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VENDA

Venda, "independent" since September 1979, is located in a remote area of northern Transvaal near South Africa's borders with Zimbabwe and Mozambique. Its isolation has hindered the development of industry and ensured a high rate of emigration to white South Africa and a heavy dependence on subsistence agriculture. In addition, Venda's unpopular President Patrick Mphephu has used a variety of tactics to suppress both real and imagined political opponents. ■

Geographic and Demographic Features

The Venda tribal group is linguistically related to the Shona of Zimbabwe and the Sotho of the northern Transvaal. The Venda first moved into the area from Zimbabwe in about 1700. Contact with whites began in 1836, but it was not until the early 20th century, after the Anglo-Boer War, that the Venda were brought under the administrative control of the Transvaal Government. ■

Venda is located in the most fertile part of northern Transvaal. Only 10 percent of the homeland is arable, but nearly two-thirds of that area is under cultivation. Roughly the size of Delaware, Venda is divided into one large and one small parcel. Between 1970 and 1980, Pretoria's forced resettlement drove the rate of increase in resident population to over 5 percent annually, increasing the population from about 270,000 to 450,000. ■

Economic Activities

Venda is the most isolated of all the homelands from centers of white population. Nearly all of its farmers engage in subsistence agriculture because there is scant incentive to produce crops for distant cities. As is the case in several other homelands, the large number of cattle in Venda has led to overgrazing, resulting in excessive soil erosion. ■

One bright spot, however, is a 40,000-hectare tree plantation—planted in the 1940s by the South African Government and now controlled by the Venda Government—that will shortly begin yielding wood for processing and sale to South Africa. ■ if the plantation is successful, it may be expanded by another 9,000 hectares. A 500-hectare tea plantation has started production; conditions for tea cultivation are excellent, but inefficient operations and high transport costs make Venda's tea about twice as expensive as other tea imported into South Africa. ■

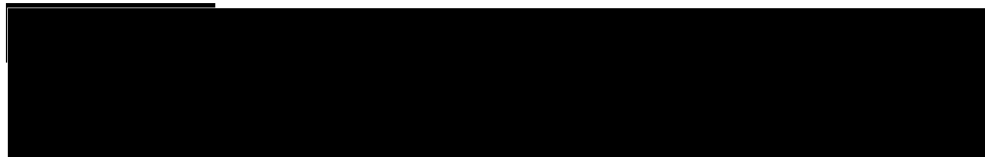
Local efforts at industrial development have failed. Venda has virtually no supporting services for industry, and transportation and communications links with South Africa are few. An industrial development consultant hired by Venda a few years ago concluded that it was futile to try to create local industrial jobs because Venda is destined to remain a labor exporter. Of the more than 3,000 people who

Venda. Women carrying water



enter the homeland's labor market annually, most depart for widely scattered cities in white South Africa in search of employment. Moreover, a high proportion of local income is spent in white-owned stores in nearby white areas, or in local stores that are covertly owned by Indian merchants who send their profits out of Venda. [REDACTED]

Political Developments



Venda held its first election in 1973. Mphephu's Venda National Party (VNP) was opposed by the Venda Independence Party (VIP). The VIP won 14 of the 18 contested seats. Mphephu then whisked the 42 appointed chiefs, who constituted a majority of the Venda Parliament, away to a nearby resort. On their return, after several days of feting, they all backed Mphephu, who became Chief Minister. [REDACTED]

The VIP was again victorious in the 1978 election, winning 31 of the 42 contested seats. Mphephu, using emergency powers, detained a number of the newly elected VIP legislators until the appointed chiefs had chosen him as Prime Minister. At "independence" in 1979 Mphephu was installed as President [REDACTED]

Venda. Lack of facilities and employment opportunities lead many men to migrate to white cities. [REDACTED]



Mphephu had 14 people arrested following an ANC grenade attack in late 1981 on a police station in the capital in which two policemen were killed. The detainees included four of the nine Lutheran pastors in Venda who had ministered to the 60 percent of the Venda population that is Lutheran. The four were tortured, [REDACTED]

Alarm over the detentions and reported torture was widespread. Even *Die Vaderland*, an Afrikaner newspaper that favors Pretoria's homelands policy, attacked the Venda Government. Mphephu's government subsequently dropped all charges against the clergymen in exchange for pleas of guilty to lesser charges. [REDACTED]

The VIP, [REDACTED] plans to step up the number of political rallies and other activities. The party is led by Gilbert Bakane, who claims to have the support of 80 percent of the Venda people, including most of those living outside the homeland. Bakane, who lives in Soweto, recognizes that he will be detained if he returns to Venda to take his seat in parliament. Aside from its opposition to "independence," the VIP differs little from the VNP. Both parties are moderately socialist and opposed to the ANC. [REDACTED]

We believe ANC infiltration into Venda from Mozambique and Zimbabwe is a distinct possibility because of their proximity and—in Zimbabwe's case—tribal and cultural ties. To prevent such penetration, the Venda National Force (VNF), an anti-insurgency unit with about 600 personnel, patrols the north of the homeland in cooperation with the South African Defense Force (SADF). Aside from these patrols, the VNF's activities are primarily ceremonial. The VNF, like the security units of the other "independent" homelands, is subordinate to the geographic commands of the South African Defense Forces [REDACTED]

