182.

19 BENSO/RAU: *The Independent Venda*, pp. 66-68.

transport facilities. It enabled the rural communities to commute to and from urban areas.²⁰ Part of the development plan for Venda included the exploration of local mines in order to create job opportunities. Planners recommended that industries be developed and industrial concessions be given to encourage industrialists to invest in Venda. Also in this area the creation of job opportunities was a major consideration. Houses were to be built in townships to offer homes to workers. The townships which were being developed at the time were, Makwarela, Shayandima and Makhado. Thohoyandou township was established only on the eve of Venda's independence in 1978.²¹

The direct involvement of political heads with the planning of Venda started in 1975 when a Planning Committee was formed. It consisted of all the political heads. They included chiefs P.R. Mphephu (Chief Minister and Minister of Finance), T. Netshimbupfe (Internal Affairs), J.R. Rambuda (Public Works), A.M. Madzivhandila (Agriculture and Forestry), and headmen E.R.B. Nesengani (Education and Culture) and F.N. Ravele (Department of Justice). During these meetings, the white secretaries, at the helm of the different government departments, reported on the general progress of development in the homeland.²²

In 1975 researchers of the Rand Afrikaans University (RAU) under Professor B.J. Piek began with a geological survey of precious metals in 1975, after which they reported on the availability of precious metals which could be exploited. The Bantu Mining Corporation was also involved with the exploration and mining of metals. Large deposits of coal were located in the far eastern area of Ha-Makuya.²³ Escom was to supply electricity to the area when the mining operations began.²⁴ All this, it was hoped, would create much needed job opportunities for the unemployed

In the agricultural sector it was soon discovered that all the projects that had been introduced on an experimental basis – such as pig and poultry breeding at Muledane, fish production near the Dzindi River, as well as timber plantations at Phiphidi, were running at a loss. Sisal production was the exception. It was subsequently decided to transfer these operations to the Venda Development

20 BENS0/RAU: *The Independent Venda*, pp. 76-79.

21 BENS0/RAU: *The Independent Venda*, pp. 76-79.

22 SA BEN 89 4/2/7/1: Minute 4/2/7 dd.1977.05.05 of the Venda Planning Committee/Venda Beplanning.

23 SA BEN 89 4/2/7/1: Minute dd.1977.05.17 of the Venda Planning Committee/Venda Beplanning; BENS0/RAU: *The Independent Venda*, p. 68.

24 Anon.: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 112; BENS0/RAU: *The Independent Venda*, p. 69.

Corporation (VDC). The latter was established in 1975 with the responsibility to the develop agriculture and industry. The VDC helped the farming industry by granting loans to Venda farmers. It became for all intents and purposes the commercial arm of the Department of Agriculture. A tea estate was established at Tshivhase which was a joint venture with Sapekoe, a company that specialised in tea and coffee plantation. Barotta farm near Tshakhuma was also acquired for the establishment of sub-tropical fruits. Plans were made to acquire land from Lwamondo to establish tea plantations. Local inhabitants however opposed the plan because of a shortage of grazing land. The plan was subsequently abandoned.²⁵

The development of agriculture presented many problems initially as a result of the reluctance of many headmen to co-operate with agricultural extension officers. The reason for this problem dated back to the introduction of fences to demarcate grazing areas from cultivation areas, and the inauguration and enforcement of new farming methods. These innovation and especially the control of the numbers of cattle stock did not always enjoy the support of the Venda community who often preferred to persist with the old, more wasteful, methods. Political heads were requested to co-operate with other traditional leaders so that agriculture extension officers could be given a free hand in the development of the region.²⁶

It was, however, not only in the agricultural sector that problems were experienced. On 18 January 1977 a meeting was held at Sibasa by the Venda Planning Committee. Representatives of VDC, BENSO and local White magistrates from Vuwani, Sibasa and Dzanani, were also present. There was agreement on the fact that because of its location, industrialists were not willing to start operations in Venda. Many breadwinners were therefore employed outside Venda. Venda offered minimum job opportunities because of its remoteness from the major industrial areas. Various plans were made to create job opportunities in the homeland, such as the establishment of the industrial town at Muledane.

The government's revenue system was also underdeveloped. There were many tax defaulters at the time and magistrates were requested to send their revenue teams

25 SA BEN 89 4/2/7/1: Minute dd. 75.10.07 of the Venda Planning Committee, pp. 2-9 of the minutes.

26 SA BEN 89 N4/2/7/1 (2): Minute dd. 1977.01.18 of the Venda Planning Committee, Venda National Development Policy.

to go out and collect revenue from rural villages. In order to promote the local economy a number of recommendations were made. Subsequently the development of Thohoyandou as capital was motivated. A shopping complex was envisaged as the hub of the new urban centre. Its purpose was to counteract the flow of money from Venda and to provide an essential service to the community by bringing consumer goods nearer to their homes.²⁷

During the financial year of 1977/78 the development of tourism enjoyed a lot of attention. A tourism committee was established under the chairmanship of the Minister of Agriculture, chief A.M. Madzivhandila. This resulted in the launching of numerous tourism projects. The restoration of Dzata at Dzanani was underway at the time. Nwanedi and Luphepe dams were under construction. Apart from the Venda farmers these water resorts had to attract tourists to the area. Klein Tshipise Holiday Resort was improved. The establishment of Mphephu Hot Springs at Sendedzane was planned in this period, as well as the development of the nature reserve at Luphephe.²⁸ The completion of these projects were realised only after Venda had attained independence in 1979.

During this period, the Department of Health was experiencing problems in bringing health facilities to rural areas. Malaria and typhoid fever could not be brought under control because of numerous problems encountered by health officials. Roads were bad and rural huts were scattered in inaccessible places. There was also resistance from the rural population who refused to take medication. Their belief in the power of the traditional healers was strong. There was a constant stream of breakdowns of vehicles because of the conditions of the roads and a scarcity of petrol filling stations in the rural areas. There were also not enough health regulations. Rural communities could not be prosecuted for not erecting domestic toilets. Businesses were erected without building plans and health inspectors were prevented from doing their work satisfactorily.²⁹ These conditions discouraged industrialists from metropolitan South Africa to invest in Venda, but it made Mphephu more determined to co-operate with the various bodies that were involved with the development of the homeland.

27 SA BEN 89 N4/2/7/2: Minute dd. 1977.01.18 of the Venda Planning Committee, Venda National Development Policy.

28 SA BEN 89 N4/2/7/1: Minute 4/2/7 dd. Feb-April 1977 of the Venda Tourism Committee, Venda Beplanning.

29 BENS0/RAU: *The Independent Venda*, pp. 96-100.

The Corporation for Economic Development (CED) which was formerly known as the Bantu Investment Corporation (BIC), was charged with the development of all the homelands. This statutory body consisted of experts who were given the task for the industrial development of the homelands, including the planning of commercial farming and transport. The local office of this corporation changed its name to the Venda Development Corporation (VDC) in 1975, and was subsequently responsible for the establishment of many projects and buildings in Venda.³⁰

One of the major industrial projects of the VDC was the production and distribution of sorghum beer at Muledane near Thohoyandou. Beerhalls were established in all the main villages so that communities could relax after work and enjoy the new brand of traditional beer. Profits made from the proceeds were added to the revenue of the government. This did not discourage the communities from brewing their traditional beer, which was still used for ceremonial occasions, as opposed to the new brand. Between the 1976/77 financial year, the VDC established post offices in Sibasa, Tshakhuma, Vuwani and Shayandima. These were leased to the Venda Government. VDC also constructed four buildings for Standard Bank, Volkskas and Barclays Bank. A Venda Building Society, for the low income group, was also established. An industrial township was developed at Muledane near Thohoyandou. The buildings were then rented to industrialists by the VDC, on the eve of independence in 1979. The Thohoyandou hotel and casino were also established by the VDC in order to attract people from outside Venda to come and spend their money locally. VDC was responsible for the granting of house loans. The town of Makhado and the neighbouring industries in Njelele area were also established by the Corporation.³¹

Academics of RAU who had the task of outlining a development plan for Venda, submitted their findings on 19 October 1977. They covered themes such as soil conservation, population settlement, employment and income creation, the development of human potential, provision of social services, government planning and administration as well as the creation of a sound infrastructure.³² Many of their proposals were accepted and implemented in subsequent months.

30 BENS0/RAU: *The Independent Venda*, p. 68; Anon.: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 120.

31 SA BEN 89 4/2/7/1 (2): Minute dd. 1977.05.05 of the Venda Planning Committee, Venda Beplanning; Anon.: *The Republic of Venda*, pp. 120-125.

32 SA BEN 89 4/2/7/1: Minute dd. 1977.05.17 of the Venda Planning Committee. Venda Beplanning; Anon.: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 124.

The development of Venda resulted in the resettlement of specific communities who were subsequently compensated by the government. The establishment of an industrial township at Palmaryville, Makhado town and the improvement of many roads, forced the affected rural villagers to be resettled elsewhere.³³ There was no resistance from the affected communities because they believed these developments would create job opportunities in the region.

While Venda was rapidly becoming a hive of development, the Legislative Assembly, in March 1978, asked the South African Government for independence. This was followed by a meeting of the Venda Cabinet and the Prime Minister of South Africa, B.J. Vorster and his Cabinet on 28 April 1978. It was agreed that Venda was to become a sovereign state during the second half of 1979.³⁴

One result was the establishment of Thohoyandou town, the construction of government buildings, a parliament building, a stadium for celebrations and sports, the purchase of new vehicles, the establishment of a new Police Force and Defence Force. It also meant that numerous buildings had to be erected. It included a prison, a presidential palace, new houses for the ministers, improvements to the Thohoyandou hotel and casino, the improvement of the commissioner's house so that it could be used by the South African ambassador to Venda, a judge's house, embassy houses in Pretoria and the general improvement of infrastructure. Funds were provided by the South African Government.³⁵

The development of Venda took place mainly around Thohoyandou. It later had the largest population of the four districts of the homeland. Dzanani district came second followed by Vuwani.³⁶ This did not transform Venda society from rural to urban. Many township residents still resided in rural homes in the countryside. Many of those who were residing in the townships were government officials because the Venda Government was by far the largest employer.³⁷ Ordinary Venda citizens from the rural areas did not benefit materially from these developments and the flow to the cities in search of work continued unabated.

33 SA BEN 89 N4/2/7/1 Minute dd. 1975.10.07 pp. 2-9 of The Venda Planning and Tourism Committee. Venda Beplanning.

34 Anon.: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 72.

35 SA BEN 89 N4/2/7/1: Minutes dd. 1975.10.07, 1977.05.05, 1978.11.24 of the Venda Planning Committee, Venda Beplanning.

36 BENSO/RAU: *The Independent Venda*, p. 72.

37 BENSO/RAU: *The Independent Venda*, p. 59.

Mphephu in particular and the Venda people in general welcomed these developments. Mphephu was instrumental in the establishment of Makhado town which is situated near Dzanani, his place of residence. The Venda community which resided in Makhado was willing to be relocated to new areas as they believed that the establishment of the town with its huge tomato processing plant, would create job opportunities in the area. Subsequently, a bakery and Makhado College of Education were established. Several furniture shops in Louis Trichardt were relocated at Makhado. A township was also established in the area. Later tarred roads were built which linked the Sibasa - Wylliespoort road, which was being improved at the time. Similar developments that were taking place in Vuwani and Mutale towns increased Mphephu's standing in the Venda society and enhanced his status. The majority of the Venda people, including his critics, respected him for his part in the development of the homeland.³⁸

38 *Sowetan*, 23.03.1995, p. 12.

