

Sources about the bantustans

The following sources are about the unfairness of the bantustan policy in South Africa and about the conditions in the bantustans

Source A from Steve Biko, a black anti-apartheid activist in 'Frank Talk vol 1 no 4 'Let's talk about bantustans'

"Geographically, ie in terms of land distribution, bantustans represent a gigantic fraud that can find no moral support from any quarter. We find that 20% of the population are in control of 87% of the land while 80% control only 13%. To make this situation even more ridiculous, not one of the so-called 'Bantustan nations' have an intact piece of land. All of them are scattered little bits of the most unyielding soil. In each area the more productive bits are white-controlled islands on which white farms or other types of industry are situated."

Source B from Steve Biko, a black anti-apartheid activist in 'Frank Talk vol 1 no 4 'Let's talk about bantustans'

"Economically, the blacks have been given a raw deal. Generally speaking the areas where bantustans are located are the least developed in the country, often very unsuitable either for agricultural or pastoral (cattle farming) work. Not one of the bantustans have access to the sea and in all situations mineral rights are strictly reserved for the South African government. In other words bantustans only have rights extended to 6 feet below the surface of the land."

Source C from Oliver Tambo, an ANC activist in interview to 'World Marxist review' February 1978

The people who live in the bantustans are usually unemployed and with a very few exceptions are unable to find work locally. They have to go to the cities, which belong to the white minority. But even there they are often unable to find a job and, if they do, the conditions amount to semi-slavery. The bantustans cannot help the people living in them to overcome poverty, give them an education, and meet their other needs. On the contrary, in formally becoming "citizens of independent States", the people in the bantustans lose all rights in South Africa - their citizenship, right to travel, and so on. They are subjected to new, unprecedented restrictions. They are herded together in quite small territories, whereas before they were at least able to travel anywhere in the country.

Questions about the bantustans

- 1) Read source A. Give examples from the source to explain why Steve Biko describes the bantustans as 'a gigantic fraud'
- 2) Read source B. How does Biko describe the land given to blacks in the bantustans?
- 3) Why do you think the South African government only allowed the bantustans to have mineral rights 'extended to 6 feet below the ground'?
- 4) Read source C. Give examples to show how Oliver Tambo explains the conditions in the bantustans as 'semi-slavery'
- 5) How did the bantustans stop African's freedom of movement?

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