

# On building a nation

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When I approached to address this Conference, I did not have to scratch my head for a topic, for I had been told: 'We would like to know more about your nation . . .' This immediately suggested to me there are people in the world who know little about some things that are significant to us, but who are at the same time, genuinely disposed towards improving their knowledge. Therefore, I feel I have a duty towards you and towards my people to make an attempt to bridge this gap in knowledge, with the view that out of this exercise might arise lines of better communication and better understanding.

There is nothing that contributes more to a future of hope and security than the assurance now that everything is being done, is being seen to be done, to build bridges, and improve relationships. This is an occupation of a lifetime, a challenge to all of us to take stock of our bearings and our attitudes *vis a vis* our colleagues in the work situation, our compatriots in the general struggle for existence; and of our honest feeling and calculated intentions about our specific problems in Southern Africa; and of how, given a chance to speculate, we see them being solved. In this context everyone of us has a role to play; a role to play because we are enlightened and have no choice but to play leader roles. The roles of leadership are but few, and the masses cry for precise, honest and sincere leadership.

Nations are not invented by men; they were created by God. Yet it is a matter of history that there has all along the line been groupings and regroupings, unions and federations — all sorts of mergers, associations and affiliations caused by plights of circumstances or common fate. Usually precipitated by disruptive wars and exigencies of a similar nature, wanton groups have consolidated themselves into powerful new nations — new nations built upon the rallying point of necessity. Land, people, strong and effective political organization . . . these are the fundamentals basic to being a nation. To these we add courage, determination, industry and commitment to the national cause with all that this implies. Every nation has a right to exist. Every nation ought to have a strong feeling of self-regard and pride in its own institutions. But at the same time, every nation should know that other nations exist and are similarly entitled to their own autonomy. There is no room for being too ambitious,

beyond the challenge of promoting your own autonomy, or working within the framework of international agreements.

Double standards may be an old political stance, but everybody ought to know that they are based on spinelessness and lack of national integrity. I know some countries that are not ashamed to engage in the international parlance of celebrity, yet are often forced by circumstances of economic necessity to act contrary to their own pronouncements. Such nations have neither self-respect nor a future.

I would wish the nation about which you would like to know more to remain true to its aspirations, subject only to the dictates of a reality consistent with the demands of its struggle for existence.

Before the imperious days of colonialism submerged the freedom of the nations of Africa into the long dark night that saw its dawn when Kwame Nkrumah liberated the then Gold Coast into the now declining Ghana, Africa had been robust and free. The re-emergence of Ghana was to spark off a chain reaction of small and large states wresting their freedom from the previous colonial powers. In some cases the price of freedom was paid in precious blood, with the colonial power not prepared to relinquish its foothold, and let the children of Africa go.

Bitter liberation struggles have ensued and often chaos and wanton destruction have marked the trail of liberatory movements. The struggle continues to this day on our borders to the north. The advent of Uhuru always resulted without exception in the colonial power having to pack and go. But the whole story has yet to be told, the whole picture of Africa has yet to be painted. South Africa, sensing the inevitable, planned her strategy by embarking upon a policy to contain her socio-political problems. Within this framework she offered the black nations an option to self-determination. At best the policy has been highly controversial and has earned itself its due amount of hostility and resistance in the outside world.

We are all aware of the policy and its ramifications. We are aware also of the involvement of all the black nations in the operation of the policy. At this point in time, various levels of advancement have been reached by various nations. All have in fact advanced to the self-governing status which is well over three quarters of the way. Yet it is also a known fact that only two have so far become independent with a third, Venda, due for independence in September 1979.

At this level Bophuthatswana had exhausted what there was to exploit within such range of limited government and, to avoid the frustration that could arise from persisting in such an intermediate stage had no option but to become independent.

Basically, there is a choice within the no-choice framework of separate development. There is a choice to become independent or not to become independent. There is no choice, however, as to whether one should operate or not operate the policy much as there was no consultation in its promulgation. All of us have had a share in the operation of the establishment — those among us who vocally oppose it, and those who actively try to make ends meet. One does not imagine that there is

anybody who has worked the policy without reservations. There are certain fundamental issues within the policy that are reprehensible, untenable and unacceptable, for instance, racial discrimination and all that it stands for. On the other hand, involvement of the people in new areas, offered by the development of the policy, constitutes a plus factor, which could never have been otherwise achieved, things being what they are in South Africa. Obviously, there are negative factors that serve only to aggravate the system; but what positive factors there are should not go unrecognized and unexploited. The most must be made of the silver lining in every dark cloud. Various people engaged with separate development think differently. Everyone should, within the given situation, feel free to act, but above all one must be practical, precise and prudent in whatever decisions one makes, and in whatever action is contemplated.

The Republic of Bophuthatswana was faced with some of the most crucial problems at the point when it became independent in 1977. It needed earnest discussion and hard bargaining to resolve some of them. We give credit to His Excellency the President and his colleagues for the hard work they put into the negotiations. For many a day the talks hung precariously over a precipice, and threatened to break down.