Chapter 7

THE STRUGGLE FOR POLITICAL POWER BETWEEN MPHEPHU AND THE OPPOSITION PARTY DURING AND AFTER THE SECOND GENERAL ELECTION IN VENDA, 1978

The second general election in Venda before independence (1978) took place at a very interesting point in time. It was two years after the Soweto uprisings and the African youth were still fleeing the country to the neighbouring states of Swaziland, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Mozambique. It was also during this period that the government of Advocate B.J Vorster was increasingly under pressure as a result of maladministration in the Department of Information. This subsequently forced him, together with Dr. C. Mulder and the responsible officers, to resign from the government. Vorster was succeeded by the former Minister of Defence, P.W. Botha.¹

The former homelands of Transkei and Bophuthatswana were already granted independence in 1976 and 1977 respectively.² The developments which were taking place in the newly created independent states prompted Mphephu to follow suit in 1979. It was also the period during which the Rhodesian War was coming to an end and Prime Minister Ian Smith's agreeing to the introduction of majority rule. Because of the increase in terrorist attacks from the north and east of South Africa, the security forces were kept on the alert. Botha introduced his "total onslaught" strategy to counter the terrorist threat.³ By granting Venda independence, the South African Government endeavoured to counter the effect of the rival independence in the neighbouring Zimbabwe.

Before the election, the constitution was amended to increase the number of elected member representatives from 18 to 42. This increased the number in the National Assembly from 60 to 84. Half of the total consisted of elected members while the other half consisted of chiefs and headmen.⁴ The second general election took place

1 B.J. Liebenberg: "The Republic of South Africa, 1961-1978", in C.F.J. Muller (ed.): *Five Hundred Years of South African History*, pp. 547-548; A. Sparks: *The Mind of South Africa*, p. 308.

2 B.J. Liebenberg: "The Republic of South Africa, 1961-1978", in C.F.J. Muller (ed.): *Five Hundred Years of South African History*, p. 525.

3 A. Sparks: *The Mind of South Africa*, p. 309.

4 Anon.: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 72; BENSO/RAU: *The Independent Venda*, p. 44.

on 5 and 6 July 1978, when detention without trial, which had been introduced in 1977 in Venda, was still in force. It allowed the police to detain suspects for an indefinite period and deal with members of the banned organisations effectively.⁵

The extent to which Mphephu had lost the support of the Vendas inside and outside the borders of the homeland became evident when the election took place on 5 and 6 July 1978. To Mphephu's annoyance the VIPP had made use of such new-fangled schemes as using aircraft to distribute election pamphlets, but it was clear that the Vendas had rejected Mphephu and what he stood for. The outcome of the elections was a landslide for the VIPP who won 31 of the 42 contested seats.⁶

Despite this convincing election victory to Mudau and his party, he could not form a government because of the predominance of the traditional leaders in the Assembly, who, as could be understood, were mostly Mphephu supporters. Mudau, a commoner by birth could command only limited support among this group.⁷ In an attempt to ensure a political role for himself he had earlier suggested that Mphephu should be made king so that he could then fill the post of prime minister.⁸

Immediately after the results were announced, Mphephu ordered a massive clampdown on members and supporters of the opposition party. Mphephu, looking for scapegoats, blamed the government officials who supported the banned organisations and the opposition party while on "his" payroll. Eleven members of the opposition, as well as teachers, magistrates, officials and students, were detained without trial. Having got rid of some of his political opponents, he thereupon nominated a number of his own supporters to the Assembly in order to obtain a majority.⁹ He had become an authoritarian ruler who did not hesitate to resort to extreme measures to silence opponents.

One of the main reasons why Mphephu had lost popular support was because the majority of educated Vendas resented the traditional or "khosi system" of

5 L. Gordon (ed.): *A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1979*, p. 328.

6 Anon.: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 72; L. Gordon (ed.): *A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1979*, p. 328.

7 S. Kongwa (researcher): "Changing Guard in Venda: Succession and Future Agenda" in *Africa Institute Bulletin*, (28)7, 1988, p. 3; BENS0/RAU: *The Independent Venda*, p. 23.

8 OS: 930417, p. 31 Interview with M.C. Senyosi, Kutama village.

9 Anon.: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 72; L. Gordon (ed.) *A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1979*, p. 328.

government. Because the traditional system of government did not allow ordinary people to take part in the decision making process, they wanted to be part of a South Africa where they could participate in the decision making process in a unitary state.¹⁰ The more traditional majority of poorly educated Vendas, on the other hand, wanted traditional rulers to keep away from (South African national) politics and rule their specific areas like before.¹¹

The members of the opposition who were arrested, were released in time to attend the first session of the new assembly. Most of the members from the VIPP then boycotted the session in order to deny Mphephu a quorum. They protested against detention without trial and further complained about the constitution which favoured the Mphephu's VNP at their expense. Mphephu thereupon threatened them with dismissal, and they later took their seats in parliament.¹² Their position became weaker because they were only active during times of election campaigns.

Before the election, Mphephu and his cabinet had approached the South African Government with the aim of obtaining independence. The Prime Minister, B.J. Vorster, agreed with his cabinet to grant the Venda homeland independence during the second half of 1979.¹³ Mphephu was criticised by many people for accepting independence. Mudau would probably have experienced the same problems faced by Mphephu if he had come into power.

The matter of accepting or rejecting independence was the sequel to a meeting of all the homeland leaders which took place in Johannesburg in 1975. The leaders pledged to reject independence unless it was agreed by all. Chief Kaizer Matanzima who was the secretary, was the first to break the agreement in 1976. He was followed by chief Lucas Mangope in 1977 and by chief Mphephu in 1979.¹⁴

All the homeland leaders who accepted independence experienced opposition in their parliaments. They consequently applied harsh laws to suppress this opposition. In Transkei, H. Mcozaki, leader of the Democratic Party was jailed and

10 VG, D.J.H. le Roux: Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Causes of the Unrest and Ritual Murders in Venda during 1988, p. 172. Anon.: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 72.

11 VG, D.J.H. le Roux: Report of the Commission of Inquiry in the Causes of the Unrest and Ritual Murders in Venda during 1988, p. 171.

12 Anon.: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 72.

13 Anon.: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 72.

14 R.E. Bissel and C. Crocker (eds.): *South Africa into the 1980's*, p. 30 T.R.H. Davenport: *South Africa, A modern History*, p. 570.

later expelled from the country. In Bophuthatswana, the leaders of the Seoposenwe Party were also jailed and expelled from parliament. In Venda, the members of the VIPP and their supporters were jailed and harassed after the second general election.¹⁵

The majority of homeland leaders probably were in favour of accepting independence, but they were afraid of the opposition politicians who were supported internationally. Yet, the issue of accepting or rejecting independence varied from one homeland leader to another, depending upon local circumstances, self interest and the establishment of power bases. Ntsanwisi of Gazankulu, Sebe of Ciskei and Phathudi of Lebowa wanted more land before accepting any offers. Mopeli of Qwaqwa, probably considered his own homeland not to be a viable entity on economic and political grounds. Buthelezi of Kwazulu rejected any independence based on separate development, and continue to keep open his links with the ANC abroad.¹⁶

Mphephu's main consideration for opting for independence was political. He had noticed the trend the electorate in Venda was following, and he realised that ultimately this would mitigate against his own position. He saw independence as the only way open in which he would be able to assert his authority over all the Vendas.

The reasons why the majority of the Vendas rejected the principle of independence were not the same for everyone. Fear of independence came to a large extent from the unemployed who disliked the idea of being excluded from the labour markets of metropolitan South Africa, while pensioners were afraid of losing their income. The latter's' fears were not unfounded, for it was well-known in Venda that the residents of Tshikota, a township near Louis Trichardt, were getting better pensions than their counterparts in Venda.¹⁷ Educated Africans, on the other hand, wanted to remain in South Africa on political grounds stemming from their opposition to the policy of Separate Development.¹⁸ Business people rejected independence because of travel restrictions. They were afraid of problems which would crop up in

15 R.E. Bissel and C. Crocker (eds.): *South Africa into the 1980's*, p. 32.

16 R.E. Bissel and C. Crocker (eds.): *South Africa into the 1980's*, p. 30.

17 R.E. Bissel and C. Crocker (eds.): *South Africa into the 1980's*, p. 32; P. Laurence: "Rural Revolt – Transvaal's homeland in ferment", in *Indicator S.A.*, (4) 2, Spring 1986, pp. 21-26.

18 R.E. Bissel and C. Crocker (eds.): *South Africa into the 1980's*, p. 32.

business transactions if they happened to belong to a foreign state.¹⁹ Most of the Vendas in the urban areas did not want to have anything to do with Venda independence. It was only teachers, civil servants and traditional leaders who played a major role in the homeland's political development.²⁰

In September 1979, Mphephu was made the paramount chief of the Vendas by the South African Government to consolidate his position over the other chiefs.²¹ This status had never been enjoyed by any Venda chief before him. None of his powerful predecessors like Thohoyandou, Mpofo, Makhado and Tshilamulela Mphephu, had been a paramount chief. The idea of paramount chieftainship came from the White authorities. In 1927 the Governor-General of the Union of South Africa was made the supreme chief of all the Africans in South Africa and given power to appoint and dismiss arrogant chiefs. The position of Mphephu was resented by Venda chiefs who regarded themselves all as equals.²² Thus Mphephu's last power base was undermined, although not enough for the traditional leaders to forsake him and move over to the opposition.

During a special session on 13 September 1979, the day on which Mphephu's government accepted independence, the National Assembly was requested to make a choice between Mphephu and Mudau for the post of president. Mphephu won by a large margin and was sworn in by Judge G.P. van Rhijn on the same day.²³ Thus it had taken Mphephu 29 years from the day he was appointed chief of the Vendas in the Njelele area to reach the highest peak of his political career. Venda became the third homeland, after Transkei and Bophuthatswana, to be granted independence. It was the smallest of the three.²⁴

Venda independence was recognised by the South African Government and the other two independent homelands. As has already been mentioned earlier in this chapter, many Vendas inside Venda as well as in the urban areas were not favourably inclined towards the idea of independence. Even among the ordinary

19 R.E. Bissel and C. Crocker (eds.): *South Africa into the 1980's*, p. 32.

20 H.W. van der Merwe et al.: *African Perspectives on South Africa*, pp. 12-13.

21 W. le Roux: *Politieke Leiers van Suider Afrika*, p. 227, W.D. Hammond-Tooke: *The Bantu-speaking Peoples of Southern Africa*, pp. 80-81; L. Gordon (ed.) *A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1979*, p. 335.

