



X marks the spot

Land deal aims to win KwaZulu over

land



Inkatha might not need an election to control Natal — the government is ready to hand over large pieces of the province in a highly-controversial land deal.

ESTELLE RANDALL reports

WHILE A "BREAKTHROUGH" IN negotiations for a democratic South Africa was being hailed in the media, central government was simultaneously concluding a number of controversial land deals with bantustan authorities.

These deals give bantustan governments joint administrative control over state land. This is likely to severely curtail a future government's ability to meet the land needs of rural communities.

In August, it was announced that some 500 000 hectares of state land in Natal would be transferred to joint administrative control with the KwaZulu government. The announcement comes after almost a year of secret negotiations between the South African

and KwaZulu governments.

The deal has been slammed by several groups. Democratic Party land affairs spokesperson Kobus Jordaan said the deal was "the most sinister piece of legislation" he had encountered.

ANC Midlands deputy chair Blade Nzimande described the move as an attempt to hand over Natal to Inkatha without an election.

"They are trying to create no-go areas for the ANC. The government should take full responsibility for what could happen," Nzimande said.

National ANC spokesperson Carl Niehaus added there was no logic in the arrangement. He said the ANC was unhappy about the unilateral transfer of land when South Africa was talking



about integrating all these areas into regions within a united South Africa. He warned that the ANC would take action if the transfer went ahead.

And in an editorial, *The Natal Mercury* said the government's timing "... smacks of opportunism. While putting negotiations at further risk, it is also in danger of turning land in an already hotly disputed area of the country into a political football."

The Goldstone Commission has also warned central government that the land deal could exacerbate violence in Natal. The commission recommended last December that further transfers of land to KwaZulu be suspended because "to proceed at the present time would, in the opinion of the commission, seriously aggravate the violence."

The deal also seems to fly in the face of concerns from the government's own Land Rights Advisory Forum (LRAF). LRAF chairperson Louise Tager called for a freeze on all transactions involving state land, saying it was difficult to understand the rationale behind the government's joint administration plans with bantustan govern-

ments around state land.

The fact that the government can ignore warnings from the Goldstone Commission and its own LRAF casts doubt on the power of these structures.

In response to these voices of opposition, the government continues to assert that the land deal — and those it concluded with the other bantustans in 1992 — amounts to a routine administrative matter and will not involve an expansion of bantustan government control over land.

It denies that the deal is a political manoeuvre to win friends on the eve of South Africa's first democratic elections.

But the government has failed to explain what joint administration entails, despite repeated requests from land activists for an explanation.

Recent revelations about the mismanagement of funds by bantustan governments, including KwaZulu, make it even more difficult to understand how joint administration with these structures could improve either genuine access to land for the landless or the provision of services to rural communities.

There are an about 1,4 million landless people in Natal. Land is a valuable resource for reconstruction and reconciliation.

In its 1991 White Paper on Land Reform, the government admits that existing state land is the only land still available for allocation to black farmers and landless communities.

Several rural communities have submitted claims to the state's Advisory Commission on Land Allocation (Acla). Many of these communities have strongly opposed the transfer of land they are claiming, either to bantustan governments or to private individuals.

However, the current land deal pre-empts Acla's findings and undermines communities that have attempted to get their land problems resolved peacefully and through channels set up by the state.

The deal is clearly an attempt to lure KwaZulu back to the negotiations process and to strengthen its power in the drive to a federal future. Until now, KwaZulu does not seem to have been impressed by these overtures. ■

● *Randall works for the Association for Rural Advancement (Afra)*

What does the deal mean?

In terms of the deal, the following will happen to the land in question:

- The KwaZulu government will jointly administer about 500 000 hectares of state land in Natal.
- Ownership of part of the land will be transferred to the KwaZulu Finance and Development Corporation, the KwaZulu Conservation Trust and the KwaZulu Monument Council. Ownership of traditional rural tribal land may be transferred to tribes and tribal authorities.
- Developed land may be leased or sold to farmers jointly selected by Pretoria and Ulundi.
- Some land may be given to tribes and tribal authorities as compensation for land taken away from them.
- Some land, such as townships, will remain under central government and will be administered by the Natal Provincial Administration (NPA).
- A technical committee made up of the departments of regional and land affairs, agriculture, KwaZulu and the NPA will identify beneficiaries to the land and activate and monitor transfer of the land to them.

Where is the land?

Despite repeated requests from the Association for Rural Advancement (Afra), the government has refused to specify the exact location of the land involved. All the state has revealed is that it involves tribal land, conservation and forestry areas, agricultural plots, townships and villages and land on which there are state buildings.

However Afra's research has revealed that the land in question is in the following 39 districts in Natal: Alfred, Babanango, Bergville, Camperdown, Dundee, Eshowe, Estcourt, Hlabisa, Impendle, Inanda, Ingwavuma, Ixopo, Klipriver, Kranskop, Lions River, Lower Umfolozi, Lower Tugela, Mahlabatini, Mapumulo, Msinga, Ndwedwe, New Hanover, Newcastle, Ngotshe, Nkandla, Nongoma, Nqutu, Ntonjani, Paulpietersburg, Piet Retief, Polela, Port Shepstone, Richmond, Ubombo, Umlazi, Umvoti, Umzinto, Underberg, Vryheid.

Clermont and Edendale will remain under the Natal Provincial Administration (NPA).