The hottest issue was the debate on citizenship, the rights of the people of Bophuthatswana in the urban areas, and the consolidation of the land. Obviously, the country needed territorial credibility in order to enhance its economic and political viability. A checker-board of seven pieces was unacceptable. But the machinery for consolidation was tied up in the shackles of the 1936 Land Act, which neither envisaged the independence of black states nor the equitable distribution of land in that event. Yet the time was right for Bophuthatswana to become independent and her tide had come to be 'taken at the flood', or missed forever. The timing was important. Therefore the subject of land consolidation was left open for ongoing negotiation even after independence. Many expressed their doubts about the reliability of such an arrangement. But it was announced recently that the consolidation of this country is to be treated as top priority by the South African Consolidation Commission, due to make recommendations to the South African Cabinet. According to the *Sunday Times*, proposals will entail 'the drastic redrawing of borders between South Africa and Bophuthatswana; the incorporation of thousands of hectares of white farmland into the black state representing a radical departure from the Government's former adherence to the 1936 Land Act as a basis of land apportionment'. And, adding the cherry to the pie, there is talk of the incorporation of Mafeking into Bophuthatswana. As far as the matter of citizenship is concerned, all people of Tswana origin are citizens, in terms of the Citizenship Act, except that provision is made for those who wish to renounce citizenship to be free to pull out. No one has availed himself of this facility yet.

People of other national origin who have been living in and have a desire to remain in this country, are free to apply for citizenship, but it must be noted that proper relations, attitudes and order shall prevail. In terms of agreements entered with South Africa, no citizen of Bophuthatswana will forfeit his or her rights in South

Africa, only on the grounds of being a citizen of Bophuthatswana. All Bophuthatswana citizens continue to enjoy what there is to enjoy in the urban areas of South Africa, for instance participation in civic politics, participation in the 99-year lease plan, continuing to work and to be housed, subject only to all the regulations governing other black people.

But 40 km north-west of Pretoria, Bophuthatswana is at work building a new society, an opposite society — a non-racial society in which the rights of the citizens are enshrined in a Bill of Rights. Show me another country in Africa with a Bill of Rights outside Botswana and Bophuthatswana! It is possibly not surprising that there should be this coincidence, for Botswana and Bophuthatswana are one country, one people. That they should lie today on either side of a fence now called a frontier, is one event for which colonialism will never be excused nor forgotten. Today our brothers in Botswana are members of the frontline states, of the OAU, of UNO, and are eligible to membership of international agencies, and we are not. We are not, partly because portions of our territory became British Bechuanaland when the rest of Botswana became a Protectorate of Her Majesty's Government.

I need not expand on this issue: We became South Africans and got out to become independent the way we did — the way of separate development. The world condemns our claim to independence, and pretends that we do not exist. They have opposed the policy and oppose us; they mistake us for the policy or the perpetrators of the policy; they do not understand. They cannot understand that we are a new country that is never going to disappear from the face of the earth. We cannot live on the wiles of the world or on their misconception of our being, whether this misconception is justified or not justified. We can only live on our faith in ourselves and in our commitment to our own cause and our own institutions. We offer no apology whatsoever to a world adopting a stance hostile to our existence just because some people are not prepared to concede the difference between our inalienable right to live as a people, and a totally unacceptable colour-based discriminatory ideology.

With a population of two million, more than a quarter million of whom represent other national groups, Bophuthatswana is divided into 12 districts coincident with electoral regions.

It has a legislative Assembly of 100 members, and is headed by an Executive President, who leads a cabinet of 10 ministers including three whites. In the house only four sit in the opposition benches.

It is not a bed of roses to build a nation. It does need determination and hard work. This Republic has mining, agricultural and tourist potential; but a nation cannot live on potential. We need money and expertise. We have potential and labour. We need to create job opportunities for our people, in order to increase their earning power, if we must achieve our commitment as leaders to raise the quality of life of the citizens. We operate an incentive-orientated industrial and tax policy in order to attract investment to this country. Already there are some 110 industrialists settled in the country, and new growth points are being developed.

We realize the need to develop our primary sector in

order to stimulate our secondary and tertiary sectors. Consistent with our commitment to develop our natural resources and our people, we have to focus our attention on what we have, and exploit and develop it for availability to the human race. Our Agricultural Development Corporation, headed by Mr Hendrik van Zyl, top South African farmer of the year 1978, has ambitious programmes for development. I would like to place on record here our appreciation of goodwill and assistance that has come from South Africa in many instances, including the private sector.

Our tourism is taking great strides. Twenty months ago at independence, our first top-class hotel was opened to the public, and as the second independence anniversary gift, South Africa's largest hotel group is on target with the construction of a 350-room hotel at Pilanesberg. Next to Las Vegas, there is not another Casino area in the world bigger than our new hotel. It has a theatre with a stage equal to anything the Lido can offer in Paris. This is one of many features our country can offer the world.

The greatest of all things that I see about this country is the exposure that it is affording its people. There is no place to hide. We need every available individual, and when we have everybody that is prepared to come, we see the lack — the lack of qualified personnel, the lack of know-how. That we took independence gave us the opportunity to be able to take final decisions and also the responsibility for implementing them. There is no more passing the buck, and blaming someone else — we have only ourselves to blame. If things must go right, we must see them right; if things need repair, we must repair them. If there is a capital city to name or to build, or a constitution to draw or a national anthem to compose, or an Education Act to promulgate — we are responsible, we must do it, do it ourselves. We are not looking for any more reward than the satisfaction one derives from having done a good day's work. The whole exercise is enterprising and challenging — one feels one has to be involved and make a contribution, and write a line in the history of this nation.