22 L. Gordon (ed.): *A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1979*, p. 335.

23 M.C. Botha: *Die Swart Vryheidspaaie*, p. 153.

24 L. Gordon (ed.): *A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1979*, p. 328; M.C. Botha: *Die Swart Vryheidspaaie*, pp. 149-153; "Anatomy of an Uhuru in Big Brother's Shadow", in *The Star*, 13.9.1979, p. 13.

Vendas, more especially from the rural areas, there was little understanding what independence meant. They called it “Phendephende” and to them the independence celebrations were merely a period of enjoyment and free meals. It did not change their lifestyle. However, the acid test for the policy of independent homelands was the attitude of the outside world. The United Nations Special Committee against apartheid condemned Venda independence because it robbed the residents of their rights to be South African citizens.²⁵ In the end no foreign state recognised Venda’s independence. Ironically, Seretse Khama, the president of Botswana, who encouraged homeland leaders to reject independence and to work for unity which would undermine tribalism, himself was leader of a “homeland” created by Britain for part of the Tswana nation, a homeland, moreover, also economically largely dependent on South Africa.²⁶

After Venda had attained independence, several groups continued to oppose his government. Apart from the opposition party, residents of Lutheran Mission stations at places like Tshakhuma, Beuster, Georgenholtz, Mukula, Tshifudi, Begwa, Tshiozwi to name the few did not support him because they resented to be ruled by traditional rulers whom they regarded as heathens because they refused to embrace Christianity and still practised their cultural traditions.²⁷

Another opposition to Mphephu’s rule came from the Lutheran church activists in the form of young ministers like T.S. Farisani, Z. Nevhutalu, M. Mahamba, N.P. Phaswana and M. Phosiwa. Those ministers differed from their predecessors in that they were not afraid to condemn the South African Government’s policy of Separate Development. They preached the gospel of liberation which undermined Mphephu’s rule. This kind of gospel usually thrives in situations where political oppression, hunger and suffering prevails. They taught that God was always on the side of the oppressed and instigated their followers to liberate themselves from

25 L. Gordon (ed.): *A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1979*, p. 335.

26 L. Gordon (ed.): *A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1979*, p. 335. At the time of Union in 1910, Britain had agreed to cede her protectorates of Bechuanaland, Basutholand and Swaziland to South Africa at a later stage. Khama opted for political independence, despite the fact that his sparsely populated country with a population density of 1 per km² was economically almost totally dependent on South Africa.

27 R.N. Mathivha: *The Berlin Missionary Venture in Education at Tshakuma, Venda 1872-1954*, pp. 42-61.

their oppressors by force if necessary. They branded apartheid and its structures as something which had to be eradicated.²⁸ The result was that the Sibasa Police Station in Venda was bombed by the ANC in 1981 and there were several casualties. Mphephu suspected that these ministers were somehow involved. They were arrested and tortured and a general outcry from abroad forced the government to give them a fair trial and they were subsequently released. One lay preacher, Tshifhiwa Muofhe died of police torture in 1981 because he was suspected of having a hand in the bombing of the police station.²⁹ Mphephu's struggle with the Lutheran Church continued throughout his political career.

The Venda youth were first drawn into politics when Venda attained self-rule in 1973. One consequence was the formation of political parties. Canvassing, which was unknown in Venda before, took place all over the area. When Mudau and some of the senior members of his party started addressing rallies all over Venda, they exposed Mphephu's limitations as well as those of other traditional leaders. The Venda youth attended these rallies in large numbers. They supported the opposition (VIPP) of Mudau as it was perceived as one representing enlightened people.³⁰

Soon thereafter there was a youth uprising in Soweto and many Venda youth were involved. The effect of the Soweto riots (1976) was also felt in Venda. Many Venda youth from urban areas fled back to Venda where the spirit of resistance against authority was cultivated. School attendance came to a halt between 1976 and 1977. Government property was damaged by students who fought running battles with the police. In 1977, the Venda Government passed Proclamation R276 which allowed detention without trial. This helped the government to deal effectively with students' unrest.³¹ The NG Kerk of the Tshilidzini Mission Station was razed to the ground by unknown persons. The young people regarded anything connected with Afrikaans and the government as an enemy.³² Mphephu did not oppose Afrikaans and it automatically categorised him as a supporter of a system the youth detested.

28 OS: 950324, Rev. W.V. van Deventer, Tshilidzini Hospital.

29 *Rand Daily Mail*, 15 July 1982, p. 2: "Detainee died on cell toilet seat, court told" – report by D. Capel.

30 OS: 930507, p. 40, M.E. Masutha, Gogobole Village, p. 40; A.N.J. Herholdt and R.J. Dombo: "Political Development of Venda: A Study of a Society in Microcosm", in *Journal for Contemporary History*, (17)1, June 1992, p. 76.

31 M. Lacob: "Homelands, the new Locus of Repression", in *Africa Report*, (29)1, Jan.-Feb. 1984, p. 47.

32 OS: 950324, p. 49, Rev. W.V. van Deventer, Tshilidzini Hospital.

Many students, officials and people who were suspected of being ANC sympathisers were detained without trial. Over 357 schools were closed during that period, including some boarding schools which were closed permanently. They were regarded as the meeting places of banned political organisations. Under these circumstances many Venda students fled to neighbouring countries where they joined the ANC in large numbers. Mphephu never seemed to enjoy the support of the majority of Venda youth during his government.³³ It appears as if he did not have those qualities as a leader that the future generation of adults considered worthy.

Opposition to Mphephu's rule also came from the NG Kerk in Africa, although to a lesser extent than from the Lutherans. The NG Kerk in Africa had started a mission station at Tshilidzini in 1956. In 1974 the Reverend A.F. Louw took over the leadership of the mission. Louw was opposed to racism and the policy of Separate development, and became very unpopular with Mphephu after making funeral arrangements for a lay preacher, Tshifhiwa Muofhe, who died in detention in 1981, and assisting Muofhe's widow in procuring the services of lawyers. Louw's work permit was consequently withdrawn at the beginning of 1982.³⁴

Further opposition to Mphephu's government came from the officials who belonged to banned organisations even though they depended upon his government for survival. They usually criticised his government in general and himself in particular in newspapers like the Rand Daily Mail and later the Sowetan. Mphephu retaliated by having them arrested and detained.³⁵

Mphephu's unpopularity with some of the rural communities and members of the ruling families stemmed from his support for the acting chiefs who ruled such areas as Sinthumule, Kutama, Tshivhase, Mphaphuli, Tshimbupfe and Nthabalala, to name a few. His refusal to install the rightful chiefs when they came of age divided the affected communities into two groups, one supporting the acting chiefs and the other the rightful hereditary chiefs. His reluctance to install the rightful chiefs came from his fear that, because of their youth, they might join the opposition and in this way erode his traditional power base. Only after his death in

33 L. Gordon (ed.): *A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1979*, p. 328; M. Lacob: "Homelands: the New Locus of Repression" in *Africa Report* (29)1, Jan.-Feb. 1984, p. 47.

34 OS: 50324, p. 49, Rev. W.V. van Deventer, Tshilidzini Hospital.

35 *The Star*, 29 January 1982, p. 2: "Venda Govt eases its iron grip".

1988 was this problem resolved when a commission of inquiry was established by the military junta of Brigadier G. Ramushwana to solve chieftainship disputes.³⁶

Mphephu's support lay with the majority of 27, and later 28, chiefs including their headmen and followers. The Dzanani area, which was Mphephu's stronghold, supported him in large numbers. The only resistance was experienced at Maelula village where there were internal squabbles with the headman.

Other support for Mphephu's party came from female burial societies, among them Talifhani, Thohoyandou and Farisani. Mphephu cultivated the friendship of the members of these burial societies especially because of their influence and popularity in rural communities. The burial societies even donated a new vehicle for his own use, despite the criticism levelled against them by opponents of the government for doing it.³⁷

After the disappearance of the opposition party and the subsequent creation of a one-party state, Mphephu was able to assert his authority over all his political opponents. His political stature grew rather than diminished as a result of his hard-handed tactics, and his political opponents took a different look at him. Even such critics as Farisani of the Lutheran church, who had been arrested on many occasions by the Venda Police, respected Mphephu for his understanding and wisdom but blamed his advisors and close friends for misleading him. Mphephu as a traditional leader, as stated earlier, had to rely on his close relations of the Ramabulanas for advice.

As a strong leader, Mphephu was able to withstand the outside pressure which came with the launching of the United Democratic Front in 1987, which aimed at making the homelands ungovernable by instigating popular revolts.³⁸ His position was never threatened because he could take important decisions on the spot without consulting his cabinet.

36 VG: Commission of inquiry into Venda vhukosi affairs, part 2, vol. 2, pp. 582, 587, 742.

37 OS: 950403, p. 50, E.R.B. Nesengani, Tshivhazwaulu village.

38 VG, J.H. le Roux: *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the causes of the unrest and ritual murders in Venda during 1988*, pp. 170-177.

Chapter 8

SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS IN VENDA, 1979-1988

During his speech amid a twenty-one gun salute on 13 September 1979 at the new Independence Stadium, President Mphephu thanked all the dignitaries who came to witness the birth of the new state. Mphephu compared himself with Moses from the Bible who led his people to the promised land. But unlike Moses, Mphephu stated, he was fortunate through the grace of God to witness the rebirth of his country.

Mphephu went on to say that education was to be given high priority in order to eliminate illiteracy in Venda and to provide skills which would enable the Vendas to contribute to the economic autonomy of their country, while the development of agriculture would alleviate rural poverty¹. He appealed to traditional leaders to support him. It would be through their effort that the development of the region would be realised and progress could be made. An efficient civil service was another foundation stone for the development of the Venda country.

On the question of the blending of the Western and traditional system of government, Mphephu emphasised it was the only one in Africa which was suitable and acceptable to the people. The Westminster-style government, according to him, had serious shortcomings. The traditional system alone, was also not sufficient. Alone it could not give an ordinary person a say in the running of the government.

When interviewed by the press as to why he had accepted independence, Mphephu gave several reasons. He stated that Venda had been independent until 1902 when the South African Republic annexed the whole area. This was in fact an error made by him because Venda was annexed in 1898 after Tshilamulela Mphephu was defeated by combined forces of the South African Republic.² The new president of Venda went on to say that he preferred to restore the position which prevailed in the area before it was annexed.

Mphephu's reason for accepting independence was that he wanted to follow in the footsteps of other homeland leaders like Matanzima and Mangope who had

1 *Thohoyandou* [newspaper], (3)9, 13.9.1979, pp. 1-2.

2 *Rand Daily Mail*, 13.9.1979, p. 1 ; *Thohoyandou*, (3)9, 13.9.1979, pp. 1-2.

accepted independence earlier and because he believed everything was going well in their new independent states. He wanted to follow suit and be part of President P.W. Botha's new vision of a "constellation of States".³ The general view of the National Party on the future of Black homelands was that all would eventually opt for independence. Thereafter they would be mutually bound together economically free of Marxist and ANC influences. Mphephu stressed that he wanted to stand alone like Transkei and Bophuthatswana and with rich coal deposits which were discovered in the north-east of Venda, he believed that his country would be economically independent. He further stressed that those who did not want independence should be left alone.⁴

Mphephu was an avid supporter of the N.P.'s policy of separate development and his acceptance of independence was an obvious choice. Since the South African Government was footing the bill for the development of the Venda homeland, he could find no better option than to go with the plan. Moreover, he believed that independence would create many job opportunities for his people which would solve unemployment problems.⁵ Mphephu was probably sincere in his substantiation for accepting independence.

