

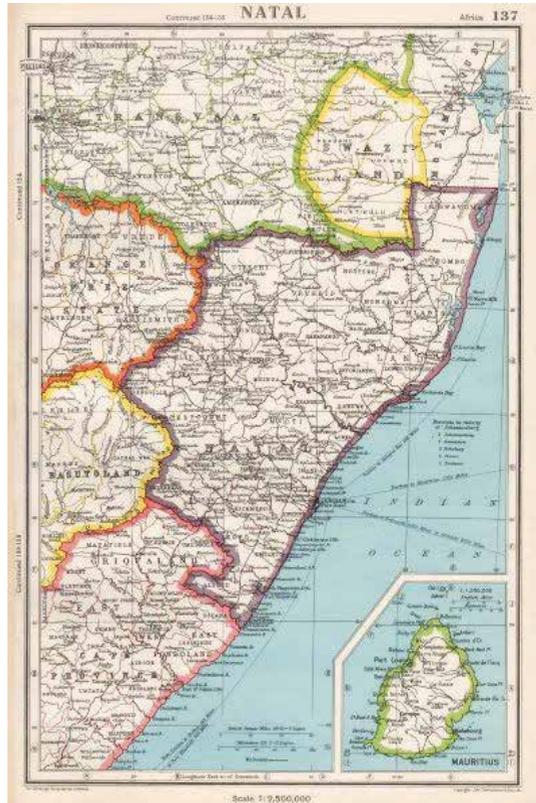
MOVING THE GOALPOSTS: THE CHANGING PROVINCIAL BOUNDARIES OF KWAZULU-NATAL

by Arthur Gammage

THE OUTLINE of the map of Natal province when the Union of South Africa was founded in 1910 gave the impression of a face looking to the left. There is even an ‘open mouth’ formed by the Mzimkhulu district. The western edge is defined by the Drakensberg escarpment; the south-western boundary by the Umtamvuna River, reaching the seashore at Port Edward. Beyond is the coastal area known as Pondoland with Griqualand East inland of it. The northern boundary changed to incorporate the Transvaal panhandle including the town of Pongola in 1994; and the boundary with eSwatini (Swaziland) turns north along the Lebombo range, east along the Maputo River, and on to the coast as the Mozambique border.

Under the National Party government homelands policy, areas with ethno-linguistic majorities became self-governing territories. During the 1970s and early 1980s, Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda and Ciskei (TBVC) were declared independent states; which enabled them to issue their own postage stamps. Despite this, no other country, nor the United Nations, recognised their status. Chaotically, Bophuthatswana consisted of seven separate portions.

KwaZulu homeland’s allocated areas were also dispersed, forming a patchwork in addition to the traditional area of Zululand north of the Thukela River, with its administrative centre at Ulundi. There was a proposal to



Natal at the time of Union

exchange parcels of land so as to make this more coherent. Mangosuthu Buthelezi and his Inkatha Party declined to take up the offer of independence, not wishing to give up the South African citizenship rights of the Zulu people.

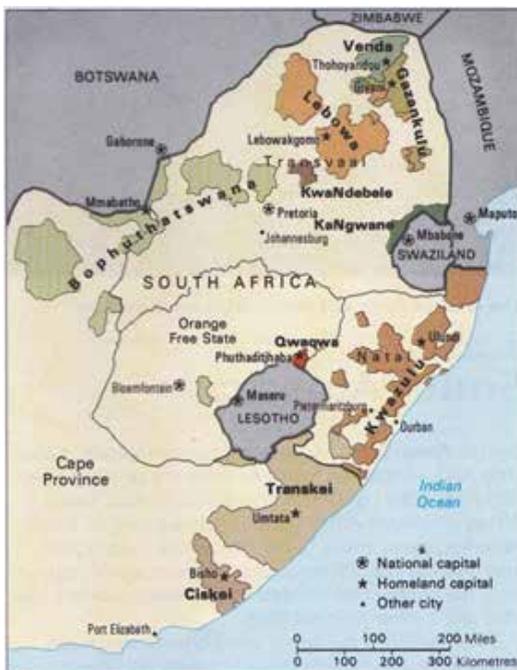
Following the independence of Transkei, Griqualand East, which was part of Cape Province, felt isolated from the rest of the Cape. The majority of residents favoured administration from Pietermaritzburg rather than from a distant Cape Town, and the region was therefore incorporated into Natal

in 1979. The car licence plates, CCW for Kokstad and CCX for Matatiele became NCW and NCX respectively. However, the mainly Xhosa-speaking enclave of Mzimkhulu chose to remain with Transkei. Then with the rearrangement of South Africa into nine provinces in 1994, it became part of the Eastern Cape.

During 1980, I attended the annual synod meetings of the Church of England in South Africa (CESA), at St Stephen's Church, Claremont in Cape Town and stayed on with a family nearby for some sightseeing. With the help of my hosts, I arranged to attend a morning session of Parliament, sitting in the visitors' gallery.

There were two items of interest on the order paper that day, both under Constitution Amendment Bills. The first was about burning the South African flag, making this a criminal offence. The opposition Progressive Federal Party (PFP) supported this motion, but contended that the proposed penalties were too harsh. They quoted from the American experience, when their flag was being burnt in protest over the Vietnam War. I do not recall that the PFP succeeded with any amendment.

The other item concerned the TBVC states. Although they came into being under the Black Homelands Citizenship Act (1970), it was now realised that the Constitution, which overrides other legislation, stated that the boundaries of a province may only be changed if that province petitions Parliament to do so. That had not been the case for the four homelands, so technically they were illegitimate. This was rectified by the constitutional amendment at that sitting.



South Africa's homelands

Decades later, I looked at a new road map and noticed that the little 'hole' in KwaZulu-Natal had officially been closed. The incorporation of Mzimkhulu district took place by means of a constitutional amendment in December 2005, together with amendments for cross-border municipalities in other parts of the country. This did not seem to be a major news story at the time, other than perhaps for those who were closely involved. Matatiele's status was hotly disputed, however, and two years later this border municipality rejoined the Eastern Cape.

NOTE

My thanks to Roger Burrows for his assistance.



KwaZulu-Natal, 1980



KwaZulu-Natal, 2020