Baldwin Mudau, on the other hand, accepted his defeat for the post of the president.⁶ It was clear that there was no more political fight left in him. The English press with the large majority of black readers, like the *Daily Mail* and *Sowetan* constantly criticised Mphephu and his government for accepting independence Pretoria style. This made him shun them and he refused to give press statements. Instead, Mphephu used the official Venda newspaper *Thohoyandou* to keep the Vendas all over South Africa informed of the progress that was taking place in their newly acquired independent state.⁷

In April 1979, a few months before Venda attained independence, Mphephu issued a statement in parliament appealing to all the Vendas outside the homeland to come and fill the posts which would be created in the new administration and to fill the gaps left by the return of many White seconded officials to South Africa.

3 *Sunday Times Extra*, 9.9.1979, p. 1.

4 *Sunday Times Extra*, 9.9.1979, p. 1.

5 *Thohoyandou*, (3)9, pp. 1-2.

6 *Sunday Times Extra*, 9.9.1979, p. 1.

7 A.J. Venter: *Black Leaders of Southern Africa*, p. 188.

Consequently many teachers, principals and school inspectors were recruited,⁸ many of whom did not possess the necessary skills to do the work previously done by the seconded officials. Despite this, all civil servants, including chiefs and headmen, were given salary increases from the day Venda attained independence.⁹ As could be expected the result was inefficiency and maladministration in government.

Even after independence, the relationship between Mphhephu and the opposition party remained strained. Traditional leaders like Chief Ramovha, Netsianda and Mugivhi later crossed the floor and joined Mphhephu's ruling party and were later given posts in his cabinet.¹⁰ Meanwhile the leader of the opposition party, Baldwin Mudau, died on 31 December 1981, and was succeeded by Gilbert Bakane, who could not match Mudau's popularity and his charismatic leadership.¹¹ This merely hastened the steady decline of the VIPP after Mudau's death.

Mphhephu was on his way to becoming just another absolutist head of state in the world of developing nations. In 1983 he consolidated his position by becoming the Life President of the Republic of Venda and creating a one-party state. This move was condemned by the opposition who had wanted to see Mphhephu leaving active politics by becoming a constitutional king.¹² Mphhephu refused the offer and defended a one-party state as normal in African political systems because the Vendas were used to the traditional government. To him Western style government was unsuitable among the Vendas because it brought instability and division.¹³

In the first general election (1984) after Venda had attained independence, the VIPP lost heavily and consequently decided to disband because their position had become irrelevant in a one-party state.¹⁴ Henceforth the only opposition to Mphhephu's leadership was found among the new generation of Lutheran Church

8 *Rand Daily Mail*, 13/10/79 ; *Thohoyandou*, (3)8, August 1979, p. 1.

9 *Thohoyandou*, (3)8, August 1979, p. 1.

10 *Rand Daily Mail*, 21.7.1982, p. 2; *Thohoyandou*, (4)9, September 1980, p. 5; Anon: *Thohoyandou*, (11)6, 6.4.1987, p. 1.

11 *The Star*, 13.01.1982, p. 2.

12 P. Sidley: "Mphhephu lives forever in South Africa's Banana Republic", in *Work in Progress*, February 1987, No. 46, pp. 26-27; B. Nel: "Khosikhulu Mphhephu of Venda", in *Southern Africa Today*, (3)4, July 1986, pp. 1-3.

13 "The Republic of Venda", *Africa Institute Bulletin Supplement*, (27)5, 1987, p. 5.

14 "Venda: Country Profile", *Africa Insight*, (18)2, 1988, pp. 104-105; W.J. Breytenbach: *Tuislande - Selfregering en Politieke Partye*, p. 156; V. Cadman: "Venda, A One Party State of Affairs", in *Indicator South Africa*, (4)2, Spring 1986, p. 82.

Ministers and sympathisers of the ANC.

Mphephu's relationship with the Venda militants was one of hostility.¹⁵ Although he was known for using security police in order to solve political issues, his attitude hardened after the bombing of the Sibasa Police Station in 1981, during which two members of the police had died and several had been injured. There was a massive clampdown on ANC sympathisers including the young Lutheran Church ministers, Farisani, Nevhutalu and Phosiwa. The situation deteriorated with the death in detention of the lay preacher, Tshifhiwa Muofhe, shortly afterwards. Many opponents were detained in solitary confinement and tortured.¹⁶ Feelings ran high and nobody dared to voice criticism. Bishop Desmond Tutu who came to visit the detainees was escorted out of Venda.¹⁷

There was widespread condemnation of Mphephu's style of leadership as a result of the arrests and torture of suspects after the bombing of the Sibasa police station. Roadblocks and detentions were the order of the day and people felt insecure. The arrests continued and people felt insecure.¹⁸ The lawyers for human rights tried to put pressure on the South African Government in order to persuade Mphephu to release the suspects, such as Farisani, Phosiwa, Nevhutalu, Mahamba and Phaswana. The South African Government refused to intervene on the grounds that Venda was then an independent state.

The trial of these suspects received widespread publicity and was attended by representatives of the British Council of Churches, Amnesty International and the International Commission of Jurists. The accused were not found guilty and were subsequently discharged. The civil court claims that followed forced the Venda Government to pay large amounts in compensation settlements. Mphephu had become a feared and unpopular leader.¹⁹

The ANC kept a relentless war of nerves on the Venda security forces. Phone

15 *Rand Daily Mail*, 13 September 1979, p. 13; M. Lacob: "Homelands: The New Locus of Repression", in *Africa Report*, (29)1, Jan-Feb. 1984, pp. 44-47.

16 M. Lacob: "Homelands: The New Locus of Repression", *Africa Report*, (29)1, Jan-Feb, 1984, pp. 44-47; *The Star* 18.1.1982, p. 1; *The Star*, 27.10.1981, p. 1.

17 *Sowetan*, 1.2.1982, pp. 1-2.

18 *The Star*, 18.1.1982, p. 1; *Rand Daily Mail*, 13.2.1982, p. 2; *The Star*, 2.6.1982, p. 3.

19 *The Star*, 18.1.1982, p. 1; *Rand Daily Mail*, 13.2.1982 ; "Homeland Tragedy Function and Farce", *SARS/DSG. Information Publication*, No. 6, p. 2.

threats of imminent attacks kept the security police on full alert.²⁰ The Venda Defence Force was formed in 1984 in order to counter the terrorist threat in Venda. The South African Government supplied Venda with trained personnel and equipment. Mphephu also became the Minister of Defence in addition to that of the Police and National Intelligence.²¹ Members of his cabinet were inactive and he had to take decisions alone in his struggle against the opposition both inside and outside the borders of the homeland.

Mphephu's relationship with traditional leaders depended upon the degree of their support. When he became president of Venda in 1979, there were several acting chiefs. Among them were Sinthumule, Kutama, Tshivhase, Mphaphuli, Netsianda and Mugivhi to name only a few.²² Since most of the Venda chiefs kept him in power during his struggle with the opposition, Mphephu was not prepared to lose them. When the rightful heirs to the chieftaincies came of age, Mphephu sidelined them. This made him unpopular with certain Venda communities because in Venda tradition, chieftainship was hereditary.²³ In 1970 for example, Mphephu helped to enthrone Kennedy Tshivhase. As he was still young, his *khotsimunene*, J. Shavhani acted in his place. When Kennedy came of age, Mphephu sidelined him.²⁴ The disputes over the legitimacy of chiefs resulted in lengthy and expensive court cases.²⁵ Thus chiefs like Kennedy Tshivhase, Peter Kutama, Soekman Sinthumule and Mphaphuli, only became chiefs after Mphephu's death. Mphephu feared the rising tide of the youth and that it would erode his power base.

Similarly, those whom he suspected of not showing complete loyalty were also sidelined. Headman Mphephu of Vuvha (Seville) was replaced by his half-brother, T.T. Ramabulana, who was also given a cabinet post.²⁶ Headman Tshikalange of Tshiffi who was formerly banned to Kuruman by the South African Government in 1969 but later had his banning orders lifted, would not be appointed to his former

20 *Rand Daily Mail*, 18.1.1982, p. 1.

21 *Thohoyandou*, (6)17, 4.10.1982, p. 1.

22 VG: Commission of Inquiry into Venda Vhuhosi Affairs, 2(1), p. 568; M. Nemudzivhadi: *When and What*, pp. 28-29.

23 VG: Cases of chieftainship disputes: Case Numbers; Tshivhase Case Number 154/86, Sinthumule 193/91, Kutama 56/90, no page number.

24 *Sowetan*, 26.9.1988, p. 3.

25 VG: Cases of chieftainship disputes: Case numbers, Tshivhase 154/86, Sinthumule 193/91, Kutama 56/90; *The Star*, 18.8.1993, p. 12.

26 VG: Commission of Inquiry into Venda Vhuhosi Affairs, 2(2), pp. 725-726.

position by Mphephu, as he regarded him as a threat. He was able to be appointed in his former position only after Mphephu's death.²⁷

One cabinet minister, A.A. Tshivhase, who was very unpopular with a large section of the Venda Community, was one of Mphephu's most loyal supporters. He was eventually given four portfolios in his cabinet, thus becoming the most senior cabinet minister.²⁸ Mphephu's cabinet ministers did not voice their disapproval for fear of jeopardising their own positions. The *Native Administration Act* of 1927 which empowered the governor-general to appoint and dismiss chiefs was transferred to the chief ministers of the homelands.²⁹ In this way, Mphephu had powers to dismiss disloyal chiefs from his inner circle of government.

Mphephu experienced many other set-backs as head of his new state. One was because of his attempt to perform the dual role of president and of paramount chief. During the week he performed the function of a modern head of state, but during weekends he became a traditional ruler. As such he would welcome customary visits from subjects who wanted to pay homage and to obtain benefits for themselves or for relatives. One of the groups were parents who came to ask for help because their newly matriculated offspring were jobless.³⁰ He did what he could, with the usual results of this kind of style of government.

Another group of citizens who came to look for favours were civil servants. Section 13 of the Venda Constitution gave the president powers to hire and discharge officials without giving reasons.³¹ Many corrupt officials would go to his royal kraal on the pretext of paying tribute and in the end they usually would return with the required promotions. Mphephu as a person was kind and sympathetic to the needs of his people. Many officials in the civil service took advantage of this kindness to feather their own beds, leading to divisions and discontent in his government. His hiring and promoting civil servants during weekends clashed with the Public Service Commission whose responsibility was exactly the appointment and

27 VG: Commission of Inquiry into Venda Vhuhosi Affairs, 2(2), pp. 725-726.

28 VG: D.J.H. le Roux: Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Causes of the Unrest and Ritual Murders in Venda during 1988, pp. 180-184.

29 *The Star*, 18.8.1993, p. 12. B.J. Barker *et al.*: *Readers Digest, The Real Story - Illustrated History of South Africa*, pp. 318 and 342.

30 VG: Commission of Inquiry into Venda Vhuhosi Affairs, 2(2), p. 737.

31 VG: D.J.H. le Roux: Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Causes of the Unrest and Ritual Murders in Venda during 1988, pp. 178-180: *Thohoyandou*, (8)5, 17.8.1990, pp. 3-8.

promotion of civil servants. The result was the creation of a bloated civil service and much of the budget was taken up by the payment of salaries.³² Favouritism and nepotism gradually started crippling what was initially thought to have been an efficient civil service.

Mphephu's increasing involvement with the civil service in the later years of his rule created problems which led to further maladministration in the government. From the beginning Mphephu wanted a loyal and efficient civil service. He was a hard worker himself and he used to travel abroad, convincing sympathetic foreign businessmen to invest in Venda.³³ Unfortunately, there was no uniformity in the civil service. Mphephu used to reshuffle the cabinet regularly. He also transferred the directors-general regularly. During his rule, he demoted and transferred two homeland's Auditors-General and it weakened the financial discipline in the civil service.³⁴ The promotion of loyal supporters to senior posts without taking into consideration their qualifications and experience, led to poor morale and uncertainty in the civil service.³⁵

The disappearance of the VIPP and the creation of a one party state increased public discontent with Mphephu's government. Many civil servants who were supporters of the defunct opposition, opposed his rule in silence. The "khosi system" or traditional government, did not give room for self expression. Mphephu ran the civil service by using a network of spies and informers.³⁶

When Venda attained independence, more attention was given to the development of agriculture. It was clear that subsistence farming could not feed the growing population. The Venda Agricultural Corporation (Agriven) was formed from the VDC in 1982 and it was charged with the development of commercial farming and the training of Venda farmers in the new methods of cultivation. Agriven was also

32 VG: D.J.H. le Roux: Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Causes of the Unrest and Ritual Murders in Venda during 1988, pp. 178-180.

33 *Thohoyandou*, (3)12, January 1979, p. 1.

34 *Thohoyandou*, 8(14), 27.8.1984, p. 1.

35 VG: D.J.H. le Roux: Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Causes of the Unrest and Ritual Murders in Venda during 1988, pp. 178-180; *Thohoyandou*, 17 August 1990, pp. 3-8.

36 VG: Commission of Inquiry into Venda Vuhosi Affairs, 2(2), p. 174.

charged with the development of agricultural projects in Venda.³⁷

The Venda concept of land ownership and utilisation was not conducive to efficient cultivation and production. The idea of commercial farming was a foreign one to the tribal authorities who controlled the land, and so Agriven had problems in persuading them to release land for commercial farming. Still, over forty projects were established and Venda farmers were granted long term loans to buy seeds, fertilisers, and equipment and to hire machinery.³⁸ Various Agricultural experts were contracted to plan dry land farming. As early as 1979, Vuwani Rural Development Scheme was established near the Levubu river where women were given plots to cultivate. Similar irrigation schemes were established at Beaconsfield, Tshivhase, Tshikonelo, Tshisaulu, Lambani and Tshifudi. At Tshikonelo on the banks of Levubu river, tobacco, maize, chillies and herbs were cultivated. A coffee plantation was established near Tshifudi.³⁹

Already the Tshivhase Tea Estate was under irrigation and a tea factory was established in 1984. These offered employment to many Vendas, especially women. Mphephu made several trips to Europe with some of his ministers to entice Belgian and Israeli agricultural companies to invest in Venda. He appointed a well-known agriculturist, Professor D. Karmeli, from Israel to give expert advice on agriculture in Venda.⁴⁰

Since the cry in Venda was over the shortage of land, Mphephu had on several occasions approached the South African Government for more land. He even went as far as claiming the towns of Messina and Louis Trichardt as well as the area of Soekmekaar, as Venda territory, much to the chagrin of Whites living in the region.⁴¹ He was, however, given farms in the Nwanedi-Luphephe areas in return for a strip of land bordering the Limpopo River. He was also granted some white farms in the area near Elim Hospital.⁴² The Van der Walt Commission was appointed in 1981 in order to investigate land consolidation in Venda, Ciskei and

37 Anon: *The Republic of Venda*, p. 132; J.B. Hoffeldt: "Venda's Agricultural Backbone", in *SA Panorama*, (30)3, March 1985, p. 16.

38 J.B. Hoffeldt: "Venda's Agricultural Backbone", in *SA Panorama*, (30)3, March 1985, p. 16.

39 J.B. Hoffeldt: "Venda's Agricultural Backbone", in *SA Panorama*, (30)3, March 1985, p. 16.

40 *Thohoyandou*, (7)14, 29.8.1983, p. 1.

41 *Thohoyandou*, (6)10, 28.6.1982, p. 1.

42 L. Gordon (ed.): *A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1973*, p. 152.

Kangwane. It was abandoned because the recommendations were not practical, since it would have entailed the resettlement of several communities. It was also not possible to buy out all the white farmers, and the South African Government was also not willing to alienate white farmers, for fear of losing votes.⁴³

There were several problems which made agriculture in Venda unprofitable. The drought which started from 1980 continued unabated and many agricultural projects along the Levubu, Nwanedi and Luphephe rivers were abandoned due to lack of sufficient water. Venda farmers therefore could not repay their loans.⁴⁴ Because of the crippling drought, a drought Relief Plan was introduced whereby labourers were employed on a temporary basis to do manual and clerical work.⁴⁵ This however was not sufficient to solve the unemployment problem in the region and because not all the labourers could be employed because of shortage of funds.

Agriven at the time concentrated on large-scale ventures such as the cultivation and exportation of products like tea, coffee, pepper and macadamia nuts. Although it earned revenue for the state, it did not benefit in a visible fashion the individual Vendas who were directly involved with production. Male labourers remained wage earners on the timber, tea and coffee plantations as well as in the industries. The flow of males to urban areas continued while more and more womenfolk were employed to fill the vacuum left by them.⁴⁶

This made the tribal authorities and the community view Agriven projects with scepticism. Mphephu, who was so much a man of tradition in his policies, did not have an understanding of what was necessary to bring his people into the modern ways of land-ownership, agricultural cultivation and production.⁴⁷

The ruling party abused power and members took more loans than necessary without repaying them. They also divided among themselves farms which were allocated to Venda by the South African Government. Mphephu himself had several farms for his personal use. This led to well founded allegations of personal

43 L. Gordon (ed.): *A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1979*, p. 302-303.

44 *Thohoyandou*, (7)10, 27.6.1983, p. 2.

45 *Thohoyandou*, (7) 10, 27.6.1983, p. 2.

46 *Sowetan*, 16 January 1982, p. 1; *Rand Daily Mail*, 13 September 1979, p. 13; *Rand Daily Mail*, 29 January 1982, p. 11.

47 J.B. Hoffeldt: "Venda's Agricultural Backbone", in *SA Panorama*, (30)3, March 1985, pp. 16-19.

enrichment and corruption.⁴⁸

In Venda, the task of granting old age pensions was done through the Department of Health and Welfare. In the rural areas, traditional leaders were given the task of identifying and selecting old people whose age made them qualify for old age pensions.⁴⁹ The headmen first selected their own relatives some of whom were younger than the pensionable age. Due to insufficient internal control in the department many cases occurred where relatives received pensions for deceased relatives. There were also many cases of thefts and shortages created by the officials in charge with the task of paying out the pensions. Many rural old people were illiterate and some of them did not have identity documents. It became very difficult to estimate their ages.⁵⁰ The system of old age pensions did not bring financial relief to all old people because only a certain number of people was selected in each of the four districts namely, Thohoyandou, Vuwani, Dzanani and Mutale.⁵¹

The planning and the development of Venda which was formerly under the guidance of the South African development agents, was transferred to the control of the Office of the President after 1979. The President and the Executive Council in the Republic of Venda, were responsible for the final adoption of development policies and programmes. There was also a Planning Advisory Council consisting of experts from the South African Government who were responsible for evaluating the development proposals which came from VDC, Agriven, various departments and local councils. After 1979, the development of Venda accelerated rapidly because the South African Government kept on increasing aid to the independent homeland.⁵²

When Venda became independent, the development that took place was centred

48 VG: Taylor Commission of Inquiry on Matters of Corruption, etc.: Report on Venda Agricultural Corporation - Abuse of loans, pp. 232-260.

49 VG: Taylor Commission of Inquiry. Report on the Department of Health and Welfare - Social Pensions Division, pp. A159-A182 (Unpublished report).

50 VG: Taylor Commission of Inquiry: Report on the Department of Health and Welfare, Social Pension Division, pp. A159-A182.

51 VG: Taylor Commission of Inquiry: Report on the Department of Health and Welfare, Social Pension Division, pp. A159-A182 (Unpublished report).

52 Anon: "Republic of Venda" in *Africa Institute Bulletin Supplement*, (27)5, 1987, p. 8; VG: Anon: National Development Policy of the Republic of Venda preamble by his excellency the President, Khosikhulu P. R. Mphephu, pp. 5-39.

around Thohoyandou, the capital, and to a lesser extent the Vuwani and Makhado areas. The infrastructure in general was still underdeveloped. The whole area was still very rural indeed. Much of the capital received was used to provide an infrastructure such as the construction of roads.⁵³ Under the Venda Road Master Plan, the Venda Government was able to raise loans for the tarring of the Sibasa-Thohoyandou road, Sibasa-Wylliespoort road, Tshikondeni-Masisi road, Sibasa-Thengwe road, Sinthumule-Kutama road, the widening of Tshisaulu-Thohoyandou road, Thohoyandou-Vuwani road and the construction of many bridges like Mutshedzi, Njelele, Dopeni and Lambani. However, much of the funds allocated for the payment of consultants and constructors from South Africa, were indirectly ploughed back to South Africa since there were no qualified construction firms in Venda.⁵⁴ Mphephu's critics blamed him for accepting independence before the homeland was sufficiently developed,⁵⁵ arguing that after independence the Venda Government would have to raise loans for this purpose and that the South African government would not be likely to foot development aid bills so readily.

The Development Bank of South Africa was established in 1983 for the granting of long term loans to the so-called TBVC⁵⁶ independent states⁵⁷ These loans which were redeemable after long periods were used for the development of the region. Since the independent states were not recognised outside South Africa, they were not in a position to apply for loans on the international financial markets.⁵⁸ The loans granted by South Africa to the Venda independent homeland were not sufficient to upgrade the whole area.

Mphephu's travels to the eastern countries like China and Taiwan in order to woo investors to establish themselves in Venda yielded some results. The incentives he offered to potential investors apparently, were the absence of trade unions and the granting of industrial concessions, coupled with cheap labour and tax concessions. Some Chinese and Taiwanese factories did establish themselves in Venda.⁵⁹ Shoe, canvas, pottery and jersey factories were established. They did not however solve

53 *Thohoyandou*, (3)9, 13.9.1979, p. 2 ; BENSO/RAU: *The Independent Venda*, p. 107.

54 *Thohoyandou*, (11)20, 13.11.1987, p. 3.

55 *Rand Daily Mail*, 13 September 1979, p. 13; B. Rodgers: *Divide and Rule, South Africa's Bantustans*, pp. 29, 30, 34 and 36.

56 Acronym for Transkei, Bophutatswana, Venda, Ciskei.

57 *Thohoyandou*, (7)3, 8.8.1983, p. 5.

58 B.J. Liebenberg: "The Republic of South Africa, 1961-1978" in C.F.J. Muller (ed.): *Five Hundred Years of South African History*, p. 524.

59 *Thohoyandou*, (11)17, 25.9.1987, p. 1.

the unemployment problem because they paid low wages and could only attract female labour. A weapons factory was established in 1981 but it later closed because of lack of business.⁶⁰

The Venda womenfolk took the lead in the building of the economy in Venda, because the majority of the male population were employed outside Venda. Many were employed by local construction firms, some found employment on the neighbouring white farms, some kept hunger at bay by selling fruit and vegetables at stalls all over Venda. Others still eked out some farming existence by cultivating crops on the irrigation schemes. A small number made a living by knitting and sewing dresses in the industrial area near Shayandima.⁶¹

Other developments which took place were the establishment of the Venda Nursing College at Tshilidzini in 1980 so that Venda nurses could receive training locally. The University of Venda was established in 1981 under the supervision of the University of the North. This was done to make university education available to local students. Many secondary schools were established by the Departments of Education, Public Works and the National Assembly.⁶² Unfortunately, many of them were of poor quality, due to lack of proper supervision.

While Mphephu was at the helm of the independent Venda, Mutale town was developed and construction of administrative buildings commenced in 1983.⁶³ Venda's own airport was established in 1984. A peanut processing factory was opened by Agriven in 1987. Agriven established its headquarters for R2 million at Thohoyandou. In 1987, 17 factories were launched by the VDC in the industrial area, Shayandima, at a cost of R21 million.⁶⁴ The Venda telephone exchange costing R14 million was built in 1987.⁶⁵

The resistance against the National Party Government which took place after the formation of the United Democratic Front (UDF) in 1983 spilled into urban and rural areas. The revolt was also felt in the homelands of Bophuthatswana,

60 Thohoyandou, (11)8, 4.5.1987, p. 1.

61 Anon: "The Republic of Venda", pp. 128, 132; J.B. Hoffeldt: "Venda's Agricultural Backbone", in *S.A. Panorama*, (30)3, pp. 16-18.

62 VG: Taylor Commission. Commission of Inquiry, Department of Public Works, July-October 1990 (Unpublished report); *Thohoyandou*, (7)4, 14.3.1983, p. 2 ; *Thohoyandou*, (6)10, 28.6.1982:

63 SA BEN 90 File 4/2/7/2 Vol. 1, pp. 10-11: Finansiële en Tegnieuse hulp.

64 *Thohoyandou*, (8)12, 6.8.1984, p. 6 ; *Thohoyandou*, (8)12, 6.8.1984, p. 2.

65 *Thohoyandou*, 4.5.1987, p. 1.

Kwandebele, Lebowa, Gazankulu as well as Venda.⁶⁶ There was resistance against reincorporating into Venda by Vleifontein residents. Mphephu sent the security forces to quell the unrest and some detainees were hospitalised.⁶⁷ There were also several instances of student unrest and school boycotts in Venda. The aim of the UDF was to make the country ungovernable.⁶⁸ It was part of a mass campaign of protest to oppose the new constitution of South Africa which came into effect in 1983.

Since the use of security police to quell the unrest was a temporary measure, Mphephu established several youth centres all over Venda. The aim was to counter UDF threats. Several teachers who were loyal supporters of the Venda Government were relieved of their posts and promoted to higher positions in youth centres. Students were taught to shun foreign influence and be loyal supporters of their government. The Mphephu Leadership Centre was opened on 19 February 1988 at Tshipise in the far Northern Transvaal.⁶⁹ The majority of the Venda students did not support this idea but preferred to join the rival organisations, like the Northern Transvaal Youth Congress (iNOTYO) and the South African Youth Organisations (SAYCO) which were affiliated to the UDF.⁷⁰

The Venda Government always operated in deficit. This was caused mainly by inefficiency in the civil service. Lack of sound financial management coupled with corruption, the creation of unnecessary government departments and the bloated civil service cost the South African taxpayers millions of rands.⁷¹ The South African Government had by that time lost the will to control finances in the homeland. The Venda Government was taken to court on several occasions by South African businessmen because of breach of contracts. Here the South African Government

66 P. Laurence: "Rural Revolt, Transvaal's Homelands in ferment", *Indicator SA*, (4)2, Spring 1986, p. 21.

67 "Homeland Tragedy, Function and Farce", *South African Research Services and Development Studies Group, Information Publication*, No. 6, p. 28.

68 M. Lacob: "Homelands: The New Locus of Repression", in *Africa Report*, (29)1, Jan-Feb. 1984, p. 47; P. Esterhuizen: "Krisis in Venda is 'n nalatenskap", in *Insig*, October 1988, p. 19.

69 *Thohoyandou*, (12)3, 25.3.1988, p. 1.

70 VG: D.J.H. le Roux: Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Causes of the Unrest and Ritual Murders in Venda during 1988, pp. 192-202.

71 VG: Taylor Commission of Inquiry 1990. Report on the Department of Health and Welfare, Social Pensions Division, pp. A159-A182; Taylor Commission of Inquiry 1990. Department of Public Works. July-October 1990, Taylor Commission, Commission of Inquiry on Matters of Corruption etc. Report on Venda Agricultural Corporation. Abuse of Loans; pp. 232-260. Unpublished report.

intervened and passed laws which prevented homeland governments from being sued by companies and individuals who resided outside the independent states.⁷²

Mphephu's leadership came to an abrupt end on Friday, 15 April 1988. On that afternoon when he left the government buildings as usual it was the last time he was seen alive by the public. On Monday morning, 18 April, the nation was stunned to hear the news of his death. Since many Venda chiefs had met their end through poisoning, and he had not been a sickly person, it was widely assumed that he had met with a similar fate.⁷³ During the preceding week-end Mphephu had not turned up to address a public gathering at the village of Malavuwe, because he had fallen ill. On Sunday evening, 17 April, he died in a private hospital in Pretoria where he had been flown the previous day.

Friday, 15 April 1988, which was a pay day for most government officials, was the last day President Mphephu was alive. On Monday morning the 18th, the Venda nation was stunned to hear that the "Great Elephant" had fallen. Some wept openly. His opponents sighed with relief, others pondered their future, but many were filled with sadness.

A *post mortem* was held in Pretoria, where Mphephu had died, to determine the cause of his death. According to the *Thohoyandou* newspaper, the cause of his death was organ failure due to poisoning.⁷⁴ His wife, a qualified senior nurse, explained the cause of her husband's death as organ failure caused by foreign bodies in the system.⁷⁵ No official document was found on the cause of his death. The Venda public at large, acting on the information from the *Thohoyandou* newspaper, generally assumed that Mphephu had been poisoned as so many Venda chiefs had met their fate before him.⁷⁶

Although an inquiry was held in Pretoria to find the person or persons responsible for his death, no one was found liable, much to the disappointment of the Venda public who suspected a cover-up. This also created a strong rumour that one of his trusted cabinet ministers, A.A. Tshivhase, who was very unpopular with the majority of the Vendas, had been the last to see Mphephu alive, and therefore must

72 *Rand Daily Mail*, 22.1.1982, p. 1; *Rand Daily Mail*, 20.7.1983, p. 1.

73 *Thohoyandou*, (12)4, 29.4.1988, p. 1; S. Kongwa: "Changing the guard in Venda; succession and future agenda", *Africa Institute Bulletin*, (28)7, 1988, p. 4.

74 OS: 920329.p. 10, Mrs Doris Mphephu, Dzanani Royal Kraal.

75 *Thohoyandou*, (12)4, 29.4.1988, p. 1.

76 VG: Commission of Inquiry into Venda Vhuhosi Affairs, Part 2, (1), pp. 389-392.

have known what happened to the president.⁷⁷

Mphephu's death left a leadership vacuum because he had ruled alone and, as stated earlier, had taken all important decisions on the spot without consulting his cabinet or other advisors. He served the Vendas for 38 years. He was the chief of the Masingo and Vhailafuri for 29 years. He served as the paramount chief for nine years and as a State President of the former Republic of Venda for nine years.⁷⁸ His untimely death shocked many people because he had been a healthy person.

On 22 April 1988 many people gathered at the Independence stadium where the dignitaries from all over South Africa came to pay their last respects. Minister Pik Botha, as Minister of Foreign Affairs paid tribute and praised Mphephu for his dedication and hard work in building and uniting the Venda nation. Mr. Botha went on to explain that as a friend and brother, he would miss the "Great son of Africa" dearly.⁷⁹

Mphephu was laid to rest among the graves of his ancestors, Makhado, Tshilamulela and Mbulaheni, his father. The burial ground for the Ramabulana chiefs are situated on the farm Alexandria (Swonguzwi) or Hanglip on the northern side of the town of Louis Trichardt.⁸⁰ Since the Venda chiefs are buried in secret in the evening,⁸¹ it is doubtful whether the casket which was displayed before the multitude of Vendas in the stadium had his corpse inside.

77 *Thohoyandou*, (12)4, 29.4.1988, p. 1.

78 *Thohoyandou*, (12)4, 29.4.1988, p. 1.

79 *Thohoyandou*, (12)4, 29.4.1988, p. 1.

80 NTS 7787 File no. 191/335. Vol. 1. Minute 5762, Folio 127, dd. 1911.11.24 from Native Commissioner Zoutpansberg to Acting Secretary for Native Affairs in Pretoria. Zoutpansberg Burial Ground Reserved for Chief Mpefu [sic] on farm Alexandria no. 339.

81 H.A. Stayt: *The Bavenda*, p. 206.

Chapter 9

CONCLUSION

President Ramaano Patrick Mphedu Ramabulana of the former Republic of Venda was widely respected by a large section of the Venda community and criticised by another group who consisted of his political opponents because of the role he played as Venda ruler from 1950 to 1988 when he passed away. Mphedu occupied the dual positions of paramount chief and president from 1979 in order to bridge the gap between traditional leadership and Western-type democracy.

Mphedu came from a long line of traditionalists and influential senior chiefs of the Ramabulana. He had a humble upbringing and he was kind and jovial but he shunned publicity and he was very sensitive to criticism. As a traditional leader he commanded the respect of a large section of the Venda society because he grew up in the chieftainship and he was therefore trained for the position. It was however in the political field that he encountered problems because he lost support of the Venda elite who believed that because of his poor educational background, he was unsuitable for the position of a political head when Venda was undergoing political change.

Mphedu's relation with church leaders and their members depended upon the degree of their support or criticism of his government. Generally speaking, Mphedu never interfered with churches in Venda, although he openly supported the Zion Christian Church (ZCC), because it did not interfere with culture and traditions of Africans. But, he was very hostile to the Lutheran Churches in Venda because of some of their clerics' attitude towards his government. Those who criticised his government were arrested on numerous occasions and tortured by the police. But he never gave instructions for this but he was nevertheless blamed for his neutral stand because one of the Lutheran church lay preachers, Tshifhiwa Muofhe died in detention.

Mphedu was called a dictator by his political opponents because of his liberal use of security policemen to solve political issues. Mphedu was not a cruel man but after the bombing of the Sibasa police station by the ANC, he became uncompromising in his dealing with his opponents. The detentions, torture and harassment of the detainees, among them who were influential ministers of the Lutheran Church, like Dean Farisani, Mahamba, Phosiwa, Nevhutalu and Phaswana, made him a feared

man. His refusal to release the detainees despite the general outcry from within South Africa and abroad, earned him the name of a dictator.

Mphephu also came under criticism for corruption, nepotism and maladministration which was common in the civil service during his rule. It should be remembered that in the beginning (1979) Mphephu wanted a loyal and efficient civil service. His failure to maintain an efficient civil service should not be attributed to him alone. There was a vacuum in the civil service after the departure of the White officials who formerly manned the various departments. Moreover, new departments were created after their departure. Mphephu was forced to recruit senior government personnel from teachers, school principals and inspectors. Junior officials were also promoted to high posts in order to fill in the gap left by experienced White officials. The new recruits did not have the necessary skills to run the departments. Mphephu and his cabinet with their limited educational background, could not have been expected to understand the intricate workings of the financial administration of the government. The South African Government's failure to train the Venda civil servants led to chaos in the administration of the homeland.

Nepotism in the civil service was not caused by Mphephu *per se*. It came as a result of the blending of the traditional system with the Western type of government. The traditional leaders had to rule the state in the Western style, where ordinary people had access to their political heads during weekends. During weekends political leaders acted as traditional leaders in their areas. During the week, the same political heads performed their duties in the Western government. It led to corruption in the government.

Mphephu did not enjoy support of the English press like the *Rand Daily Mail*, *Sunday Times* and *Sowetan* which were critical of the South African government. His government was given a negative report and he was personally criticised. This made him to shun publicity and the reporters were not welcome in Venda. Officials whom Mphephu suspected of giving information to the press were harassed by police and others were transferred to remote places.

Mphephu also came under severe criticism for his handling of chieftainship disputes. He undermined the traditional system of chieftainship by appointing chiefs of his own choice. In so doing the problems which arose dragged for long periods and resulted in

expensive court cases. The affected communities were forced to contribute funds for the defence of their rightful leaders.

These cases could only be resolved after lengthy court battles. The rightful chiefs could only be restored to their rightful positions after Mphephu's death in 1988 and that made him unpopular with the affected communities.

Mphephu was an avid supporter of the policy of separate development and his working relations with the South African Government was at all times very good and that earned him the names of "sell-out" and "collaborator" by the opponents of the South African government. His close working relationship with the South African government resulted in the rapid development of the homeland more especially after the granting of independence in the 1980's.

Mphephu was also called a puppet of the National Party Government by his critics for his acceptance of independence. They wanted a unitary state, and independence, they believed was robbing the Vendas of their birth right. By accepting independence, Mphephu wanted to have easy access to funds for the development of the homeland. Baldwin Mudau who was regarded an enlightened leader, also believed in the principle of independence. Venda independence was accompanied by the rapid development from 1978 and continued until Mphephu's death in 1988. Mphephu was sincere in his belief of the principle of independence, because he knew it would ease up unemployment problem which was very prevalent in the homeland.

Independence was granted at the time when Venda was undergoing rapid development. A large section of the Venda community welcomed these developments and there was no talk of boycotting the celebrations. This enhanced Mphephu's standing in the community because Venda was being transformed from a rural to urban society. The development of infrastructure, Thohoyandou town, the townships as well as the new buildings and factories which were being erected made Mphephu to be respected even by his critics. It should be remembered that a large section of the Venda rural community at the time was not interested in politics of the day, but were faced with bread and butter issues.

The general public—more especially people from rural areas—loved and respected Mphephu because of his traditional background and good humour. He was always sympathetic to the needs and plight of his people. His kraal was a hive of activity

during weekends when people would arrive in pretext of paying homage which was customary but in the end they returned home being promoted to higher positions. This made him open to criticism. At the same time Mphephu was unsympathetic to his opponents whom he regarded as enemies. The government officials who supported the opposition were not promoted to higher posts even when they qualified for these positions. The development of infrastructure in Venda centred mainly in the areas of his supporters but in the areas of the opposition, the development came very slowly.

Mphephu was called a despot by his critics because of his intolerance of the opposition. He created a one party state and made himself a life president which was his only way of silencing the opposition and that made him very unpopular with a large section of the Vendas. The results of the polls from the 1973 and 1978 general elections proved that Mphephu did not enjoy popular support in the political field.

As a traditional leader, Mphephu enjoyed respect even among his critics. He was a strong leader. During his rule, he was able to contain ritual murders and witch-killings which were prevalent during his successor, President Ravele's rule. He was able to take important decisions on the spot without consulting his cabinet. Some of those decisions later proved to be wrong. For example, his promotion of the unpopular minister A.A. Tshivhase to senior cabinet position by allocating him four portfolio's made him unpopular. Mphephu's involvement with White business people in business ventures landed him into court battles.

Mphephu's handling of forced removals that took place in the north-eastern Transvaal from the late 1960's to the 1980's made him unpopular with the affected communities. Although it was generally known that forced removals were initiated by the South African government with a view of separating people on ethnic lines, Mphephu's undiplomatic handling of the issue caused a lot of resentment. Headman Netshivhulana, who was reluctant to be resettled in Venda, was threatened with reclassification as a Tsonga. The Northern Sothos who resided in the Sinthumule and Kutama areas were forced to sell their stock and move out of Venda before harvesting their crops. This was in stark contrast to the approach of his counterparts Ntsanwisi of Gazankulu and Phathudi of Lebowa who addressed their respective followers in a diplomatic manner and who showed sympathy towards their plight.

His lack of education prevented him from gauging events which were taking place around the world in general and South Africa in particular. When the South African government was busy holding dialogue with the banned organisations in exile, Mphephu was still locked in conflict with them. His style of leadership was autocratic because he never sat down with his political opponents in order to solve political issues. The case of the Vleifontein residents who refused to be incorporated into Venda was resolved by police brutalities and several residents were hospitalised.

Mphephu's traditional background and lack of formal education did not endear him with the residents of the mission stations like Tshakuma, Beuster, Makonde, Tshifudi and Begwa, to name a few. These people had embraced Christianity and Western education and did not like to be ruled by traditional leaders whom they regarded as heathens and who practised polygamy and other customs not acceptable in Western culture. These Lutheran mission stations became a hotbed of opposition to Mphephu's rule and were instrumental in making him lose elections in 1973 and 1978. Yet, despite his shortcomings, Mphephu was a strong leader who was able to withstand the pressure from the United Democratic Front who tried to make the homelands ungovernable by propagating popular revolts.

Mphephu was a hard worker and he travelled extensively trying to entice foreign business people to invest in Venda. His fight was against unemployment. He was also an honest man and did not own any businesses himself. During his rule, he never looted the state coffers like Gabriel Ramushwana, the head of the military junta who retired a millionaire after enriching himself with the proceeds of state pension funds. In spite of his poor educational background and his limitations in the political field, Mphephu was regarded by a large section of the Vendas as the man who brought progress to the homeland by working tirelessly for its development.

The Nationalist Party's policy of Separate Development received wide criticism from within certain sections of the South African communities and abroad because it deprived Africans from the right to exercise their vote and it was in most cases a violation of human rights. Critics of this policy further stated that the Nationalist Party wanted to solve the "Black Problem" by dividing Africans into ethnic

groupings so as to rule them effectively. While some of these statements were undoubtedly true, it should be remembered that no ethnic group in South Africa would have allowed another to impose its will over it or to be dominated it. Vendas would have resisted to be placed under Tsongas and Shangaans or Sothos and vice versa. This became evident during the Thohoyandou Territorial Authority meetings where there were always problems concerning representation since the three ethnic groupings mentioned above shared the same area. The result was that the Tsongas/Shangaans were among the first to break away to form their own territorial authority, followed by the Northern Sothos in 1967.

As stated earlier, the previous South African Governments paid little attention to the rehabilitation of the reserves later called the homelands after 1948. As a result there was a lot of poverty and suffering in these areas. Furthermore, the traditional system of government which was in place among the Africans for generations was being eroded by the policies of the previous governments. Chiefs became more and more traditional figureheads with no powers at all. They had to enforce government policies which in most cases were not acceptable to their subjects. The result was that the relationships between chiefs and their subjects were strained.

The new policy of the Nationalist Party of empowering traditional rulers and who had to take the lead in the development of their areas under the guidance of the Native Affairs Commissioners and their assistance was attractive and acceptable to most rural people. However, the educated, urban and detribalised Africans had no liking for rejected a policy that relegated them to an existence away from the metropolitan and other urban centres. The rural Africans depended upon subsistence farming for their livelihood and the development of the homelands was a positive step in the policy of Separate Development.

The establishment of rural towns of Giyani for Gazankulu homeland, Lebowakgomo for Lebowa homeland and Thohoyandou for Venda with their modern infrastructure and residential houses was welcomed by all including the critics of homeland and policy. Although Mphephu came under severe criticism for embracing the policy of Separate Development, nevertheless he is still regarded and respected by a large section of the Venda society for the part he played in developing the Venda homeland.

Mphephu's political career came to a sudden end with his death under suspicious circumstances at his state mansion on 16 April 1988. His death marked the last chapter in the development of the Venda homeland under the policy of Separate Development. It was indicative of his leadership qualities that he was able to rise above his humble background as a labourer in the municipality of Johannesburg to the position of the President in what was a modern state in the making. The tragedy of Mphephu was that he had misjudged the trends of the times. Six years after his death, the Venda state that he had tried to establish was absorbed in the Northern Province of South Africa which came into being in 1994.

Addendum

PROFILES OF PERSONS WHO SUPPLIED ORAL EVIDENCE

Abner D. Mahatlane

He was born at Elim Mission Station where he received his primary and secondary school education. He later proceeded to Johannesburg after the Second World War where he was employed in various factories as a clerk. He returned in 1950 to settle at Vhufuli village where he was employed at Donald Fraser Hospital as a clerk. In 1969, he resigned and went to settle at Malamulele village in Gazankulu, where he became Ntsanwisi's personal secretary. He also became the secretary of Ximoko, a cultural movement of Ntsanwisi which later became a political party. He knew Mphephu very well because he was one of the delegates representing the Shangaans during the time of the territorial authorities and also during the time of the forced removals. He is now a retired businessman.

Born 4 9 1922
Giyani Township
Private Bag X573
Giyani
Tel.: 0158-23375

Mrs. Martina M. Manyage

She is a very close relative of Mphephu and was born at Tshakhuma Mission Station where she received her primary school education. Mphephu stayed with her family while attending primary school at the mission station in line with Venda culture which prohibit a would-be chief from growing up in the royal kraal for fear of poisoning. She is also closely related to headman Ravele by marriage and she knew both Venda leaders very well.

Born 4 4 1915
Tshakhuma Mission Station
Tshakhuma
No telephone number

Mfachaka E. Masutha

He was born at Gogobole a village under Sinthumule's chieftainship on the western side of Louis Trichardt. After completing his primary education, he went to Johannesburg where he was employed and became detribalised. He was a close friend of Baldwin Mudau and became national organiser of the Venda Independence Progressive Party. He was also responsible for organising the rallies both in the urban and rural areas before the elections of 1973, 1978 and 1984. He is also related to Mphephu by marriage and they knew each other very well although they did not get on politically. Masutha retired to his village in 1989 and is now a pensioner.

Born 23 11 1923
Gogobole Village
P.O. Sinthumule
via Louis Trichardt

Theodore T. Mathagu

He was born and educated at Tshakhuma Mission Station and was also Mphephu's classmate. He was a high school principal for many years. His promotion was delayed because he was one of the biggest supporters of the opposition party and Mphephu did not take kindly to that. He was later promoted to the position of school inspector when he was about to retire. He was harrassed by the South African security forces during the launching of the Venda Independence Progressive Party in 1972. He knows much about Mphephu's background and academic achievements, having grown up with him at Tshakhuma Mission Station.

Born 14 7 1926

Tshakhuma Mission Station

Tshakhuma

Tel.: 0200-Tshakhuma 27

Mrs. Doris Mphephu

She qualified as a nurse in Natal and was employed as a clinic nurse at Madombidzha in 1968 and was later transferred to Mphephu clinic. There she was married to Mphephu and became the first lady when Venda attained independence in 1979. She was then promoted to the position of nursing organiser, a position she held until 1988 when Mphephu died. She was elevated to the position of Minister of Health in 1988, acted as the President's first lady and was retired by the military junta of Gabriel Ramushwana in 1990. She accompanied Mphephu in his visits locally and abroad. She died in a car accident in 1996. She was acquainted with the circumstances surrounding Mphephu's death.

Born 3 10 1941

Dzanani Royal House, Dzanani

M. David Mphephu

He was born and bred at the Dzanani royal kraal. He is Mphephu's half-brother and his mother Vho-Muthelo is still alive. After completing his primary school education, he went to Johannesburg where he was employed as a labourer. Before Venda attained independence in 1978, he joined the South African Defence Force and was later transferred to the Venda Defence Force in 1984. Having grown up in the royal kraal he is very knowledgeable about the tradition of chieftainship. He is now occupying the high position in the line for chieftainship at Dzanani, his birthplace.

Born 3 2 1939

Dzanani Chief's Kraal

Dzanani

Tel.: 0159-21917

Mrs. Mukumela Mphephu

Mukumela Mphephu is Patrick Mphephu's half-sister and she was born at Dzanani royal kraal but grew up at Malimuwa near Witvlag, the birth place of Mphephu's mother. She passed standard 3 and was later married to headman Mmbi of Maniini village where she still resides. She is still given a royal welcome at Dzanini because she is a senior aunt or "Makhadzi" as is known in Venda tradition. She was able to provide interesting information regarding Mphephu's childhood.

Born 1921
Maniini Village
Thohoyandou

Jeffrey J. Mulaudzi

He was the former director-general for the Department of the National Assembly, where his task was to liaise with traditional leaders. He was responsible for traditional activities in the rural areas, including the establishment of tribal schools. He began his career as a tribal clerk with the Mphephu Tribal Authority and later was promoted to the position of Director-General in the Department of Internal Affairs and later National Assembly. He was one of Mphephu's most trusted civil servants, and was forced to retire by the military junta of Gabriel Ramushwana in 1992.

Born 18 2 1944
Thohoyandou Township
PO Box 345
Thohoyandou
Tel. 0159-21758

John Victor N. Mulaudzi

J.V.N. Mulaudzi was born at Tshikota township where he received his primary education. He completed both Matric and the teachers' diploma at the same time. He was principal of several secondary schools in Venda, including a school for chiefs's sons by the name of Tshavhakololo. Later he became the principal of Mulenga secondary school, a position he held until he was transferred to the Venda government in 1979. He was a director in the Department of Foreign Affairs in the former Republic of Venda where he held the post of Chief of Protocol. He obtained a BA Honours Degree from the University of Venda in 1991. He travelled widely with Mphephu in South Africa, more especially in the former TVBC States. After the take-over of the Venda government by the military in 1990, he was transferred to the former Venda Department of Education as a director. He is now a retired businessman.

Born 16 9 1940
Shayandima Township
Shayandima
Tel.: 0159-83419

Solomon M. Mulaudzi

He joined the civil service in 1949 as tax office record keeper at Sibasa. In 1954 he became a temporary interpreter clerk at the magistrate's office and in 1960 he became head of the revenue section at the magistrate's office. In 1968 he was transferred to the magistrate's office where he assisted in organising tribal authorities in Venda. In 1973 he became Secretary of the Legislative Assembly in the Venda government. In 1977 he became Secretary of the Tender Board until 1979 when he was made Deputy Secretary of Economic Affairs (Finance Section). He was transferred to the Public Service Commission where he retired in 1988. He had a close working relationship with Mphephu because of the number of years he spent in the civil service, being the oldest Venda civil servant at the time.

Born 5 3 1923
Dzwerani Village
P.O. Lwamondo
Thohonyandou
Tel.: 0159872-1231

E.R.B. Nesengani

He is an ex-school principal and former minister of education (1979 to 1988) and was the only graduate in Mphephu's cabinet. Being a member of the Davhana royal family and headman of Tshivhzwaulu village, he is very knowledgeable about Mphephu's supporters and opponents. He was retired in 1990 by the military junta of G. Ramushwana.

Born 1924
Tshivhzwaulu Village

Joel Nethavhani

He qualified as a teacher in 1952 and taught at Siloam and also in various primary schools in the Dzanani area. In 1979 he joined the Venda civil service as Senior Information Officer in the Department of Information and Broadcasting. In 1984 he was transferred to the Department of intelligence as information officer, the position he held until he retired in 1988. He was Mphephu's classmate in Tshakhuma and also a personal friend. I was able to obtain first-hand information about Mphephu's youth from him.

Born 4 6 1929
Siloam Village
P.O. Nzhelele
Dzanani
Tel.: 01595-30091

Silas Ramovha

He was the younger brother to Mphephu's father-in-law, Samuel Ramovha and was the son of Joseph Ramovha, the first black preacher of the Lutheran Church at Dzanani. He received his primary school education at Getrudsburg Mission Station and later qualified as a bricklayer. He was employed by the Venda government as a senior artisan, the position he held until he retired. Having spent most of his life at Dzanani and being a member of the tribal council, he is very experienced in matters of the royal house.

Born 6 6 1924
Dzanani Village
Nzhelele

No telephone number

Headman F.N. Ravele

He was the last president of the former Republic of Venda and a close associate of Mphephu. His grandfather, Nanga Ravele, was Tshilamulela Mphephu's trusted headman and the two families were related through marriages. He was the most senior cabinet minister in Mphephu's government. He succeeded his father in 1946 as headman of the Mauluma community under Mphephu's jurisdiction. He obtained the Junior Certificate in 1952 and Matric through correspondence in 1969. He was elected chairman of Ramabulana School Board in 1958-1969 as well as treasurer of Ramabulana Regional Authority from 1958-1969. He was also member of Thohoyandou Territorial Authority in 1969. He held the post of Minister of Education, Public Works and later Economic Affairs until 1988 when he succeeded Mphephu as President. He was on the spot when Dr. H.F. Verwoerd visited Venda in 1954 and 1958 with the aim of introducing tribal and regional authorities. Of all the people I have interviewed, I found Ravele to be the most knowledgeable person about the evolution of traditional government from 1952 until 1988.

Born 15 11 1926
Mauluma Village
P.O. Mungomani
Nzhelele

Masindi C. Senyosi

He was born at Kutama royal kraal and attended his primary school education there. He later went to Johannesburg where he was employed in several firms as a labourer. He returned in 1970 and is one of the senior members of the Kutama ruling family and also a member of the tribal council. He was a member of parliament in Mphephu's government, but was later sacked because of differences with the President of Venda. He is now a pensioner. He is very knowledgeable about the activities of the ruling house because he is a close relative of the Kutama family.

Born 1924
Tshikwarani Village
Kutama

No telephone number

R. Andrew Senyosi

He was born at Kutama and grew up in the ruling family. He attended his primary school education at Kutama and left for Johannesburg where he was employed in various firms as a driver. He returned in 1978 on the eve of Venda's independence and was employed as a driver of the ministers in Mphephu's cabinet. He is a member of the Kutama tribal council and is very knowledgeable about the affairs of chieftainships.

Born 23 1943

Tshikwarani Village

Kutama

No telephone number

M.V. van Deventer

He is a Minister of the N.G. Kerk (in Africa) at Tshilidzini hospital near Thohoyandou. This hospital which started as a TB clinic by the Dutch Reformed Church later grew into a modern hospital. Van Deventer succeeded the Rev. Mr. Louw who was forced to leave Venda by Mphephu on account of having helped the widows of the detained Muophe who died in police custody. Van Deventer's wife served as medical doctor at the hospital. He was closely associated with the Lutheran church activists like Farisani, Mahamba, Phaswana and others and he became a member of the Christian Fellowship, a movement which was founded by Farisani during the 1980's when there was a lot of pressure against the Venda government and other apartheid structures. According to some sources, he was forced to resign from this movement.

Born 19 11 1952

Tshilidzini Hospital

P.O. Shayandima

Tel.: 0159-41061

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10. ORAL INFORMATION (SEE APPENDIX : ORAL SOURCES (OS))

OS 930221: Daniel A. MAHATLANE, Giyani Township, born 4.9.1922.

OS 920323: Martina MANYAGE, Tshakhuma Mission Station, born 4.4.1915.

OS 930507: Machaka Elias MASUTHA, Gogobole Village, born 23.11.1923.

OS 920321: Theodore T. MATHAGU, Tshakhuma Mission Station, born 1926.

OS 920329: Doris MPHEPHU, Dzanani royal kraal, born 3.10.1941.

OS 930405: David Mavhungu MPHEPHU, Dzanani royal kraal, born 3.2.1939.

OS 931023: Mukumela MPHEPHU, Maniini Village, born 1921.

OS 940721: Jeffrey J. MULAUDZI, Thohoyandou Township, born 18.2.1944.

OS 950306: John V.N MULAUDZI, Shayandima Township, born 16.9.1940.

OS 940719: Solomon S. MULAUDZI, Dzwzerani Village, born 5.3.1923.

OS 940718, 950403: Etienne R.B. NESENGANI, Tshivhazwaulu Village, born 3.5.1927.

OS 920315: Joel NETHAVHANI, Siloam Village, Born 4.6.1929.

OS 930423, 931024: Silas RAMOVHA, Dzanani Village, born 6.6.1924.

OS 920304, 930302 and 940521: Frank N. RAVELE, Mauluma Village, born 15.11.1926.

OS 930408, 930417: Masindi Charles SENYOSI, Kutama Village, born ± 1924.

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